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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, June 3, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 3, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

[English]

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs in relation to a study on the Enhanced New Veterans Charter Act, statutory review of the Act.

We are delighted that this is a unanimous report of all the members involved and in the House. I certainly want to thank them for their co-operation, which is a very positive thing. I also want to point out that the analysts did a terrific job in their supporting effort. We are very pleased that this report is in the House right now.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DAY OF THE MIDWIFE ACT

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-608, An Act respecting a National Day of the Midwife.

She said: Mr. Speaker, at a time when the health of mothers and children around the world is one of our biggest concerns, I am honoured to introduce this bill, which is calling for the creation of a national day of the midwife in Canada. I would like to draw attention to the hard work that the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park has done on this file.

Since 1991, the World Health Organization has recognized May 5 as the International Day of the Midwife, which is celebrated in more than 50 countries. There are over 1,300 midwives in Canada who support women in every region of the country during pregnancy, childbirth, and recovery. It is time to acknowledge the valuable contribution that midwives make to our society.

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

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-609, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (critical infrastructure).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce this bill, which would address the curious problem that has developed in Canada where the high price of copper has led to widespread incidence of theft of copper wire and copper piping. The bill would move the theft of copper wire and pipe from the section of the Criminal Code dealing with minor theft and place it in the mischief category. Those guilty of the theft of copper wire would then become liable for all the damage done and not just the value of the wire or the pipe.

These thefts often put at risk not only the safety of those involved in the theft but also the safety of first responders, utility workers, and local residents.

I very much appreciate the Canadian Electricity Association, which brought this urgent problem to my attention.

I would like to conclude by offering my private member's bill to the government. I would be happy to see the Conservatives take this bill and pass it into law using their majority. I believe the increased prosecutions that would result from this simple change to the Criminal Code could help us reduce what is too often seen as an easy-money crime of opportunity, yet one that is clearly a threat to public safety and to our critical infrastructure.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition from petitioners who call upon Parliament to refrain from making any changes to the Seeds Act or to the Plant Breeders' Rights Act through Bill C-18 that would further restrict farmers' rights or add to farmers' costs.

Further, the petitioners call upon Parliament to enshrine in legislation the inalienable rights of farmers and other Canadians to save, reuse, select, exchange, and sell seeds.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting to the House three petitions that are calling for the creation of a legal ombudsman mechanism for responsible mining.

Students at the CEGEP Limoilou took it upon themselves to get these three petitions signed.

[English]

CANADA POST

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

In the first petition, the petitioners draw to the attention of the House of Commons and the government the Canada Post plan to reduce services, including the elimination of home delivery to five million households, which is drastic, along with the increase of postal rates.

• (1010)

PUBLIC TRANSIT OPERATORS

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the second petition, the petitioners are calling for a stop to the violence against bus drivers.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to amend the Criminal Code in order to establish a separate offence sanctioning the aggression committed against drivers of buses in their functions and establishing more severe penalties against their aggressors.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I have another one thousand signatures on petitions calling upon Parliament to amend the Criminal Code to decriminalize the selling of sexual services, criminalize the purchasing of sexual services, and provide support to those who desire to leave prostitution.

The petitioners are petitioning our government because the laws were deemed unconstitutional in the Bedford case.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today from constituents of my riding of Kingston and the Islands.

The first petition calls for a moratorium on genetically modified alfalfa.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon the government to consult with Canadians and issue a suitable form of proportional representation after the consultation.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition calls for the creation of a legislated ombudsman mechanism for responsible mining companies operating overseas.

[Translation]

VIA RAIL

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting petitions on behalf of several hundred people. This is a series of petitions calling for improved VIA Rail service in eastern Canada. Members will recall that VIA Rail does not run through the Gaspé anymore. It goes through the rest of eastern Canada three times a week, when just two years ago it went six times a week. People are calling for improvements and are hoping that the government will listen.

CANADA POST

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the other petition is about cuts at Canada Post. Many post offices have had their hours and staff cut back. Now the corporation is talking about getting rid of home mail delivery. These people want Canada Post services to return to previous levels. They want the cuts to stop.

[English]

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a number of petitions from the Millennium Kids organization. Some of the members will be here with us later today. They have done a great job in collecting signatures from across Canada.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to continue with its commitment to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

PENSIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to table a petition today signed by my constituents.

The petitioners believe that people should be able to continue to have the option to retire at the age of 65 and that the government should not in any way diminish the importance and value of Canada's three major seniors programs, the OAS, the GIS, and the CPP.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three sets of petitions to present today, signed by citizens from across Canada.

The petitioners point out that the current impaired driving laws are too lenient, and they want to see tougher laws and the implementation of new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the same petition as my colleague.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***JUSTICE FOR ANIMALS IN SERVICE ACT (QUANTO'S LAW)**

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC) moved that Bill C-35, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (law enforcement animals, military animals and service animals), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here once again in the House of Commons to speak to a very important initiative that pertains directly to our four-legged friends, animals that can be described as in service of our country and in service of our community.

Bill C-35, the justice for animals in service act, is also known as Quanto's law. It is named after Quanto, who was a five-year-old German shepherd Edmonton police dog who was fatally stabbed October 7, 2013, sadly, while assisting the police in apprehending a suspect. Quanto and his handler, Constable Matt Williamson, were in pursuit of a suspect in a stolen vehicle. When the vehicle became disabled at a gas station, the driver jumped out and fled. Constable Williamson ordered the suspect to stop. When the suspect refused to do so, the officer deployed Quanto, his partner, his dog. Constable Williamson, then in pursuit, eventually witnessed what took place. Quanto did catch the suspect who was fleeing, but in the midst of holding him while waiting for Constable Williamson to arrive, Quanto was stabbed with a knife repeatedly. Medical treatment was applied, but despite efforts to save Quanto, he succumbed to his injuries.

Sadly, this particular incident is not an isolated incident. This has happened in other cases across this country. It speaks to the need to do more when it comes to protecting service animals. It speaks to the recognition of the vulnerability of these animals in supporting law enforcement, our border services, and other law enforcement services.

At the outset, I want to pay tribute to the member for Richmond Hill, who is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, who brought this initiative forward. However, because of a procedural requirement that when he became a parliamentary secretary he could no longer pursue this initiative, the government has picked it up and taken it forward. It was also referenced in the Speech from the Throne.

The proposed amendment to the Criminal Code is to recognize the daily risks taken by police officers and their service animals. They work very much in unison.

I note that this bill defines each of the terms. The proposed amendments would create a new specific offence prohibiting the killing or injuring of a law enforcement animal, service animal, or military animal. I will come back to those definitions.

A law enforcement animal is defined as a dog or a horse that is trained to aid a law enforcement officer in carrying out the officer's duties.

The petitioners highlight that 22-year-old Cassandra Kaulius was killed by a drunk driver. Her family and Families for Justice point out that the current laws regarding impaired driving are much too lenient. The petitioners are asking for mandatory minimum sentencing for people who have been convicted of causing death by driving drunk.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am also honoured to present a petition that highlights the fact that girls are being violently discriminated against through sex selection.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to condemn this practice.

TORONTO ISLAND AIRPORT

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition to the House today signed by constituents in and around my riding of Beaches—East York.

The petitioners draw the attention of the House to the planned expansion of the Toronto Island airport to allow jets to land and take off from the airport. They are concerned that this will ruin Toronto's waterfront.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to block any changes to the tripartite agreement that would allow jet airplanes or extensions of the Toronto Island airport runways, to stop subsidizing Porter Airlines, and to compel the federal Toronto Port Authority to pay millions of back taxes owed to the people of Toronto.

• (1015)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of residents in my riding who are concerned with the rights of farmers to save, reuse, select, exchange, and sell seeds. They are asking Parliament to refrain from making any changes to the Seeds Act and the Plant Breeders' Rights Act through Bill C-18. They ask Parliament to enshrine in legislation the inalienable rights of farmers and other Canadians to save, reuse, select, exchange, and sell seeds.

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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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

A military animal is defined as an animal that is trained to aid members of the Canadian Forces in carrying out members' duties. This would include the very critical task that we saw in recent years in Afghanistan with bomb disposal units. Dogs, as we all know, are gifted with very sensitive olfactory systems. That is, they are able to smell things that other animals and humans cannot. Despite great advances in technology around bomb disposal, the dog is still the very best indicator in many cases of where these IEDs, the landmines, are located. However, we can imagine the great risk they are under. We can also imagine how incensed the Taliban is when its random attempts to kill and maim people are foiled by the dogs. This makes these dogs a target just as, in a criminal sense, dogs who apprehend those who may flee justice or those who may be involved in the drug trade are specifically made targets.

Therefore, I come back to the purpose of the bill, which is to recognize both the harm and the danger to which they are exposed but also to elevate criminal sanctions to protect them and send a signal to recognize their specific vulnerability.

A service animal is defined as an animal that is required by a person with a disability for assistance and, importantly, is certified in writing as having been trained by a professional service animal institution to assist a person with a disability. Again, I would suggest that the intent of the bill is to elevate the importance of what these animals do, the service they provide, and the potential vulnerability that is present in their life because of their service.

● (1020)

While the bill bears the name of Quanto, that name really represents a much larger body of animals. Quanto, incidentally, was recently elected into the Purina Animal Hall of Fame, I am told, as special recognition of his service to country.

The Criminal Code has contained offences relating to treatment of animals since 1892, and the current set of offences has existed since 1953. The penalties in the existing law were in fact increased by this government in 2008. The offence of killing, maiming, wounding, poisoning, or injuring an animal that is kept for a lawful purpose is found in section 445 of the Criminal Code, and this particular section was used, in fact, to prosecute Quanto's killer.

The maximum sentence that may be imposed where there is a hybrid offence and it is prosecuted as an indictable offence is up to five years, and the law provides that the court may, in addition to any other sentence, on application of the Attorney General or on its own motion, order that the accused pay the reasonable costs incurred in respect of an animal as a result of the commission of the offence. This gets at the fact that the training and purchase of these animals, because they provide such special service, is significant.

I have a very good friend, Duane Rutledge, who is a dog handler with the New Glasgow Regional Police Service back in my home constituency. He has, over the years, trained and worked with three separate dogs. Most of these dogs are German shepherds, brought in either from the Czech Republic or from Germany. These animals can cost thousands of dollars, and when one factors in the training that goes into preparing these animals for service, the cost goes even higher. Estimates, in some cases, put a single service animal, by the time it reaches maturity, at \$60,000; so there is cost to be incurred as well. Not to diminish the loss and the human side in injury to an

animal, the financial costs associated with an animal being taken out of service, or worse yet, killed, are significant.

Further, paragraph 738(1)(a) of the Criminal Code authorizes the court to order the offender to pay the costs associated with training a new animal as restitution for the loss of an animal where the amount is readily ascertainable.

The person who killed Quanto, for example, was sentenced to a total of 26 months imprisonment on various charges arising out of the events of October 7, which I spoke of earlier. Eighteen months was specifically designated for the killing of Quanto. He was also banned from owning a pet for 25 years.

[*Translation*]

Quanto's killing was only the most recent instance in which a police service animal was killed in the course of a police operation. Another high-profile incident involved the death of an eight-year-old horse.

The horse, Brigadier, was a Toronto Police Service horse killed in the line of duty in 2006. In that case, a driver in a fit of rage, while waiting in line at a drive-through ATM, made a U-turn and barrelled into the horse and his mounted officer. Both of Brigadier's front legs were broken, the left one so badly that he could never have recovered. The horse had to be put down.

● (1025)

[*English*]

We have another example in which a service animal, in this case a horse, was injured severely. The person drove a car into the animal, into the police horse, and was subsequently convicted. There were charges for dangerous driving causing bodily harm to Brigadier's mounted officer.

Members of this House would also be aware of the many ways that law enforcement dogs and horses can assist handlers in protecting the public.

A police dog is trained specifically to assist police and other law enforcement personnel in their work, such as searching for drugs, explosives, people who are lost in the woods, and evidence such as weapons, and protecting their handlers. Law enforcement canine units, like Quanto's unit in Edmonton, are common components of municipal police, as well as provincial police forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

We are all very aware of the Musical Ride and the service it represents, as well as the entertainment factor. It is a source of pride for both the RCMP and all Canadians.

In 1995 in Montreal, after 23 years, a new version of the Montreal police canine unit was established.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Today, this canine unit is composed of 11 police officers and 10 operational dogs. The canine unit supports Montreal police officers in their investigations and daily activities. It is also called upon to work in certain operations where its specialties are required. For example, the unit will co-operate with other police forces that do not have canine units.

The canine unit also works during major events. It is also called upon to participate in media, community and cultural events at schools and community meetings or on television shows to promote the canine unit, the police service and the City of Montreal. The dogs of the Montreal police canine unit each specialize in specific types of work.

[*English*]

We know that some dogs are trained for a very specific purpose with respect to the detection of narcotics. Other dogs have specialized skills in searching buildings and in explosives detection. Some dogs have specialized training that takes years to perfect.

On the international front, looking outside our borders, a number of American states, such as Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, and others, have enacted special laws making the intentional injuring or killing of a police dog a felony offence, subjecting the perpetrator to harsher penalties than those that exist in statutes embodied in local animal cruelty laws. Just as the assault on a police officer may currently result in harsher penalties, we believe there should be an elevated sentence to be meted out when a police animal is injured or killed.

In terms of law enforcement horses, as I mentioned, after special training, law enforcement horses may be employed for specialized duties, ranging from patrolling a park or wilderness area, where police cars would be impractical or noisy, to riot duty. Nothing garners attention in a large crowd where a riot might be erupting like a 1500-pound police horse coming into that area. It tends to garner attention. It tends to have a calming effect on the nerves for many, upon seeing that police horse arrive.

Police horses serve to send a very strong message when attempting to disperse crowds, through their larger size. Police horses provide the officers who ride them with added visibility and an added capacity to see what is happening in what is sometimes a very scattered and chaotic situation. They give riders the ability to observe a much wider area and allow police officers in that area to garner the attention they need and deserve. The service horses help, therefore, to deter crime. They help people find officers when they need them.

The bill would go further and proposes to extend specific protection, not only for law enforcement animals but also for trained service animals and military animals. Service animals perform tasks to help their disabled human masters live independent lives.

• (1030)

Most service animals are dogs, such as seeing eye dogs. However, other kinds of animals may also be trained to serve their masters, to serve individuals they are tasked to work with. The costs associated with training these new service animals is also significant.

I mentioned the Canadian Armed Forces and the variety of animals that are often contracted and used for those purposes. These animals assist Canadian Forces members by locating bombs. Again, I say for emphasis, what courageous work.

Like the men and women of the Canadian Forces who are tasked with this highly dangerous task, service animals have an enormous role to play in helping to detect IEDs, which are hidden and have a horrible impact, as we know, on human life. We have certainly seen the horrific aftermath and chaos that results when individuals step on IEDs. We have many service members in Canada now living with those ailments and ambulatory disabilities as a result.

Each of these service animals is required to have received specialized training to enable it to accomplish very specific tasks in support of its human handler.

It should also be noted that this offence would only apply where the animal was killed or injured in the line of duty. Animals that did not fall within the scope of this new offence would nevertheless be protected by existing animal cruelty provisions of the code.

As with existing sections under 445 of the code, the proposed offence would require the offender to have intended to kill or injure one of these animals. That mens rea, that intentional element, exists. In that way, accidental or negligent conduct would not be criminalized.

As with other provisions under section 445 of the code, the new offence would carry a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment on indictment, and 18 months or a fine of up to \$10,000 on summary conviction.

It is important to note that the proposed amendments would also require courts to give primary consideration to denunciation and deterrence as sentencing objectives as they relate to this new offence. We must underline here that there would be a mandatory minimum penalty of six months' imprisonment where a law enforcement animal was killed in the line of duty and the offence was prosecuted by indictment.

The bill also includes a provision that would require the sentence imposed on a person convicted of an assault committed against a law enforcement officer to be served consecutively to any other sentence that might be imposed on the offender for the offence committed at the same time. We know that these police officers and military members work with the animals essentially as a unit, so an offence committed against the officer would be served consecutively to that which would pertain to the harming or the killing of the animal.

The murder of a police officer is classified as first degree murder automatically and is punishable by life in prison with a mandatory minimum period of parole eligibility of 25 years, as a reflection of that seriousness.

The Criminal Code specifically prohibits assaults committed against peace officers in the performance of their duties through a number of offences, including section 271, assault on a police officer; and section 270.01, assault with a weapon or assault causing bodily harm to a police officer. That recognition exists.

Government Orders

Regrettably, data from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics adult criminal court survey reveals that there are still too many assaults being committed on police officers across the country. There were, in fact, a total of 31,461 charges in the years 2011-12.

Again, we believe that there is consistency in bringing this matter forward. The Criminal Code was amended to require courts, when sentencing persons convicted of assaults on police officers, to give primary consideration to the objectives of denunciation and deterrence. This new amendment to the Criminal Code would be in that same vein.

I am sure that all would recognize that attacks not only put the lives and safety of individual officers at risk but also demonstrably put animals' lives at risk when violence and weapons are used. The attack undermines the justice system more broadly. Thus, recognizing the wilful killing or injuring of a law enforcement animal undermines the justice system more broadly.

The bill would require the sentence imposed on a person convicted of wilfully killing or injuring a law enforcement animal to be served consecutively to any other sentence imposed on the offender for the offence committed at the same time.

In closing, I want to indicate that I am looking forward to the justice committee's deliberations on this important bill and the study that will take place there. I urge that the bill be referred to committee without undue delay.

I believe that in this highly charged partisan atmosphere in which we sometimes work, this is a bill that should really receive broad support.

• (1035)

It is intended to improve safety and the ability of police and service animals to do their important work in service of Canadians, in service of law and order in this country, and I would encourage all members to support this bill.

Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is with regard to mandatory minimum sentences. It is a technical question. I know that the government likes to use wedge issues to impose such mandatory minimum sentences.

I would like to know if the government has in mind that mandatory minimum sentences could go against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I would like to know if it has asked for judicial input on the imposition of mandatory minimum sentences in this bill.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

It is an important question. The Department of Justice has lawyers with the necessary experience and training to study each bill and each article of the Criminal Code to ensure charter compliance.

[*English*]

Indeed, we have looked at this bill. The section of the charter that would attach, potentially, would be section 12, where one would attempt to deem a period of mandatory incarceration of six months cruel and unusual punishment.

I would submit to my friend and the House that given the seriousness of killing a police animal in circumstances that very often involve endangerment of the public, with a weapon, for example, or by fleeing lawful custody, this is, as I said earlier, about denunciation and deterrence. This is about sending a message that killing or injuring a police animal in such circumstances is deemed serious enough that a mandatory minimum period of incarceration would be warranted and would reflect society's denunciation of that type of criminal behaviour.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the Minister of Justice. On the issue of consecutive and mandatory minimums, it certainly is showing some difficulties for the government. Other bills have been challenged in the courts. There seems to be a lack of trust by the government in judges' discretion. That is what these folks are trained for. They are trained to apply the law and to sometimes give more harsh or less harsh penalties, depending on the situation. Mandatory minimums certainly take that discretion away.

The minister said, in response to the last question, that this bill was examined for charter compliance. I expect that it was by Department of Justice lawyers or outside lawyers. I am not asking for it today, but will that evidence or charter compliance information be allowed to go before committee so the committee has the wisdom of that advice when looking at this particular bill?

I want to say that Liberals are supportive of the bill going to committee. It is an important bill, but it is also important that the legislation not be turned back by the courts.

• (1040)

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Prince Edward Island for his question and also for his indication that the Liberal Party will be supporting this bill as it moves forward, the proviso being that it will be examined at committee. I would say to my friend that the intention, of course, in the examination of all legislation, is that the committee will have the opportunity to hear from officials if the committee wants justice officials to come before it, and I will certainly be appearing, to speak to the charter compliance, the constitutionality, so to speak, of the legislation.

However, let me be clear. It is not this government's intention to shy away from bringing forward legislation that we feel protects the public, and in this instance, protects animals that serve the public, because of the fear that somehow, somewhere, it may be challenged or that a judge may decide to strike it down. We are, after all, elected to this place and elected to government to act in the best interests of what we feel will serve and protect Canadians.

Government Orders

It is interesting to note that the Liberal Party, when in government, had no hesitation in bringing forward mandatory minimum penalties. In fact, many of the penalties found in the code today find their origins in the Liberal Party. There has been, as we have seen in a number of cases, a great deal of duplicity coming from the Liberal Party on this subject.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of Justice for his opening speech in the debate on Bill C-35. I have to say that we must applaud the intentions of this bill, which are very worthwhile. That said, its application poses many problems. Over a period of nine years, this government has shown many times that it was wrong to attempt to push bills that pander to specific groups.

The Minister of Justice said at the start of his speech that he wanted to send a message. I would like him to tell me to which group of voters this message is being sent.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, clearly the message is for everyone, for every person who intends to injure an animal.

[*English*]

This is consistent with existing provisions in the Criminal Code that are intended to protect animals. More broadly, it is a recognition of the specific role played by police and service animals in society. For those who would intentionally harm those animals, there would be penalties attached. There would be accountability. That, frankly, has been lacking.

We have seen instances, which I have described, of police service dogs and animals who were harmed as a result of their service. Recognizing that in the criminal law, punishing those who commit such offences, would be general and specific deterrents. It would send a message to the offender and would be a general deterrent to those who would be similarly inclined.

This is not some kind of foreign concept or some kind of concept found only in Conservative circles. Having spent a number of years in the courts, general and specific deterrents are applied each and every day by judges across the land.

Would it prevent, in every case, an injury or the death of an animal? Of course not. However, I would suggest and submit that as a government, we have taken steps we think send clear messages on subjects of violence. We want to deter this. We want to protect those animals who put themselves on the line and are in harm's way, and we will continue to do that. Hopefully, we will actually garner some support, for a change, from the NDP on a subject as important as protecting police and service animals.

•(1045)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like the Minister of Justice, I understand very well the great service provided by animals in law enforcement. However, I am very surprised that the Minister of Justice is sharing his comments on this bill at this point in the parliamentary session. From the broad range of legislation available at this time and in future, why was this bill given priority now? What are the other bills that he is interested in and he believes have priority?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Obviously, the Department of Justice has many priorities. There is the response to the Supreme Court ruling with respect to prostitution in the Bedford case. There is the important debate we had last night on protecting children in criminal courts. Also before the House of Commons are the amendments to the bill that, for the first time, would protect victims in Canada.

[*English*]

We have a very busy justice agenda. We have a number of bills, which I just mentioned, and more to come with respect to legislation pertaining to impaired driving and legislation pertaining to other amendments to the Criminal Code. In addition, as we heard just moments ago, at the opening of the session, a lot of private member's bills have come from both the opposition and the government side. That is, in fact, the origin of this bill. It was the member for Richmond Hill who brought this matter forward in the form a private member's bill. We have adopted it as government legislation. We prioritized this bill, along with many others.

We hope we will have enough time to debate these in the coming months and see them become law for the protection of all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today in the debate on Bill C-35, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (law enforcement animals, military animals and service animals).

We will support the bill at second reading so that we can study it more thoroughly in committee. I would like to mention that I will try to direct my comments in the rest of my speech to the minister so that he can take our concerns about Bill C-35 into consideration.

The minister clearly defined the guidelines for developing this bill, more commonly known as Quanto's law, which refers to an incident in Edmonton. A police dog was killed during a police operation. Sadly, he was stabbed while trying to intercept a fleeing suspect. I think the police made representations and denounced the lack of legal standards regarding cruelty to animals.

In the 2013 speech from the throne, the Conservative government said that it intended to crack down on cruelty to service animals, which is why we are debating Bill C-35 today.

The general purpose of the bill is to amend the Criminal Code to create a new offence. In a nutshell, this is the definition of the offence created by Bill C-35, which will add the following after section 445: "Every one commits an offence who, wilfully and without lawful excuse, kills, maims, wounds, poisons or injures a... service animal".

Government Orders

In the other provisions of the Criminal Code, animal cruelty offences almost all carry a maximum sentence of up to five years in prison. This new section is in line with the other sentences in the Criminal Code. However, the first problem is that the minimum sentence is set at six months. Under Bill C-35, if a law enforcement animal is killed during the commission of an offence, while aiding a police officer in enforcing the law, a minimum sentence of six months applies.

I already asked the minister why the Conservative government is choosing once again to attack judicial discretion and go against what almost every criminal law and criminal justice expert is saying, namely that mandatory minimum sentences do nothing but hinder the justice system. It is recognized. Even experts in the U.S., which as we know chose to adopt a much harsher and punitive approach to criminals, are backtracking. They are telling the Conservative government that they already tried this approach, but it did not work. The United States currently has the highest incarceration rate in the world and that comes with a hefty price tag.

We realize that the idea behind minimum sentencing was to deter people from committing offences. Even the Department of Justice has recognized that the deterrent effect of minimum sentences has produced very little return on investment. The justice system is even more packed than before and the incarceration rate is going through the roof. Minimum sentences cause all sorts of problems.

•(1050)

I do not understand why the government wants to bring in a six-month minimum sentence for this type of offence. Let us be clear: animal cruelty is absolutely unimaginable. However, I know how the Conservatives operate. They will immediately point the finger to the NDP and say that we are siding with criminals and so on, but that is not true.

We simply want to have the best possible legislation that respects the fundamental principles of Canada and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, by imposing appropriate sentences on people charged with animal cruelty. The second problem has to do with consecutive sentences when an offence is committed against a police dog.

These two problems call for this bill to be studied in committee so that we can hear from experts on the matter. We know for certain that mandatory minimum sentences do not work. They eliminate judicial discretion and dramatically increase the incarceration rate. We already have a major problem when it comes to access to justice and there are already delays in proceedings.

I think I have made myself clear. I therefore ask the Minister of Justice to work with us to find a solution that honours not only the great work that law enforcement and military animals do every day, but also the fundamental principles of our justice system.

Furthermore, I think it is important to add something here about aggravating circumstances. The last clause of Bill C-35, which provides direction to courts on sentencing the accused, is worded in such a way that judges and courts must take into account the deterrent effect of the sentence. Courts are being given some discretion in imposing a sentence, but at the same time, they are being forced to impose a minimum sentence of six months.

I would like to tell the Minister of Justice that the aggravating circumstances in the last clause of the bill could be a better legislative measure than imposing a minimum sentence. The last clause of the bill could be worded in such a way that courts should take into consideration the deterrent effect intended by the legislation, but also the aggravating circumstances of an offence, so that judges can impose the appropriate sentence for an offence.

I would like the minister to work with us and realize that the minimum sentence might not be the best legislative measure.

As another aside, I would like to talk about animal cruelty. Since the Conservative government came to power in 2006, it has done nothing. It has never taken into account our position on animal cruelty. We have all had animals before, and many of us might have pets.

Everyone can agree that they are family members. We love them like our children, brothers or sisters. When I go door to door in my riding, I see that people love their animals, and I am sure that all my colleagues have seen this too. Animal cruelty is repugnant to all of us, to all Quebeckers and all Canadians.

•(1055)

Preventing animal cruelty is one of the Conservative government's priorities. If the government is looking to introduce this bill now and pass it before Parliament breaks for the summer, it must be because the government believes that animal cruelty is an extremely important subject and must be regulated. I would therefore like to talk about two bills that the NDP introduced in this Parliament, and I would like the minister to tell me whether or not the Conservatives will support them.

The first is Bill C-232, which was introduced by my colleague from Parkdale—High Park. This bill would remove animals from the section of the Criminal Code on property and create a new section for animal cruelty offences. In short, animals would be considered people and not property. Under the existing legislation and the Criminal Code, a person must own the animal or have some connection to it in order to be found guilty of animal cruelty. The definition of “animal” is inadequate. It must be reviewed and so must the provisions of the Criminal Code.

Bill C-232 would allow the justice system to deal more effectively with animal cruelty offences and increase the possibility of conviction for animal cruelty offences. This is a good bill. My colleague from Parkdale—High Park met with thousands of people who support this bill. I would therefore like to ask the minister if he will work with the NDP to regulate animal cruelty offences and strengthen the provisions in that regard.

The second bill I would like to talk about is Bill C-592, which was introduced by the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. This bill seeks to better define what an animal is under the Criminal Code and define what is meant by intent and acts of cruelty. I would once again like the minister to tell me whether the Conservative government will support these two bills, Bill C-592 and Bill C-232, which seek to modernize the Criminal Code and better regulate the treatment of animals.

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• (1100)

What message does the government want to send to all Canadians?

After what happened in Edmonton, it is completely understandable for people to be outraged. This incident was the last straw and it showed the importance of this issue and the gaps in the Criminal Code when it comes to animal cruelty.

It is all well and good to regulate in response to a situation, but what about the thousands of other situations that we hear about in the media regarding shelters and slaughterhouses? What are we doing right now to regulate animal cruelty?

I would like to thank the minister for introducing this bill. I think we should work on it, and I hope that the minister will be open to some amendments.

Today I would like to ask the government what it is doing to regulate animal cruelty. There have been scandals in the past several years about mistreatment in shelters and slaughterhouses. Why have the Conservatives not done anything? Why did they just decide now to introduce this bill, a bill that only addresses a small fraction of animals? This bill addresses trained law enforcement animals, military animals and service animals. The word "trained" is part of the definition. What are they doing for animals destined for consumption? What about animals, in shelters or animals that are abandoned?

It is important to understand that all animals are worthy of being protected. I do not want anyone to interpret what I am saying as meaning that we do not agree with protecting law enforcement or military animals. I think this is a good initiative, but what about all the other animals?

The fact that the definition being added to the Criminal Code covers trained animals means that some animals may be excluded. What is the difference between a law enforcement animal and a domestic animal, for example, in a case in which a dog is killed while trying to defend his owner from a thief? The dog is not necessarily trained for that. There are a number of situations that the Conservative government does not seem to consider important. The government may think that the legislation is enough, but it is not. Canadians have spoken out, and they have called on the government to modernize the Criminal Code.

I would simply like to reach out to the minister and ask him what we can do today to pass laws regarding animal cruelty.

The NDP is here today. I hope to have the minister's support for our Bill C-592 and Bill C-232, so that we can work together to ensure that individuals found guilty of mistreating animals receive the penalties they deserve.

• (1105)

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the NDP for her thoughtful speech. In response to her query about other NDP private members' motions and bills, they will follow the normal course and there will be opportunity to debate them in the House. However, we are here to talk about a specific government initiative.

As with last night, when we discussed the very important subject of protection for children from sexual predators, I find it somewhat stunning and perhaps disingenuous that NDP members always tend to present the argument that a bill is coming too late, or it is not soon enough, or that it should have been presented sooner, yet in the same breath suggest that it is flawed and cannot proceed and that mandatory minimum penalties when children are sexually abused or when a service animal is killed in the line of duty are somehow, in some way, offensive to their sensibilities and that it is offensive to Canadian values that we would ask for mandatory minimum periods of incarceration as a condemnation of that type of serious activity.

Sexually abusing a child or killing a police animal while it is conducting the task for which it is trained, in my view, requires serious denunciation. That is the view and the position of this government. If the NDP and others want to argue against that and suggest that somehow we should coddle these criminals and simply put them in counselling or on probation, then I suggest that they are sadly out of step with where Canadians see these types of criminal behaviour.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, we are having a reasonable debate in the House of Commons, so I would appreciate it if the minister would respect each and every opinion and not make unfair insinuations about my intentions. I said that Bill C-35 was important and that it is a good first step. We can work with it.

The Minister of Justice is not even listening to his own experts, who are saying that minimum penalties do not have the intended deterrent effect. They do not work. That is what the United States and experts from the minister's own department are saying. All I am asking is that we create the best legislation possible for service animals and for all animals.

It is easy for the minister to rise, point a finger at members of the opposition, and make us out to be the bad guys. However, I am simply asking if he is ready to take up the fight against animal cruelty right now and agree to our initiatives, which are in line with the government's idea of imposing appropriate penalties on those who abuse animals.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île for her speech and for all the work she does in the House and her riding.

Does she know if the government asked for a legal opinion about this bill in order to determine if mandatory minimum penalties violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park for her work on her animal cruelty bill.

After his speech, I asked the minister whether he had asked for a legal opinion, and I got a rather evasive response. He said that a number of legal experts looked at the bill, but we do not know if they gave the government a legal opinion. The minister did not mention it in his bill.

Government Orders

It is clear that the government is not even listening to its own experts. We have seen that a number of times. All of the experts agree that mandatory minimum penalties do not work and that they take away from a judge's discretion in court. Will the minister take that into account at the committee stage? I hope so.

It in no way detracts from the importance of imposing appropriate penalties on those who abuse animals, but I do not think that mandatory minimum penalties are the best way to go.

• (1110)

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île for her speech, and particularly for correcting the Minister of Justice as she did. The speech made by the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île was eminently reasonable, in fact.

The Minister of Justice wanted to send a message during questions and comments, and I simply had to ask him whether that message was directed to a specific constituency. We may wonder. This is a very particular bill, with very strong images, that is of very limited use. In view of the provisions for mandatory minimum sentences and consecutive sentences, it could even have negative consequences.

What exacting and rigorous work does my colleague want to do, therefore, to improve this bill in committee?

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As I said in my speech, in any event, we are going to support the bill at second reading so it can be referred to committee. If the minister refuses to listen to his own experts, we are going to hear what they have to say about consecutive sentences and mandatory minimum sentences, in the hope that the minister will want to work with us to make this bill as good as it can be—a bill that does not reflect a consensus, but adheres to the spirit of both our system of justice and the law. That would strike a good balance.

What is most important is to have a balance between a bill that legislates on a subject as sensitive and important as cruelty to animals and our justice system, our judges, our experts, and the people who work on the ground.

I hope with all my heart that we will have the support of the government and we will work with it to achieve the best bill possible.

[English]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's remarks and the minister's questions, and I want to ask the member something in all seriousness. I listened closely to the minister's words, and he basically accused the member, because she raised some questions on mandatory minimums, of coddling criminals.

I do not believe that to be the case at all, but I will give her the opportunity to respond. The minister basically accused the party of coddling criminals. Is that what we do in when we hold debate on the bill?

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague raises an important point about the state of democracy in this Parliament.

[Translation]

I would like to tell the Minister that I came here three years ago, and unfortunately, every time I have risen in the House to state my position and what I thought was best for Canadians, I could be accused of all sorts of things, such as wanting to coddle criminals and be their friend.

In my opinion, every member of Parliament is entitled to a certain degree of credibility. Each one of us is entitled to our opinion so that we can democratically debate an idea, without being accused of being a traitor or of having bad intentions.

Clearly, we are all here for the purpose of legislating. We are legislators, and I think it is important to have a respectful debate. I am entitled to respect, as is every member of this Parliament.

I do not feel insulted by the minister's remarks, but I would like him to at least respect diverse opinions.

• (1115)

[English]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to speak to this bill, Bill C-35, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (law enforcement animals, military animals and service animals), that was introduced for first reading on May 12.

The origin of this bill came about following the most recent death of a police service dog with the Edmonton Police Service, by the name of "Quanto". The Conservative member for Richmond Hill presented a similar bill in the fall of 2013, and I congratulate him for that.

This practice is becoming increasingly common, for there to be criminal sanctions imposed on those who harm service animals in other jurisdictions, and the reasoning is the same. These animals provide a service for which they are injected often into dangerous situations, as in the case of police and military animals. I believe the member for Richmond Hill and I were on the same educational trip to Israel where we saw military dogs in action, doing extremely good work; whether with explosives, taking down individuals, or tracking terrorists who might come through some of the security fences to do harm. Those dogs are unbelievably well trained. They provide a public service to law enforcement or military, or against terrorist attacks.

At the same time, all service animals will fill a role that is a critical extension to those using them and thus are animals that must be present in high-risk situations. They go into a crime scene; they protect law enforcement officers from attack by criminals; they are involved in looking for explosives, so these animals are often put into high-risk situations.

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The issue is not entirely about protecting these animals, but rather about ensuring that the legislative mechanisms would achieve these objectives. That is what we are talking about today. We had to distinguish between the two. If there is some criticism of this legislation, as we just had a discussion about a moment ago, that does not necessarily mean that there is a problem with the intent of this legislation, which is to protect the animals. There may be a problem with the design of the legislation and how it would be carried out, rather than with the original objective of protecting those animals. It is important to place this legislation in context.

In the course of the past 48 years, 10 police dogs have been killed in the line of duty. The RCMP, Canada Border Services Agency, and Correctional Service have 310 dogs in service currently. The scale of the offence is not as significant as the Conservatives themselves have been implying. I look to the minister's remarks to the member who just spoke. Because there was criticism raised to this bill on mandatory minimums, the member was basically accused of coddling criminals. We have to keep in focus the legislation itself. We need to ensure that the legislation would do what it would be intended to do and would not get thrown out by courts down the road. The point is that the scale of the offence is not as significant as the government has been implying, but that does not minimize the fact that the protection of service animals should be acted upon.

● (1120)

The legislation, while supportable, must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and careful examination. I made that point earlier.

The statement introducing Bill C-35 contains the following background information related to the animals to be covered. The legislation proposes Criminal Code amendments that would create a new offence specifically prohibiting the injuring or killing of animals trained and being used to help law enforcement officers, persons with disabilities, or the Canadian Armed Forces.

Persons convicted of such an offence could face up to five years' imprisonment with a mandatory minimum sentence of six months in prison in cases where a law enforcement animal is killed while assisting a law enforcement officer in enforcing the law and the offence is prosecuted by indictment.

If a law enforcement officer is assaulted or a law enforcement animal is injured or killed while on duty, the sentence for that offence would be served consecutively under this legislation to any other sentences imposed on the offender arising out of the same event. I will explain later why we are concerned about that consecutive sentencing as it does take away judges' discretion and maybe at the risk of losing the legislation.

The RCMP currently has 157 police service dogs in service across Canada; 135 are general duty profile dogs and 22 are detection profile dogs. They are used to help find lost persons, track criminals, and search for items such as narcotics, explosives, and crime scene evidence.

In addition to the RCMP, provincial and municipal police services across Canada have integrated police service dogs as part of their everyday service delivery in our communities.

Canada Border Services Agency has 53 dog and handler teams that help to detect contraband drugs and firearms, undeclared currency, and food, plant, and animal products. Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you have seen them work, but these dogs are absolutely amazing in terms of how they can find firearms and narcotics. You may have had an opportunity in an airport to see a dog being led by a Canada Border Services Agency officer checking to see if there are any drugs in baggage. It is absolutely amazing to see the dogs work. They run across the baggage and sniff out narcotics if they are there. They do provide a marvellous public service for Canadians.

As I mentioned a moment ago, when we were in Israel over a year ago we saw how the dogs there could find weapons hidden in vehicles. I cannot emphasize enough the service that these extremely well trained animals do for the public.

Correctional Service of Canada uses dogs to help stop the flow of illicit drugs and contraband into federal correctional institutions. It has over 100 dog and handler teams across the country.

The justice for animals in service act applies to law enforcement service animals and Canadian Armed Forces animals. In practical terms, dogs would be the primary animals protected by this new legislation, given that they are the animals most often trained and used to assist law enforcement officers and persons with disabilities.

However, horses are also used by some police forces and the minister in his remarks earlier mentioned that as well. Also, other kinds of animals can be trained as service animals to assist persons with disabilities. They all, as I understand it, would be protected under the justice for animals in service act.

● (1125)

According to the Canadian Police Canine Association, 10 police dogs were killed in the line of duty between May 25, 1965 and October 7, 2013. That is a period of 48 years. Of those dogs, three were killed in the past decade. As indicated, the RCMP, Canada Border Services Agency, and Correctional Service of Canada have 310 dogs currently in service.

The Toronto Police Service reported the death of a police horse in 2006.

There is considerable investment in terms of resources in the training of service dogs. The RCMP has indicated that it has 112 police dog teams in Canada at a cost of \$60,000 per team. What should also be considered is that service animals, while highly trained, are companions for the officers and individuals that they serve. I will come back to my experience with the police officers, correctional officials, and military personnel who handle these dogs. In many cases, the dogs become a lifelong companion. They are extremely close. The team relationship between the handler and the dog is quite extraordinary.

What requires clarification in this legislation is the issue of service animals. The definition set out in clause 3 refers to "an animal that is required by a person with a disability for assistance". The issue is how many incidents the government has found with respect to service animals being killed or injured.

Government Orders

The Prime Minister said in a statement on May 12, 2014, that this legislation would send the message that “violence against service animals is unacceptable”. The question is the extent of the problem being addressed with these changes to the Criminal Code.

The legislation, Bill C-35, is not dissimilar to legal sanctions being imposed in other jurisdictions with respect to the protection of police, military, and service animals. In the United States, the Federal Law Enforcement Animal Protection Act contains specific provisions related to penalties for the harming or killing of federal law enforcement animals. The legislation states:

Whoever wilfully and maliciously harms any police animal, or attempts or conspires to do so, shall be fined under this title and imprisoned not more than 1 year. If the offense permanently disables or disfigures the animal, or causes serious bodily injury or the death of the animal, the maximum term of imprisonment shall be 10 years.

However, under the United States' provision, there are neither consecutive sentencing provisions, nor mandatory minimums. The offences against law enforcement service animals are treated as stand-alone violations.

Support for the legislation being considered by the committee would have to ensure that the sanctions to be imposed under the legislation would withstand judicial scrutiny. In response to my earlier question, the minister did indicate that the legislation was checked for charter compliance. That is something that we really need to know.

I hope that the minister will be willing to provide that evidence to committee members to show where the legal advice came from. Is it from the Department of Justice? Is it outside advice? Is there charter compliance, especially as it relates to consecutive and mandatory minimums jointly in this particular bill?

This would not be the first occasion to have arisen, as members are aware, where the Conservative government has presented a legislative mechanism containing penalty provisions that have been directly challenged by the courts. In response to what the minister said earlier, there is no problem with the government pushing the envelope and challenging the courts. That is not a problem.

● (1130)

The concern we may have is whether the government is taking into serious consideration some of the advice that is given to it, probably by the minister's own department. We know of certain cases of judicial appointments where the government went outside of government to get an opinion that it felt would be more in line with its thinking, and we know what happened as a result of going down that avenue.

We have seen it even in private members' bills from Conservative members with respect to implementing the Conservative tough-on-crime agenda. It has taken the direct intervention of justice legal advisers to impose amendments limiting the excessive nature of the legislation.

I have seen that in committee several times, where a private member's bill comes in. It is going to do all these wonderful things in protecting victims. The witnesses come in based on the original legislation. After the witnesses go home and leave town, the Department of Justice comes in, implements amendments, usually

more than there is clauses in the bill. It completely waters the bill down so it really does not do what the original bill claimed it would do. The backbench members who brought in the bill continue to promote it as if it would and the witnesses who were before committee are usually none the wiser in how it has been watered down.

As has been pointed out by the member for Mount Royal, with respect to the concern on the Conservative government's use of both mandatory and consecutive sanctions, it is important not to remove discretion from judges by making consecutive sentences mandatory in all instances of a particular offence. At times it may be necessary, but to make it mandatory in all instances is probably not the right way to go. Doing so may result in charter infringement in a case where the totality of the punishment is no longer proportionate to the gravity of the offence or otherwise consistent with the purpose of sentencing as provided for in the Criminal Code.

It is certainly possible to make consecutive sentences the norm, while still allowing judges to order concurrent sentences in exceptional cases, providing they give reasons for departing from the usual practice. Such a check would allow Parliament to express its concern about the conduct and denounce it, while at the same time allowing judges to exercise their necessary discretion when doing so could prevent a sentence from infringing on the charter.

As with all matters of sentencing, we must remember that they are after the fact and do not serve as preventive measure, particularly as studies do not show a link between imposition of mandatory sentences and a subsequent reduction in the incidents of those said offences. The previous member spoke extensively about that issue.

These concerns were echoed recently in a *Globe and Mail* article, March 1, which made the following observation with respect to the use by the Conservatives of both consecutive and mandatory minimum sentencing:

The Conservative government has been overhauling the justice system in the name of crime victims, focusing on longer prison terms and limits to judges' discretion.

But the proposed rules could run into trouble. They might clash with the Criminal Code's “totality principle”, which says an individual's overall sentence should not be overly harsh, or crushing; or they might fall afoul of the Constitution's ban on “cruel and unusual punishment”.

“The minimums, especially consecutive minimums, don't leave room for considering the individual offender and the nature of the offence”, Toronto defence lawyer Clayton Ruby, author of *Sentencing*, a textbook in its eighth edition, said in an interview. “Government doesn't trust the judges. They appoint them, but they don't trust them. It's all about control”.

That is worrisome. The provisions in *The Globe and Mail* article relate to the attempt to use the mandatory minimum and consecutive sentencing in relation specifically to crimes against children. Bill C-35 would impose those provisions in relation to service animals.

● (1135)

As I have indicated, the need for the legislation may be justifiable, so it is important to have it on the floor. The concern is that once again we see the government create a sense of crisis where there is not one.

Government Orders

I want to emphasize in conclusion, as I have said throughout my remarks, that these service animals provide a tremendous service to Canadians and globally around the world in the protection of public safety. There needs to be measures taken, but let us be careful not to jeopardize the charter rights as well.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my friend. He referenced the fact that there was a need and in a roundabout way, he seemed to be leaning toward supporting the legislation. Of course we will have a rigorous examination of the bill.

I want to come directly to the point of consecutive sentences, as well as mandatory minimums. We are talking about the likelihood that in very few cases it would be six months for killing a service animal in the commission of an offence, which would be served consecutively where a police officer had been injured in the same incident. Cruel and unusual punishment might be the view of some and may be the view of some judges. Are we attacking the judiciary? Not at all. Again, and I say this for emphasis, it was a Liberal government that put the vast majority of about 60 mandatory minimum sentences into the Criminal Code. Out of some 700 plus sections of the Criminal Code, about 60 involve mandatory minimum sentences.

The member is known for his hyperbole and his exaggerations. He seemed to somehow reference that I was being insulting by defending the government's position. I did not reference a person's intelligence yesterday or today, as a member of the Liberal Party did yesterday. I did not accuse somebody of using government aircraft for personal use, which is untrue and completely false. I have never used government aircraft for anything other than government business. What happened was an attack on one's character to impugn one's integrity in the course of debate.

We are here to talk about government legislation, a bill that we think would protect animals and the public. That is the focus here. We are here to talk about legal principles. We are more than happy to do that, but impugning one's character and suggesting it is somehow malicious to respond to allegations thrown one's way is simply untrue.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the minister is referring to, but it sounds terribly serious. There was no intent to impugn character on my part. I did suggest, in defence of the NDP member earlier, that the minister was trying to accuse the NDP of coddling criminals, while talking about this bill. That was going a little overboard. However, I certainly would not impugn one's character. I quite like to stick to the facts, something the government does not always do.

I want to come back to the point earlier, which is the key concerns with this bill. The minister is correct that six months is not a lot of time. However, the principle at stake here is a judge's discretion and the fact that there are minimums put in place that may not withstand challenges if they are to occur. That is the key point. We are trying to examine the legislation and get it through. If it meets all the criteria it should meet, then let us get it through. However, we do not want to see a situation where it gets challenged in the courts and then turned back. Therefore, we are trying to help the government out. Sometimes it gets a little reckless.

● (1140)

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the position of the Liberals has been that mandatory minimums might somehow create a constitutional or charter challenge, and they have been bringing this up over and over again. Where this is the case, we know the rulings are clear. Where they constitute cruel and unusual punishment, they become unconstitutional. That ruling has been levied very few times on the vast majority of sanctions imposed by the Liberal government itself for mandatory minimums, as the minister indicated.

It is interesting that we are talking about that context between cruel and unusual punishment for an individual who is putting cruel and unusual treatment on a service dog. The member articulated clearly that they are well trained, that great Canadian and public expense goes into training these dogs, that there is a tremendous amount of safety and security provided to the Canadian public by these dogs and to the law enforcement officers they serve and that there is tremendous value to protecting service animals, not just police animals but service animals.

Does the member recognize the contradiction in that we are talking about effectively and reasonably sanctioning people for cruel and unusual treatment of animals that are providing our country with the greatest of service and we are letting that get hung up by an anticipatory cruel and unusual treatment of the people who are offending this law.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, what the member does not seem to understand is that the discretion of judges is important. There will be instances, there is no question in my mind, where judges can back up with evidence during a court hearing that sentences should be longer. There will be other cases where maybe sentences should be shorter. My point on this legislation is to ensure that it is not excessive in its actions and gets turned back by the courts.

The fact is, yes, if a crime has been perpetrated on an animal, a dog or a horse, and we have seen some of those, then penalties have to be imposed. There is no question about that. However, I have confidence in the judicial system in that judges will do their job. They will look at the evidence and the circumstances and impose the proper sentences.

The other thing we run into with all of these mandatory minimums, not just in this legislation, is if defence lawyers say that there are mandatory minimums and unless they fully win the case, or they are beat before they start, they may as well fight it to the end. Because there is no ability now to negotiate, no ability to come to an agreement, what happens is there is more court time taken up, more judges are needed and there is more time spent in courts with defence lawyers. They know there is a mandatory minimum and there is no way they can create the evidence to lessen the sentence, so it is all or nothing.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened intently to my friend across the way. I was substituting in the justice committee last week, during which a very interesting comment was made, and I would like his opinion on it.

Government Orders

Often the courts and legislators struggle to find the balance in protecting the victim with different legislation. The comment made last week by a witness was that the balance should always go to the charter and not to the victim. I would ask the member that same question.

The member talked about possible charter challenges and was concerned about that. If we are trying to find a balance, would he like the balance to go to the benefit of the charter or to the victim?

• (1145)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I missed that justice committee meeting. That is not my committee; I am on public safety, so I did not hear that particular statement. However, in my view, getting into that kind of a discussion is a mug's game. It is not about that issue. The charter is there to protect the rights of everyone, and the rights of victims as much as or more than anyone else's. That is the bottom line. We are very fortunate to have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms in our country that gives everyone those protections.

One of my concerns over some of these private members' bills coming forward at the public safety committee is that the thrust of the legislation itself often revictimizes the victims, especially when a bill comes in that a backbench member says is going to do a, b, c, and d, and after we hold the hearings and after those victims go home, the Department of Justice amends the bill with six or seven amendments and the bill no longer protects the victims the way we had hoped it would. That is revictimizing the victims.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to stand today and to have this opportunity, on behalf of my constituents in Richmond Hill, to speak in favour of Bill C-35, the justice for animals in service act, or Quanto's law.

This legislation would ensure that those who harm law enforcement, service, or Canadian Armed Forces animals face serious consequences.

Before I go on to the content of my speech, I want to take the opportunity to thank the Right Hon. Prime Minister for including this piece of legislation in the throne speech back in October of 2013. I also want to thank our Minister of Justice for the focus and attention he gave to this particular piece of legislation in his agenda of a multitude of requests and justice-related matters that he focuses on and has to focus on.

I want to also thank them for giving me credit for having introduced it as a private member's bill.

However, I do want to say this: the legislation the government has introduced would go beyond my initial private member's bill, Bill C-515, which was focused solely on law enforcement animals. The new offence proposed by Quanto's law addresses the intentional killing or injuring of a law enforcement animal, but it also includes service animals such as guide dogs for the sight-impaired and animals that are helping Canadian Armed Forces personnel carry out their duties. These animals also benefit Canadian society. I think the inclusion of them in this bill make it a much better bill, so I want to thank the Minister of Justice for expanding the bill and for tabling it in the House today.

Our government recognizes that these animals play a very important role in protecting our communities and improving the quality of life for Canadians. The proposed legislation is aimed at denouncing and deterring the wilful harming of specially trained animals used to help law enforcement officers, persons with disabilities, or the Canadian Armed Forces.

In regard to just that statement by itself, if there is anything we could do as a Parliament to denounce and deter those who would have that inclination, that intent, to hurt a service animal that is there to protect us, to protect human beings, to protect our society, to protect our communities, that in and of itself is, I believe, strong enough justification for all members of this chamber, irrespective of party affiliation, to give serious consideration to supporting Bill C-35, Quanto's law.

I know that from time to time in this House we see, on an ongoing basis, some pretty heated debate. We get partisan comments on all sides of the House, and I understand that. It is the government's role to govern and to bring in legislation; it is the opposition's role to hold the government to account.

However, I believe this is one piece of legislation that transcends the lines of partisanship. It would impose penalties upon those who would harm those service animals we train to protect us.

We heard a bit about the cost of training such animals. I have read that it costs upwards of \$60,000 to train a police dog, for example, and in excess of \$40,000 to train a guide dog. A lot of focus has gone into training these animals and developing them as part of a team to protect their partners in the execution of their duties.

• (1150)

I realize that cost should not drive justice legislation, but I want to point out that in addition to the obvious benefits that we get when these animals are protecting us, it does cost a lot of money to train them in the first place.

The introduction of this legislation fulfills our government's promise in the 2013 throne speech to recognize the daily risks taken by police officers and their service animals in their efforts and to enforce the law and protect Canadians in their communities.

The legislation honours Quanto, a police dog stabbed to death in the line of duty while trying to apprehend a fleeing suspect in Edmonton, Alberta. Quanto had four years of decorated service and had participated in more than 100 arrests prior to his death in October 2013.

It is not lost on me, and I am sure it is not lost on a lot of Canadians, that the stabbing of Quanto while the suspect was being apprehended could have easily been done to his partner, Constable Matt Williamson, but the animal was there to protect his partner and took the hit for him. It was a selfless act on the part of the animal. The least we can do as parliamentarians is ensure that we have legislation that imposes penalties on those who would act in such a heinous manner toward an animal that is there to protect us.

Government Orders

I also want to pay tribute to the many animals, police service animals in particular, that have lost their lives in the line of duty. When I introduced my private member's bill back in 2013, I referred to Brigadier, a police horse in the Toronto Police Service that was deliberately hit by a vehicle driven by a criminal. That hit cost the animal its life, but it protected Constable Kevin Bradfield, who sustained some injury but did not take the impact. The animal took the impact of that hit. This is yet another example of a selfless act by a police animal hurt in the line of duty while protecting its partner, protecting a human being.

I would like to quote the Prime Minister when he was in Edmonton a few weeks ago to announce this legislation. His words are worthy of mention once again for the benefit of all members in the House today and for those throughout the country who are watching us in our deliberations. This is what the Prime Minister said:

Quanto's violent death is a powerful and sad reminder of the dangers that law enforcement animals often face in assisting officers to protect Canadians and communities. This legislation honours those faithful animals and emphasizes the special role that they play. Our Government is committed to ensuring that people who willfully harm these animals face the full force of the law.

We know that they are animals and that they are not human beings, but just because they are animals does not mean that we of necessity have to be heartless and not recognize their selfless contribution to keeping our communities safe.

The Prime Minister went on to say:

This legislation also recognizes the vital role that service animals, such as guide dogs, play in helping persons with disabilities benefit from a better quality of life and lead more independent lives. This sends the message that violence against service animals is unacceptable and those who commit such callous acts will pay the consequences.

One of the things that has not received much focus is the impact on the partner when a service animal is hurt. An animal assigned to a police officer or assigned to someone who is sight-impaired is a partner.

• (1155)

In the case of someone who is blind, the service animal is the eyes of the blind person. It is a partner. It is an animal the person relies on for protection and companionship and to ensure that they are at all times kept out of harm's way. They are very important. When one of these animals is injured, it has a tremendous impact not only on Canadian society but on the partner of the animal.

Having met Constable Matthew Williamson, who was Quanto's handler, and Constable Kevin Bradfield, who was Brigadier's handler, I know the impact it had on them and their families because of the close attachment they had to those animals. They know very well that these animals were there to protect them and to apprehend criminals in the line of duty.

In our society, service animals have become an integral part of law enforcement. They assist with search and rescue efforts; tracking criminals; and searching for narcotics, explosives, crime scene evidence, and lost property. They serve as VIP protection, in some instances, and in crowd control, hostage situations, and police and community relations.

All of us as parliamentarians travel. We travel across the country and back to our ridings. Invariably, as we walk through an airport, we will see a service animal with the Canada Border Services Agency sniffing luggage as it is going around on the conveyor belt. They are trying to identify anything illicit in the luggage. Occasionally they find narcotics, which could end up in our communities, schools, around our families, and in our malls. They could end up doing no good and an awful lot of harm to Canadians. We have to thank the animals who have had tens of thousands of dollars worth of training to sniff out those narcotics before they get to our communities.

Do we not have a responsibility to do something a little extra to protect these animals? I would submit that we absolutely do. It is our obligation, and that is what this bill aims to do.

The RCMP currently has 157 police service dogs in service across Canada. Of those, 135 are general duty police profile dogs and 22 are detection profile dogs. They have specific training to execute their responsibilities.

In addition to the RCMP, provincial and municipal police departments across Canada have integrated police service dogs as part of their everyday service delivery in our communities. I spoke to the York Regional Police Chief, Eric Jolliffe, and he congratulated me when I initially proposed this bill to the House. He spoke to me as recently as a few weeks ago about how pleased he is that we are moving forward with this piece of legislation, as York Regional Police have a very large canine unit.

By the way, I would like all members of the House to know that law enforcement officers are thrilled that finally we are focusing on protecting their partners that are used as tools in the execution of their duty of protecting Canadians.

• (1200)

Service animals' involvement in law enforcement goes well beyond the police. As I mentioned earlier, the Canada Border Services Agency uses them. In fact, the CBSA has 53 dog and handler teams that help to detect contraband drugs and firearms, undeclared currency, and food, plant, and animal products. That just opens up a whole slew of things we could be discussing here today.

Additionally, Correctional Service of Canada uses dogs to help stop the flow of illicit drugs and contraband into federal correctional institutions. They have over 100 dog and handler teams across Canada.

Service animals are active and indispensable members of our society who, with their handlers, work with dedication to ensure that Canadians remain safe in their communities.

I could expand on the importance of having service animals at correctional institutions, because keeping drugs and contraband out of our correctional institutions certainly will assist in the rehabilitation of those individuals who are incarcerated.

Not only have they been given important responsibilities, but these animals also have an unbreakable bond with the officers who have the honour to be their handlers. That makes losing a service animal in the line of duty very difficult.

Government Orders

Constable Matthew Williamson of the Edmonton Police Service Canine Unit, who was Quanto's handler, along with the entire Edmonton Police Service, was shocked by the loss of their friend Quanto.

Scott Pattison, spokesperson with the Edmonton Police Service, noted the strong connection between the handlers and the dogs, saying that, "The dogs go home with the members and they're part of their own families really. These animals perform their jobs every single night on behalf of the citizens of this city with extreme courage". That applies to every police dog across this country.

That is why our government was extremely proud to introduce this legislation to ensure that harm committed against these dedicated animals would become a criminal offence.

Bill C-35 proposes Criminal Code amendments that would create a new offence specifically prohibiting the injuring or killing of animals trained to help law enforcement officers, persons with disabilities, and the Canadian Armed Forces.

The member for Malpeque earlier mentioned our visit to the canine unit in Israel. We saw first-hand an example of how these animals perform in trying to protect military officers. It is very impressive, and it is selfless service on the part of the animal.

Persons convicted of such an offence could face up to five years of imprisonment, with a mandatory minimum sentence of six months in prison in cases where a law enforcement animal was killed while assisting an officer in executing the law and the offence was prosecuted by indictment.

The minimum sentence would be six months. I have heard members in this House this morning speak about the mandatory minimum sentence of six months. I want to highlight once again that it is six months. It is a minimum of six months for someone who pulls out a knife in Edmonton and repeatedly stabs an animal. It is unbelievable.

To ensure that persons convicted of harming police service animals would be sentenced properly according to the crimes committed, Bill C-35 contains measures whereby if a law enforcement officer was assaulted or a law enforcement animal was injured or killed while on duty, the sentence for that offence would be served consecutive to any other sentence imposed on the offender arising from the same event. This would ensure that the punishment matched the nature of the crime.

The justice for animals in service act applies to law enforcement animals, service animals, and Canadian Armed Forces animals. In practical terms, we need to protect these animals.

I am running out of time, so I will conclude by saying that our government's tough-on-crime legislation is being met with continued dedication as we work to ensure that our justice system is fair and efficient. Enacting this particular piece of legislation would finally codify an official offence for the act of injuring or killing service animals.

We must stand up and protect these animals who are giving their lives to protect us. I urge every member of this House to reflect on these comments, look in their own hearts, and join us in unanimously passing this very important piece of legislation.

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition will support this bill at second reading so that it can be studied in committee, but I want to inform my hon. Conservative colleague that, once again, this bill is an affront to the discretionary power of judges. The minimum penalty will be less than two years, so once again, the federal government is making a decision that dumps a responsibility onto the provinces. Many provincial legislatures have raised this problem.

Furthermore, I would like to know why the government did not consider the opinion of the provinces, which are calling on the government to stop doing this. The dog that was stabbed and unfortunately killed was the inspiration behind this bill. Is it not true that the person who committed this crime received some rather harsh penalties? This bill addresses something that is not really a problem, and it creates more discord with respect to the provinces' prison system.

Will my colleague at least admit that there are problems with this bill?

[*English*]

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, let me thank my hon. colleague opposite for his question. It is a very pertinent and important one.

I am delighted to see that the official opposition will be supporting the bill through to second reading, and it will have an opportunity to be discussed and deliberated on by the justice committee. As the justice minister said this morning, he would be delighted to appear before the justice committee along with his officials to respond to a lot of the questions.

I will say this. With respect to mandatory minimum sentences, we are talking about a six-month period. The criminal who stabbed Quanto has already been charged and sentenced and is imprisoned in Edmonton.

It would be a six-month period, taking into consideration a lot of breaks these criminals get for time served before they are actually convicted. It could even be considerably shorter. The least we can ask for, the least we can expect, is that someone is imprisoned for a minimum of six months for such a heinous crime.

● (1210)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the hon. member's speech. He seemed to be saying that animals, especially service dogs, are not mere property. They are loyal friends, if I am not mistaken.

Would the member not support a bill like the bill the Chrétien government brought in that was stuck in the Senate and then was brought in as a private member's bill by the former member for Ajax—Pickering, Mark Holland, to strengthen the rights of animals such that they would not be considered mere property that can be mistreated by their owners?

Government Orders

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his question, and I also want to thank the Liberals for their indication that they will be supporting this bill through to second reading. I can see that all members in the House see the benefit of having important legislation like this enacted in this Parliament.

With respect to another piece of legislation, I cannot speak to the legislation that was introduced in a previous Parliament. I am not familiar with it. However, I will say that I am an animal lover. Anything we can do to protect our animals we should be doing. This particular piece of legislation focuses on those animals that have no choice. They are, from puppies, trained to protect. They are put in the line of duty, and they do it wholeheartedly and with such commitment that it is a lesson for us as human beings. It is really selfless commitment. They put their lives in danger to protect their partners and to protect all of us.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his great speech and all the work he has done on this since becoming a member of Parliament. I know it is well received by his community and by everybody right across Canada, because it is indeed an important piece of legislation.

It is great to hear that both the NDP and the Liberals are prepared to support this to go through to committee. The one issue that they continue to raise is the mandatory minimum aspect of the sentence.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would comment on whether he feels that past practices of six months' sentence for stabbing a law enforcement dog in such a cruel and heinous way or intentionally driving a vehicle into a horse that is serving the better interests of the Canadian public is really reflective of the nature of that kind of crime. Also how important is it to send a clear signal that the public sentiment and support for service animals does indeed warrant, in the greater public interest, the sanctions that are being proposed under this piece of legislation?

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Yukon for that very important question, but I also want to take this opportunity to thank him for his service as a correctional and law enforcement officer spanning better than 20 years. He is an example for many people of someone who has dedicated his life to protecting the general public.

In response to the question, I obviously did not feel that the current legislation was sufficient to protect these animals, and I fully endorse and support Bill C-35, because I believe that the Minister of Justice has shown his tremendous focus and attention to this particular aspect that he would like corrected in the Criminal Code by bringing it forward and tabling it here today. I thank the Minister of Justice again for that, and I thank the member for his question.

I believe Canadians right across this great country of ours would agree with all members in the House that it is about time we did something to protect law enforcement and service animals.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Richmond Hill for his speech.

The NDP has clearly said that it will support the bill at second reading in order to increase co-operation with the government, since

some aspects of this bill really bother us. The intent behind this bill is laudable. I do not deny that.

However, the Minister of Justice wanted to send a message regarding a bill that addresses a very specific problem and a very limited reality. We all agree that this bill targets a very small number of animals who act in service capacities. I told the minister that we have seen a huge number of bills that address technicalities and very specific situations, and I called this pandering to specific groups.

Could my colleague tell us what strong message will ultimately be sent?

[*English*]

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member, and I want to thank him for reiterating once again that the NDP will be supporting the bill through second reading, and their comments will be well represented at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

However, the minister spoke this morning about a message of denunciation and deterrence, to which the member referred. It was a question from a member opposite asking who this message is for. It is a message for all Canadians, particularly for those who would not think twice about hurting a service animal that is in the line of duty, whether it is protecting a person who is sight impaired, or a police officer, or someone from the military.

It is a very strong message from this Government of Canada, this 41st Parliament, that we are here to protect Canadians and that we will stand by those animals that police services and military people across the country are using as tools to assist them in the execution of their very important duties.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of the constituents in my riding of Parkdale—High Park. I note that there are many pressing issues about which people in my community have communicated with me.

They have contacted me about the global crisis of climate change and the need for urgent action. They have contacted me about the need for an inquiry into the missing and murdered aboriginal women. I hear frequently about the lack of affordable housing. I hear about the tremendous stress that families are under because of the lack of child care. Certainly, I hear about the lack of good quality jobs; and I often hear about the hollowing out of the manufacturing sector in Ontario.

There are many urgent matters that should be coming before the House, but given that the government is proposing Bill C-35, I am happy to speak to it. It is an act to amend the Criminal Code concerning law enforcement animals, military animals, and service animals.

Government Orders

Anybody from my city, Toronto, will certainly remember the terrible incident of the death of a police service horse called Brigadier. That was back in 2006, when a hit and run driver apparently intentionally ran into Brigadier, a magnificent Belgian cross police horse. He was quite a striking animal who was unfortunately rammed by a speeding car, which resulted in his death. It was a pretty horrific event.

There is a more recent event that has provoked Bill C-35, known as Quanto's law. A police service dog was stabbed to death by a suspect trying to flee, back in 2013. The perpetrator of that offence pleaded guilty to animal cruelty and other offences. He was eventually sentenced to 26 months in prison and banned from owning a pet for 25 years.

These incidents of malicious acts against service animals do occur. They occur rarely, thank goodness, but they do occur. It is a flaw in the current provisions around animal cruelty in the Criminal Code that there is no specific provision for dealing with acts against these service and law enforcement animals.

What this bill would do is strengthen penalties against those who attack law enforcement animals, service animals, or Canadian Armed Forces animals. It would do this by creating a new offence that specifically prohibits anyone from killing, wounding, poisoning, or injuring trained animals that work for police, persons with disabilities, or the Canadian Armed Forces. It would sentence them to up to five years. It would be a maximum of five years and a minimum of six months in prison.

If the offence were committed during the line of duty of the service animal, the offence would be served consecutively with any other punishment imposed on the perpetrator.

Whether they are enforcement animals or service animals, we all see and admire them. They are highly trained, wonderful species. They provide a great service to our society. There should be a provision in the Criminal Code that deals specifically with these animals.

I will say, though, that our animal cruelty legislation in general, which is more than 120 years old, needs a serious update. There was a little bit of tinkering a few years ago through a Senate bill, but the fundamental problem with our animal cruelty laws is that they treat animals as property. They are under the property provisions of the Criminal Code, rather than recognizing that animals are sentient beings.

• (1220)

I have a private member's bill, Bill C-232, that would update the animal cruelty legislation, very specifically excluding farm operations, hunting, and fishing. It is more about companion animals. What it would do is recognize that animals are not property like a car or a barn. They are in fact sentient beings. The bar that is set today in order to achieve a conviction is one of wilful neglect. It is that term, "wilful neglect", or wilfully acting to harm an animal that creates a bar that is very difficult for the criminal justice system to achieve.

It is not that there are not convictions under this legislation. There are. However, just strengthening the penalties, as was done a few years ago, does not fundamentally change this more than 120-year-old legislation. It needs to be changed to recognize animals, as we

are talking about them today as service animals, are thinking, feeling creatures that certainly feel pain and provide a great service to humans, whether they are working with people with disabilities, with law enforcement agencies, or as beloved companions in people's homes. They are not the same as inanimate objects and ought to be treated differently under the Criminal Code. That is what my private member's bill is arguing for.

The bill before us today, Bill C-35, would serve to make a positive change to the Criminal Code in that it would include law enforcement animals and service animals as a distinct category, because they are performing a function defined in law, helping to enforce our laws, or supporting people who are especially vulnerable. It is appropriate that there would be special recognition for these animals and that there would be special penalties, especially for animals who are injured or killed in their line of work. That is absolutely what should happen.

What I am concerned about, and several members in the House today have expressed this concern, is that a bill that is essentially laudable is in fact tainted by the introduction of minimum sentencing. Our concern is that it is a frequent tactic by the federal government to impose minimum sentences and thereby remove discretion from the courts when it comes to sentencing. What we find sometimes is that judges will not convict because they do not believe the minimum sentence is warranted. Certainly it has been found that minimum sentences are not a deterrent for people committing crimes. They have not served that purpose; so we really question the value of repeatedly imposing minimum sentences in legislation, as the Conservatives are wont to do.

Also, we are concerned about consecutive sentencing, which again limits the ability of the courts. That is why, while we support the bill in principle, we want to see it studied at committee. Hopefully, there will be some justification for the proposed minimum sentencing.

We are here in the House, and I do not have a lot of company here. A lot of members have missed their shifts in the House. We have had Conservatives and Liberals missing 26 shifts in the last little while. There are a lot of procedural games going on. As New Democrats, we are going to push back against that. We want to do the work of the House and focus on that.

I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

• (1225)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Call in the members.

• (1310)

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

(Division No. 160)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brosseau
Caron	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Dusseau
Freeman	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Gravelle	Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hughes	Jacob
Kellway	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Nash	Papillon
Péclet	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Rousseau
Saganash	Scott
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay — 84

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Bélangier
Bennett	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Block
Boughen	Braid
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael

Government Orders

Carrie	Casey
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cotler	Crockatt
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Devolin	Dion
Dreeshen	Dubourg
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Falk
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Foote	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lamoureux	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leef	Lemieux
Leung	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
May	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murray	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	Pacetti
Paradis	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Raiitt	Rajotte
Regan	Reid
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Seeback	Sgro
Shea	Shipley
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Smith	Stanton
Sorenson	Storseth
St-Denis	Sweet
Strahl	Toet
Tilson	Trotter
Trost	Truppe
Trudeau	Valcourt
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Valeriote	Wallace
Van Loan	Warkentin
Warawa	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Watson	
Sky Country)	Wilks
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Williamson	Yelich
Woodworth	Zimmer — 174
Young (Oakville)	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to continue the debate on Bill C-35. I will share my time with my esteemed colleague from Joliette.

Government Orders

I have been a member of this House for three years now. It is widely recognized that the Conservatives have tabled many bills, often with commendable intentions. I had the honour of being a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for a few months, and we looked at a large number of private members' bills aimed at amending the Criminal Code and fixing other very specific aspects.

However, this piecemeal approach is distressing because it addresses few problems and causes several more. We are dealing with the Criminal Code in an improvised and isolated manner, when we should be looking at it as a whole, and in particular, we need to ensure that our initiatives will have a real impact and will truly solve the problems.

On several occasions, I have seen the government's obsession with imposing mandatory minimum sentences at all costs and restricting the ability of the courts to make decisions.

The very big problem is that the experts contradict the approach of the government and of certain backbench members once the bill is passed. The government is not reasonable and makes amendments to the Criminal Code or enacts new laws that are subsequently challenged. They fall before the courts under the weight of the facts, and the problem the government and my backbench colleagues thought they had solved remains intact. We can even wind up with legislative voids.

That is why the New Democratic Party will support Bill C-35 at second reading so that we can do some hard work in the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I am very proud to do that with all my colleagues. We will be able to examine the problems and offer constructive solutions to the Minister of Justice and to all committee members so that this bill can achieve its aims.

I do not mean to downplay the purpose of this bill, which is the subject here, quite to the contrary. It is my pleasure to have a brother-in-law who is a police officer in Montreal. He is a dog handler. I have met his work partners on numerous occasions and have observed that my brother-in-law, Danny, is completely devoted. He has developed a very profound attachment to the dogs he has trained, cares for, and works with every day.

●(1315)

It is quite remarkable to see how extensive a police dog's training is. The dog carries out very specific missions and, in particular, is a huge asset to its handler, the police officer responsible for it, and to the entire unit to which the officer in question belongs. I have personally witnessed this, and I was very pleased to see it. I commend Danny and will be happy to have a good beer with him over the summer and to see him at work over his barbecue.

I am afraid the problem raised will absolutely not be corrected by introducing mandatory six-month minimums and penalties that may be added consecutively to other penalties imposed in court.

We must be careful not to give in to wishful thinking. We must not believe, in a closed-minded and ideological way, in the deterrent aspect of sentences that may be imposed. It is very important that prosecutors, judges and police officers have the tools they need to impose an appropriate sentence suited to the crime committed if the person is found guilty. Mandatory minimum sentences, on the other

hand, remove the court's leeway. They prevent our judges from assessing the situation as a whole and from exercising complete latitude to impose a particularly heavy sentence where there are aggravating factors or, on the contrary, a distinctly lighter sentence where circumstances so require.

This latitude is one of the fundamental elements of our system of justice. In Canada, we have a lot to be proud of. Having latitude ensures that the accused are not subject to potential injustices and allows them to avoid presumptions related to the circumstances, a condition or issues that we, as legislators, cannot completely provide for except by making multiple exceptions that will have no other effect than to make the law unwieldy and even lead us to dead ends or vacuums. These can be much more dangerous than more general rules that provide latitude, for both the prosecutor and the judge, to establish the sentence for an accused based on the situation.

This problem of reducing flexibility is something I have witnessed directly, both as a member of the House for the past three years, and in particular as a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for a considerable period of time. Reducing flexibility creates two problems. First, it creates a false sense of security amongst Canadians. That is particularly worrisome. We absolutely cannot allow citizens to wrongly believe that everything is solved and that they no longer have to worry about the possibility of certain crimes being committed. That is part of our responsibility.

Obviously, the other problem is believing that the government's approach solves everything and that crime will automatically be reduced. This has not been proven. On the contrary, some of my colleagues have explained in their previous speeches that the experience around the world, and especially in the southern part of the province, have shown the opposite.

●(1320)

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou on his work. He gave a fine presentation on the issues and the impact of our choices in Ottawa.

I would like him to talk about the fact that the NDP and other members of the House have introduced bills against animal cruelty and the Conservatives have voted against all those bills.

Some Conservative members stood up to say that they were against all forms of animal cruelty, but they are voting against any related bills brought before Parliament.

However, the Conservatives are introducing in the House a bill that targets only one category of animals. I find that odd. Could my colleague elaborate on that?

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank my colleague from Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord for his particularly relevant question.

Government Orders

Right now, we are unfortunately working in poor conditions. The government has imposed special working conditions for the month of June, in addition to repeated time allocation motions. I will not get into the purely partisan attempts to work against us at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. It is really sad. My colleague raises a very important point.

Clearly, like any of the 308 legitimate representatives in the House, we have proposals on the table. I would mention Bill C-232 introduced by my colleague from Parkdale—High Park and Bill C-592 introduced by my colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

Those two bills have a broader perspective and might overlap somewhat with the bill we are examining. I will certainly appeal to the good faith and co-operation of my colleagues from all political parties to support the two bills I just mentioned.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for his speech. I would like his thoughts on the Conservative government's agenda.

The Minister of Justice came to the House to make a speech about this bill. I also recall that initially this bill was a private member's bill.

I would like the hon. member's thoughts on why, when there are so many other very important things on the justice minister's plate, he took the time this morning to come and debate this bill. I would like my colleague's thoughts on the government's intentions behind all this.

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague from LaSalle—Émard for her question and comments.

The motivations of the Minister of Justice and the government in general do make us wonder. This morning the Minister of Justice made a speech about this bill, but it is clear that the NDP has to move all the debates forward. I thank both my NDP colleagues very much for asking me questions and making comments after my speech. In the rest of House, mum's the word. Members no longer want to take part in legitimate debate, let alone talk about the issues having to do with this bill.

There is something deeply disrespectful to the public about repeated time allocation motions and the fact that my colleagues are keeping mum and refusing to have a constructive debate. We will see what happens at committee stage. Nonetheless, I hope that our amendments will be considered seriously by all members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

• (1325)

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-35, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (law enforcement animals, military animals and service animals).

Since two of my colleagues have introduced bills on this subject and the government opposed them, I do not understand why we are being presented with this bill today. We are going to support it at second reading, but only so that it can be studied in greater depth in committee and so that it can be amended. There are two clauses that we have particular problems with: the introduction of minimum sentences and consecutive sentences.

In concrete terms, this bill amends section 445 of the Criminal Code by providing for a new offence when a service animal or a law enforcement or military animal is killed or injured in the line of duty. These animals protect their masters. The bill provides for a minimum sentence of six months if a law enforcement animal is killed in the commission of an offence. It will make the sentences imposed on a person consecutive to another sentence imposed for another offence arising out of the same event or series of events.

The government is once again demonstrating its propensity for taking away the courts' discretion. Why is it doing this?

It is important to hear from the experts about the impact of imposing minimum sentences and consecutive sentences. If more and more people are receiving minimum sentences, and consecutive sentences are imposed, we may have to expand the prisons. That is why we recommend that the bill be examined in committee. It is very important that the government listen to the arguments made by the opposition and the public.

Two of my colleagues introduced bills C-232 and C-592, but the government opposed them. It is important to protect our animals, but I reiterate that this bill must be referred to committee to be studied in depth. The NDP rejects any form of cruelty to animals. We have long advocated bills for the protection of our animals.

I am going to speak from personal experience. Unlike my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou, I do not know any dog handlers in the police. However, I have a family, and one of my daughters has four daughters. Each of her children had a cat. Some may say that this has nothing to do with law enforcement animals, but those animals were treated very well. Each child had her pet, to talk to and comfort her.

When the cats reached the end of their lives, the parents did not abandon them to die. They took them to the veterinarian to put an end to their suffering. I also have a granddaughter who did a training placement with the Inuit and came back from northern Canada with a dog that the whole family looks after today. These animals are part of their lives. They are very important to them.

Because I was a farmer, I also had animals. When an animal was taken to slaughter, it was important that it be treated properly before its life was ended.

• (1330)

We often see news reports about puppy mills and about how our slaughter animals, hogs, cattle or any kind of animal, are taken to the slaughterhouse. We want those animals to be well treated along the way. When we leave Abitibi with a shipment of hogs for slaughter in Lanaudière, that is a trip of some 700 km. Those animals must be protected and their health cared for.

Government Orders

When I go door to door in my riding, I see that people are attached to their animals. They take care of them. I have been going to a stationary campground for 18 years. Yes, a member of Parliament at a campground. People go there with cats and dogs and pay them a great deal of attention. They spoil them and take care of them. That is why I think it is very important to watch out for animals whose purpose is to protect police officers or RCMP officers and the public. This bill provides that a person who injures an animal whose purpose is to protect its master and perhaps society should be punished and go to prison. However, are consecutive sentences necessary? I doubt it.

The NDP will vote for this bill at second reading. However, we really would like that our amendments be heard by other committee members studying this bill, that there be no time allocation and that, once the bill has reached third reading, it is a bill that will actually protect animals and people.

If I have a dog to protect me and it is killed in the course of an invasion of my home, what do I do? Will the person who has killed my dog be punished? Will he be sent to prison? Will he receive a consecutive sentence? I do not know. Perhaps that should be added to the bill, as in Bill C-592 introduced by my colleague.

I would really like to see this bill being studied in committee. Someone will be telling me shortly that I am repeating myself and talking about animals we have in our families. Those animals must be protected as well. We have no right to mistreat them. When I was on the farm, we raised two pigs because one pig all alone would be bored. You do not raise one piglet on its own; you raise two. One of my daughters did not eat pork because she had played and had fun with those two pigs, in addition to feeding them. That has somewhat changed today.

I thank all my NDP colleagues who are rising today to speak to this bill. We know that many New Democrats are speaking, but there is also room for members from the other parties.

• (1335)

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Joliette for her speech.

I especially thank her for showing us what issues this bill fails to address. This bill very specifically targets one category of animals, those that provide assistance to the police, the Canadian Forces and people with disabilities.

My colleague raised a very interesting point about how this bill does not include other animals, whether they be pets or even wild animals, when it could have included every little creature living in our midst. This bill does not do that, unlike the bills introduced by our colleagues from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and Parkdale—High Park.

I would like my colleague to elaborate on the fact that this bill looks at only a small part of the picture instead of taking a broader and more inclusive view.

Ms. Francine Raynault: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

I think that this bill needs to go further. It protects dogs that work with the police, but we also need to protect all of our pets, and the government has not really talked about that.

Some of our colleagues included these animals in their bills, but those bills did not go anywhere because the other parties voted against them. It is important for all animals to be protected. If a person does not want to take care of a pet, then they should not adopt a dog, a cat or even a bird.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Joliette for her speech. She clearly showed that the members on this side of the chamber recognize the work done by service animals that help the police and others. We realize just how important that is. We cannot ignore that.

Since we are coming up to the end of the session, is my colleague curious to know why this bill is being debated now? Although it is quite commendable, this private member's bill has now become a government bill.

I am wondering what the government's priorities are right now. Can my colleague talk about that? Can she also tell us about the priorities of the official opposition?

Ms. Francine Raynault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I too wondered why this bill was introduced today at the end of the session. It could easily have waited until next fall or some other time. We know that 2015 is an election year. I am sure the Conservatives can give us an answer.

We think that there are more important bills we should be studying at the end of the session, especially since we are sitting until midnight every night. We have time to study them.

It seems like the people talking in the House today are mostly from the NDP, not the other parties.

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will have, at most, 20 minutes to talk about Bill C-35. That is actually a good thing because, as you can hear, I am a little hoarse thanks to yet another virus my children passed on to me. I will take the time to enunciate clearly to compensate for the unusually rough sound of my voice.

Government Orders

I am the third NDP MP in a row to speak to this bill. I would like to explain to the people who are doing us the honour of listening to us on CPAC that we are sitting until midnight every night for the entire month of June until the House adjourns. We are doing this because the Conservative government wants to move bills forward. However, people will notice that most of the MPs who are taking the time to speak to the bills being debated in the House are members of the NDP. One might have thought that the government asked for longer sitting hours because it wanted to defend its views on certain private members' bills or government bills. That is not the case. Some evenings, the Conservatives are often absent from the debates even though they themselves decided to extend sitting hours. That really bothers me. I would like to go back to the reason why this place is called what it is called. This is a parliament. We are parliamentarians, and it is our duty to rise and speak in the House on behalf of our constituents. The way the current government is running the House really bothers me. It really worries me too.

I have a few minutes to talk about Bill C-35, which would create a new offence that would apply when a law enforcement or military animal is injured or killed in the line of duty. As some of my colleagues have already pointed out, this bill was initially introduced as a private member's bill but was then taken over by the current government. We will be supporting this bill at second reading so that it can be studied in committee.

I would like to address those who are honouring us by watching us on CPAC. I want to be sure that they really understand what is happening. We are supporting the bill at second reading. It will not become law automatically. It will be introduced before one or more committees that are directly involved with the issues in the bill. I am part of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. I definitely will not have the opportunity to study the bill, since it has nothing to do with fisheries. Other colleagues of mine, those who are part of the official opposition and are experts in legal matters, will make sure that they share their opinions with the committee. Some of my colleagues, who work very hard, will propose amendments. However, I have little hope that it will go well. Committees are not nearly as collaborative as they should be because of the culture this government has imposed. However, as the official opposition, we have a duty to stand up for the institutions of Parliament. We must continue to debate these issues every step of the way, despite the government's lack of good faith, in the hope that bills will be improved. That is what can happen when the work of Parliament is done properly and appropriately.

We have serious concerns about two of the bill's provisions, in spite of the fact that we will be voting in favour of it on second reading, but not at its final reading. The first is the six-month minimum sentence provided for in the bill, and the second is that the sentence is to be served consecutively to any other sentence imposed on the offender arising out of the same offence.

Let me explain things more clearly. If a person is charged with assaulting an RCMP officer, he will certainly receive a sentence for committing that offence or for having fled from an RCMP officer. That person will have committed an offence. However, if at the same time, the officer's dog was injured or killed, another sentence will be tacked on to the one initially imposed for the primary offence. An offender could therefore be sentenced to 18 months in jail for

assaulting a police officer and to a minimum of six months in jail for having, for example, stabbed the officer's service dog.

One important clarification needs to be made for those watching these proceedings at home. Just because we are critical of some of these provisions does not mean that we are insensitive toward animals. Members on the other side are always trying to paint us in this light. As soon as we ask questions, they claim that we are opposed to the very foundation of a bill under consideration.

● (1340)

The Conservatives even kept repeating that we sided with pedophiles when they introduced a highly controversial bill and lumped possession of a few marijuana plants together with amendments to the child pornography legislation. It was preposterous. I am a father and I was furious for three weeks.

The Conservatives have a habit of systematically saying that if members of the opposition ask questions about or do not support their bills, then they must be on the side of the criminals or they must hate animals. This is a completely deplorable way of engaging in a debate. Our friends opposite have a habit of acting this way.

Let me be clear that we are not against animals. I once owned a magnificent Doberman. I have fond memories of the dog training classes I took with Peanut. When we brought her home, she was so little that we named her Peanut. One hundred pounds later, we still called her Peanut.

Dog owners will understand what I am saying. I was proud of my girlfriend at the time when she would venture out late at night to pick up some milk at the corner store. She felt safe because she had a Doberman with her. Animals help people feel safe. Once we have experienced this, we are profoundly moved. I do not think that I am being overly emotional. Those who have owned pets understand the feeling.

My position today should not be seen as being anti-animal, and the NDP should absolutely not be seen as being a party that is opposed to animal rights. On the contrary: the member for Parkdale—High Park introduced Bill C-232, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (cruelty to animals), a bill that would repeal the cruelty to animals provisions that appear in the part of the Criminal Code that covers property, in recognition of the fact that animals can feel pain.

Government Orders

That fundamental change was brought forward by a New Democrat member who asked that we stop looking at animals the same way we look at a table or a chair or a doorknob. Believe it or not, the party in power opposed it. The party in power absolutely will not consider this important factor that would help raise awareness to companion animals. In spite of that, they have now introduced something very specific, like Bill C-35, which boils down the government's interest to only a few types of animals, when it comes to improving animal rights and conditions. There is a price to be paid when we get to the courts, and that is discretion.

First, the credibility of judges is attacked, in this case with no valid or genuine justification. Quanto, an Edmonton police dog, was unfortunately stabbed to death while he was attempting to intercept a fleeing suspect, in October 2013. That is the event that inspired Bill C-35. The accused, Paul Joseph Vukmanich, pled guilty to evading police and cruelty to animals. He therefore acknowledged that it made no sense to attack the assistance animal that was working with a police officer. He was sentenced to 26 months in prison. He will be prohibited from owning a companion animal for the next 25 years. This is a superb example of the value and importance of judicial discretion. Even the idea of 25 years without a companion animal is not included in the clauses of the bill introduced today. It was a judge who, based on his wisdom and understanding of case law and of what happened during that event, reached a very worthy decision.

Constantly demanding very detailed parameters, minimum or maximum sentences, and requiring that judges follow them, as the present government does, in a way amounts to contempt for the wisdom of our judges.

In fact, when I put it to one of my rare government colleagues who spoke on the subject, the member for Richmond Hill, he was unable to refute that conclusion.

● (1345)

He was unable to say that the judge had erred, that the decisions made in the Paul Joseph Vukmanich case were incorrect or that the penalties were too light. Instead he outlined the Conservative Party's positions in a highly incoherent manner. For example, he said the court had taken too long to reach a verdict in the accused's case. Since he was awaiting his verdict in prison, he did not really serve his full 26-month sentence. What an incredible admission.

It is not because Canadian judges are soft on crime; it is because the justice system lacks the resources to ensure the work is done within a reasonable period of time. Consequently, we wind up with nonsensical situations in which someone has awaited judgment in prison for such a long time that the sentence he receives is really minimized. That has nothing to do with any alleged "softness on crime". It has everything to do with the lack of resources in the justice system. We will have to address that in order to avoid this kind of situation, and we will not be able to do so with a bill such as this.

Every expert will tell us that the government's tendency to constantly extend minimum sentences is contributing to an increase in the time spent mounting a defence and arguing cases in the courts and thus the time required to render verdicts. This is a highly nonsensical situation that increases costs. The government's approach exacerbates the problem. Our judges are not too soft on

crime. The problem is that criminals' sentences are being minimized as a result of delays. They are waiting too long for their verdicts. This is incredible. Our colleagues opposite even admitted that their approach was contributing to the problem. Consequently, we are completely passing up an opportunity for a valid solution to these problems.

Another inconsistency in this bill is that minimum sentences do not lower the crime rate. Several American states were tempted by the approach the government in power has been imposing for several years, but they are now pulling back. It has not worked. In the case before us, I do not believe the accused who killed an Edmonton police officer's dog with a knife would have said to himself as he opened the knife, "Oh my God, I may get at least six months." I doubt he would have folded up his knife. Things do not work that way. This bill will not achieve the desired results. On the contrary, it will slow down proceedings and prevent the justice system from imposing the right sentences at the right time.

We have also addressed the question of creating a class of animals. I thank my colleague from Joliette for being the first to do so because this has been troubling me since I first examined the bill. Consider the example of an elderly couple who are starting to be a little concerned and are suffering from somewhat reduced mobility. They acquire a German shepherd, which is then trained to become a reliable guard dog that can tell the difference between an offender and a friend who is coming for coffee.

Imagine the worst scenario: this poor couple is attacked by the worst psychopath. Not only does he break in, but he also slits the dog's throat and scatters its intestines around the apartment. He is a real psychopath.

The bill's provisions would not apply in this case, because the dog would not be on official duty. The dog would have done its job as it was trained to do, it would have gone through the worst possible situation and would have confronted the worst psychopath in the history of crime in Canada, but it would not be protected by the law because it was not an RCMP service dog or a certified trained guide dog. Nevertheless, it would satisfy all of the bill's criteria. It was trained to do a certain job and it died trying to do that job.

● (1350)

There is no logic in establishing a category of animals. The Conservatives believe that other animals doing their jobs do not have the right owners and therefore do not deserve to be better protected.

There is something else that we need to consider. The provisions in Bill C-35 are not any different from the sentences and fines already provided for in the Criminal Code. On reading Bill C-35, we see that the provisions it contains, such as the sentence for animal cruelty, are in line with existing provisions. Is this not actually a false problem of our judges being soft on crime, as I explained on two previous occasions? Moreover, the bill offers a false solution because it in no way amends the existing provisions. Could it get any worse? The bill addresses a false problem and offers a false solution. Questions need to be raised and put to competent people in committee.

People need to ask themselves why such a muddled and rigged piece of legislation was introduced in the House in the first place. Unfortunately, I have come to the following conclusion. As one of my Quebec colleagues mentioned at the outset of the debate, this is an attempt to target a specific group of people. I can only imagine that a Conservative Party strategist somewhere in the Prime Minister's Office claimed a riding was lost by a mere 35 votes. In that particular riding there are 25 owners of RCMP service dogs, each with a wife and three children. Maybe they think that if they manage to get this bill passed, they will win the next time around. That may seem somewhat far-fetched, but knowing how obsessed this government is with databases and the potential to manipulate the vote, I cannot help but believe that similar thinking is behind bills as incongruous as this one.

An hon. member: Anything is possible.

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague said, nothing is impossible. Even though the bill that has been introduced resembles a parliamentary farce imposed by the current government, the NDP must still help preserve a modicum of respect for the institutions of Parliament, as I mentioned previously. We will do our job in committee and study the bill before it goes to third reading. We will ask experts to appear so that we can ask them fundamental questions. For example, why remove discretionary authority once again from the courts, as has been done in several other government bills? Why do that again? Have the Conservatives examined the impact of introducing minimum and consecutive sentences on the justice and prison systems? Once again, why do that? Did the government avoid consulting the provinces?

People at home need to fully understand what is going on. When individuals get a six-month sentence, they are placed in the provincial prison system. Two years ago, a number of provincial legislatures sounded the alarm and wondered why the federal government is making these decisions without consultation. If we do not ask ourselves the question, the number of people in provincial penitentiaries will rise by 10%, 15%, 20% or 30%. This is what we call "offloading to the provinces". In the bill, could a minimum sentence violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms? Did the government seek legal advice on this? These are not minor questions.

Canadians can have faith in us; we will do our job in committee. We will invite competent individuals to testify, people who have decades of experience with these legislative matters. They will be able to answer our questions. We will be able to see whether the version of the bill at third reading can be supported. Despite the government's bad faith, we will do our job as parliamentarians.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1355)

[English]

STEPHEN LEACOCK MEMORIAL MEDAL FOR HUMOUR

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Saturday, the Stephen Leacock medal for humour will be presented

Statements by Members

at a gala reception at Geneva Park Conference Centre near the city of Orillia, in my riding.

As members may recall, Stephen Leacock was Canada's most famous author of humour. Leacock, the head of McGill University's Department of Economics and Political Science for 28 years in the early 1900s, also kept a summer residence in Orillia. That is now home to the Leacock Museum as well as the annual tribute to Canadian authors of humour.

This year, the Leacock Associates have awarded the medal for humour to Cape Breton's own Bill Conall for his sophomore novel *The Promised Land*. It is a hilarious tale of hippies who are on a journey to Cape Breton in the 1970s. I can just imagine the humour that arises. Members also have first-hand knowledge of just how well Cape Bretoners are endowed with a knowledge and a knack for humour.

I invite all hon. members to join me in congratulating Bill Conall, winner of the Leacock medal for humour 2014.

* * *

• (1400)

LAKE BANOOK

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Lake Banook is located in the heart of my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. Home to three different canoe/kayak clubs, it is widely recognized as one of the best natural paddling courses in the world. In fact, our community has hosted several world championship events, and just last week, CanoeKayak Canada announced that Lake Banook will be one of four national team training centres in the country. That is amazing news.

Residents know, however, that the lake is not without its challenges. Environmental issues have created problems with excessive weed growth that inhibits our ability to use the lake to its full potential.

Considering the federal government's responsibilities for environmental protection and Dartmouth's commitment to the lake as a national and international sports venue, I encourage the government to work with the municipality to address this issue so we can keep the lake in great shape for many years to come.

* * *

ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and thank Ms. Lesley Lewis for all she has done during her tenure as CEO of the Ontario Science Centre, located in Don Valley West.

Statements by Members

The Science Centre, an iconic cultural attraction, is an interactive public centre for innovative thinking and provocative dialogue in science and technology. It delights, informs, and challenges visitors young and old, enriching their lives and understanding through engagement with science of local, national, and global relevance.

Ms. Lewis was CEO of the science centre for 16 years, where she was instrumental in the planning process for the agents of change transformation, the greatest leap forward the Science Centre has taken since it opened in 1969.

We thank Lesley for making a difference in the lives of all those who have visited and will continue to visit the Ontario Science Centre.

* * *

CLARENVILLE HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the remarkable achievement of the Clarendville High School student choir from my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's.

I join the principal of Clarendville High School, Ian Davidson, and indeed the entire community, in congratulating music teacher and choir conductor Ann Lundrigan, along with her 52 student singers, on winning a gold level award while representing Canada as the only Canadian choir in its category at the Worldstrides Music Festival in New York City on April 11. The public school choir placed third in its category, behind two exclusively fine arts schools.

During the competition, the choir members sang three pieces: *Ain't Judging no Man*, *Praise His Holy Name*, and *We Rise Again*. Their hard work and unmatched enthusiasm earned the students the Spirit of New York award for the entire festival.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating the Clarendville student choir and in wishing it every success. May its perfect pitch continue.

* * *

HOUSING INDUSTRY

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the importance of the housing industry in Canada, especially the efforts of the Canadian Home Builders' Association.

Our government understands the critical role this sector plays in providing quality jobs and economic growth for Canadians. More than 8,500 small and medium-sized businesses are members of the CHBA. What is more, residential investment supports more than 900,000 jobs and generates more than \$120 billion in economic activity every year. However, the industry is only as strong as the ability of Canadians to pursue their housing aspirations.

I have seen first-hand the efforts of our government to lower the barriers to home ownership, affordable renovations, and rental housing, yet more must be done to support this critical industry. Continued partnership between the government and the housing industry is important to ensure that we continue to help Canadians achieve the dream of home ownership.

●(1405)

POLAND

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 25 years ago the first cracks began to appear in the Soviet Union when the nation of Poland held its first semi-free elections. This regaining of Poland's independence on June 4, 1989, was a victory for the Solidarity movement and a blow to tyranny.

Solidarity was founded in 1980 as a trade union but grew into a massive social movement with a membership of one million and broad public support. The determination and courage these workers showed in the face of violence and repression changed the course of history.

Poland has flourished in its freedom. It has a strong and growing economy and is a leader in the European Union. The Polish diaspora, including the strong community in my riding of Parkdale—High Park in Toronto, has always played a key role in supporting the cause of freedom in Poland. I join them in acknowledging Poland's independence and the tremendous victory of the Solidarity movement.

* * *

ALS AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, June is ALS Awareness Month, so it is important that we take note of this terminal disease and the effect it has on Canadians and their families.

ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease, as it is more commonly known, is a rapidly progressing disease that works by killing nerves and leaving those diagnosed unable to control or initiate voluntary movements on their own. Roughly 3,000 Canadians are currently suffering from this disease, with two or three dying, on average, each day. There are no effective cures or treatments, and the financial and caregiving burden of ALS is significant.

In 2005 my father succumbed to ALS, so it has affected me personally. Each year at this time, friends, family, and supporters of those suffering from ALS dedicate their time and energy to increase knowledge of this devastating disease and to raise funds for a cure.

I encourage each member to wear a cornflower today to demonstrate our support in the fight against ALS so that together we can support families and find a cure.

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ATTACK ON AMRITSAR TEMPLE

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago today marks a dark and difficult chapter in India's history. The June 1984 Indian army attack, named Operation Blue Star, on the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab, one of the holiest sites for Sikhs, led to the killing of thousands of innocent pilgrims.

Statements by Members

Today, on the anniversary of this horrible attack, we remember the innocent lives lost and their families. Their memories will live as a constant reminder of the importance of defending the fundamental values of democracy, rule of law, and human rights for all. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of those who were affected by this tragedy.

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[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post has announced that new community mailboxes are to be installed in the towns of Rosemère, Bois-des-Filion and Lorraine. The installation is the result of Canada Post's plan, a plan endorsed by this government, to end home mail delivery.

In a number of cases, the new community mailboxes are going to be installed in front of residents' property. This will cause an outcry from many property owners, I am sure, not to mention the difficulties it will create for senior citizens who will have to go and fetch their mail, although this same government officially supports remaining in one's home.

This is a nasty, sloppy plan.

A responsible government would have proposed solutions to improve service and attract new customers instead of cutting services, raising prices, and firing 8,000 people.

Conservative and Liberal governments have always given the middle class the short end of the stick, and now they are reducing their services to nothing. Canadians deserve better. They deserve a party like the NDP, a party that will be on their side.

* * *

[English]

CANADA DAY

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with Canada Day fast approaching, and on behalf of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, I would like to invite Canadians from coast to coast to take part in celebrating Canada's 147th birthday.

As the minister announced this morning, July 1 in the capital will pay tribute to the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War, the 75th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War, the end of the mission in Afghanistan, and the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown and Quebec conferences.

The Canada Day noon show will include a flypast of CF-18 fighter jets and the Snowbirds demonstration team. The day and evening shows will feature Brett Kissel, the British Columbia Boys Choir, Marianas Trench, Nadja, and Serena Ryder, just to name a few.

On July 1, please join us in celebrating another year of Canada's history—strong, proud, and free.

● (1410)

[Translation]

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday I will be at the annual meeting of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. Co-operatives help build communities, and they increase the supply of housing available for everyone. Each year, more than 600,000 Canadian households benefit from affordable housing, thanks to support from the federal government. That positive contribution allows low-income individuals to live a dignified life. Unfortunately, that federal assistance is coming to an end, which could mean that some renters will find themselves in a very precarious situation. However, there is plenty of need. LaSalle—Émard has only a few co-operative housing options, and housing supply is getting more and more limited. Many seniors are calling me because they are looking for affordable, safe, comfortable housing.

I am asking the indulgence of the federal government and asking that it renew funding for social and co-operative housing and ensure that there is more affordable housing available across Canada.

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[English]

ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of International Trade welcomed ministers and high-ranking officials from the 10 member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN, to Canada.

With more than 600 million people, the member countries of ASEAN make up the fastest-growing and most dynamic markets in the Asia-Pacific region and collectively rank as Canada's seventh-largest trading partner.

Strengthening trade and investment links with ASEAN is a key component of Canada's ambitious pro-trade plan.

Trade promotion and connecting Canadian businesses, especially small and medium-sized businesses, to international markets is part of Canada's global markets action plan to boost exports and create economic opportunities.

While the Liberals think that budgets balance themselves and NDP members put on their tinfoil hats and fabricate conspiracy theories, our government remains focused on the real priorities of Canadians: balancing the budget, lowering taxes, and creating jobs.

* * *

TIANANMEN SQUARE

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, wherein hundreds of Chinese citizens were murdered for standing up for rights and freedoms.

Oral Questions

As we remember and reflect upon the protestors' courage and sacrifice, China's government continues to deny that this brutal crackdown occurred, targets those who commemorate it, and seeks to sanitize the facts of history.

Twenty-five years on, the people of China remain subject to ongoing repression and oppression whereby Chinese human rights advocates, citizens, and journalists are subjected to police monitoring, imprisonment, and torture; a legal system devoid of judicial independence; limitations on religious worship; criminalization of speech; and massive repression of minorities, exemplified in the assault on the Falun Gong and ethnic minorities like the Uyghur and Tibetan people.

We must speak out on behalf of those who cannot be heard, bear witness to the continued oppression and repression, ensure that human rights are at the core of the Chinese-Canadian relationship, which we otherwise value, and that the memory, history, and lessons of Tiananmen Square will never be forgotten.

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MILLENNIUM KIDS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians took great pride in the work of the Prime Minister and the government last week as Canada focused the world's attention on the important area of mothers', newborns', and children's health.

We were able to bring together world leaders, members of civil society, and, very importantly, young people.

Millennium Kids has done a fantastic job in collecting signatures. Over the last couple of weeks, I have received a number of its petitions, which I tabled earlier today.

These young men and women are rallying support for nations to meet the Millennium Development Goals and to achieve 0.7% aid to GNP spending on foreign assistance.

I understand many children are tuning in across Canada in classrooms, and for those who made the trek to Ottawa, I want to congratulate them on their efforts.

Later this day I will be seeking the consent of the House to table the petition received from Millennium Kids.

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• (1415)

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one has to feel sorry for the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. She left NATO documents in an airport, to be found by Sheila Coppins.

However, after all, leaving NATO documents lying around is actually a bit of a Conservative tradition.

It was the member for Beauce, the then minister of foreign affairs, who first perfected the practice in 2009. Then the only defence was that the documents were classified but not that classified.

Now it is only Tuesday, but it has been quite a week so far for the Conservatives.

Just yesterday, the trial of a former staffer in a voter suppression scheme began in Guelph, where dozens of Conservatives are expected to testify.

Bruce Carson's former escort was called as a witness for the preliminary inquiry in his trial.

Patrick Brazeau's legal team asked for more time before a pre-trial hearing on charges of breach of trust.

All the while, the NDP has been asking questions about privacy and climate change, while the Conservatives and the Liberals, as usual, hide behind secret meetings and magically invented rules.

* * *

[Translation]

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the NDP is abusing the resources of the House of Commons to do partisan work.

It is the party that is supposedly working to build a better Canada, but here we have more evidence of opportunism. Using the ten percenter program during a pre-election period or an election period is unethical, and the NDP knows it. It is an insult to Canadians, especially if those who authorized this expense were aware of the consequences.

Now that it has been caught red-handed, let us hope that the NDP will have the decency to repay this shameful and unjustified expense.

This goes to show that the NDP has no respect for the rules established by the House of Commons and that it is worse than other opposition parties that cross the line by disrespecting taxpayers' money to serve their own interests.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

PRIVACY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is confirmation today that the Prime Minister's pick for Privacy Commissioner has given legal advice to CSIS, CSEC, and the RCMP, Canada's key surveillance and data-gathering organizations. These are the same organizations that he would now have to investigate on programs he helped to develop and approve.

Do Conservatives still not see that this is about protecting the intimate private lives of Canadians? What do they not understand about this obvious conflict of interest?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, Mr. Therrien is an individual who has had 30 years' experience serving the public, in the public sector. He has legal experience. He has experience on the privacy files.

This appointment was made pursuant to a very rigorous process where a number of highly qualified individuals were identified, and we have found the person who is the most qualified to actually have this position.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Daniel Therrien provided legal advice on exactly how many surveillance and data-gathering programs on the intimate private lives of Canadians? How many did he approve? All of them?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I already said, Mr. Therrien is a qualified candidate who has a significant amount of experience in law and with respect to the confidentiality required in this position. The appointment was made pursuant to a rigorous process, which identified Mr. Therrien as a highly qualified candidate—the best candidate for this position.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how can someone who helped create these surveillance programs and gave them a green light now look at them objectively and tell us whether they respect Canadians' privacy? It is impossible. That is the very essence of a conflict of interest. That is quite clear. Even Mr. Therrien admitted that he will be forced to recuse himself in the case I just mentioned.

Did the Nadon affair not teach them anything about making curious appointments?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the Leader of the Opposition, actually having experience on legal matters and on privacy matters disqualifies someone for a post. Actually having 30 years of experience serving the public disqualifies that person for the post.

That is what the Leader of the Opposition is selling. Perhaps he will put it in a mail-out soon.

* * *

●(1420)

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims that he is waiting for the United States to take action to combat climate change before we in Canada can take action ourselves. The American government is moving ahead with new regulations for the sector that is its largest polluter, coal. Are the Conservatives finally going to move to reduce greenhouse gases in the sector that is Canada's largest polluter, oil and gas?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as stated yesterday in the House, we took action two years ago. We welcome the Obama administration's move towards this. I look forward to reviewing further details of this action plan.

Again, we took action on this two years ago, which means that our regulations will come into effect sooner than the United States'. We

Oral Questions

also estimate that we will achieve a 46% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in this sector by 2030, compared to 30% in the United States.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Americans are now on track to meet their Copenhagen targets, which Canada will miss by 50%. That is the truth.

The United States is taking real action, and it is not buying the Conservatives' excuses. Last night the U.S. ambassador called on Canada to match America's latest move by adopting new climate change rules for our largest-emitting industry, oil and gas.

It is a straightforward question. Are we going to get new climate change rules for big oil and gas companies, or are we just going to get more excuses from the Conservatives?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think many people forget that Canada represents less than 2% of the global greenhouse gas emissions, while the United States produces almost 20%. Coal-fired energy generation in the United States produces twice the greenhouse gas emissions that all the emissions produced in Canada do.

We are pleased that the United States is following in Canada's footsteps, and we will continue to build on our record and work with the United States to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions internationally.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the President of the United States proposed meaningful regulations to reduce emissions from its largest source of carbon pollution.

In Canada, the oil and gas industry is our largest source of greenhouse gases. Since 2006, the government has promised regulations to reduce that industry's emissions, so when, precisely, will we see those regulations?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as stated in the House two years ago, in the absence of that leader, we have reduced the greenhouse gas emissions. We are acting on this and we welcome the United States moving on the greenhouse gas regulations related to this sector.

Again, I think many people forget that Canada produces less than 2% of the global greenhouse gas emissions. The coal-fired energy sector in the United States produces—

The Speaker: I know the minister will want to be careful not to point out the presence or absence of members. That is unparliamentary.

The hon. member for Papineau.

Oral Questions

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for years the government's excuse for a total lack of action on climate change was the need to coordinate regulation with the United States. Well, the world's largest economy and our largest trading partner just unilaterally proposed regulations on its highest carbon-polluting sector.

When will Canada follow suit?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was Michael Ignatieff who said that the Liberals did not get it done.

Our priority is to protect the environment while keeping our economy strong. We have made significant investments to begin Canada's transition to the clean energy economy and advance our climate change objectives. We have recently announced and launched the national conservation plan, which promotes our government's strong legacy of conservation work and includes new investments to secure ecologically sensitive land and conserve marine and coastal areas. I am proud of a government that is getting results.

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has been telling us for years that it is important for us to coordinate our regulations with those of our largest trading partner. Yesterday, the Americans acted. They decided to tackle climate change by regulating carbon emissions from the sector that is their largest polluter.

The government has been promising us regulations for eight years. When will it finally wake up and take action?

[*English*]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the first 21 years, Canada's coal regulations are expected to result in a cumulative reduction in emissions equivalent to removing 2.6 million personal vehicles from the roads a year. We are also the first major coal user to ban the construction of traditional coal-fired electricity generation units.

I am proud to be part of a government that is getting action for Canadians and producing real results for Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a clarification. Canada is one of the 10 worst countries in the world in terms of the fight against climate change. It is not just 2% per capita.

President Obama's ambitious proposal marks a turning point in the fight against climate change. One of the biggest greenhouse gas emitters has finally agreed to face up to its responsibilities by targeting the sector that is its largest polluter. The Conservative government, which favoured a North American approach, must now keep its word.

When will the Conservatives announce their greenhouse gas reduction target for the oil and gas sectors? It was not done two years ago; it has still not been done. We are still waiting.

[*English*]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, where were those members two years ago when we announced the greenhouse gas emissions for this sector?

We welcome the move from the United States to address this issue. We took action in this sector two years ago, which means that our regulations will come into effect sooner than those of the United States. We also estimate that we will achieve a 46% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in this sector by 2030, compared to 30% in the United States.

We also have one of the cleanest energy systems in the world, with 77% of our electricity supply emitting no greenhouse gases.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are having a hard time keeping all of their fossil fuel buddies straight.

We are talking about Canada's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, the oil and gas industry. Instead of regulating the industry, the Conservatives are giving it billions in subsidies.

Conservatives have made excuses. They have dragged their heels. They have broken promise after promise to act. They have said that we have to wait for the U.S. Now our largest trading partner is urging us to act.

No more excuses. When will we see regulations for the oil and gas sector?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, for many people in Canada who are not aware, Canada represents less than 2% of the global greenhouse gas emissions, while the United States produces almost 20%. Coal-fired energy generation in the United States produces twice the greenhouse gas emissions that Canada does.

We also have one of the cleanest electricity systems in the world, with 77% of our electricity supply—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Halifax.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister still seems to be confusing America's big emitters, coal, with Canada's big emitters, oil and gas.

Speaking of oil and gas, the northern gateway puts thousands of jobs at risk and it threatens our coastline with oil spills. Today 300 scientists told the Prime Minister that the review panel was so flawed that it could not be used to justify the pipeline.

Will the Conservatives listen to public opinion and the facts, and turn down this pipeline?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that decision is before cabinet. We have no further comment.

* * *

•(1430)

PRIVACY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, Conservatives continued undermining the independent officers of Parliament. There was less than an hour to vet the nomination for the privacy commissioner, which has raised alarm bells across the country. The Conservatives ignored the precedent of having a review with expert witnesses and the Prime Minister even overturned the recommendation of his own hiring committee.

At a time when the government has declared open season on the privacy rights of Canadians, why are Conservatives undermining Parliament and ramming through such a controversial appointment without input from privacy experts?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is mistaken on several fronts.

The candidate appeared before committee today, as we all wanted him to do. I think he defended himself extremely well. He is clearly the best candidate for the position.

There was a rigorous process in the search for a successor to the previous privacy commissioner. I was very happy to recommend who I considered to be the best choice for that job. I am sure he will do an excellent job, should Parliament accept him.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, but unfortunately, what has happened is the Prime Minister's contempt for due process has undermined both the Privacy Commissioner and Mr. Therrien himself. The members refused to allow him time to answer simple questions about conflict of interest, about his expertise and about data sharing.

Canadians are looking to the Privacy Commissioner to stand up for their rights. Today, at committee, Mr. Therrien said that even he agreed that the government's widespread assault on privacy rights should be held in abeyance until he could get up to speed to review the legislation.

Would the Conservatives at least agree to that?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the privacy rights of Canadians are a huge priority for this government. That is why we have taken the time to ensure that we consulted with the interim Privacy Commissioner prior to the naming of the new officer. That is why we have made this such a priority for our government.

Oral Questions

The activities of government's law enforcement, as well as security agencies across the country, are subject to judicial and independent oversight. However, the question for the hon. member is this. When is he going to respect taxpayer money when it comes to the use of illegal offices and illegal mailouts?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I was a kid and other kids changed the rules in the middle of the game, we called them cheaters.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, the entire legal community and even the Conservatives' selection committee think that the Prime Minister has made a poor choice. In fact, when your only support comes from the leader of the Liberal Party, who is not particularly known for his judgment or his astute analysis, you are in trouble and you appoint a commissioner who will be in a clear conflict of interest.

People are right to be concerned about their privacy. When will the Prime Minister admit that he has made another mistake?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP is sensing a political opportunity in this case.

[English]

That is what the New Democrats do. They attack individuals who have had 30 years' experience serving the public sector. They should be ashamed of themselves.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are always paying the price for this government's illogical decisions. Today, once again, the Wait Time Alliance released its annual report, which states that little progress has been made in recent years with respect to improving wait times. The provinces are in difficulty, and the government is cutting health care funding by \$36 billion, money that could be used to reduce wait times.

Why is the government refusing to follow the Canadian Medical Association's recommendations and work with the provinces in order to improve health care in Canada? Canadians cannot wait any longer. The time to act is now.

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everything we do on health care is in collaboration and co-operation with the provinces and territories, including the \$40 billion annually at the end of this decade that we are transferring to the provinces for delivery of health care.

Oral Questions

I am a lot more optimistic than the member opposite. We have seen, through our investment in wait times guarantee of over \$1 billion, that the provinces are making very good progress in certain areas. They are meeting nearly 80% of time targets in areas like cataract surgery, hip replacement, hip fracture repair and also in radiation therapy.

The provinces are working hard at this and they are getting some very good results.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's assurance rings very hollow when we consider that the Conservatives eliminated the funding specifically targeted at reducing wait times. It has gone.

The Wait Time Alliance report card reveals that Canadians are waiting far longer for emergency care than people in other comparable countries, and 4.4 billion Canadians have no family doctor. Instead of working with the provinces to address these challenges, the government has abandoned them.

Why will the minister not come to the table with the provinces and work with them to improve health care for Canadians?

• (1435)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to work every day with the provinces and territories on the delivery of health care. It is their responsibility and they work very hard at it.

I would just point out for the member that the Canadian Institute of Health Information saw 2012 as the highest level of physicians per capita in Canada in the history of Canada, so there is a lot of progress being made there.

As well, if we look at comparing ourselves to other countries, last year the OECD noted that Canada had the lowest median wait times for cataract surgery and the second lowest median wait times for hips and knee replacements compared to countries like Finland, Australia, New Zealand and the U.K., so we are making progress.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not only a jurisdictional question for the provinces and the territories; it is a federal issue as well. Commitments were made by the federal government.

Outcomes speak louder than words, and wait times, according to this report card, are not improving. In fact, Canadians are now paying a very high emotional, physical, and even financial cost for the long wait times. According to the report today, the cost to the economy of lengthy waits for just five procedures is \$15 billion a year.

Why will the government not honour the commitments that were made and become an active partner in reducing wait times for Canadians?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are an active partner in reducing wait times. The member knows we provided \$1 billion for the provinces and territories to establish the wait times guarantees in their own priorities areas. Importantly, they were able to choose those areas that were priorities for them in their own health systems.

We have seen concrete results with, as I said, priority procedures in provinces meeting nearly 80% of time targets, including radiation therapy and other procedures.

We are working with the provinces and territories in many other ways to help them reduce wait times and on things like electronic health records. We are also working with them on a national strategy for health human resources to help reduce wait—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade has the time to take potshots at opposition backbenchers, which is flattering, but he and the Prime Minister do not seem to have the time to close a CETA deal, an agreement the Liberal Party supports. Canadians were led to believe CETA was signed, sealed, and delivered last October, but nearly eight months later the treaty is in limbo with even Europeans questioning its success.

As the Prime Minister heads to Brussels, can he and his party tell us when he will finally get the much ballyhooed CETA deal done?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is talking about the Prime Minister's record, but she is obviously trying to ignore her own. I would like to welcome her to the trade file and to the international trade portfolio. I offer her my congratulations. This is her first question on a trade file. It certainly is not a priority of the third party. I also note that she missed 20 meetings of the international trade committee and missed 69 witnesses.

Come on. Now you want to ask questions on a trade file? You should learn it first.

The Speaker: Order, please. The parliamentary secretary should know to address his comments to the Chair. Of course, I do not ask questions during question period. It is up to other members.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during his first major speech, the U.S. ambassador singled out Canada for its lack of action on climate change. While the U.S. government is showing real leadership by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the Government of Ontario has closed coal-fired power plants, Canada's overall emissions are on the rise.

When will this Conservative government take seriously the fact that this is an urgent issue?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, we took action on this file two years ago. In the first 21 years Canada's coal regulations are expected to result in a cumulative reduction in emissions equivalent to removing 2.6 million personal vehicles from the roads each year. We are also the first major coal user to ban the construction of traditional coal-fired electricity generation units.

I am very proud of our investments and I am proud to be part of a government that is getting real results for Canadians.

* * *

• (1440)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, instead of talking about the equivalent of taking cars off the road, why not actually take some cars off the road by investing in sustainable transportation infrastructure? Right about now thousands of GTA commuters are dreading the voyage home. Not only are they tired of congestion, but the C.D. Howe Institute says gridlock costs the Toronto economy up to \$11 billion a year.

However, the Conservative government has decided to delay billions of dollars of infrastructure investments even though investing in sustainable transportation would protect the environment and secure jobs. Why?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Because you are wrong.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. This is now the third time I have had to remind members to direct their comments to the Chair, so perhaps we will move on to the next question and allow ministers time to reflect on that.

The hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

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GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of wrong, the integrity commissioner ruled that John Lynn, a friend of the justice minister, hired four Conservative staffers at Enterprise Cape Breton without any competitive process. "One can only conclude that it was motivated by patronage".

The question remains, who exactly directed John Lynn to stack the regional development association with patronage appointments? Who? The dots all connect to the Minister of Justice. Will the minister appear before committee to explain his role in this latest in a string of Conservative scandals?

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have already taken action on this file. I already confirmed last week that Mr.

Oral Questions

Lynn's appointment as CEO of Enterprise Cape Breton was terminated as of May 27, 2014.

What I think Canadians are wondering though, in light of today's revelations, is when is the NDP going to pay back the taxpayers' dollars it has been wrongfully using throughout our country?

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Wow, Mr. Speaker. The question is when will the Liberals and the Conservatives return to workers the \$57 billion in employment insurance money that they stole from workers.

The sole purpose of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation is to hand out goodies to Conservative cronies. Those jobs should have been given to people in New Brunswick who really needed them.

The Minister of Justice is hiding behind the member for Fundy Royal. Nevertheless, it is his responsibility

Will the minister have the courage to explain himself in committee or will he hide like the Liberals—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of State for Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

[English]

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC): Mr. Speaker, saying it louder does not change the answer. The fact remains that we accept the findings of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner. My Lynn's appointment as CEO of Enterprise Cape Breton was terminated.

The question remains as well, when are the New Democrats going to do the right thing and repay the taxpayers' dollars they have been misappropriating for political gain throughout the country?

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my talented friend, what I am seeing is that the member for Beauséjour and his Conservative friends are scheming behind closed doors to prevent the opposition from doing its job.

Eight months ago, the Prime Minister was strutting about pretending that he had signed a trade agreement with the European Union. Eight months later, diplomats and insiders are saying that we are still a long way from an agreement. The Minister of International Trade would have us believe that it is just a translation problem. However, everyone knows that is not true.

What still needs to be negotiated?

[English]

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised by the hon. member's question.

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. Many members are trying to ask questions at the same time. The parliamentary secretary has already been asked a question and now he is going to answer it, so we will hear him. If members have other things to ask, they can try to seek the floor when he is finished answering it, but not until then.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

• (1445)

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that, as with all of our free trade agreements, this free trade agreement with the EU contains an effective and balanced dispute settlement mechanism. It had broad consultation throughout the country. The Prime Minister and the Minister of International Trade are continuing to work with our European counterparts.

The other question that the hon. member really needs to think about, because I could hear them talking about the \$3 million they have spent—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year, the Prime Minister fled scandal. He ran away to Europe and pretended to sign a trade deal. He did not have a deal then and we still do not have a trade deal. Reports reveal major issues remain unresolved and throughout, Conservatives continued to keep Canadians in the dark about the details.

Why will the minister not simply come clean and answer two very simple questions: What remains to be negotiated and when will we see the deal? Then maybe the Liberal Party members can take a look at the deal, because, apparently, they are wanting to sign on to a deal they have not seen, we have not seen, Canadians have not seen. We just want to see the deal. Show us the deal.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hope they have more questions, because I have lots of answers.

This is the most comprehensive and ambitious trade initiative Canada and the EU have ever negotiated. Since reaching the agreement in principle last October, officials from both sides continue to work diligently to finalize the technical aspects of the agreement that includes conversion of the agreement in principle into a legal text of over 1,000 pages, then translated into several languages. Like Canada, the EU is committed to bring CETA into force as quickly as possible so workers and businesses on both sides of the Atlantic can benefit from increased trade, opportunities, and job—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Peace River.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, men and women are equal under the law, and that is why I was shocked to read this morning that a female member from the Red Sucker Lake First Nation in Manitoba is being prevented from running for chief in the upcoming band election because she no

longer lives with her husband. This is undemocratic and this is offensive.

Will the government stand in solidarity with Louise Spence in her right to be treated as a person?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Peace River and the hard-working chair of the aboriginal affairs committee for the question.

As members know, in the 21st century this is completely unacceptable. That is why the government passed the First Nations Elections Act, which sets out very clear criteria that would allow Ms. Spence to run. Unfortunately, the Red Sucker Lake First Nation has not opted into the First Nations Elections Act, and we call upon it to do so.

At the same time, I call upon all members of this House to join with me in solidarity in standing up for Ms. Spence and for all women living on reserves who are fighting for the right to be recognized as persons.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning, the F-35 procurement process has been done in secret, behind closed doors. The Minister of National Defence was proud to announce at the CANSEC defence industry conference that he would be informing us of the final fighter jet options in the next few weeks. Now, it seems clear that the Conservatives will wait until after the House rises for the summer before they announce their decision, as if they had something to hide from Canadians.

The question is simple. Will the Conservatives proceed with a real competition or will they once again rush into the arms of Lockheed Martin?

[*English*]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we did agree to have a seven-point plan to review the options available to replace the F-18s. We have been going through that. An independent panel has reviewed the work and research done by the RCAF. It has given it a rigorous and thorough examination to ensure there is total impartiality and total objectivity. The ministers are now reviewing the results of those reports, and will be making a decision in the future, and the reports will indeed be released.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like so many of the government's projects, the F-35 procurement process started as a disaster by the Liberals and has been made worse by the Conservatives. From cost overruns and delays to secrecy about the cost of the project, Canadians do not trust the project, the process used, or the government itself. The minister was happy to tell CANSEC that there would be a decision in the next few weeks, but she has not commented on what will happen here in the House.

Oral Questions

Will the decision be made before the House rises for the summer, and will there be a fair competition for the replacement of the CF-18s?

• (1450)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that our primary goal is to ensure that the men and women in uniform get the equipment they need to do the job that we ask.

To that end, ministers are reviewing the reports that were prepared and vetted by an independent panel of experts, including one person who was quite publicly critical of the program. We are going through those. Once we have made a decision we will announce it, and the reports will be released.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no doubt, in due course I suspect that we will have an announcement of another sole-source boondoggle.

Keeping the review of sexual assaults within the Canadian military will not change the military's way of doing things. It will not get to the bottom of the issue. It will not help those affected, nor promote confidence in the system. Experts have said that this issue needs to be handled by civilians outside the military, but instead the government is promoting a military investigation.

Does the minister really believe that victims of sexual assault will trust anything less than an independent judicial inquiry?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these allegations are truly disturbing.

Make no mistake. No one who chooses to serve Canada as a member of our armed forces should fall victim to this kind of disgusting and unacceptable behaviour. The Chief of the Defence Staff is investigating. Sexual misconduct has no place in our armed forces and we will have zero tolerance for it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élane Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a fundamental principle of justice. The Chief of Staff of the Canadian Forces, who for so long turned a blind eye to sexual assault within his ranks, should not be put in charge of getting to the bottom of a scandal related to the culture of the organization. Victims and Canadians feel this approach lacks credibility. They are calling for the government to put an end to this culture of secrecy and impunity.

Why are the Conservatives condoning this process, which allows the army to wash its dirty linen in private, behind closed doors?

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the opposition is attacking the Chief of the Defence Staff in allowing this process to work.

As a matter of fact, in the previous session of this Parliament, I introduced a bill that called for greater penalization of those who kidnap, sexually assault, and murder their victims, and the NDP opposed it. It is a little rich for New Democrats to be coming out now commenting on sexual assault within the Canadian Armed

Forces and not supporting legislation in this House to actually toughen penalties.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was painful watching Jeny Migneault, the wife of a retired soldier with PTSD, running after the Minister of Veterans Affairs and pleading for help as he scurried away.

Too many military families share Jeny's experience of shouldering the burden of caring for an injured spouse with too little support. This might actually explain why divorce rates for wounded soldiers are sky-high.

Why does the minister not care? When will the government stop treating injured members and their families with such totally callous disrespect?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, certainly this government cares and certainly the minister cares. In fact, as an individual who spent some 30 years as a front-line police officer, he is, I believe, well suited to understand the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform.

That said, we have a recent report—a unanimous report, I might add—that has come from the veterans affairs committee. This is a good sign that we are working in a non-partisan way to address the issues and concerns of all veterans and their families.

We look forward to continuing that productive, constructive working relationship to ensure that the very best services are available to the men and women in uniform and their families.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 70th anniversary commemorations of D-Day take place this week in Normandy. The minister knows that the funds he is providing are not enough for an elderly veteran on a fixed income to fly over there if they need a caregiver or additional support.

The minister has deep enough pockets when it comes to spending millions on self-promoting ads, so will he guarantee the House and our veterans that they will not have to pay a cent out of their pockets to commemorate this event? After all, they came at his invitation.

• (1455)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I share with the hon. member and all members here the enormous pride as we prepare to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the D-Day Normandy landings. We owe an eternal gratitude to all of the men and women in uniform who took part in that historic liberation.

I note, as the member has said, that we have some 100 former members of the Canadian Armed Forces, veterans and their families, travelling to Normandy. The Prime Minister will be there along with the Minister of Veterans Affairs and other members of the House of Commons.

This is an enormous source of pride for all Canadians, and we thank them for their service.

*Oral Questions***DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, somewhat incomprehensibly, Conservatives have actually decided to appeal a court ruling that gave Canadians abroad the right to vote. Instead of listening to the courts and helping Canadians vote, Conservatives are wasting time appealing the decision.

Why would the minister insist on making it harder for Canadians living abroad to vote? When will the Conservatives drop this wasteful appeal, respect the court decision, and let Canadians living abroad vote in our elections?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, non-residents should have a meaningful and direct connection to Canada and to their ridings in order to vote. For two decades, Canada's policy limited to five years the length of time one can be abroad and still vote. That is fair and reasonable, and it is comparable with other similar democracies around the world.

I understand the NDP's position is completely out of touch with everyday Canadians on these matters. Those members believe that people should be allowed to vote without bringing any ID whatsoever. We disagree with the NDP and its approach, and Canadians are on our side.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after the fraudulent robocalls and after doing everything possible to try to restrict voter participation with their electoral "deform" bill, the Conservatives are still insisting on restricting Canadians' right to vote. The Conservatives are trying to have an Ontario Superior Court ruling overturned so that they can prevent Canadians who have been living abroad for more than five years from voting.

Why is the minister doing his best to prevent one million Canadians living abroad from voting?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government believes that Canadian voters should have an ongoing connection with Canada in order to be able to vote. The five-year limit has been in place for two decades. It is reasonable and comparable to what other similar democracies around the world are doing.

The NDP does not share Canadians' values and principles on these issues. The NDP believes that people should be able to vote without even showing any ID. Approximately 90% of Canadians disagree with that approach, and that is why Canadians vote for us.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has a long-standing relationship with Spain in our support for freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

Can the Minister for Multiculturalism update this House on the government's position on the important role that recently abdicated King Juan Carlos of Spain played in these matters?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr.

Speaker, the Kingdom of Spain is a very close ally of Canada. It is one of the world's great democracies, thanks in part to the leadership of King Juan Carlos, who oversaw the successful transition of his country from dictatorship to democracy, who for four decades has served his people with dignity, and who suppressed an attempted military coup in 1981.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, we would like to join the people of Spain in thanking His Majesty King Juan Carlos for his service and for his friendship to Canada. Indeed, we wish him, his family, and his successor, Prince Felipe, every success.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has recently made a regulatory change that now allows the Minister of the Environment to loosen Fisheries Act prohibitions against polluting water if these clash with weaker provincial prohibitions.

The minister is obviously getting ready to use that power. Otherwise, why make the change? Which chemical pollutants is the minister preparing to give a regulatory free ride to?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite the opposition's claims, our amendments to the Fisheries Act strengthen fisheries protection.

We are focusing more of DFO's time and resources on projects that could have an impact on commercial, recreational, and aboriginal fisheries that are so important to many of our rural communities.

Our changes also make penalties tougher in order to punish those people who actually break the law by causing serious harm to fisheries. These changes will also cut red tape while protecting Canadian fisheries.

* * *

● (1500)

SENIORS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the next 25 years the number of seniors in Canada will double. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have no plan to deal with or provide the needed supports for our aging population.

From health care to financial security to housing, it is time for a plan. Our seniors deserve nothing less.

Why have the Conservatives not worked with the provinces and territories to develop a national aging strategy? It is time for some federal leadership.

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, seniors in Canada can be proud of the record support they are seeing from this government.

We have increased tax relief for seniors, increased funding for the new horizons for seniors program, and are investing in programs to help seniors, such as the targeted initiative for older workers.

That member and that party voted against all of these. We will take no lessons from the NDP, which would raise taxes for all Canadians, including seniors.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains steadfast in its support for the people of Ukraine.

We will not sit idly by while Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity are threatened. General Breedlove, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, has personally thanked the Prime Minister for Canada's contribution and leadership in these matters.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence please update this House as to Canada's contribution to the NATO alliance?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Pickering—Scarborough East for his service as a member of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I am happy to report that the Minister of National Defence is representing Canada at this week's meeting of the NATO defence ministers in Brussels. Recent Russian aggression against Ukraine illustrates the importance of ensuring that the alliance is ready and able to respond to any and all challenges.

Currently we have six CF-18 fighter jets flying training missions near Ukraine's southern border. I would like to thank our Romanian hosts, particularly Major Alin Cuchit, who recently called these missions "...a fantastic opportunity because Canada has some of the best pilots in the world".

I could not agree more. We are committed to the NATO alliance and, as always, Canada is doing its part.

* * *

[Translation]

PARKS CANADA

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my riding, Pontiac, is very privileged to have the magnificent Gatineau River, an important part of our country's human and natural history. It certainly deserves to be designated a Canadian heritage river. However, Parks Canada, which oversees that network, has been crippled by the Conservatives' many cuts.

Do the Conservatives really believe that cutting Parks Canada's budget is a good way to develop regional tourism and protect our rivers?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is playing a leadership role when it comes to protecting

Oral Questions

our environment. That is why we have invested significantly to clean up and improve water quality and to protect fish in targeted areas such as the Great Lakes and Lake Winnipeg. We have also renewed the Great Lakes water quality agreements and our commitments to remediate contaminated sites.

The standing committee on environment has concluded its study on water quality on the Great Lakes, and I look forward to seeing the final report.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the Government of Quebec will table its budget. Quebecers are coping with a difficult financial situation, but in Ottawa, the Minister of Finance is telling foreign delegations what a great job he did balancing the budget, supposedly.

Has the minister told these people that he decided to slash Quebec's health care funding by \$10 billion without consulting anyone? Has he told them that he is still pillaging billions of dollars from the employment insurance fund? Has he told him that his employment insurance reforms and his cuts are costing Quebec dearly—

• (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud to host these foreign delegations because our government, led by the Prime Minister, did what had to be done. We reduced our spending and we are working to spend the money we have.

I would like to congratulate the new Government of Quebec, which wants to do the same: reduce government spending and deal with the current economic situation head-on. I wish the government good luck with tomorrow's budget. For our part, we will continue to ensure that Canada remains very strong, a wonderful country united with a very strong Quebec.

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. That concludes question period for today.

The hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook is rising on a point of order.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

PETITIONS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Government Orders

There have been consultations and I believe you will find unanimous consent for the House to revert back to presenting petitions, for the sole purpose of presenting two petitions on the topic mentioned earlier in my statement pursuant to Standing Order 31.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to revert to petitions for this sole purpose?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from the Millennium Kids organization, with hundreds of signatures. Some of the members are with us here today, sitting in the gallery. It has done a tremendous job collecting signatures across Canada.

The petitioners ask the Government of Canada to continue in its commitment to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise today to present a petition signed by a number of citizens, including many young Millennium Kids, a number of whom are here today.

The petitioners want to remind us all that in 2000 Canada, as well as 188 nations, promised to spare no efforts to fulfill the eight critical goals now known as the Millennium Development Goals and that this commitment could be fulfilled by keeping an earlier promise to spend 0.7% of Canada's gross national product on development assistance.

The petitioners underline that we have broken that promise, and so they ask us to correct the situation and, in order to meet the MDGs, to direct 0.7% of Canada's GNP toward official development assistance every year.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

VETERANS HIRING ACT

The House resumed from June 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-27, an act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (enhancing hiring opportunities for certain serving and former members of the Canadian Forces), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, May 27, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-27.

Call in the members.

● (1515)

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

(Division No. 161)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Andrews	Angus
Armstrong	Ashfield
Ashton	Aspin
Atamanenko	Aubin
Bateman	Bélanger
Bennett	Benoit
Benskin	Bergen
Bernier	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blaney
Block	Boivin
Borg	Boughen
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brison	Brousseau
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Caron	Casey
Chicoine	Chisholm
Chisu	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Cleary
Clement	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crockatt	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Daniel	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dechert	Devolin
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dreeshen
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau	Dykstra
Easter	Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Foote
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Galipeau
Gallant	Gameau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Glover	Godin
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Gravelle	Grewal
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hassainia	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Hsu	Hyer
Jacob	James
Jones	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse

*Government Orders***CANADA-HONDURAS ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT**

BILL C-20—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-20, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the consideration of the report stage and five hours shall be allotted to the consideration of the third reading stage of the Bill; and

That, at the expiry of the five hours provided for the consideration of the report stage and the five hours provided for the consideration of the third reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stages of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

I will recognize the hon. opposition House leader.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for those who are keeping score, this is the 68th time that the government has used closure or time allocation motions. Sadly this is a new record.

The Conservatives are limiting members' speaking time in the House of Commons for the 68th time. Clearly they want nothing to do with debates or discussions. They only want to shut the place down. Interestingly enough, they claim to want a debate, but they want to limit it and have it take place in the evening.

Last week, they missed 26 shifts. They failed to show up in the House to speak to the issues and represent their constituents. Not just the Conservatives, but the Liberals as well. These two parties really could care less about democratic debates. The NDP, on the other hand, believes that debate is important.

• (1520)

[*English*]

Why are the Conservatives trying to shut down debate on this particular bill? Apparently it is because the NDP has been scoring points on the fact that the government's trade strategy has been a disaster. The Conservatives sign these trade agreements, poorly negotiated, but they have never signed a fair trade agreement, and their trade deficit is at a record level, as is the deficit with most of the countries they have signed agreements with.

Given all the human rights violations in Honduras, given the wide outcry about this bill being put forward and the agreement being signed with a regime that has been tagged with so many human rights violations, the question is this: why does the government want to shut down debate? Is it because as Canadians learn about the human rights violations they are not keen that the government push this bill through?

Lauzon	Laverdière
Lebel	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leef
Lemieux	Leslie
Leung	Liu
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Michaud
Miller	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Murray
Nash	Nicholls
Norlock	Nunez-Melo
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	Pacetti
Papillon	Paradis
Payne	Pilon
Plamondon	Poilievre
Preston	Quach
Rafferty	Raiitt
Rajotte	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Reid
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Scott
Seeback	Sellah
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
St-Denis	Stewart
Storseth	Strahl
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Tilson
Toet	Toone
Tremblay	Trost
Trottier	Trudeau
Truppe	Turmel
Uppal	Valcourt
Valeriotte	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Zimmer — 268

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

Government Orders

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, the reason we are pursuing this is that our government has an agenda that is firmly committed to the subject of free trade, because free trade has been key for Canada's success economically. It is a major reason for our prosperity, starting with the North American Free Trade Agreement, which has allowed our economy to enjoy considerable success and avoid the fate of many other countries that did not do likewise.

In fact, with a country of our size, for us to really enjoy the kind of economic success that our human potential and our natural resource potential allows us, we have to be able to find markets for those goods and services. As an island by ourselves, selling and consuming only what we produce and selling only to ourselves, we could never enjoy the kind of prosperity we can enjoy by sharing our goods and products with the world and enjoying all that the world has to offer.

That is why, as a party, we are firmly committed to the concept of free trade. It delivers jobs. I understand that the hon. member comes from a party with a very different perspective, and he said it well when he said the following. This is the House Leader of the Opposition:

We should be holding multilateral negotiations based on fair trade, not free trade, because free trade has cost Canadians dearly.

We disagree. I understand that it is the perspective of New Democrats, but we actually believe profoundly that free trade is a good thing; that taking away taxes on goods and products people wish to buy is a good thing; that allowing Canadians to sell their goods and services into other countries around the world is a good thing; that less money to the government in taxes and tariffs is a good thing, if that money stays in the pockets of Canadians; and that more opportunity to sell what we have to offer, to show the talents Canadians have, and to benefit from the selling of our goods and services means more prosperity and jobs for Canadians.

That is the fundamental difference. We think free trade is a good thing. The hon. member and his party think free trade is a bad thing. That is why, of course, we have not received their agreement to advance the bill further, and that is why it is the case that we have to ensure that we bring this matter to a vote.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed by the government House leader's answer. The debate we are having right now is not to deal with the issue of the bill, but to deal with the procedure and process the government has once again chosen to enter into. The government was unable to negotiate a way we could pass the bill without having to use time allocation.

Time allocation puts restrictions on members of the House and the number of members who are able to contribute to the debate. Obviously, given that this is the 68th time, I believe, what we have witnessed is the government's inability, since acquiring a majority, to get a consensus on passing legislation.

I recognize that the House Leader of the Opposition jumps with glee that this is number 68 and seems almost to be happy with that fact. It is not a good thing. It would be far better if we had opposition and government working together to ensure that there was a proper way of passing legislation through the House.

This way, the legislation that is very controversial is assigned more hours of debate. Pieces of legislation that have good solid support do not require the same number of hours of debate.

Every time the government House leader stands to move time allocation, it highlights the fact that we were unable to accomplish a consensus. I think it is sad for members of Parliament and for all Canadians when this form of closure is brought in. We should not take it as a normal process, and this is what we have seen.

Does the government House leader anticipate that all bills will be brought in under a normal process of time allocation?

● (1525)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. It is a good one. I certainly do not hold the Liberal Party at fault in this case for our not having come to an agreement on the appropriate amount of time for this bill. Had it only been a matter between us and the Liberals, there would have been no difficulty in coming to such an agreement. As I understand it, we share a perspective on this particular bill and on the appropriate way in which to manage House business.

I will remind the hon. member that we saw that remarkable experience this past Friday, when for the first time ever, the NDP stood up and said no, it did not need time allocation and was prepared to let a bill advance. Therefore, we can assume that what happened in all the other 60-plus cases, in terms of the NDP's perspective, was that it did not have the view that it was not necessary. In fact, it made it quite clear that it was necessary and it enjoys seeing the tally run up.

What we have tried to do as the government is adopt a balanced approach to try to assess as best we can the amount of interest in speaking to each particular bill and to utilize time allocation, as I think it was originally intended by those who inserted it within the Standing Orders, as a scheduling device to allow for adequate and appropriate debate but also to allow for decisions to be made. This is an important matter on which we need to have such a decision made, because it is a question of a free trade agreement that was entered into some time ago.

There have been criticisms, oddly, from the opposition, which claims to be concerned that free trade agreements are not moving quickly enough, yet now we are trying to advance a free trade agreement, and there is from that same opposition party the complaint that we are advancing it. We can see that between the lines, it really only has one perspective, and that is the perspective of the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster that free trade is a bad thing. We disagree. We think free trade is a good thing. It delivers jobs. It delivers economic growth for Canadians. It delivers prosperity and opportunity for the future.

Government Orders

That is why we are very pleased that we will be having the opportunity, in the days ahead, to allow every member of Parliament a say in whether Canada will have a free trade agreement in place with Honduras and whether we will be able to see the growth in sectors such as agricultural products and food products. Where we already have some trade, we have seen huge opportunities for future growth, opportunities for farmers to benefit, opportunities for those who work in the food processing sector, and opportunities for Canadian investors to benefit more. These are all good news for Canadians, and that is why we should be allowing this to advance to a vote and allowing Canadians an opportunity to share in the benefits of free trade, even with Honduras.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the government House leader. He suggested that all of us would have an opportunity. I guess he meant to vote, because he is certainly limiting the opportunity for us to speak to a particular bill. I guess the government House leader's view of things is that as long as we get to vote, even if it is in the negative, we have had our say.

The good folks in Welland did not send me here to stand up all the time just to vote without my telling the House what they think. That is what they send me here for. It is to tell the government what they believe and what they think.

Let me tell the House what free trade has done for the folks in Welland. We have seen one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. Nearly every single manufacturing job they had in Welland is gone.

The government House leader talks about agricultural processors. Let us start with the canning factory in St. Davids, which left to go to the United States, because it could. The Bick's pickle plant left because it could. It went to the United States. The Heinz Canada plant in Leamington left. Why? It was because it could go to the United States. I could go on and on and list them.

The issue is not whether we should enter into trade. That was abundantly clear long before I came to this place. This country is a trading nation. I do not think that is the issue. The bottom line is that there are many impacts associated with these free trade agreements. That is why they are so important to debate, because the impact can be staggering.

In my riding is the St. Catharines GM plant, where I used to be employed. When I was there, not that long ago, 9,200 people worked in that plant. Now there are 1,500. If we look at the GM chain across Ontario, we see there used to be 35,000 employed. Now there are fewer than 8,000. Where did they go? They went to Mexico. How did they get there? NAFTA gave them the right to go there.

There are winners and losers. That is why we need the time to debate who the winners and losers are, because fundamentally, that is what drives this debate. I do not disagree with the House leader that we need a trading agenda, but when there are winners and losers, we need the opportunity to tell the House and the government side the potential impact on us in certain parts of this country. Then it can try to balance those impacts, because ultimately, it is Canadians who are injured by free trade.

There is no question that there are winners. However, to force it in such a manner and make it sound as if our economy will come crashing down tomorrow if we do not have a free trade deal with Honduras is truly beyond words. Surely we do not need to use time allocation on a free trade deal with Honduras. That just seems beyond the pale in this particular case.

I look to the hon. House leader to find a way to negotiate with the other side. I recognize that we might be tough to negotiate with, but we are not supposed to be easy to negotiate with. We are the opposition. No one said we were supposed to be patsies.

If the government would come to the table in an honest and sincere way, maybe we could strike some deals. One never knows, but one should keep trying.

• (1530)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I want to start by acknowledging some of the challenges faced by some of the food sector, particularly in Ontario food processing. We know this sector has been facing challenges in Ontario due to rising hydro rates. A lot of new regulatory provisions that have been put in place by the provincial Liberal government have significantly handicapped our manufacturing sector.

I have experienced those kinds of job losses in my constituency. What the managers always tell us is that they do not want to get in a public political fight, but they tell us that hydro rates and provincial regulations have been hostile to businesses and have been critical in their making decisions. They say that when they are finding ways to increase their productivity and be more efficient, when the bottom line, the pro forma, does not work, naturally they will go elsewhere, especially when a lot of what they are producing goes elsewhere.

That is the key. When we talk about the auto sector, for example, if Canada was to only produce autos for Canada and no longer for the United States, we would be producing a lot less autos. That would mean a lot less jobs in Canada, but that is the vision my friend holds out.

The fact is, it is not an NDP world of a fixed economy. It is that fixed pie economy, the notion that there are so many dollars out there in the global economy and we will carve it up and everyone gets a slice. The NDP thinks if we enter into a free trade agreement, somehow that means we will give away part of our slice to someone else.

That is not how economies work. We know that economies can grow and shrink. When did economies shrink most of all? It was in the Great Depression, when we saw the world response to increased tariff walls to try to bring in protectionist measures to protect their economies. The result of that was the greatest depression in the history of mankind. It was brought on exactly by that philosophy of protecting one's fixed pie. When have we seen the greatest growth and the greatest prosperity? It has been when we have had free trade.

Government Orders

When we had the negotiations on the NAFTA and the free trade agreement with the United States in his neck of the woods, in the Niagara Peninsula, there was talk, as he said, of winners and losers. They said that the great loser would be the wine industry. It would be wiped out. No more would we get that precious Baby Duck that was produced in the Niagara Peninsula. The wine industry would be gone.

What happened? It was not about winners and losers; it was about winners and winners. The wine industry sharpened its pencil and improved its techniques. It got better, and now Niagara has a world-class wine production industry, very different from what it was back in 1988. It is a really first-rate wine industry, proof that Canadians can compete and do compete, and that free trade brings prosperity, success, and jobs for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, somewhat paradoxically, we have just witnessed an excellent debate between my colleague for Welland and the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. This is in no way related to the procedural matter before us, namely a request for an explanation into why a time allocation motion has been imposed.

This is an illustration once again of just how important this debate is. We can safely predict that the sun will rise. Similarly we can predict that each day, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons will move a new time allocation motion, arguing that he knows what the NDP's position is. I could very well respond that the Conservatives' position is also well known. However, that is not what debate is about. Debate should focus on the impact that a bill will have on each of the country's ridings and on its positive or negative consequences. If as many members as possible are not allowed to express their views, then the whole purpose of the debate process is lost.

Fortunately we will have a new government in 2015, otherwise I have a hard time understanding how we can ask 30 more members to sit in the House only to be gagged.

My question is very simple. How can the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons reconsider his planning to allow substantive debates in which as many members as possible get an opportunity to speak, instead of limiting debate and gagging us every time?

• (1535)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that I should plan the agenda so we could hear from more speakers. I did that about a week and a half ago, and I seem to remember he voted against the House sitting later and having more speakers.

Therefore, I am very puzzled by this position of the New Democrats. They say we should have more speakers and then they try to shut it down. Earlier today, when we were embarking on more debate, they tried to shut down the House entirely so there could be no more speakers today. Just earlier, the House leader of the official opposition complained that Conservatives, having had a few people deliver the position of the party and having set out what we all agreed in, were letting more New Democrats speak. He wanted to

hear more Conservatives speaking and fewer New Democrats. I can understand why; perhaps he too gets tired of hearing NDP speeches. I do from time to time.

All I hear from the New Democrats is a series of positions that are inherently contradictory. If they want to talk about time allocation and whether it is necessary, last Friday we had the experience of the New Democrats standing and saying they were ready to advance a bill so it was not necessary to move time allocation. This was the first time in three years they made that move, after we introduced such a motion. It was remarkable. I welcome more such moves by the New Democrats. I invite them to do that more often.

I think every Canadian can conclude fairly what happened in each one of those other cases about why it was impossible to come to agreement to advance a bill.

However, he is right. We should talk about the benefits of this agreement, such as who gains and what are the impacts on communities. I look to some of the important sectors. There is, for example, agriculture, which we just talked about. Beef producers would be likely to gain from immediate market access. Quite a few of those I know across Canada. Pork producers would benefit in many NDP ridings. Just in the agriculture sector, there are potato producers, vegetable oil producers, grains producers and a range of processed food products, which are all areas where it is anticipated and projected that there would be significant gains. Indeed, the stakeholders who are engaged in the process of producing these products have said that they support the agreement, that they want it in place and the sooner it is in place, the sooner they can get on with selling more, creating more jobs and delivering more prosperity for Canada.

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for elucidating to the House the importance of sectors like agriculture. In my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla, many ranchers stand to benefit from this legislation among others, including CETA, the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between Canada and the European Union, and also the recently announced South Korea free trade agreement.

Earlier today the NDP put forward a motion to adjourn the House. The NDP actually voted against extending House sitting hours. The fear I have is that the cattle producers in my part of the country will not get the benefit of access to these markets unless we can have a debate, come to a decision, and see these pieces of legislation become law.

Could the minister comment on these issues?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, there are very significant gains to be made through this free trade agreement. I talked about the agricultural sector, but it is through the full range of goods and services that Canadians produce. In fact, when this agreement with Honduras is fully implemented, 98% of the tariff lines, which are laid out on what the tariff is for a particular product, against Canadian goods and services will be eliminated.

Government Orders

That means 98% of the different types of products will enter Honduras tariff free. That is a huge upside and a huge opportunity. That is an opportunity in manufacturing, in agriculture, in our natural resources production, in our energy sector, and in a whole range of things that Canadians do and produce. That means there is an opportunity for jobs and economic growth.

We have an opportunity, but the only way we can seize it is by putting this agreement in place. That is what we are seeking to do here. We are seeking to deliver benefits for all Canadians, including the Canadians from the hon. member's constituency in the beautiful Okanagan Valley, where I know they are also interested in the opportunity, not for government to owe them a living but for them to have the opportunity to make their own living, to achieve their own success. They are not afraid of competing with the best in the world because they know Canada can do it, and Canadians can do it successfully.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to ask a question to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, who is maintaining his intellectual dishonesty.

I am so sick of hearing members, particularly government members, playing semantics. Yes, we voted against the motion that would have taken powers away from members of Parliament. He said that we voted against a motion to extend debates until midnight. Yes, that was in the motion, but there was a lot more in that motion. Every time the Conservatives speak, they forget to mention the truth and the facts. I wanted to point that out today.

We said 100 times that we were prepared to work until midnight every night. The proof of that is that most of the members who are rising to speak during these extended debates are New Democrat members. I would like my colleague to clarify that and to be honest with the Canadians who are watching these debates.

As for today's motion—the debate is actually on a motion to allocate the time for debate on this bill—I get the impression that the Conservatives have lost all sense of democracy and do not see how the House of Commons is useful. It seems as though the Conservatives think that the House of Commons is only useful for voting. The only thing to do is to vote, even though historically, the House of Commons has been used to debate ideas, as we all know. Members come to represent their ridings and debate the issues of the day. The voters of Sherbrooke did not send me here to have me vote three times a day and then return to my riding. They voted to send me here to debate the issues that are important to our country.

I would like my colleague to tell us whether he realizes what an important role the House of Commons plays in Canadian democracy and why it is important to have debates. I know he will tell me that we have debated enough, that debates do not serve a purpose, and that we know their position and they know ours. Nevertheless, I would like him to understand that the House of Commons serves a purpose. Historically, the House of Commons has been used to debate meaningful ideas. Could the member comment on how important the House of Commons is to Canadian democracy?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, first I will address the issue of the motion for extended hours under which we are sitting. The member said that there was more in it than simply the extended hours, and that was why the NDP objected. Let us look at the more that was in it. There were three basic elements.

The first element was that all votes on substantive motions, if deferred, instead of being deferred to the end of government business, would be deferred until after question period the next day. I do not recall this being something that was an earth-shattering violation of democracy. It would have been 6:30 p.m., at the end of government business. Everybody thought it made more sense to do it at a time when everyone was in the House and when it could be done efficiently rather than at midnight every night. That is not unreasonable.

The second element that I did not refer to was it made it so that motions from the opposition to adjourn the House could not be made after 6:30 p.m. and motions to adjourn the debate could not be made after 6:30 p.m.

These were the elements that were so offensive to the folks who said they were willing to work late. They were willing to work late; they just did not want to lose the right to not work late. They want the ability to adjourn the House even though they have no problem with working late, but it is terrible if they cannot adjourn the House.

Members can see my problem here. The problem is the New Democrats do not want to work late. They do not want the additional hours. They do not want the debate that they claim to support to occur, and there could be no better example than this bill. They say that we should debate the bill's merits. There is some good stuff in there, but it is complex, so we have to debate the benefits and the negatives, except what did the NDP members do? They put forward a number of amendments. I cannot remember if it was 53 or 63, but the sum total of those amendments was to delete every clause in the bill.

Shall we have a thoughtful debate about that? I do not think that is a thoughtful debate. It is a silly debate. There was a separate amendment for every clause to be deleted. If that ain't process gone wild, I don't know what is. Most people say, "If you don't like it, vote against the bill, say you're against the bill, say you're against free trade, say you think free trade is a bad idea". We think free trade is a good idea. That is why we are voting for the bill.

You can say free trade is a bad idea and vote against the bill, but that does not mean we should not deny people the opportunity to vote in the House on the bill. That is what we want to see happening.

• (1545)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I go to questions, I would remind all hon. members to direct their comments to the Chair and not directly to their colleagues.

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

Government Orders

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Conservative House leader. Does the member find something wrong with having an amendment to a bill?

I remember the Reform Party, which is the Conservative Party today, on the Nisga'a bill for British Columbia when there were 471 amendments. We started voting in the House on a Monday and we finished on a Wednesday. As a matter of fact, maybe I should not say this, but they were falling asleep in the House. It was not because they were interested in the vote; they were just playing the game, and they did not want that bill.

Does the member remember that, or is his memory too short to remember what they used to do when they were in opposition? I would like to hear if he remembers, or if he was not born at the time.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I was not here. Second, I was never a member of the Reform Party of Canada. In fact, I was President of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, and I am a very proud member of the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario right now as well.

Of course, I am proud of that heritage and proud of its long history in delivering good results for Canadians. One of the best things the Progressive Conservative Party ever did for Canada was the delivery of the free trade agreement with the United States, a seminal crossing of a watershed, which was quite a debate in 1988.

In that debate in 1988 on free trade, the Progressive Conservative Party was advocating the benefits and opportunities that would come from free trade. However, the NDP at the time and the Liberals, although they have come around, were saying that it would be end of the universe, our economy would collapse, and Canada would be in terrible shape.

Many years later, the debate is over among Canadians. Broadly speaking, they see that free trade has proven to be tremendously successful. Canada has enjoyed tremendous prosperity such that we now have the strongest fiscal position in the G7, and the strongest economic growth and the strongest job growth in the G7 since the downturn, all because the country has embraced free trade.

Yes, it is true, there are some who still oppose the concept of free trade. They exist in some debating societies, they still exist in some fringe groups, and they still exist in the NDP in Canada.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Call in the members.

● (1630)

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

(*Division No. 162*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Falk	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leef
Lemieux	Leung
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Poillievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Reid	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Smith

Government Orders

Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)

Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trotier
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
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NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Ashton
Aubin
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Caron
Chicoine
Choquette
Cleary
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Dusseault
Foote
Freeland
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Hyer
Jones
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Mathysen
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Plamondon
Rafferty
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
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Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
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Andrews
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Boivin
Boulerice
Brisson
Byrne
Casey
Chisholm
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Fortin
Freeman
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Julian
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Masse
May
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nash
Pacetti
Pilon
Quach
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
St-Denis
Sullivan
Toone
Turmel

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, Canada Post; and the hon. member for Québec, Veterans.

[*English*]

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed from June 2 consideration of Bill C-20, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-20, the bill respecting the free trade agreement with Honduras.

New Democrats support trade, but we do so in a much more mature and robust way than the government has been doing.

Trade agreements are important. I know them very well, being from Windsor, Ontario, which continues to be the automotive capital of Canada, although the industry has witnessed attrition. I will speak to this quickly because it is relevant to today's debate.

There are winners and losers when trade agreements are implemented. Different sectors of society and industries are affected because the agreements essentially change the rules on how those businesses were developed, invested in, and had their technology, research, and training evolve—all of the things that were important for them to be successful. The rules can change quite extensively under trade agreements.

Canada's auto industry was affected as a result of the North American free trade agreement. We had the auto pact at that time, which was a special trade agreement with the United States. That agreement was challenged and we lost the challenge. We lost that special agreement with the United States, and hence our world ranking with respect to automotive assembly went from second place to eighth place.

A lot of jobs have been lost. A lot of investment has gone south of the border. Many people lost good, solid, value-added income from value-added employment, which allowed them to send their kids to university or college, allowed them to invest for their retirement, and made money available for our health care system and other types of infrastructure. More important, research and development, patent development, and all of those things are affected by free trade agreements coming into effect. The consequences can be severe.

We need to ameliorate the situation. We need a business case so we can protect those sectors, so they can have a fighting chance when the rules change.

Government Orders

There is the potential for attrition with respect to the South Korea trade agreement once it is implemented. The auto industry will suffer once again because some of the tariffs will be phased out. South Korea has non-tariff barriers and those barriers would make it difficult for us to send vehicles over there compared to that country dumping its vehicles into Canada and being more successful.

With respect to the trade agreement with Honduras, we have to look at a couple of fundamental things. New Democrats want to see democracy, environmental protection, and labour standards reflect Canadian values. We can undermine ourselves if countries use the environment as a dumping ground for by-products or as a shortcut. We have to consider whether we would in fact be encouraging the development of further substandard labour standards. There are some questions around the textile industry in Honduras, for sure.

We also want to look at democracy. Is the country becoming more democratic? I will get into that a bit more later.

Honduras fails on all accounts.

We also have to look at what significant strategic value this trade agreement would have to Canada. The government has focused on central America with a number of different trade agreements, but it has decided on a one-off with Honduras. That is unfortunate because it would reward a regime with questionable behaviour when it comes to a number of things.

We also have to make sure we have a satisfactory proposed agreement. The government has been negotiating agreements with environment and labour side agreements included, but those side agreements are not enforceable and do not have the necessary teeth to make sure we can do something about it.

When we are dealing with a force out there, whether it be a bully or somebody who is committing questionable practices, we know that if we do not take the carrot and stick approach then we are basically leaving ourselves vulnerable. The carrot is the reward. The stick would ensure that we can pull back on parts of the agreement, pull back on certain conditions, and demand certain things that would not normally be available.

• (1635)

When the Conservatives sign these trade agreements, these one-offs like this with questionable countries like Colombia and Panama in particular, we cannot enforce the improvement of conditions.

That is unfortunate, because we see in Honduras that we do have a significant problem with that. Honduras basically has a government right now that came in through a coup. In 2009, there was a coup to topple President Zelaya. It was a military coup, and it then formed its basis on the continued problems that have gone on for decades in Honduras.

Instead of cleaning up and rewarding this situation, we should actually be pushing back. We know that the United States, the European Union, the UN General Assembly, and many Latin American nations all spoke up about the abuse. They talked about the problems in Honduras, whereas Canada made relatively no noise whatsoever.

That is unfortunate, because a partnership is a two-way street. Why would we want to encourage this partnership? Some would argue that is why we have to open these doors and do all these things, but when we do not have the tools or the resources to push back against the abuses, or we do not put benchmarks in place to be reached, then there is no motivation for Honduras to do so. When it has no motivation to do so, it will just move the trade agreements and their benefits especially to an elite class in Honduras in particular.

We know that many NGOs have documented serious human rights abuses, killings, arbitrary detention of thousands of people, severe restrictions on public demonstrations, protests of freedom of expression, and interference of the independence of the judiciary. They are all well established.

We also know there is a lot of drug smuggling that comes through Honduras. Some of it is the worst in the region. In fact, much cocaine goes through Honduras.

Why would we want to partner with a state that is moving illegal drugs, some of which come to North America in great, significant amounts, including Canada? It does not make much sense. Why would we not benchmark that the drug effects would be reduced and measured over time as we continue the relationship with regard to free trade? It is unfortunate that we have missed the opportunity to do this. That is why we cannot support the government on this bill. This is a military government in Honduras, essentially.

It is interesting that, when we look at its ranking, we see that Honduras is currently Canada's 104th export market in terms of its value. We export \$38 million and we import \$218 million, and we have a deficit. This has been the theme of the government, moving us from a trade surplus to a trade deficit. We have also eliminated our manufacturing surplus exports and now have a manufacturing value-added deficit.

What we are looking at is the natural resources sector benefiting and the value-added jobs disappearing. They do not have to disappear, because Canadians are well trained, well researched, and have good experience in many sectors, but we have to make sure we protect them in the sense of providing the proper export market. Honduras does not rank as a strategic priority for that.

We were talking today in the House of Commons about where the EU deal is. It has disappeared. We do not have the text for it. We have not seen any action with regard to the European Union. At least there would be better options for value-added manufacturing and value-added food products getting out there.

It is important to talk about the government's lack of respect for understanding a comprehensive trade strategy. We are concentrating on these small markets in Central America without any type of strategy overall to improve labour, environment, and the quality of life of the citizens. We should be measuring those, benchmarking them, and demanding that they be improved so Canadians can compete in a fair, responsible, reasonable way.

Government Orders

• (1640)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleague just elaborate a bit more on the connection between trade and human rights.

The government wants to tell the public that the NDP is against trade, but what is more accurate is that we are pro-people and pro-workers.

The issues in Honduras and the human rights record in Honduras are problematic. Is there a concern that a free trade agreement such as this, without human rights elements, could be feeding the human rights issues in Honduras?

Mr. Brian Masse: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, and this is the point I would like to drive home. Here are a couple of facts. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime estimates that in 2011 there 92 murders per 100,000 people per year in Honduras, making it the most violent country in Latin America. In 2012, it reached a record high of 7,172 homicides, and since 2010 there have been more than 200 politically motivated killings in Honduras.

Here is the real kicker to this. The people with whom we want to do business, who are trying to go pro-democratic, are being killed in this country with which we want to now increase our trading relationship. That is exactly backward. We should be protecting those individuals by benchmarking the actions of the government to make sure those people get proper justice, are not going to be killed, and will not leave a void of good people who want to do the right thing.

When there is so much cocaine moving through that state, it makes us very vulnerable to increasing its wealth and capability to produce drugs and distribute them around the world, including Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we follow through what New Democrats are proposing with regard to why they do not support this free trade agreement with Honduras, we could make the connection that if they believe in what they are saying, Canada should not be participating in trade with Honduras.

My question for the member is this: does he believe Canada should have trade with Honduras, given his comments regarding human rights and other issues? Are New Democrats being inconsistent by allowing any form of trade with Honduras?

• (1645)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, New Democrats believe in trade, but we would like benchmarks and improvements on trade to make sure the labour, environmental, and other conditions are enhanced. That is the responsible and reasonable thing to do.

Trade has always existed, from tribe to tribe, from country to country. People have always traded, even in their own communities. That is going to exist. However, we want to benchmark. If we are going to create a more mature trade relationship with Honduras, then it has to have a more mature result; and a more mature result means to stop killing the activists who are fighting for democracy, stop killing the politicians who want democratic change or to have a democratic voice, whatever political parties they belong to, and also make sure journalists are not going to be slain, that there is a free press that can voice the concerns of people.

Those are all responsible, mature positions to take, in my opinion. It is one of the reasons the Liberal Party has so many problems, because it cannot take those mature, responsible positions when it comes to trade. Its members think it is an expense for people when it comes to the environment, social justice, human rights, and drug trafficking. When we improve trade relations with this country, why are we not demanding a decrease of the drug trade into Canada as part of the conditions?

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we support free trade and we support this agreement.

In thinking about free trade and what the Canadian trade agenda should be, it is important to understand how dependent Canada is on trade and the extent to which we really are a trading nation.

Here are a few data points: 80% of our economy depends on access to foreign markets for Canadian exports, and we believe that it is essential for us to be supporting that access to support Canadian businesses, Canadian jobs, and Canadian people. As well, 19.2% of all Canadian jobs are directly associated with exports, and each export-related job supports an additional 1.9 jobs. This is really key, really central, and it is why free trade is a crucial part of any sound economic strategy for Canada and a crucial part of our own economic strategy.

What I am sad to point out, however, is that essential as trade is as a centrepiece of our economy, right now we are suffering. We are running significant trade deficits. What that says to me is that the government talks a lot about trade, but our economic strategy is not delivering, and it is not delivering particularly in the trade area.

We see that with Honduras. In 2012, Canadian business exported only \$39 million in goods to Honduras. Meanwhile, we imported \$219 million worth of goods from Honduras.

We need a trade strategy that is about integrating Canada into the global economy, selling Canadian goods abroad, and creating jobs in Canada.

Part of what we need to be doing when it comes to Honduras is creating an opportunity for Canadian beef and pork exporters. They see a real opportunity there, and the opportunity they spot is one reason we are in favour of this agreement.

In the debate so far today, we have heard reference to the need to have a more comprehensive approach to trade, a more comprehensive view of how Canada fits into the global trading arena. The Liberal Party absolutely supports that position.

We support the deal with Honduras, but Honduras is a tiny economy. This deal is not going to move the needle, and it is really important for us to have a much broader view of where Canada fits in the world and who we trade with.

Government Orders

In particular, we would like to see much more attention on the fast-growing emerging market economies. We should be paying a lot more attention to Africa, since some of the fastest-growing economies in the world are in Africa. There are several countries in Africa that have had more than 5% GDP growth for the past five years. That is a tremendous rate of economic activity, and Canada, with its very strong reputation in that region, should be taking advantage of it. We need a Canadian trade policy that looks to these vast growing markets in a comprehensive way.

We have spoken a lot already today about the European trade deal, and it is very important to spend a little time talking about that deal and focusing on it. Europe, of course, is a vast market. We have supported the deal that the government has been talking about, but, like many people in this House, we are very disturbed that the deal, which was announced with so much fanfare in October, has not yet been inked.

We urge the government to complete it. Yes, we are going to support the government on Honduras, but we would very much like the government to pay attention to the European deal and get it done.

This deal is essential for Canada. Now that the Americans are talking to Europe, there is tremendous danger with the European deal that that they are going to leapfrog us in the procedural process in the civil service and that we are going to find ourselves at the back of the line.

That would be a real pity for Canada. We have to pay close attention and devote all our efforts to getting that European deal done.

We have spoken today about some of the internal problems in Honduras. They include issues with democracy, labour rights, and the environment, and even as we support this deal, it is worth dwelling on those issues. It is really important for us to enter this trade deal with our eyes wide open.

Canada cannot trade only with perfect democracies. It is a big global economy, and we need to be part of it. It is actually helpful for countries that are on the path from authoritarianism to democracy to have trading relations with democracies like Canada.

●(1650)

However, even as we enter into those relationships, we have to do so with two points of view. First, we have to see the building of these connections between Canada and a country like Honduras as part of a strategy to help open up the country, to help democratize it, to help those journalists who are in trouble, to help opposition politicians and labour activists. That has to be an essential part of our approach.

Second, as we enter into a closer economic relationship with a politically troubled country like Honduras, we have to be very clear with our businesses that if a tipping point is reached, it must be the position of Canada that morality and our values will trump dollars.

We have seen that happening most recently in the Ukraine conflict. We have had a very strong economic relationship with Russia, and that economic relationship was based on some of the ideas that are driving this trade deal with Honduras. It was based on the hope that Russia's engagement with the world, with the west and Canada, would help tip it in the direction of being more democratic

and being a more open society. Sadly, that has not happened, so we have had to pull back from that relationship at some economic cost.

In entering into deals with countries like Honduras, countries in a troubled place on the path from dictatorship to democracy, we have to be very clear in our own minds and in our discussions with Canadian businesses that it is a possibility that this could happen, because we never want to be in a position where the values that are so important to us in Canada, the values that we stand for in the world, are compromised.

In conclusion, we do support this deal. We hope the House will vote in support of it. We are very much in support of a Canadian economy that is integrated into the world.

However, as we work on Canadian trade, it is very important to remember three things.

One, we have to do a much better job of ensuring that Canada is a successful trading nation, and our trade deficits right now show that such is not the case.

Second, and in pursuit of that first goal, we have to have a much broader, much more comprehensive vision. The Honduran deal is great, but it is a very small country and, as we discussed today, our deal with the very big European Union is stalled. Let us get that done, and let us start working on some comprehensive deals with the fast-growing emerging markets, particularly in Africa.

Third, even as we strongly and energetically support trade and openness to the world economy as a centrepiece of Canada's economic strategy, we have to bear in mind that the world is very spiky. The world is not flat, it is spiky. Different economies are playing by different rules, and sometimes that is going to mean that we will come into a values clash with countries that we have been building a trading relationship with. At those moments, we have to be prepared to let our values stand first.

●(1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

She talked about free trade agreements in general. I have a general question for her about the Liberal Party's support and her leader's support for the free trade agreement with Europe when we have never seen the text of the agreement. She asked a question about it during today's question period.

Does she think it is normal to support a free trade agreement when we have not seen the details or the text? Does she think that is normal?

[*English*]

Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, indeed we are paying a lot of attention to the European trade deal, as are our colleagues in the NDP. We are very troubled that although this deal was announced with a lot of fanfare, we have seen very little detail and very little progress toward concluding it.

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We are comfortable in supporting it and indeed proud to do so, because doing a trade deal with Europe needs to be one of Canada's top international economic priorities. That is what we are talking about when we talk about the need for a comprehensive approach to trade and a comprehensive approach to getting access for Canadian businesses to the world's big trading blocs. That said, it is a real problem that this deal has not been done and that so little detail has been released. We hope the member will join us in pressing the government.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Toronto Centre made reference to Honduras and the fact that her party supports the deals.

When I sat on the trade committee, I had the opportunity to go to Colombia and meet with President Uribe and his cabinet. He talked about how important trade was in assisting Colombia in diversifying its economy from guns and drugs and all these other things.

Colombia still faces a lot of challenges. My colleagues in the NDP said to figure out the human rights part first and assess whether a country deserves to trade with us. My challenge with that idea is that in that case, we would maybe never give countries like Colombia and Honduras the opportunity to diversify what they are doing.

I would ask my colleague to reiterate the importance of some of these developing countries and why it is important for us to do deals with them to help them to diversify and build up their economies.

Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with that point. It is very important for all of us to acknowledge and appreciate that these are going to be very hard issues and that we have to look at them case by case. There are going to be countries that cross the line in terms of how they treat people at home or the way they behave on the international stage, and when that happens, we cannot have trading relations with them.

That said, trade and engagement can be and has been, as we have seen historically in many cases, a very effective way of bringing countries into the international community and of fostering more democracy and more openness at home, as well as being of great benefit to Canada. In our judgment, Honduras falls into that category, and that is why we support this agreement. Again, having said that, we do think it is important, going forward, to watch the situation closely and to enter into this agreement with our eyes wide open.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the member for Toronto Centre was asked to be a panellist on a panel regarding trade issues concerning GMAP in particular. I know the government had a problem with it, so I want to hear the member's comments on where the government should be going with its trade policy and how this Canada–Honduras free trade agreement would fit into the GMAP of the government.

• (1700)

Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, we strongly believe that it is important for economic considerations and trade to be a big part of Canada's relationship with the world, particularly now as the rules of the world economy are shifting.

As I said earlier, though, it is very important for us to understand that we are not playing in a world economy that plays by a single set

of rules. We are playing in a world economy where some countries are playing by state capitalism rules. They are authoritarian at home and they take that authoritarianism abroad when they trade. It is very important that we build a trade policy that understands that, is conscious of it, and is aware of the problems that might await us.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague from Toronto Centre who opined that we have judgments that perhaps become a value judgment, because we have to look at the circumstances of individual cases. I would not disagree with that. I would come to a different conclusion than the member came to, which is that we should just go ahead with Honduras.

It reminds me of her colleagues in the last Parliament, who decided that the Colombia deal would not be a good deal until the human rights abuses were cleared up. They finally caved at the last minute and made a deal with Uribe in Colombia and said that we would have some sort of monitoring committee. It would be Colombians monitoring to make sure that Colombians did not abuse Colombians when it came to human rights. Good luck with that one, because it did not work. If that is the Liberal value judgment, then trade trumps all, and maybe we will hope for things to get better. Then it really is time for a new chapter to be written.

When we look at values, we look at human values and human needs and how we respect human values around the world, not at whether there is a balance sheet at the bottom that actually becomes the important message. Clearly, the government sided with the Liberals in tow as an extra piece of add-along and decided that it is their value system. That is their value judgment. If it is a dollar sign, it is a great value. If it is human rights, not so much. Maybe it will get better. Let us hope it gets better. If it does not get better, we do not live there. That seems to be the attitude.

I am not quite sure how that happens. Clearly the evidence points to Honduras not being a stable regime. It has no elected government. In comes the army and takes people away. It seems that the House was seized with what happened in Crimea and unanimously said that no state should simply walk into a democratic state and decide to impose its will, even if it is somewhat internal with some external backing. We see it in Honduras. We want to have a trade deal, so maybe it is okay.

It seems slightly hypocritical. If we are standing up for the rule of law and for human rights, surely to goodness we can stand up for the rule of law and human rights for the people of Honduras, some of the poorest on the planet. The average wage is \$1.25 a day. We could not buy a Big Mac for \$1.25. I do not know if we can even buy a coffee for \$1.25.

If that is the trading arrangement we are looking at with one of the poorest nations in the world, then free trade is a bit of a dead end, if that is how we measure success. In my view, we are taking advantage of Honduras. We are trying to extract from it, because they do not have much leverage. The government is not good about extracting a decent deal when dealing with a country that might be on par with ours, whose economy might be equal to ours, or greater, when it comes to the EU. The EU is a totally different bandwagon.

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My goodness, we have a deal. We do not have a deal. We are going to sign a deal. It is coming. I used to tell my kids that when they were younger. When they asked in July when Christmas was coming, I would say it is coming. When they were three years old, counting days from July to December 25, it was a tough one. I used to say, "It is coming. Be patient".

It seems the government has decided that we on this side should believe in the tooth fairy. The EU deal will finally get here at some point, but in the meantime, we have a better one with Honduras. What a trade-off. Never mind the 500 million people on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. They will get to that one. That is not as important as this one. They will even have time allocation on it. That is how much we need this free trade agreement. We need it so badly for Canada's economy, because as we know, it is fragile. The government always tells us that we live in a fragile economic world economy, and this deal with Honduras will probably rectify all that fragility. It might, but I highly doubt it. I am a bit of a skeptic. I am on the opposition benches, and I am supposed to be a skeptic.

• (1705)

One thing is for sure: this trade deal will not enhance the civil liberties, human rights, and economic well-being of the people of Honduras. For all the impassioned speeches and bluster on the other side about how this would lift them all up and that rising tides lift all ships, we should ask the people of Colombia, a country we signed a free trade deal with a few years ago, whether that tide came and lifted all ships. They would tell us that it did not. They are as badly off as they were before it was signed. In some cases, the situation is worse. If we asked them about their human rights, they would say that it is as bad as it was before. If we asked them whether journalists are still being murdered in Colombia, even though that was supposed to end, they would tell us that it is true too. If we asked trade union members in that country whether their members are still losing their lives on a monthly basis, we would find that it is true.

All of that was meant to end. The Liberals said that they would sign on to the deal during a minority Parliament to make sure we passed a bill for an FTA with Colombia. They signed on to that deal. They bargained away the human rights of Colombians, so I do not trust them to not bargain away the human rights of the Hondurans.

There are ways to leverage beyond a balance sheet when it comes to human rights. We have seen it around the world. I would remind the current government that it was a previous government, under the prime ministership of Brian Mulroney, which they used to call the Progressive Conservatives, that said that in spite of the Commonwealth, we should embargo South Africa because of apartheid. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was absolutely correct. The trade union I belonged to at that time, as well as the broader labour movement, had called for that for years. We were right to call for it at that time. We did not enter into a free trade agreement that claimed to change apartheid in South Africa. That is the difference. We could not say that if we had an FTA, apartheid would be banished. It would not have been. However, the embargo made it go.

My friend across the way wonders if I am kidding. I am not kidding. The reality is that we did not enter into a free trade agreement. The prime minister entered into a different free trade agreement in this hemisphere with a partner in the United States, but

he did not enter into one with South Africa. He led the banning of trade with South Africa. He placed an embargo on trade with South Africa, and at the end of the day, we saw an end to apartheid. That was a leveraging tool that was useful.

I say to my colleagues on the other side that if they want to make a difference in the lives of Hondurans, a free trade agreement will not do that for them. The evidence is clear. What would make a difference would be an understanding of how they need the rule of law and democracy back in their system, not a dictatorship that is basically funded by the army.

My friends across the way always talk about the rule of law and democracy and how these are essential ingredients for building economies and societies and enhancing the efforts of their citizens. Why do we not start from that premise?

Not all societies are perfect. We know that this democracy is not perfect. We have seen that in the last couple of days. Some folks have said that majority governments are the tyranny of the 50% plus one. Those are the rules we play by. That is okay. We might think there is a different style of democracy we might want in this place. Perhaps we would change it if we had the opportunity.

There are other means to ensure that Hondurans can lift themselves up. This free trade agreement will not. That is a shame, because once we do this, it will be the end of the road for us. We will simply say that we have entered into a free trade agreement, so we do not have to do anything else, and we will leave them alone, just as we have done with Colombia. There will be no more leverage with respect to that government to say that it needs to democratize itself and needs to respect human rights and work with its citizens, not oppress them. That is what we are seeing now.

Every expert who has come before the international trade committee has said that there are abuses across the entire country, and they have not stopped. Free trade agreements do not end those abuses. If we want to end those abuses, we should use other tools to make it happen. Then and only then should we look at entering into a trade agreement with Honduras.

It is not about not trading with Honduras. At the end of the day, it is about telling the Government of Honduras that it needs to clean up its act first by respecting the rule of law and the human rights of its citizens. Then perhaps at some future date we might enter into some sort of trading agreement.

• (1710)

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a trade agreement with a country that has an economy that is smaller than Ottawa-Gatineau's. Almost half its population lives in poverty or extreme poverty. We are not looking at a market that would be extremely beneficial for Canadian producers and manufacturers. Also, it is a country for which Canada already has extremely low trade tariffs, under 5%, as we heard in committee.

Government Orders

More importantly, on the topic of human rights, it is a country in which more than 30 journalists have been assassinated or killed. Labour organizers and women continue to be murdered in Honduras. There is also drug trafficking that goes on with impunity.

Could my hon. colleague please elaborate on the kind of trade the NDP would like to see? In committee, not a single witness said that increased trade with Honduras would improve the situation for human rights in that country. What kinds of trade agreements should Canada look at negotiating to benefit Canadian families?

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, the member is right about its economy being small. There are few opportunities for most trading groups in this country. There is some agricultural potential for us in Honduras, but beyond that, there is not much else.

There is a greater opportunity for us to perhaps work with DFAIT and NGOs to help Hondurans build civil society capacity and government capacity that would put Honduras on a path to a democracy that respects the rule of law. Even its own Supreme Court says that 98% of the crimes committed are committed with impunity, because folks there do not believe that they are going to be caught, and if they are caught, they will never go to trial or be convicted.

There is no respect for the rule of law. How would any company here in Canada enter into a trading relationship with a country where there are rampant criminal elements and there are no convictions? Why would one go there?

One of the things the Conservative government always says is that if it is going to have a trading partner, the other side needs to have the rule of law so that both sides understand what is going on. That is not true in Honduras.

We need to help it build that capacity internally, and then perhaps there would be a trade agreement down the road.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening, but I get a lot of confusion in what the member is saying. On the one hand, the member is saying that trade is good with Honduras and is something we should pursue, but on the other hand, he is saying that liberalizing trade with Honduras is bad.

Is it the position of the NDP that we should trade with Honduras, but only if we put huge tariffs on them, and that this somehow would be a way Canada could actually impact change in that country?

Does the hon. member not believe that by having more opportunity for Canadians to actually trade with Hondurans, to go back and forth and to provide more opportunity for them to come here and see how this government and civil society operates, would be a positive that would actually help encourage Honduras' move towards democracy?

Is it the member's contention that the best way to impact change in Honduras is to trade but to levy huge tariffs on that trade, and somehow that would improve the economic situation between Canada and Honduras? Could the member explain that?

• (1715)

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to explain to my friend across the way, the parliamentary secretary. No, it is about

building civil society and governmental capacity first. Then perhaps we would trade with them in some form or another.

Then again, if you want to bring Hondurans here to learn about how to build capacity, I think that would be a great idea. Instead of bringing temporary foreign workers from Honduras up here all the time to exploit them, maybe you ought to bring those folks up here to learn about democracy. Let them learn about the rule of law. Let them learn the rules about human rights, and you can keep the temporary foreign workers back in Honduras.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. Again, I remind all hon. members to address their comments to the Chair rather than directly at their colleagues.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would like to begin my speech with a quiz. What do the following organizations have in common: Alternatives, the British Columbia Teacher's Federation, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Common Frontiers, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux and the Council of Canadians?

Mr. Speaker, I know that I have the floor right now, but I would hand it over to you if you would like to answer my quiz, or I could give you the answer if you are having a little trouble.

The answer is that all these organizations have given the Canadian government seven warnings. Let me share their concerns. These various civil society organizations in Quebec and Canada are concerned that the free trade agreement currently being debated in the House of Commons will further undermine human rights and democracy in Honduras. That is the answer to the quiz.

Discussions on this free trade agreement began a few days after Juan Orlando Hernández was installed as president. He took power following the highly controversial presidential election in Honduras. Most international observers felt that the electoral results, which were marred with irregularities and obtained in a context of violence, were not valid.

The proposed legislation shows that Canada supports illegitimate governments if doing so serves the interests of the Canadian economy. That makes no sense.

This bilateral trade agreement was signed on November 5, 2013, shortly after that presidential election, in spite of widespread opposition and evidence suggesting that the agreement would exacerbate social tensions and human rights issues.

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After the military coup in 2009 that resulted in the overthrow of democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya, the violence and repression reached unprecedented heights. Human rights and women's rights advocates, members of the LGBT community, the Garifuna, indigenous peoples, union leaders, farmers and journalists were systematically threatened and in some cases, unfortunately, killed.

The unfortunate thing in all that is that Canada is exacerbating social conflict in Honduras. In addition to the free trade agreement, Canadian investments have contributed to social conflict, particularly in the mining and tourism industries and the export sector.

The government of Canada provided technical assistance for the adoption of the General Mining and Hydrocarbons Law in January 2013. The new law ended the seven-year moratorium and imposed a 2% royalty on mining companies to fund state security measures.

The agreement also provided for new mining projects, and this revived social tensions and required a heightened military presence in the communities where the mining projects were located.

According to the Honduras Documentation Center, 52% of the conflicts arise out of the management of natural resources. The best-known example, unfortunately, is the Goldcorp mining company of Vancouver, which operates a gold and silver mine in the Siria valley.

From what we know, the mining project is apparently responsible for contaminating the water, drying up watercourses and causing the emergence of serious health problems in the surrounding communities. Unfortunately, the full extent of these problems has not even been identified.

In the clothing and textile exports sector, Gildan of Montreal, whose factories are located in northwestern Honduras, has come under heavy criticism. Gildan is said to be responsible for numerous work-related injuries due to excessively long work shifts and high production targets. It has allegedly fired workers for attempting to unionize.

In the tourism industry, Canadian investments have resulted in the displacement of indigenous and Afro-Honduran communities, without regard for their culture or their ancestral rights on those lands.

The Canadian government is misleading the public when it says this free trade agreement will result in improvements in the situation in Honduras. In fact, it is going to enormously reduce the capacity of the government to legislate in the public interest, and deal a hard blow to the rights of communities and individuals and to labour and environmental rights.

● (1720)

In the meantime, investors' rights are taking precedence. Corporations will now be able to sue the government if it makes decisions that run counter to their interests. If the government in power seeks to protect its people and does anything that goes against investors, it will be sued. The Honduran government will thus be inclined to make decisions based on the interests of foreign investors, not those of its own population. That is an enormous risk.

The side agreements on the environment and the right to work include no mechanism to give them force and effect in law. Consequently, by favouring the economic interests of a few privileged investors, this free trade agreement will only force Honduras into even greater crisis and a heightened climate of violence.

I would now like to address the issue of police corruption and the militarization of the state. Police corruption is endemic in Honduras. Some senior officers are involved in criminal activities, and impunity undeniably reigns in the judicial system and law enforcement agencies.

Constantino Zavala, chief of police in the province of Lempira in western Honduras, was recently suspended as a result of drug trafficking allegations.

President Hernández has emphasized a return to military security, specifically by ordering the creation of the Military Police of Public Order funded by proceeds from a new security tax on major corporations.

The new military units will be responsible for patrolling residential neighbourhoods, new developments and public places in order to combat crime. However, human rights advocates in Honduras believe that they are witnessing a return of the death squads that assassinated women, youth and political dissidents in the 1980s.

During the November 24, 2013, presidential election, many Hondurans hoped that the country's new political face would put an end to the two-party regime, which would be for the better. However, it would appear that, on the contrary, the questionable election of President Hernández has exacerbated the situation. Foreign observers and local human rights advocacy groups have reported widespread fraud in the form of vote-buying, voter registry irregularities, the sale of ballots, military intervention, bullying and even assassinations. Hernández has nevertheless been declared the winner, and that has plunged the country even deeper into crisis.

That is why many organizations are asking that the Parliament of Canada not pass this act respecting a free trade agreement between Canada and Honduras and that the Conservative government review its priorities with Honduras, focusing first and foremost on the welfare of its communities, its population and its workers.

I would like to conclude by saying that this trade agreement is not in Canada's best interest. The volume of Honduran exports to Canada is much higher than that of Canadian exports to Honduras. This trade agreement does not benefit Canada.

In light of the political and social situation in Honduras, it would be really ill-advised for Canada to enter into a free trade agreement with this nation. Perhaps we could revisit the matter a few years down the road when a more favourable climate prevails. For now, the government should focus on free trade agreements with emerging countries that offer considerably more trade opportunities for Canada.

Private Members' Business

●(1725)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a question I had asked one of her colleagues with respect to trade in general. I am sure she is aware that Canada currently has trade with Honduras. The member is suggesting that because of the environment in Honduras, we should not be enhancing trade. Does she believe that Canada should be decreasing trade with Honduras?

The second question is this: can she give an indication of a country with which she would be comfortable signing off on a free trade agreement?

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, it is not a matter of knowing whether trade with Honduras should increase or decrease.

If we know that certain types of trade fan social unrest or cause problems in another country, then we should ease up. However, if trade does not exacerbate the climate of instability among certain businesses, it can continue. However, when trade fans unrest, then we need to proceed much more cautiously.

I will give the example of a South American country because it is quite relevant. Recently, I had the opportunity to visit Brazil. This interesting, emerging nation has made great strides in the area of human rights and policing. A few years ago, it was impossible for people, especially for a young woman like me, to walk about the favelas without the fear of being kidnapped or assaulted.

Recently I went to Brazil and walked about in the favelas and lived to tell about it. I was able to see first-hand the great improvements that have been made and I think it would be worthwhile for the government to explore opportunities to enter into a trade agreement with this country.

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again I am a bit confused by the NDP position. The member for Welland went even further. Not only did he mention that the best way to impact change in Honduras would be to try to trade with massive tariffs and that we should punish the people of Honduras, but he also said that we should cancel exchanges of workers between our two countries and that somehow would promote better relations with the people of Honduras.

Is it really the NDP position that by helping to increase the wealth of a society, business can play absolutely no role in improving relationships between two countries, that business and trade cannot have a role in helping the people of Honduras develop a better society? How is it that New Democrats think that punishing the people of Honduras, keeping their wealth down, impoverishing them, would somehow endear them to Canada and then would open a door for us to help them make changes in how they govern themselves in civil society? How do they square that circle? I just do not get it.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the figures handy. I had them, but cannot seem to find them in my notes.

I can say, however, that the rich are getting richer, while the poor are getting poorer. The situation is not improving because the poor are falling further into poverty. Instead we seem to be fanning the conflict and contributing to the problems that people in this country are having and to the clash between the two social classes.

Even if wealth is being created, it is not being redirected to the poorest members of society. Nothing is being done to improve the social climate, which is especially difficult in Honduras.

●(1730)

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF EXTRACTIVE CORPORATIONS OUTSIDE CANADA ACT

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP) moved that Bill C-584, An Act respecting the Corporate Social Responsibility Inherent in the Activities of Canadian Extractive Corporations in Developing Countries, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased today to begin the first hour of the second reading of my bill, Bill C-584, An Act respecting the Corporate Social Responsibility Inherent in the Activities of Canadian Extractive Corporations in Developing Countries.

Today, we have a unique opportunity to take on our responsibilities as individuals, and also as a country. Canada is in a unique position, because approximately 75% of international extractive corporations are incorporated here, under Canadian legislation. Our responsibility is that much greater since we have to ensure that those corporations respect international human rights and meet environmental standards outside Canada.

We are not talking about the Smurfs here, but about something very real. We are talking about people whose rights are being violated, people who are displaced without their consent, without consultation, and people who are watching their environment being destroyed.

Private Members' Business

The companies themselves have understood two important things. First, they have a social responsibility to the communities, through the activities engage in. In 2007, representatives of the major mining companies signed the recommendations of the national round tables on corporate social responsibility and the Canadian extractive industry. One of those recommendations was the creation of a corporate social responsibility ombudsman office. The Executive Director of the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, the Senior Manager of Corporate Responsibility and Government Affairs at Talisman Energy, and the current President-CEO of The Mining Association of Canada all participated and all signed the recommendations.

The second factor that affects the extractive companies is a matter of image and credibility, as we know. The companies understand that in the digital age, when information is increasingly easily accessible to people, who are increasingly aware of social causes, it is worthwhile for the companies to demonstrate transparency. Moreover, more and more private investors and investment funds are looking at a company's reputation before becoming shareholders or investing in it.

Unfortunately, the Canadian corporate social responsibility strategy does not go far enough to guarantee that Canadian companies that operate in developing countries adhere to human rights and environmental norms and laws.

In 2009, the Conservative government created the Office of the Extractive Sector Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor in response to the report of the national round table on the subject, but did not give it any real power. The counsellor has neither the authority to investigate complaints nor the legal authority to ensure that the parties involved participate in the arbitration process in good faith. Its record is a fiasco. None of the six cases submitted were resolved in mediation and in three of those cases, the mining companies accused of violating human rights refused to participate in mediation. All of the cases are therefore closed, and the first counsellor appointed, Marketa Evans, resigned in October 2013, a year before the end of her term. The counsellor position has remained vacant since her resignation.

The industry unquestionably needs to rethink the way it handles its relations with governments and communities outside Canada. To do that, it needs clear guidelines and government help. It is time to look reality in the face. Voluntary measures do not work and corporate goodwill is not enough.

In a 2008 UN General Assembly report, John Ruggie argued that the legislative framework governing the activities of corporations in the natural resources sector is outmoded. He also found that the worst cases of human rights violations have taken place in low-income countries, countries that had recently experienced or were still experiencing conflict, and countries where the rule of law was weak and corruption levels high.

This frame of reference sets out three broad obligations that fall to states and corporations. States have an obligation to protect populations, primarily through legislative, administrative and judicial means, when corporations commit human rights abuses. Corporations have a responsibility to respect human rights by acting

with due diligence and being aware of the adverse consequences that their activities and economic relations can have for human rights.

● (1735)

Finally, they have an obligation to ensure access to effective recourse through both legal and non-legal means.

It is only right that they be accountable for their actions abroad. Unfortunately, rather than focusing on developing mandatory, effective mechanisms, the Conservative government continues to act meekly and timidly, and to promote voluntary initiatives.

Bill C-584 would establish an ombudsman with a clear mandate, a specific framework and real powers. We need an independent ombudsman in charge of enforcing standards and laws in respect of corporate social responsibility. The ombudsman would be mandated to investigate complaints on the actions of Canadian companies abroad, publish the findings of his investigations, and make recommendations to the Government of Canada regarding legislative amendments and the sanctions that should be imposed on companies at fault.

It is our belief that Canada must promote values of respect, social justice, environmental protection and respect for human rights abroad. Practices not permitted in Canada should not be permitted abroad either. Holding extractive companies to account is simply a question of justice. By taking this action, we will be giving a voice to those who do not have one. Together, we will give a voice to justice by creating the position of ombudsman.

I would like to point out that, today, I am the voice of over 500,000 people who have been fighting since 2006 from within Development and Peace for the establishment of an independent ombudsman with the power to hear complaints and take action. I would also like to recognize the work of the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability, or CNCA, a large network comprised of environmental and human rights NGOs, faith-based organizations, labour unions, and research and solidarity groups across Canada, which have been calling for the creation of the position of ombudsman for many years.

I believe that there is a clear message being sent when both NGOs and companies sign off on a recommendation. As legislators, we have a duty to listen to society.

Last weekend, the Permanent People's Tribunal, or PPT, was in session for two days. The tribunal was comprised of a jury of eight international experts who were called upon to assess the impact of the mining activities of Barrick Gold, Goldcorp, Tahoe Resources, Blackfire Exploration and Excellon Resources in Latin America. After having heard from numerous witnesses and experts, the tribunal reach the conclusion that these mining companies are responsible for a number of human rights violations, and that the Canadian government is, in part, responsible for failing to prevent and, even, facilitating these violations.

When the verdict was read on Sunday afternoon, Mireille Fanon-Mendès-France, one of the eight members of the jury, lamented the fact that "Canadian mining companies often act as new colonizers" and that they "arrive in the country, take possession of the lands and violate the peoples' right to self-determination".

Private Members' Business

This French expert, who works on the UN Human Rights Council, mainly denounced the acts of discrimination against indigenous peoples and neighbouring communities resulting from the activities of Canadian mining companies.

While the tribunal may not have any legal authority, it definitely has moral authority. Now it is up to us to act and to pass Bill C-584 to ensure that no human rights violations by Canadian businesses are tolerated outside Canada. We cannot and must not close our eyes to the protection of human rights. We must ensure that natural resources in developing countries are developed in a responsible manner.

The government is part of the solution to ensure that the international actions of these extractive companies are consistent with the standards and statutes regarding compliance with the social responsibilities of Canadian and international businesses. Canada's reputation has too often been tarnished because a mining project caused environmental degradation, rising social tensions and even violence.

In February 2011, for example, the NGO Human Rights Watch reported that security forces working for the Canadian corporation Barrick, one of the largest gold producers in the world, were guilty of rape at the Porgera mine in Papua New Guinea. In May, five people were killed in violent riots at the site of Barrick's North Mara mine in Tanzania. In the meantime, the Calgary oil company Talisman Energy continued its exploration activities in the Amazon jungles in Peru despite the opposition of the region's indigenous Achuar people.

● (1740)

Yet Talisman is still perceived as a champion of the social responsibility of companies in the industry as a result of its public support for the concept of the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples. What is wrong with this picture?

If we are not yet convinced of the urgent need to act, let us consider the fourteenth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development:

Over the past several years, the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Development has heard evidence related to the activities of Canadian mining and other resources companies in developing countries, including Colombia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Most recently, it has held hearings on the activities of the Canadian mining company TVI Pacific Inc. in the Philippines, as well as on the broader issue of corporate social responsibility with respect to the activities of Canadian mining companies in developing countries.

These hearings have underlined the fact that mining activities in some developing countries have had adverse effects on local communities, especially where regulations governing the mining sector and its impact on the economic and social wellbeing of employees and local residents, as well as on the environment, are weak or non-existent, or where they are not enforced.

[The Subcommittee is] concerned that Canada does not yet have laws to ensure that the activities of the Canadian mining companies in developing countries conform to human rights standards, including the rights of workers and of indigenous peoples.

I hope this issue goes beyond partisanship and that we will all agree that it is high time to take action against the reprehensible activities of certain Canadian mining companies abroad.

Bill C-584 is a path for justice and one more pillar to support human rights abroad. I hope to have the government's support to try to give a voice to those who, sadly, do not have one.

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for bringing forward the bill. I have looked at the bill and I wonder if the member could table for me any assessments she has done with respect to the financial and legal implications of it.

I am also somewhat concerned by the massive encroachment into the rights of the provinces that the bill, if passed, would undertake. Could she also comment on the consultations she had with provincial counterparts with respect to the encroachment on their rights and would she also table those consultations?

Again, could she table the financial recommendations, the financial impacts, the legal impacts, and her consultations with the provinces? Quite honestly, if she has not done those types of consultations, would she consider withdrawing the bill until she has done that very important work? It would help us to be in a better position to decide whether we could support the bill.

● (1745)

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, first of all, in terms of financial implications, I would like to point out that the bill uses funds already allocated to the Office of the Extractive Sector Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor.

The financial implications had therefore already been calculated by this government when it created the position of Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor in 2009. If the legislation needs to be amended to alter the financial implications, for example, then we will deal with that when the time comes. For now, this government has already done the calculations and there are no additional financial implications tied to this bill.

In addition, I consulted with almost all of the NGOs that had a hand in the national roundtable report on corporate social responsibility and the Canadian extractive sector. I would like to point out that this initiative was put forward by the government in 2006. It was the one that held the consultations. I reviewed everything that was said. This bill was endorsed by the industry, by the NGOs and by civil society.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that we recognize the whole idea of corporate responsibility. This is not necessarily new. I know my colleague, the current critic for the environment for the Liberal Party, has taken a keen interest, as other members have over the years, in wanting to advance a higher sense of corporate responsibility. I think Canadians as a whole would look to the government to come up with initiatives that would have an impact and would influence what happens in the world.

Would my colleague provide some additional comment on the type of support available? In fact, it would be nice to see the bill go to the committee, where it could draw upon some of the stakeholders who are very opinionated on this very important issue.

Private Members' Business

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question.

Again, I want to point out that this was the main recommendation of the national roundtable report on corporate social responsibility and the Canadian extractive sector. This recommendation was endorsed and drafted by the principal extractive sector and NGO stakeholders.

When the report was tabled, there was virtually unanimous agreement on accepting the principle of creating an ombudsman position. Also, as I said in my speech, a number of civil society NGOs have expressed support for this recommendation since the report was tabled in 2007, notably Development and Peace and the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability.

I can assure my colleague that civil society and the people my colleagues met with in their ridings support this bill. I am not saying that we have reached a general consensus, but I do think that we have achieved a consensus as far as creating an ombudsman position is concerned.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the member for her enthusiasm and corporate social responsibility. All of us here want to take this seriously.

It gives me pleasure to rise in the House today and speak about what our Conservative government is doing in our approach to supporting and promoting corporate social responsibility, or CSR, particularly with Canada's international extractive sectors operating abroad.

I want to emphasize that this government encourages and expects all Canadian companies working internationally to respect all applicable laws and international standards, to operate transparently and in consultation with host governments and local communities, and to conduct their activities in a socially and environmentally responsible manner.

Our Conservative government works across all sectors and with a wide range of stakeholders to underscore the importance of responsible business conduct, good governance, and meaningful stakeholder engagement, broadly and in the extractive sector specifically.

Canada is a trading nation. Our economy relies on doing business around the world. From the trade perspective, we promote CSR to Canadian businesses because they contribute to our economic success. I want to be clear. The vast majority of Canadian companies conduct their operations in a responsible manner. It is a key reason why Canadian companies are highly regarded and internationally respected. It is also one reason Canada is a global leader in the extractive sector.

Canadian companies operating abroad recognize that responsible business practices are fundamentally important to their ultimate success and to their bottom line, including shareholder value. Canadian companies recognize that a commitment to responsible business practice is a commitment to their own success.

I would now like to turn to a CSR strategy that our government has created.

The CSR strategy was created around a number of core areas. However, much of the focus has been centred on four key elements. These are often referred to as the four pillars of the CSR strategy. They include enhancing the capacities of developing countries to manage the development of minerals, oils, and gas, and the benefit from these resources to reduce poverty; promoting widely recognized voluntary international CSR performance guidelines; establishing the Office of the Extractive Sector CSR Counsellor; and supporting the development of the Canadian Centre for Excellence in CSR.

Other areas of CSR strategy include promoting and recognizing that transparency and disclosure are key to the success of CSR activities. Co-operating with stakeholders for continuous improvement in the implementation of the CSR strategy and extractive sector CSR practices is also very important.

The CSR strategy has proven to be a strong framework by which the government encourages and promotes responsible business practices by Canadian companies working internationally in the extractive sector. The CSR strategy has also garnered strong support from a broad range of stakeholders, including industry, civil society, and host countries.

The government's approach to CSR is based on its commitment to the value of using voluntary mechanisms for dispute resolution, such as those offered by Canada's National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the NCP. The use of voluntary initiatives based on internationally developed and recognized standards offers a flexible and effective approach to resolving issues of mutual concern, and can advance public policy objectives in a more expeditious and less costly way than relying on regulatory or legislative regimes. Voluntary mechanisms for dialogue and dispute resolution are respectful of the countries that host Canadian companies. It is for those countries, not us, to judge what laws should be in place within the respective jurisdictions.

Compared to the many legal alternatives, non-judicial mechanisms offer a cost-efficient and more accessible alternative for all stakeholders. Voluntary mechanisms also allow relationships to flourish on the basis for creating economic and social benefits for both the company and the host community. Coercive mechanisms shut down dialogue and risk ending positive relationships.

Through the CSR strategy, our Conservative government's efforts are squarely focused on encouraging constructive collaboration and dialogue. This approach is further exemplified by the Canadian Centre for Excellence in CSR, which has been successful in establishing an environment for productive discussion among key industry, civil society, and government stakeholders on sensitive issues affecting Canada's extractive sector.

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This government has made a commitment to review the CSR strategy five years following its implementation date. In 2014, I am pleased to report that the government has been active in carrying out this mandate. The review is informed by a comprehensive process that includes round table consultations with industry and civil society, supplemented by an online public consultation process. The Minister of International Trade and his parliamentary secretary also held consultations in the summer and fall of 2013, which has fed into the CSR strategy review.

● (1750)

The preliminary findings of the review confirm that the CSR strategy should continue. It clearly responds to the needs of the host communities and Canadian extractive sector companies operating abroad. We are confident that the CSR strategy will become even better as a result of the broad consultations we have undertaken during the review process.

Everything I have said so far clearly highlights why Bill C-584 is duplicative. It simply restates key elements of the existing CSR strategy. The government already works with the Canadian business community, civil society organizations, foreign governments and communities, as well as other stakeholders, to foster and promote responsible business conduct in countries where Canadian extractive sector companies operate.

The CSR Counsellor's office and the CSR guidelines promoted in the CSR strategy play an important role in assisting companies and facilitating dialogue between project-affected stakeholders to allow for sustainable economic growth in the countries where Canadian companies are active.

This government supports the overall objective of fostering enhanced accountability for the extractive sector, while continuing to address the CSR-related challenges of Canadian firms operating abroad.

However, I urge my colleagues to oppose this bill for three reasons.

First, legally the bill raises several constitutional issues. The bill purports to compel Canadian extractive companies to report on how they conduct their business when they are operating abroad. This clearly falls outside the Government of Canada's jurisdiction. Jurisdiction over how a company conducts its business is primarily provincial. Extractive sector companies do not fall into the federally regulated category. Even for federally incorporated companies, the federal government lacks the jurisdiction to legislate the commercial activities of these companies overseas. As a result, it is likely that any legal action challenging the constitutionality of the bill would be successful.

Second, Bill C-584 duplicates the key elements of Canada's existing CSR strategy, which already articulates how the government provides tools and information to assist Canadian extractive sector companies enhance their ability to manage social and environmental risks abroad. As mentioned earlier, much of the guidance and undertakings recommended in the bill are currently provided by Canada's NCP for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

Third, the CSR strategy is currently being reviewed. It is therefore premature to put forward this bill when concerns that have prompted its introduction may be addressed following the completion of the CSR strategy review.

For these reasons, I ask all hon. members to vote against the bill, which is legally unenforceable and duplicative and whose consideration is clearly premature, given the ongoing CSR review process.

I have had the privilege of travelling into Central and South America with different committees and have seen some of the different Canadian mining companies operate. I am proud to see how important they think CSR is. In fact, in Peru, it is really interesting. When one looks at the Canadian mining or extractive industries there, they are so highly regarded that other countries are hiring Canadians to help set up and establish their mines because we know how to do it.

I understand the enthusiasm that the member has for this type of legislation and her concerns, but she can rest assured that we are taking these concerns very seriously and already working with many stakeholders to ensure that these CSR concerns are being addressed.

● (1755)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak to Bill C-584, although I have to admit I am disappointed with what I have just heard from the government side, which seems to suggest that everything is going along perfectly and there is no need to do very much. In fact, if one looks at what it has been doing, it has been dragging its feet for a very long time.

[*Translation*]

I would like to congratulate my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île for this initiative. She is headed in the right direction and the Liberal Party will support this bill, An Act respecting the Corporate Social Responsibility Inherent in the Activities of Canadian Extractive Corporations in Developing Countries.

[*English*]

I would like to begin by thanking the large number of my constituents who wrote to me about this bill and about their concerns regarding the activities of Canadian mining companies in foreign countries. We would not be hearing from them if everything was going along perfectly.

Many Canadians care deeply about these sorts of issues and want to see us holding ourselves to a higher standard. I share those concerns and wishes. As I will be arguing, it is in everyone's interest that Canada adopt the highest possible standards in this area.

Corporate social responsibility is an important issue, and Bill C-584 is one of several private members' bills that have been introduced in recent years that seek to better regulate the activities of Canadian corporations working in the extractive sector.

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My own colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood, for example, introduced a bill in the previous Parliament. It was called Bill C-300. I have to commend him for this, because he really did make a very honest effort to address corporate social responsibility in the mining sector. It was a private member's bill that would have been the Canadian equivalent of the U.S. legislation passed in September of 2013, which requires mining and oil and gas corporations to submit annual transparency reports that disclose all financial payments provided by them to foreign governments for the purposes of furthering mining or oil and gas industry activities.

The bill before us today shares the same basic goal as the bill advanced by the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, but approaches it from a different angle by proposing to establish an ombudsman who would be responsible for:

(a) creating guidelines respecting the best practices to be followed by corporations in their extractive activities in developing countries; and

(b) monitoring the corporations' extractive activities to ensure compliance with the guidelines.

Earlier I mentioned the importance of corporate social responsibility. This is important because it is through a good regime of transparency and ethical safeguards that corporations acquire the social licence to operate successfully.

My colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood put it eloquently in a past speech, when he explained that:

Social license is more than a stack of legal documents and geological surveys; rather it is the social permission of the people affected to mine the minerals. Sometimes the people are well represented by their government and sometimes not.

The Canadian government has an obligation to ensure that companies based here are not engaged in corrupt activities that encourage foreign governments to not act in the best interests of their own citizens. This happens more than we would like.

For example, in January 2013, as documented by the CBC, Human Rights Watch reported that a Vancouver-based company failed to ensure that forced labour was not used in the construction of a mine it operated in Eritrea. The agency said that Eritrea's conscripted workers, some of whom had been forced to work for over a decade, face torture or other serious abuse, and revenge is taken on their families if they desert their posts.

Sadly, all over the developing world there are other similar examples of corporations failing to live up to the ethical standards that they need to adhere to. Most do, and do a great job, but we are here to make sure that they all do.

● (1800)

A failure to respect the human rights of workers and residents in areas affected by mining operations can lead to social instability and failed states. We all end up paying the price when this happens.

In the example I just cited, there is some evidence that the Canadian company tried to address the problem on its own, but evidently whatever action it did take was insufficient to prevent these abuses from occurring. This is bad for Eritreans, it is bad for Canada's global reputation, and it is also bad for the mining company itself, which was subjected to considerable criticism.

The company might very well have benefited from independent guidelines regulating how it should operate in foreign countries and a watchdog to ensure it was compliant with those guidelines.

In fact, there is already a broad consensus among civil society, NGOs, industry, and some governments that there has to be something done about the problem of unreported payments and corruption involved in a variety of enterprises, particularly the extractive sector, and that we need to have increased transparency in order to curb corruption. The government claims that it shares this goal, yet I note that it failed to support the bill from my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood, which would have brought Canadian regulations up to par with American and EU standards. I suspect a similar fate, based upon what my Conservative colleague just said, will befall this bill presented by the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île. I hope I am wrong.

The Prime Minister announced with much fanfare in June 2013—that is, a year ago—that the government would adopt a G8 initiative that requires companies to disclose any payments they make to foreign governments, but a year later, no such legislation has been introduced. My hon. colleague from the Conservative Party said, “We're on top of this and our corporate social responsibility plan is just working beautifully”.

We are told now that something will be forthcoming by April 1, 2015. There is no excuse for this two-year delay. We will see if the government is any quicker at introducing these rules than it has been so far in, for example, regulating carbon emissions in the oil and gas sector. That was promised five years ago.

One way that it might demonstrate good faith and show that Canada is taking this issue seriously is to allow Bill C-584 to be taken to committee.

With regard to the bill itself, let me reiterate again that it is a very well-intended piece of legislation. Liberals recognize that, and we are supportive of it.

That said, there are a few areas that can be improved. For example, clause 9 of the bill indicates that corporations would have to report to the office of the ombudsman on any extractive activities within one year of the act coming into force. However, a later section, subclause 10(1), gives the office of the ombudsman up to three years to develop the guidelines. If the ombudsman does, in fact, take three years to develop the guidelines, how will companies be able to report in the first and second year in the absence of those guidelines?

However, that is something that could be corrected in committee.

Another problem is in clause 8 of the bill, which would require companies to:

(a) take all necessary measures to minimize the negative impact of its activities on the environment or on human rights in the developing country

Without defining what “necessary measures” are, the bill would leave major loopholes for corporations that the bill is supposed to close.

There are a couple of other things; however, my time is coming to an end. I would encourage all members in this House to vote in favour of taking the bill to committee, because its objectives are good objectives for Canada, good objectives for the extractive industries, and the right thing to do.

● (1805)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for bringing this legislation forward. I was delighted to second the bill.

I want to pick up on what my colleague from the Liberal Party said. I am heartened to hear that the Liberal Party supports this legislation.

The last time we debated similar legislation put forward by the member's colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood, the Liberal Party unfortunately did not support it entirely. At the time, the Liberal leader and some members of the front bench could not find a way to support Bill C-300, so I am glad the Liberals will be supporting sending the bill to committee.

These are really important initiatives. We have already had an overview of what the bill proposes to do, but for those members who are hearing about this legislation for the first time, it essentially says that Canadian companies doing business abroad should more or less follow the same rules that they follow here. That is essentially the theory around this legislation and that is what the round table came up with.

The round table, as has been mentioned, included members of civil society, industry, and government. Ed Broadbent, who formerly represented my riding, was very much a part of moving that forward.

Then Alexa McDonough had a bill similar to the one we are debating now; I also had a similar bill, and my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood put forward Bill C-300. We have had a lot of debate and discussion.

The government has said that it has acted. It has talked about its CSR Counsellor being in place. The government felt that this was taking care of people's concerns about the behaviour of Canadian extractive companies abroad. However, when that position was created, we all noted that the position was actually toothless.

It is important to note the title of counsellor, not ombudsman. When complaints came in, the counsellor did not have the power to investigate them. The problem with the counsellor position was that it was incumbent upon both parties, the party making the accusation and the company, to accept an investigation. To no one's surprise, there were not many investigations. The CSR Counsellor was not effective at all.

My colleague has brought this issue back to the House of Commons. It is fantastic to see the progress that has been made because of civil society. It really should be noted that civil society has incredible leverage, particularly when it comes to both foreign policy and domestic policy. Development and Peace and unions such as steelworkers that are involved with extractive companies have been front and centre in making this issue known to Canadians and to politicians. They want them to move forward, and they have not let up. They want Canada to be smart about what we do abroad and

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proud of what we do abroad. That way Canadian companies abroad are seen as responsible actors.

Development and Peace, the faith communities, unions, and everyday Canadians have been carrying this flag and making sure that we do not lose sight of this issue. It is terrific that my colleague has taken it up. She is carrying on the work that was done before.

I also want to acknowledge the change in mindset of the mining sector. In particular, for the record, I want to cite the Mining Association of Canada. This organization has written to government to advocate what we heard from my Liberal colleague, which is to bring in regulations on what we call "publish what you pay", meaning that the transactions that any company does abroad would be made public. They want to see consequences if companies do not make those transactions public.

The government has said it is consulting on this issue, but industry is ahead of government. What is going on here? We need to get the government to listen more carefully, not just to Canadians but to industry as well. The government has to get on board and get moving on this issue.

I will read what the association said on this issue. It was noted, and I will not be surprising some members, that there was a bit of tension between industry and civil society representatives on the last iteration of this legislation, Bill C-300.

● (1810)

Here is what the Mining Association of Canada is saying in a letter to government:

The function of the Office of the CSR Counsellor should...be focused on the "front end" [at the beginning of the process] of any request for a review...to clarify the issues and the guidelines involved, to encourage the parties to address the issues through direct dialogue under local-level mechanisms, and to advise parties on the implementation of the guidelines. MAC believes companies will be motivated to participate in this front end of the process, as they have participated in the initial stages of the requests for review brought to the Office to date, and as an alternative to other, more formal forms of review.

It goes on to say, and here is the important part:

This first step is essentially to determine the nature of the dispute and whether mediation could be effective in resolving it. In MAC's view, this first step should be mandatory: a company's refusal to participate in this front-end process should have as a consequence a loss of public support for the proponent's project by the Government of Canada's Trade Commissioner service.

It is industry that is saying this. This is progress. This is the Mining Association of Canada acknowledging that collectively the industry has a responsibility to engage when there are concerns and complaints about activities on the ground.

The government says that somehow this is not in its domain. It is extra-territorial. It cannot be involved in these things, et cetera. Industry is saying no; we need to be engaged.

We have seen incredible advancement. We have seen engagement. What we need to see from government is to be at least at the same level as industry and adopt these measures that have been put forward.

Private Members' Business

The reason is that, when we see mining operations abroad—and we see it, frankly, here in Canada and we see it with gas and oil as well—and the fact that companies can make a profit from mining, no one has a concern around that. However, when we see that people's human rights are abused or that the environment on which they rely is being negatively affected and they feel they have no voice at all, what are their choices? I have Bill C-486 before the House on conflict minerals,

When mining companies, extractive industries, or oil and gas companies are abroad, they are not just any companies; these are Canadian companies, and there are certain values and responsibilities, I will say, that go with that.

We have heard stories of mining companies hiring security firms to clear the land, so anyone who protests any of the developments is cleared off the land and sometimes people are killed. This is extraordinarily troubling for many of us, but the question is, what are we going to do about it? Will we just continue to listen to these grievances, or will we act?

That is why the bill is so important. It says that there is a responsibility for the Government of Canada to have an objective person to oversee the concerns that may arise because of our activity abroad.

CSR is a great term. The problem I have noted over the last number of years is that it seems to only apply in-house to business and the corporate side. Frankly, I think it is quite obvious to many that it should be something that government adopts, that the cornerstone of part of our trade policy and our foreign policy should be corporate social responsibility, and the Canadian government should ensure this happens.

We just had some great debates in our foreign affairs committee about what happened in Bangladesh with the Rana Plaza collapse. Over 1,000 people died a year ago, on April 24. Why? It was because there were not proper standards and because the integrity of the building was not kept up. What happened? We saw 1,100 people die, many of them children, most of them women.

We can do better. We need to have oversight. The bill is a reasonable offer. We can make sure that when Canadian companies are operating abroad, we can say in good faith that they are following the same values and the same regulations that we want to see them follow here.

I would ask the government to at least look at what is being proposed and see if we can improve it, so that we can be proud Canadians when Canadian companies are operating abroad.

•(1815)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to support the bill introduced by my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île, Bill C-584, An Act respecting the Corporate Social Responsibility Inherent in the Activities of Canadian Extractive Corporations in Developing Countries.

For the benefit of my constituents, I will briefly explain what it is about.

My colleague's bill will ensure that Canada meets its commitments under international law and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights with respect to the extractive activities of Canadian corporations in developing countries; it creates the Office of the Ombudsman and requires corporations to report to it on their extractive activities; it gives the Office of the Ombudsman responsibility for developing guidelines on best practices for extractive activities; and it requires the ombudsman to table an annual report on this act and its operation.

I am very proud to be able to support this bill. Since I have been a member of Parliament, a number of groups have come to consult me at my office about the matter. There is a large Filipino community in my riding and they came to see me the first and second year after I was elected specifically to talk about this problem. Groups from the African and Latin American communities have also come to talk to me about it. It is a great concern for them. Even though they are in Canada, they know what is happening in their countries and they expect the government to act quickly to change the situation.

At the moment, 75% of the world's mining companies are headquartered in Canada. It is therefore our responsibility to point out to them that what is good in Canada is also good abroad. Since their headquarters are in Canada, it is up to us to tell them what practices they must follow. If we believe that human rights are important in the choice of best practices, of course we must encourage those companies to do the same things outside our country, in developing countries.

We often hear of workplace health and safety problems for employees in other countries where mining is being done. We also have to consider the issue of colonization, and I would like to use an excellent quotation to describe the problem.

Mireille Fanon-Mendès-France, of the United Nations Human Rights Council, said the following:

Canadian mining companies often act like new colonizers. They come to the countries, they take over the land and they violate the peoples' right to self-determination...

In fact, that is exactly what is happening. The companies arrive, they crowd out the people, they take over the land and they decide what they are going to do. If they need people to work, they use them. If not, they bring people in from elsewhere.

I am aware that some mining companies do not act that way. One of my good friends worked for a mining company before he changed jobs recently. That company went to the job site and gave health and safety courses to the miners. Those are good practices, and it is what my colleague is asking for with the establishment of the office of an ombudsman.

It is a question of choosing those good practices, gathering them together, sorting them out and teaching them as examples of what should be done. That deals with the problem of colonization.

We also need to consider our environmental responsibilities. What about our responsibility concerning the water used in mines? Are they going to let things slide like the previous two governments did? They, too, can say that it is not their responsibility because it is happening in other countries. That is what the Conservatives seem to be saying and, unfortunately, we have just learned that they will be voting against this bill.

The Conservatives are saying that it is none of our business, but it is our business. These companies have their headquarters in Canada. It is up to us to ensure that they proudly represent Canada. Our international reputation is at stake.

There is social unrest because companies show up and chase people off the land even though they were already living there. There are problems with violence. Children have also worked in those mines. The mines are a hotbed of violence and child exploitation.

● (1820)

We need to take a leadership role, especially since three-quarters of the world's mining companies have their headquarters in Canada and everyone knows what going on in those mines. We regularly see newspaper articles and reports on the working conditions in the mines, the potential for accidents and the age of the workers, which is something that concerns me.

I have done a lot of work on the issue of human trafficking. I do not want to accuse any company of human trafficking, but we know that young people are being exploited in these mines. It is unbelievable. We need to assume that leadership role and implement best practices. We need to ensure that every mining company that represents Canada abroad is accountable. That would help our reputation.

The creation of an ombudsman was recommended in the report that came out of the 2007 national round tables on corporate social responsibility and the Canadian extractive industry seven or eight years ago. The report was jointly written by NGOs, unions and the mining companies themselves. The government is arguing that we should not get involved in this, but if the companies themselves are able to stand up and say that they need guidance, it is time we give it to them.

The ombudsman's mandate would be to investigate complaints about the foreign operations of Canadian mining companies. Someone has to receive those complaints. The ombudsman should also publish the results of his investigations and make recommendations to the government regarding legislative changes and the sanctions that should be imposed on companies at fault.

This round table submitted its recommendations in 2007. In 2009, two years later, the government chose to instead create the Office of the Extractive Sector Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor, which is responsible for hearing complaints about environmental degradation and human rights abuses abroad. This is good, but it is not as good as having an all-powerful ombudsman.

This office has been the subject of a lot of criticism. The counsellor did not have the authority to investigate complaints. What is the point of having a counsellor who cannot even investigate complaints? He also did not have the legal power to ensure that the parties involved participated in the arbitration process in good faith.

Private Members' Business

If one of the parties does not participate in the arbitration, it created problems because the office of the counsellor could therefore not determine whether there was harm and could not recommend corrective action. In fact, six cases were raised and nothing ever came of any of them.

Now we can see what is going on with the self-regulation that Conservatives believe in so strongly. No matter which sector—rail safety, credit cards—they always say that there is a little code of conduct and that people act in good faith. I am sorry, but those fabulously wealthy mining companies are not all acting in good faith. Some are, but it is not true that they all are. It is our duty as lawmakers to impose regulations on these companies to ensure respect for international human rights.

Many people and organizations support my colleague's bill. I would like to congratulate her again. One that really interests me is the Development and Peace initiative called "A Voice for Justice". The campaign has collected 80,000 signatures calling for the appointment of an ombudsman who can ask unscrupulous Canadian mining companies for accountability.

I want to emphasize that because, in my riding, the congregation of the sisters of Sainte-Anne is really very active when it comes to ensuring respect for human rights and children's rights on an international level. The sisters asked me to talk about this issue. I would like to thank them for the work they do. A huge thanks to my colleague who introduced this private member's bill.

● (1825)

I hope that the government will at least agree to send it to committee. It is part of the legislative process to send it to committee, study it thoroughly and then decide whether or not to continue the process.

I hope that all members in the House will want to and will be able to vote in favour of the bill introduced by my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate with the member for Terrebonne. The member has two minutes remaining before we wrap up debate on this bill.

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île on introducing this bill.

This issue has been troubling me for a long time on a personal level. I did my studies with a specialization in Latin America. We often studied cases about mining companies going to developing countries, in very poor communities in particular. They built mines and promised many jobs to the locals. However, they did not talk about the negative consequences, such as the displacement of people. They did not talk about the environmental damage caused by the mines.

I am also very pleased to be able to speak to this bill for another reason, even though I have only a couple of minutes. I had the honour of working with my colleague from Ottawa Centre on Bill C-486, seeking to regulate the mining sector and dealing with conflict minerals in the region of the Congo. By bringing all these bills together, we can right the wrongs. We are putting in place a social responsibility system for extractive sector corporations.

Government Orders

I would very much like to talk about this some other time.

The Deputy Speaker: The member will have eight minutes remaining when we resume debate on this bill.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1830)

[*Translation*]

CANADA-HONDURAS ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-20, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, as reported without amendment from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-20 concerning the free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, for which the agreement in principle was concluded on November 5.

Free trade is a very important policy for Canada. The many advantages of free trade cannot be ignored, and it goes without saying that the strength of the Canadian economy relies on opening new markets. For that reason I do not understand why the government is delaying finalizing the free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras. I would like the government to move more quickly and to take concrete action with respect to emerging markets. This agreement is a start, but it is not indicative of the ambition that Canada should have with respect to international markets.

I am also wondering why the government has suddenly found that there is an urgent need for action in this area. I am wondering about the government's sense of urgency, because it has been negotiating this agreement since 2010. It has taken the government almost three years to put this agreement back on the table. Surprisingly, in 2010, the government was talking about short-term trade prospects. I wonder whether the government really takes international trade seriously, whether it is really a priority, or if this is just empty rhetoric.

If we look at the figures for 2012, we see that Canadian exports to Honduras totalled \$38.6 million. Bilateral trade between Canada and Honduras during the same period totalled \$257.2 million, while Canadian imports from Honduras were valued at \$219 million.

While trade between the two countries is not substantial, there are still many companies waiting for progress to be made in this area. They are looking for more openness, and unlike the NDP, which rejects the bill without understanding the importance of free trade agreements, I think we need to consider businesses and workers.

Once a free trade agreement is in place, Canadians can expect to see more jobs for the middle class and more business opportunities for companies. The Liberal Party has mentioned this fact on a number of occasions both in and outside the House. Every effort must be made to help the middle class.

Consideration must also be given to potential trade opportunities for Canada. Given the size of Canada's economy, it is critically important for us to compete globally for emerging markets. In my view, the government needs to be more serious and more transparent when it comes to this matter. It needs to answer questions over its failure to take action with respect to other emerging markets.

I agree that international markets are more open from an economic standpoint. The world and trade are evolving rapidly. This means we need to act more quickly on free trade initiatives.

Certain Canadian businesses stated in committee that they had lost a share of the commercial market in Honduras when the free trade agreements between Central America and the United States were signed in 2005. They pointed out that Canada needed to act as quickly as possible to regain this share of the market. We are already lagging behind. A free trade agreement with the Republic of Honduras represents an important step in the resumption of trade with Central America. However, we will then have to turn our attention to Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and El Salvador and negotiate additional agreements.

Previous Liberal governments in fact concluded trade agreements with far more influential countries like Costa Rica, the State of Israel and Chile.

Consider Chile, for example. Bilateral trade of goods with that country represents \$2.5 million Canadian, and exports to Chile amount to \$789 million Canadian. We are talking about trade that is almost 10 times greater than that between Canada and the Republic of Honduras.

Although this government boasts of having negotiated several agreements, such as the agreements with Colombia, Jordan, Panama and the one being negotiated with the Republic of Honduras, only the agreement reached with Peru appears to be as ambitious as those achieved by Liberal governments.

•(1835)

These agreements do not position Canada where it should be in the global economy. As is its responsibility, I urge the government to do more for international trade.

Furthermore, in addition to the free trade agreement, an agreement on environmental co-operation has been reached with the Republic of Honduras. That agreement refers to the promotion of stronger environmental policies and sound environmental management. The Canadian government must make sure it keeps those promises and develops measures designed to improve environmental performance. It must also ensure that businesses involved in trade between the two countries comply with them. For the moment, the agreement makes no mention of any audit mechanism. That means there would be no penalties for businesses contravening these agreements.

Government Orders

When it comes to the environment, the Conservatives have some work to do to regain Canadians' trust. The environment has never been a priority for the Conservatives, and everyone knows it. It is therefore surprising that they have moved forward with an agreement of this kind.

Can the Prime Minister and the Minister of International Trade give us any guarantees that this environmental co-operation agreement will be a success?

There is also talk about labour co-operation agreements. We ask that the government ensure that workers' fundamental rights are a priority and that labour law is complied with, here and in Honduras.

It is essential that any increase in trade occurs in a manner respectful of workers and that free trade between the two countries will not lead to weakened labour rights.

Once this agreement is final, we will be entitled to demand acceptable wages and working conditions for the workers of the Republic of Honduras.

As my colleagues previously mentioned, we are aware of the unstable situation in Honduras, and we believe it is not a situation that warrants the economic isolation of that country. We must ensure that increased trade between the two countries can be achieved through harmonious relations and that free trade side agreements will be complied with.

This agreement will help strengthen the national economy of Honduras and at the same time prevent certain violations of fundamental rights by force of the ties that will bind us. Economic ties between countries have the power to encourage better behaviour.

The government must still make sure that this economic agreement works properly; otherwise, trade must be halted. That calls for a great deal of vigilance and oversight in the areas of labour and the environment.

If the government really wants to guarantee human rights in Honduras as part of this free trade agreement, it must issue an annual report and require one from Honduras, so that the public can see whether human rights have been respected as trade between the two countries grows.

We are entitled to require compliance with these parallel agreements, and to have proof of compliance. I hope that this government will remain vigilant with respect to the adverse consequences of the bill, given the unstable situation in Honduras. We must remain alert and monitor the internal situation in that country.

In conclusion, I support this bill, because it represents a first step toward trade with new markets. Because our economy is based on exporting, I believe that eliminating barriers to trade can only be beneficial to Canada. I therefore ask the government to be more persuasive in this bill on free trade with Honduras, and to ensure that Canada is open to emerging markets in a way that fully reflects our values. The government must provide for better monitoring of the political, economic and environmental situation in the countries with which we trade. Otherwise, Canada's image could suffer.

• (1840)

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech. The difficulty I have is apparently the Liberal members are in support of a deal with a country that is so bad. That is the part of this debate that I cannot understand. We have a government and some members to my left who have decided that the words "free trade" mean more than the words "democracy", "human rights", "fair and equitable treatment of its citizens". Here we are championing a deal, an agreement, with a country that is awful. By signing such a deal, we are giving it legitimacy. We are giving a government that was put in place by a coup a legitimate place. As Canadians, we should be concerned and should take a big step back.

Would the member like to comment on that?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I am not a cheerleader for this agreement. I am saying that we will support it. There are issues. We do not support free trade without imposing certain conditions like the Conservatives and we are not against free trade like the NDP.

I will explain it to the member. There are already Canadian companies doing business in Honduras. This agreement will help Canadian companies that are doing business in Honduras. There are American companies that are taking business away from Canadian companies, companies that perhaps are in the member's riding or province. They have come before committee and testified that we are losing business. We are way behind. As much as the government likes to say that it has been signing free trade agreements, we have a trade deficit.

The member started off by saying that he wishes it was a Liberal government. So do I, especially in the area of free trade. We were champions when we were in government. When we signed free trade agreements, they were real free trade agreements. There were conditions imposed upon other countries. If we were going to sign an agreement, it did not matter with which country it was; those conditions had to be respected. We made sure that Canadian companies and Canadian individuals were protected.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague, the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, who explained the position of the Liberal Party quite well.

He also mentioned the other free trade agreements that we signed when we formed the government.

When it comes to free trade, the Conservatives want it at any price, without carefully examining a number of factors. As for the NDP, we know where it stands, and I have the impression that the party's position is that we should not have free trade with any countries. The opposite is true.

Government Orders

In his speech, my colleague from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel said there is no monitoring mechanism in the free trade agreement between Canada and Honduras. I wonder why, since it is important to protect our resources and our companies, when it comes to free trade. Can he explain why there is no monitoring mechanism in this agreement?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, that is a fantastic question. I want to congratulate my colleague on his election a few months ago. I congratulated him outside the House, but this is the first time I have had the chance to do so officially in the House.

We said the same thing: the Conservatives are signing a free trade agreement without any conditions because they are always playing catch-up. We are seeing it with this free trade agreement. It was negotiated in 2010 and, four or five years later, it has yet to be ratified in the House. It could have been done when it was tabled. We are already lagging behind the United States, which signed an agreement 10 years ago.

Some Canadian companies are losing a share of the market. Some workers are losing their jobs because a main office in Montreal is having business dealings with Honduras. We are losing commercial opportunities and jobs. We cannot sign free trade agreements without giving it any thought.

● (1845)

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I invite the Conservatives to consider the old saying that if you play with fire, you are going to get burned. This would unfortunately be the case if we ever partnered with the Honduran government to sign a free trade agreement.

We could ruffle each other's hair and joyfully squabble about the economic relevance. I am certain that very good arguments for an against could be exchanged from both sides of the House. However, that is not the problem. First, I will note that we cannot compare the very nature of trade between Canada, an export-oriented country, and little Honduras, whose main economic activity is underground and illicit narcotics trafficking. Honduras engages in mining activities. I can understand that Canadian companies are interested in seeing a certain legal framework, but this requires the rule of law and, obviously, that is not the case in Honduras.

The essential problem with this agreement is that we have to sign it with a partner that is not respectable enough to be considered credible. This is tragic. Honduras itself is the private property of a few families, a few high-ranking police and army officers, where no consideration is given to the interests of the local population. This is especially tragic, and it means that the government is not democratic. The recent governments were installed by the army. There is no real democratic choice. Not one government has recognized this government as being a free and informed choice by the population.

There is the recurring problem of corruption. It is complete, absolute and endemic. Not even the judges can be trusted. The United Nations has made recommendations concerning the Honduran judiciary. It said, in reference to the judges of the Supreme Court of Honduras, that it made no sense for at least four of them to be there. That speaks volumes. This is a state where the law is not obeyed. The main law in the world is "thou shalt not kill". In Honduras, that is not the case; a lot of killing happens there.

This is a state where there is no justice. Justice is a dream. As I said, there is no law, and a lot of killing happens there. Journalists are killed, as are union representatives and people who want a little democracy; everyone who makes certain people unhappy is killed. Because there is no justice, the killers are never prosecuted. What would the consequences be if the Canadian government sent mining engineers to that country? If Canadian mining engineers were killed, what recourse would Canada have? There would be none. We cannot rely on these people to ensure that justice is done. For that most obvious reason, we need to keep our distance from this kind of people. In that country, even the legal profession is at high risk.

If we were presented with a trade agreement that included a component on legal obligations and democratization obligations—that would not be exceptional in terms of recognizing a country's independence—but the problem is that we are being asked to partner with this country in a legitimate trade framework, but it is ostracized by corruption and the denial of the essential fundamentals of justice.

● (1850)

That is where we say to ourselves that associating with them is essentially so corrupting that we should not do it.

We have had treaties with other countries whose economic relevance we cheerfully quarrelled about. I am thinking of Jordan in particular. In the case of Jordan there was some economic relevance, but Jordanian society was also evolving, changing, and willing to use the window afforded by international trade agreements to become a much more democratic state that complied with international agreements and international human rights law. We supported it.

In this case, there is no such component. No government representatives came to tell us that signing this agreement would lead to democratization. The murder rate is constantly increasing. It is not improving; it is deteriorating. That is the whole problem.

We do not want to associate with people of such poor reputation. There is something extremely disturbing here: the law in Honduras, the informal law, permits private companies to hire mercenaries. One can imagine the international mess we would find ourselves in if ever any Canadian companies dealing with social problems or problems with competitors or small-time bandits attacking their company responded by hiring mercenaries. Canada as a whole and its global reputation would be tarnished.

Our global reputation is good. It is important to note that Canada has a long history of active involvement in peacekeeping missions. We had a prime minister who won the Nobel peace prize. We have legal experts who have drafted international legal instruments and charters of freedoms.

Canada is the opposite of Honduras. The history of Honduras is merely a succession of military governments and governments that belonged to a few private families. The old saying is true: if you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas.

Government Orders

I can essentially understand my colleagues, who were making an economic choice in terms of international trade. We could genuinely have a long discussion on the subject. In the case of Honduras, however, this is not a trade problem; it is a moral problem.

Should Canada support the international credibility of a government of thugs by means of a trade treaty? The issue is not that there are a few problems of corruption; it is that the corruption is systemic. All stakeholders have said the same thing. Even the U.S. Senate acknowledged this was unacceptable.

I will be pleased to answer my colleagues' questions.

● (1855)

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his excellent speech. Bill C-20 is a bit harsh and I fully agree with the reasons why we should oppose it.

The NDP studies international agreements properly and bases its assessments on fundamentally important criteria. Does the proposed partner respect democracy and human rights? Does the partner's economy have a significant or strategic value? Are the terms of the proposed agreement satisfactory?

What does my colleague think of the NDP's guidelines for studying international agreements?

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, who does excellent work in the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. She understands the problem we might run into by signing an agreement with Honduras.

The criteria imposed by the NDP take into account the fact that Canada does not want to become corrupt. We will not sell our soul for a fistful of dollars. On the contrary, we want to sign agreements with partners that evolve and have the same view toward democracy and respect for human life and environmental regulations.

In that regard, Jordan announced a major turnaround. It was interesting to become partners with a country that was taking charge and looking to the future. Despite the major economic gaps, we had the opportunity to become an older brother to be looked up to who supported a great move that would benefit the entire population of Jordan.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada used to be a world leader in foreign affairs, in our relations with other countries and in our ability to help other organizations, other countries, become more democratic, freer, fairer to their citizens and have better human rights records. However, I am afraid agreements like this set us back.

Agreements like this with a corrupt government that has very little regard for human rights send a message to other like countries that it is okay with Canada to be like this. It is okay with the Conservative government and with their partners, the Liberals, to be like this. Signing agreements with this kind of country is a signal to other oppressive countries that oppression is acceptable to Canada.

What does the member think of that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, the government has been quite clumsy about how it has dealt with this agreement. I do not think that the government members are criminals or interested in supporting fascists. Unfortunately, that is what they are doing.

Canada has a long history. We can criticize this government's approach to international relations sometimes. However, a few days ago, this same government was commended by the United Nations Secretary General for its efforts with regard to child and maternal health.

Canada can still stand tall. Through its history and accomplishments, on which we may not all agree, there is always a desire to be a good country that defends democracy.

However, with this agreement, it is clear that the government has it all wrong. I invite the government to change its perspective on this issue.

● (1900)

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to speak to Bill C-20, which deals with the agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras.

Before I begin my speech, as most of my colleagues on this side of the House probably know, I will be speaking as a New Democrat and I will be voting against Bill C-20.

In my speech, I will lay out the various reasons that lead me to that conclusion.

Before I begin, since my colleagues have mentioned democracy a great deal, I would like to tell the people watching us today on CPAC, on television or online, that democracy is very important.

We are sitting late at the end of this parliamentary session to make sure that we do things properly and to thoroughly debate the various bills that we have to pass. However, it would seem that only the New Democrats really value their speaking time in the House. We have seen that the Conservative party has missed more than 22 shifts, while the Liberals have missed four. On this side of the House, we are serious and we have not missed any shifts during these extended hours. I thank my colleagues for their participation in democracy. I will also refer to it in my speech.

As I said, I will be voting against Bill C-22. Why? Because we New Democrats have very strict criteria for free trade agreements. In general, they must respect the fundamental rules of democracy.

I will list them: first, does the prospective partner respect democracy, human rights, adequate labour standards, environmental protection, and Canadian values? If such is not consistently the case, is the partner on a path to meet those objectives?

We do not necessarily eliminate partners who do not meet those objectives. However, we want them to be people who are ready to meet strict and serious objectives.

Government Orders

Second, does the prospective partner's economy have a significant or strategic value for Canada?

And third, are the terms of the proposed agreement satisfactory?

I will begin with the first one that mentions, among other things, democracy and human rights.

I did a little research. I visited the site of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It provides some very interesting reports on the Republic of Honduras, particularly since the coup of 2009.

I looked at a report from the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination. I also checked the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders about the mission to Honduras. These very interesting reports paint a clear picture of the current state of human rights in Honduras.

What do the reports say? They mention human rights violations committed by the police and by security guards, as well as murders and people allegedly going missing. They indicate that Antonio Trejo, a human rights lawyer, was murdered. In fact, many human rights activists get killed or go missing in Honduras. There are also allegations that military groups have killed men, women and children.

The findings from the reports and the working groups raise many questions regarding an unwillingness, on the part of the government and judicial authorities, to investigate serious human rights violations. Furthermore, the country's legislative framework still does not prohibit the use of mercenaries. These are very serious issues that constitute direct attacks against human rights.

Canada was, for many years, a leader in international relations. Our country used to be a role model for the way it met its international responsibilities. However, in its current form, the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement fails once again to hit the mark.

•(1905)

The government is completely missing the mark. We should be leading by example and presenting a more substantial free trade agreement. The Canada-Honduras agreement, as it stands, is very problematic.

I have been watching the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway as he goes about his work. I know that he is doing an incredible job of keeping us informed about what is included in these free trade agreements and what the Conservative government is proposing to Canadians. I admire the work he does. I am part of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, so I do not get very involved with international agreements. Economics never really was my strong suit, which is why I think it is very important that we have other experts on our team. He takes his work very seriously and works hard to educate us and keep us informed about what is in this free trade agreement.

Human Rights Watch has said that Honduras suffers from rampant crime and impunity in terms of human rights. The murder rate,

which has risen consistently over the last decade, was the highest in the world in 2013. That was just last year. Perpetrators of killings and other violent crimes are rarely brought to justice. The institutions responsible for providing public security continue to prove largely ineffective and remain marred by corruption and abuse, while efforts to reform them have made little progress.

The rights of very specific groups are being attacked in Honduras. Journalists, peasant activists and the LGBT community are particularly vulnerable to attacks yet, as I said earlier, the government routinely fails to address those injustices and provide better protection for those at risk in Honduras.

What I find sad is that many people from Laval contact me every week to share their priorities with me and to talk about what is bothering them at the federal level. A large part of what they tell me has to do with our place on the world stage, the responsibility we have as a G7 country and the influence we could have in the world. Most of the people who contact me are extremely disappointed in this Conservative government's lack of leadership.

There are a number of examples at the international level. Take for example the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, which we pulled out of. Many people in Laval were shocked when we withdrew from Kyoto, and I know that people across Canada were stunned to see that the Conservatives were withdrawing from Kyoto.

I want to get back to the free trade agreement that we are discussing here. I do not want to spend too much time on the first point, since I know my time is limited. I did some research on the economy, to find out whether the proposed partner's economy is of significant and strategic value to Canada. Through my research I discovered that less than 1% of our trade was with Honduras. Our types of trade with this country are very specific and will probably benefit some very specific sectors in Canada.

I see that my time is up. I just wanted to conclude by talking about something that my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin mentioned during his period for questions and comments. Toronto is currently hosting the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Summit, and we are seeing all of this Conservative government's efforts to support women's and children's rights. If the government were to start integrating that into their policies, it would be a great start. Let us start with the international agreements we want to sign.

I am ready for questions.

•(1910)

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Alfred-Pellan for her speech.

I would like her to explain how a democratic country like Canada, with a relatively stable political system and an economy that may not be 100% but is pretty stable, can help Honduras with its governance problems.

What can Canada do to help Honduras become a democratic country again?

Government Orders

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from LaSalle—Émard. I know that she cares deeply about human rights issues. I am pleased that she is participating in today's debate. It is extremely interesting.

Canada is lucky to have been a champion, a leader. We are lucky, because not all countries can claim to be democracies. I do not always agree with the Conservative government, but from Monday to Friday, we have a one-hour question period during which we can ask the government questions about what is going on. We do not always get the answers we would like, and sometimes we get no answer at all, but that is part of the game.

We should be human rights and democracy champions. It is our responsibility as a G7 country to be champions for that. Why not help Honduras, as my colleague from LaSalle—Émard said, by setting a good example? I am not saying that our way is the only way, but Canada is a good example to follow when it comes to democracy.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Alfred-Pellan on her excellent speech.

She outlined the social and environmental factors that must be respected when entering into free trade agreements with countries across the globe. Established democracies must be respected when agreements are entered into, and human rights and workers' rights must be upheld. The countries involved must benefit and evolve into free societies, and in return Canada, too, must benefit.

Can my colleague please elaborate on the importance of humanitarian and social conditions in countries with which Canada negotiates free trade agreements?

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Compton—Stanstead. We often have very good discussions on workers' rights. I talked about being a champion, but my colleague from Compton—Stanstead is a champion when it comes to protecting the rights of workers. He cares a great deal about this issue.

I come back to what I said in my speech. Something is lacking. There is a lack of motivation and leadership. The Conservatives turn a blind eye, but the fact is, we should be keeping an eagle eye on these matters and trying to reach the very best agreements possible, while at the same time enhancing the quality of life of people in foreign countries who may be less fortunate.

The statistics on Honduras are quite startling. According to the United Nations, out of 186 countries Honduras ranks 120th on the human development index. Honduras is appalling when it comes to social values. We can do better. We can take action and play a leadership role. We can ensure that we live in a fairer world, a greener and more prosperous world, not only for Canadians, but for all our trade partners.

• (1915)

[English]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill C-20, the free trade agreement with Honduras.

Despite what members of the government, and perhaps members of their partners, the Liberals, have suggested, we are not opposed to trade. On this side of the House, we are very much in favour of trade, and very much in favour of fairer trade, and where that is possible, then free trade as it goes with fairer trade. However, this is certainly not an agreement we can support, mostly because the partner on the other side of this agreement is not one we should be giving any credence to whatsoever.

The government in Honduras is oppressive, and it was originally formed through a military coup. It is a government that has institutions that are not working. It is the murder capital of Central America, perhaps of the world, and most murders are not investigated even by the police, yet the Conservative government has decided that it is a model deal for us to sign. I just cannot stomach how low we have sunk in search of free trade deals.

We know there is a trade deal coming with Europe, but for some reason it is very badly stalled. It was announced in the throne speech of 2011 along with a trade deal with India, but we have not seen either of them yet. We have seen an apparent signing of an agreement in principle, but we do not even know what those principles are because there have been no details.

Here we are debating, as we did with Panama, a deal with a very poor nation that has a terrible governmental and human rights record, and we are debating it under time allocation, of all things. This is now the most important thing on the Conservative government's agenda, and it has to be done now. However, the agreement in principle was reached in August 2011, which is almost three years ago. The actual deal was signed in November 2013, more than six months ago, but now we have five hours to debate it. That is ridiculous, and 68 time allocation motions are not some kind of scheduling convenience, as the Conservatives would have us believe. They are running roughshod over democracy, and we should not be proud of that record.

Both the Conservatives and Liberals are suggesting that the NDP is opposed to trade, which could not be further from the truth. In fact, we relish the thought that we are going to be able to get at more trade with more partners in this world. However, we need to do it in a way that improves the status of those other countries, and not as a reward for countries that have terrible records and terrible governments, which is in fact what is happening here.

We ask questions when it comes to a trade deal.

Government Orders

Is the proposed partner one that respects democracy, human rights, the environment, labour standards, and Canadian values? If some of those things are not all the way to what a Canadian standard would be, are they working to fix it? If the answer to that question is yes, then that is a partner we can see doing business with on the basis of a free trade agreement.

Is the proposed partner's economy of significant or strategic value to Canada? Apparently it may be of strategic value to some mining industries, but it is a very small player in terms of Canada's overall trade, and we do in fact have a trade deficit with this country.

Are the terms satisfactory? Well, the proposed free trade agreement with Honduras fails this test.

Honduras is a country with undemocratic practices, a corrupt government, weak institutions, low standards, insignificant strategic value, and a record of human rights abuses. When I look at the list of what Honduras is, I cannot help but think that some elements of the Conservative government are heading in those directions.

The fact is that we have had 68 time allocation motions to end debate, which are called "guillotine" motions in other countries because that is what they do. They guillotine debate and democracy. It is an indication that the Conservative government has slipped, we believe, in terms of its democratic practices, like Honduras.

The bill the Conservatives brought forward to change the electoral act disenfranchised some Canadians. That is moving backwards as far as democracy is concerned. The allegations of voter suppression are another example of undemocratic practices.

• (1920)

Regarding corruption in government, we have senators being given money by the Prime Minister's chief of staff in order to keep them quiet, or billing practices whereby senators bill the public for travel when it is a partisan event they are going to or bill for homes they are not living in.

All of these things are corrupt practices of a government. Maybe the Conservatives think they want to be like Honduras, and that is why they want to sign an agreement with it.

We have a Prime Minister who surrounds himself with characters who are of questionable repute. We have a government that is giving more and more power to single individuals within that government, taking that power away from institutions or Parliament and putting it in the hands of a minister. For example, there is Bill C-24, which would give the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration the power to individually strip a person born in Canada of his or her Canadian citizenship. We do not normally find that concentration of power except in governments that are not democratic, and that is part of what we are seeing here.

We have weakened institutions in Canada. The Chief Electoral Officer had his powers reduced in the recent bill on electoral reform. We have a fight with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. We did not have the government kicking four people off the Supreme Court, but there was a pretty public spat with the Supreme Court that had a chilling effect between the government and the Supreme Court.

We have lower standards in Honduras, lower standards in Canada, but what has the government's record been over the past few years? We have lowered our environmental standards. We have weakened our labour laws. We have taken ourselves in the opposite direction of improving environment and labour laws. We have stripped environmental protection from hundreds of thousands of rivers and lakes in this country. This is moving in the direction of a less environmentally conscious state, and perhaps Conservatives are looking at Honduras and seeing themselves in the mirror.

Other speakers have talked at length about the human rights abuses that have been legion in Honduras. Some of the human rights abuses have been perpetrated by the government and some perpetrated by others, but none of those human rights abuses have met with any kind of punishment, because impunity is the rule in Honduras. People can get away with anything because there are weak police forces and so little in the way of judicial oversight that very little is done.

What do we have here in Canada in terms of human rights abuses? It is a pretty good country, except we have a thousand or more murdered or missing aboriginal women and we have a government that is refusing over and over again to actually conduct even an investigation into those murdered and missing aboriginal women. In any other country, that would be seen as a human rights abuse. We have appalling living conditions and appalling educational conditions for indigenous people in this country. That in itself is a human rights abuse, and the government appears to want to do nothing to improve the situation. We have refugees who come to this country expecting to be treated with dignity and respect, and in some cases they are denied some or all of their medical care. They are expected to report back to their home country even if their home country is an unsafe place for them.

This is the direction this country has moved under the Conservative government, and it is looking strangely as though maybe Honduras is a comfortable partner for the government. I hope not.

In Honduras we also have the spectre of the killing of journalists. Now, I will not accuse the Canadian government of killing any journalists; that has not happened, but the government has attacked the CBC and it has attacked the CBC's journalists in the sense that it has now imposed itself in the collective bargaining arrangements with those journalists. The journalists are now having to deal directly with the government.

We on this side of the House support fairer trade. We support trade with equals in terms of environmental law, in terms of labour law, in terms of how people are treated in those countries. We support trade when standards in that other country will be raised and when we can see that happening. We do not support the free trade agreement the government has negotiated with Honduras for the reasons I have cited, and we will be opposing this deal.

Government Orders

• (1925)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member, because as the critic for international human rights for the official opposition, this particular agreement is very concerning to me.

Earlier today, the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, from the Liberal Party, was talking about this trade agreement and the importance of it. He made reference to the fact that if there were some kind of accounting mechanism, a report done annually on how this agreement improved human rights, he might find that acceptable. We have an agreement with Colombia right now. We have such a reporting mechanism, and it is a complete fallacy that it is an appropriate method, because what is coming out of there does not even begin to address it. We are into our third report now on that particular deal.

I would ask what the member's response would be, when it seems that the Liberal Party is very quickly moving into alignment with the Conservative Party on these particular trade agreements.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hamilton for the very astute observation that we have an alignment here of the Liberal and Conservative members of Parliament, who seem to think that this is one of the greatest deals since sliced bread and that maybe the way to deal with human rights abuses in the future is to just report on them. We already have examples of reporting, and it is actually not improving things. Things are not getting better.

The whole point of entering into relations with countries that are oppressive and are violating human rights is to try to change that situation. It should be to try to make that country understand that it cannot continue that way. Signing sweetheart deals with a country to give it the power to trade freely with Canada is no way to encourage that country to change its ways. In fact, it seems to be rewarding bad behaviour. When I was growing up, they did not reward bad behaviour, and maybe that is something the Conservatives need to learn.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Honduras is renowned for human rights violations and for its crime rate. In 2013, Honduras had the highest rate of crime in the world.

The Conservatives attack us and claim that we are against free trade. I would like the member to correct the notion that we are against free trade, which is far from true. Free trade is not an issue. We are not against trade; democracy is what is at stake.

Are we going to sell our products to, and trade freely with, a country that does not respect democracy? I would like to hear the member's thoughts.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly my point. We are not opposed to free trade. In fact, I am actually looking forward to the details of the Canada–Europe trade agreement, because I note that a number of countries in the European Union actually have better environmental laws than Canada does, and some of them have better labour laws than Canada does. Perhaps that deal would cause

us to have to raise our standards, and we would actually do better, as a result, in our environment and labour laws.

The PIPEDA law that was put in place in Canada in 2000 was a step forward and was brought in because we wanted to do business with Europe. Europe would not do business with countries that did not have personal information and privacy legislation.

That is how these trade deals should work. They should not work to drag everyone down to the lowest common denominator; they should work to bring everyone up to better standards, to an improved quality of life, and to improved human rights in particular in this case.

• (1930)

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to congratulate all my colleagues. For the past two weeks, they stood up in this House while the Conservatives and the Liberals voted for extended hours but did not show up at work. We show up at work. We care about Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Now on to Bill C-20, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras.

In terms of labour and the environment, this government has simply abandoned Canadians across the country. I feel this bill is a flagrant act of deception.

The short title, the Canada-Honduras Economic Growth and Prosperity Act, does not reflect any of that. Members will recall that Honduras is a very poor country with repressive, undemocratic policies. Its human rights record is shameful.

The previous government, led by democratically elected President Zelaya, was overthrown by the Honduran army under the pretext of a constitutional crisis. The coup was largely criticized throughout the world, particularly by neighbouring countries in Latin America, EU countries, the United States, and even the UN General Assembly.

Meanwhile, Canada made a notorious decision not to impose sanctions on the current regime or condemn the abuse inflicted on its opponents. Once again, human rights were ignored. Non-governmental organizations have reported serious human rights violations, including murder, the arbitrary detention of thousands of people and very tight restrictions on public protests and freedom of speech.

Speaking of freedom of speech, I just want to point out that there have been 68 time allocation motions in the House in three years. Freedom of speech also means that every party has the right to talk about bills in the House without being chastised every time. Three of those motions were moved in the past two weeks.

Government Orders

The situation in Honduras is extremely troubling, yet we are getting ready to do trade with a country where delegations of business people will have to visit in order to ensure the success of the agreement and future trade.

A number of elements support the NDP's position against this agreement. Among others, Honduras is characterized by its anti-democratic practices. It has a corrupt government, inadequate institutions and a record of human rights violations. This is unacceptable to Canadians across the country. Honduras also has low humanitarian standards and has negligible strategic value for Canadians.

The agreement was negotiated without any transparency, despite repeated requests from stakeholders in several Canadian economic sectors. During the negotiations, the Government of Canada was never willing to release the text of the agreement, as is also the case with the European Union treaty.

Furthermore, the bogus environmental assessment for this free trade agreement released in October 2013 ignored the impact of Canadian investments in Honduras, because this information was deemed confidential. Again, this is a lack of transparency. This means that side agreements on the environment and on labour are inadequate, because they do not include concrete mechanisms to ensure their implementation and assess their impact.

The extractive sector is certainly a major business interest for Canada, and for the NDP, as evidenced by the introduction, earlier this evening, of Bill C-584 on the social responsibility of mining companies, by the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

• (1935)

A number of these companies, such as Goldcorp, were involved in controversial local conflicts with citizens and indigenous groups. They are the target of allegations of environmental contamination. This is why my colleague introduced her private member's bill and why the NDP is worried.

There is a lack of transparency in this type of free trade agreements. Canada is a major producer and extractor of natural resources. Therefore, when our economic ambassadors have holdings or businesses abroad, they must absolutely respect the environment, human rights and labour rights.

Speaking of labour rights, Gildan Activewear, a large garment manufacturer based in Montreal, owns factories in Honduras and is named as one of the beneficiaries of the agreement. However, Gildan Activewear had businesses in India where nine-year-old children were on the production lines. They were paid \$5 per day, and sometimes per week. That is unacceptable.

Let us also keep in mind that Honduras is becoming a major clothing and textile manufacturer with a cheap labour force. This is why we must be vigilant with agreements such as the one negotiated with Honduras.

Clearly, the NDP recognizes the importance of international trade to our economy and is in favour of opening up new markets and providing a suitable environment for our Canadian exporters.

In my riding, there are several companies that say they are ready to move into foreign markets. They just need a little help from the Canadian government via embassies in various countries. They say that this could open doors for them, but the embassies, even though they are right there on the ground, do not work for them. That is unacceptable.

The NDP would like to increase trade with countries that respect Canadian and UN values. Our party wants to sign trade agreements that will benefit Canada's economy.

Earlier, my colleague talked about a trade deficit. In university, I had a macroeconomics professor who, after NAFTA, told me that the potentially acceptable trade deficit would be substantially exceeded, and that the cost would likely be irreversible.

Over the past seven or eight years, things have gone from bad to worse under the Conservatives. This is jeopardizing thousands of jobs in Canada, especially in my riding where the decline of the manufacturing sector is really hurting people.

Let us not forget that Canada has always been a leader in human rights and labour rights. It must continue to lead. Unfortunately, we have not really been able to promote these values since the Conservative government came to power. What a shame.

Part 2 of this bill amends existing laws in order to bring them into conformity with our obligations under the agreement. It changes things like crown liability, proceedings, the importation of intoxicating liquors, and commercial arbitration. Canada has not even been able to enforce compliance on the softwood lumber agreement with the United States or with trade agreements with other countries.

I would like to talk about the very important criteria for assessing trade agreements.

For example, does the proposed trading partner respect democracy, human rights, and acceptable labour and environmental protection standards, which are values that Canadians hold dear? Is the proposed partner's economy of significant or strategic value to Canada?

Unfortunately, the free trade agreement proposed does not necessarily meet those criteria. We really want agreements with countries that will make our economy prosper and through which we will be able to make sure that fundamental human rights, labour rights and environmental rights are respected.

• (1940)

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the last speaker for the passion he always puts into his debates in the House.

I would like to ask him how he feels about the fact that we are here. It is 7:40 p.m. We believe very sincerely in having a debate and discussion that may be an opportunity to put fresh ideas before Canadians.

How does he feel about the fact that there are no other speakers but NDP members at this point?

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for his question.

This is an example of the bogus democracy propagated by this government. When you want to make a democracy come alive, you participate in it. Not only is this government not participating in it tonight, nor on previous nights, but it is also preventing us from letting our constituents speak when it abruptly shuts down these debates. That is what the time allocation motions are doing. They deprive our constituents of their voices: they can no longer speak before you, Mr. Speaker. They can no longer have an honest and democratic dialogue from which our country can benefit and become democratic once again.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I got up slowly because I wanted to give people on the other side of the House or in the Liberal Party a chance to get up and ask questions, since they are not speaking on the bill. I am not even sure if they are paying attention to what we have to say, since they do not have any questions.

We are obviously challenging something that is a very high priority for them, since they imposed time allocation on this report stage debate on free trade with Honduras.

I would like to ask the hon. member what he thinks the government's priority is. Why does it put such high priority on these free trade agreements? What is its agenda here? Is it anything like what it is doing with temporary foreign workers, where what it is really doing is undermining standards in our own country?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Mr. Speaker, I would once again like to thank my colleague for his question.

All we see is crass improvisation, day after day. My colleague just touched on an extremely important issue, that of temporary foreign workers. When something is wrong, all we need to do is find out what is happening on the ground. However, it would seem that the Conservatives prefer to pat themselves on the back about having brought in a new FTA. There are still many issues right here that need work, like EI, old age pensions and temporary foreign workers. It is hard to pinpoint what the government's true priorities are. It should be squarely focused on economic development and maintaining our social fabric, given that for decades, we were pioneers in the area of protecting minorities and those in need in Canada. Now, all of that has been pushed aside to focus on Alberta oil. That is all we do here. As we have always said, we are not opposed to resource development and trade, but they need to benefit all Canadians.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Honduras tolerates corporations that resort to violence and harm the environment, that trample the rights of indigenous peoples and have nothing but contempt for local populations. It gives free rein to death squads and paramilitary groups that intimidate citizens and crack down violently on even the most peaceful demonstrators.

I have a question for the member, whom I would like to congratulate on a most excellent speech. Does he not believe—as I vehemently do—that Canadians would want us to negotiate free trade agreements and trade with countries that respect human rights and democracy?

• (1945)

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question.

The answer is simply yes. We even want to help all countries on the planet prosper, but first we must ensure that they respect democracy and the environment, which today is a global issue. We must ensure that we protect people, human rights, equality and job opportunities for men and women, and we must also ensure that children go to school. Education is important. It is extremely important.

There are prosperous countries out there and trade with them could benefit both parties. However, we are spending all this time on one country, Honduras. Of course, we must help that country get out of that situation in one way or another, but we should not be the only ones responsible. We have to help our economy, and to do that we have to ensure that free trade agreements respect, I will say it again, human rights and democracy, but above all the economic development of all of Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here I am, not quite at prime time in British Columbia but getting late here in Ontario, to oppose Bill C-20 at report stage. I spoke on this bill at second reading and clearly stated my fears about the bill, and many other New Democrats did so. However, here is the bill back at report stage with no changes. It is clear that the government has not been listening when it comes to our arguments about the ill-advised nature of signing a free trade agreement with Honduras.

In fact, I guess I have to say again that I often wonder if the government members have heard anything we have had to say on the topic of free trade. This goes so far as Conservative members continuing to stand in the House to say regularly that New Democrats have never supported a single free trade agreement. In fact, of course, that is not true. We supported the free trade agreement between Canada and Jordan. New Democrats have always said we need to evaluate each proposed trade agreement on the basis of objective criteria and not just endorse any and all trade agreements, no matter who the partner or what the cost to Canada's economy, on the basis of some uncritical belief in the god of free trade.

We believe there are three fundamentally important criteria we should use in assessing trade agreements: is the proposed partner one who respects democracy, human rights, adequate environmental and labour standards, and Canadian values; second, is the proposed partner's economy of significance or strategic value to Canada; and third, are the terms of this proposed agreement satisfactory? Just as the agreement with Jordan clearly met these tests and, therefore, New Democrats supported it in the House, I believe the one with Honduras just as clearly fails all three of these tests.

Government Orders

Once again, today I want to focus on the first test: is Honduras a country that respects democracy, human rights, adequate environmental and labour standards, and Canadian values? Why have we chosen to negotiate a trade deal with Honduras, a country with a history of repressive, undemocratic politics and a seriously flawed human rights record? The democratically elected government of left-leaning president Manuel Zelaya was overthrown by a military coup in 2009. The coup was carried out by the Honduran army under the pretext of a constitutional crisis that had developed between the Supreme Court and the President over his progressive social policies.

The coup was widely condemned around the world, including by all other Latin American nations, the European Union, the United States, and the UN General Assembly. Canada at that point should have considered sanctions against this de facto regime and condemnation of its systematic abuses of human rights in its aftermath. Instead, what have we done? We have continued to pursue closer economic relations with Honduras without any conditions.

In January 2010, President Sosa assumed the presidency through what almost all deemed undemocratic and illegitimate elections. Since then, there has been one more set of elections, this one also carried out in a climate of fear and intimidation. Just as the first election was clearly illegitimate, the second election has been marked by violence and serious allegations of voter fraud.

What is the message Canada is sending here? Conservatives have chosen to press forward with a trade agreement with an undemocratic regime like that in Honduras while breaking off trade talks with neighbouring El Salvador after it elected a progressive government. This is surely the wrong signal and not a message that most Canadians would support.

Does this mean Honduras could never be a good prospect for a trade agreement? Obviously not, but we on this side would want to see some evidence of an intention to return to democracy in Honduras and some evidence of a commitment to address Honduras' appalling human rights record.

Let me return again to that human rights record of Honduras, which I spoke about earlier at second reading.

There is, of course, a clear link between the lack of democracy and the lack of protection of basic rights in Honduras. International human rights organizations have documented serious human rights abuses, including killings; arbitrary detentions of thousands of people; severe restrictions on public demonstrations, protests, and freedom of expression; and interference with the independence of the judiciary. These are all well-established facts.

The leading Honduran human rights group, known as COFADEH, documented that at least 16 activists and candidates for the main opposition party were assassinated since June of 2012, and 15 more survived attacks on their person. There are extensively documented cases of police corruption, with 149 extrajudicial killings of civilians by police recorded between January 2011 and November 2012 alone.

Many Conservatives, including the Minister of International Trade, have suggested that Honduras is coming out of a difficult period and that there are improvements being made. The facts, however, paint a much different picture. Let us look again at what

international human rights organizations have most recently said about the situation in Honduras.

• (1950)

I raised these assessments of Honduras human rights record at the second reading debate, and I heard nothing from the government side to refute this evidence.

Let me quote again from Amnesty International's written statement to the 25th session of the UN Human Rights Council, March 2014, which was called "Honduras: Deteriorating human rights situation needs urgent measures". That is a "deteriorating" human rights situation, not improving. Let me quote briefly from that report:

Amnesty International is increasingly concerned about the human rights situation in Honduras, in particular about human rights violations against human rights defenders, women and girls, Indigenous, Afro-descendant and campesino...communities, and LGBTI people. These violations take place in a context where impunity for human rights violations and abuses is endemic....

I want to draw attention, again, to two groups that continue to be subject to extreme levels of violence in Honduras: journalists and transgender Hondurans. According, again, to Honduras' own national human rights commission, 36 journalists were killed between 2003 and mid-2013, making Honduras one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. Journalists in Honduras continue to suffer threats, attacks, and killings, including the kidnapping and murder of a prominent TV news anchor in June 2013 and the murder of a prominent radio personality in April 2014. Authorities have consistently failed to investigate any of these crimes against journalists.

Attacks on journalists and opposition candidates are, of course, an attack on democracy and a serious concern when they take place in a country with which Canada is contemplating signing an international trade agreement.

I want to draw attention to another group that has been subject to even higher levels of violence in Honduras, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community, but in particular the transgender community. Again, why would Canada seek an agreement with Honduras in view of its appalling record of violence against the LGBTQ community, especially when the Minister of Foreign Affairs has made many statements in defence of gay rights in other forums?

Lest we be fooled by the Minister of International Trade's assertion that things are getting better, let me provide some updates on how things are actually getting worse for transgender Hondurans.

Transrespect, the group that attempts to document violence against the transgender community for the annual transgender day of remembrance, documented eight trans murders in Honduras in 2012 and 12 transgender murders in 2013. The number is going up, not going down. This brings the total, between 2008 and 2013, to 60 transgender murders in only six years in Honduras.

This gives Honduras the horrible distinction of being the country with the highest per capita transgender murder rate in the world, more than double the second-highest rate.

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In the month of May this year alone, there were four serious incidents, including three assassinations of public figures in Honduras. These should give us pause in our enthusiasm for a trade deal with Honduras.

On May 4, Orlando Orellana, 75, chair of a local community board outside the city of San Pedro Sula, a community that is involved in a land dispute with a development company, was assassinated. Mr. Orellana had assumed his position as chair of the board after the assassination of the previous chair in 2012. No arrests have been made in either of these deaths.

Casa Alianza Honduras, an organization that works with street children, issued a report in early May documenting the killing of 270 street children and young people in Honduras in the first three months of this year. On May 8, two days after this report was made public, José Guadalupe Ruelas, the director of Casa Alianza Honduras, was severely beaten by the military police in front of the presidential palace and denied medical attention. He did, however, survive.

On May 16, the mayor of one of the cities in the northeast of Honduras was assassinated. He had been a strong advocate of free medical care for the poor in Honduras.

Three days later, on May 19, a government forester was shot and killed in La Ceiba. This time the victim was José Alexander González Cerros, who worked in the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve and who had recently reported illegal logging in the area.

Again, can the government seriously assert that things are getting better in Honduras?

Let me conclude by saying that Canadians expect our federal government to set a good example on the world stage, and that includes considering democracy and human rights as necessary parts of the criteria used in evaluating trade agreements. Clearly, Honduras fails to meet the standards that Canadians expect of our partners.

•(1955)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech, for his approach, which takes into account human rights and the human condition, and for promoting social democratic values.

I would like him to talk about how Canada could set an example and serve as a mentor to countries where governance is highly compromised and where human rights are also violated.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about in this debate tonight and why it is so disappointing about the failure of the other parties to take part is exactly that question. How do we promote a better human rights world? One of the ways we do that is by making the standards of human rights a condition for those we wish to deal with in trade.

I think the hon. member knows that before I came to the House, I did a lot of international human rights work. I worked in Afghanistan with Amnesty International and in East Timor as a human rights observer at the elections. We see many Canadians who volunteer to go abroad with human rights organizations as election observers. I

met one of my colleagues in the House, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, as an election observer in the Philippines in 2010. Many ordinary Canadians volunteered to go to Ukraine to observe the elections just recently.

It is very clear that Canadians hold these kinds of human rights and democracy values very close to their hearts, to the point where they are prepared to go and volunteer themselves to help promote democracy abroad. We should expect no less from our government.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2006, the United States implemented their free trade agreement with Honduras. Since then, the situation has worsened, and murders have soared. Violence and political repression have worsened since the Honduran coup in 2009.

Two years after that coup and the implementation of the free trade agreement, almost 100% of the free trade benefits have gone to 10% of the population's wealthiest individuals. The question I want to ask the member, whose speech was particularly interesting, is this: does he not think that this is the best evidence that combining free trade with oppression does not lead to the desired outcome for the countries?

•(2000)

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, in the earlier stage of this debate, we often heard members on the other side say that we needed to help Honduras. However, if we do not have standards for the environment and for human rights imbedded in our trade agreements, then we have to ask ourselves who are we actually helping by establishing this relationship. If we end up helping only the very wealthy elite who have used the military in Honduras to preserve their positions in power, then what does that really say about Canadians?

The member raised the important question of the United States in Honduras. Less than two weeks ago, 108 members of the U.S. House of Representatives signed a joint letter to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry asking that the U.S. suspend its aid to the Honduran military police due to the severity of human rights abuses in Honduras. Even the United States, which has already signed an agreement, has had 108 members of its House of Representatives express their severe reservations about strengthening that relationship because of the terrible record on human rights in Honduras.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member and I first met while we were both on an election observer mission in the Philippines. The fact is that many around the world have condemned the Honduran elections, its human rights record overall, and the true validity of its democracy. Could my colleague speak a little more about the validity of that election and whether Honduras is a good trading partner for Canada?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Scarborough—Rouge River shared the same experience I did in the Philippines, observing an election conducted in a climate of fear and intimidation in many places. I was on the island of Mindanao in the Muslim region. At the polling place where I was observing the vote, two people were killed.

Government Orders

The amazing thing to me is that it is not just a Canadian value, but Filipinos lined up to vote. Less than two hours after people had been murdered at the polling place, people came back to exercise their right to vote. They were so brave in asserting the importance of democracy that even in that climate of fear and intimidation, they wanted to vote.

We know that in the last election in Honduras, which took place at the end of November, five members of the opposition party's election workers were killed during the last weekend of the election. Can we really accept the validity of a government that only narrowly defeated the opposition when many of members of the opposition were killed during the election campaign?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a good opportunity for me to speak in the House because there were many bills to which I wanted to speak but was unable to. My constituents of Scarborough—Rouge River have not been able to have their representative speak on their behalf in this chamber because the government continues to move closure or time allocation and restricts debate in the House.

That is happening today as well. We are debating the implementation of a free trade agreement that was negotiated in August 2011. It was signed in November 2013, and now we are into June of 2014. Only now is the government in a hurry to have the implementation of this free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras rushed through Parliament.

With respect to Bill C-20, the implementation of this free trade agreement, I will be opposing the bill along with most, if not all, of the New Democratic members. Honduras is a country with undemocratic practices, a corrupt government, weak institutions, and low standards. It is of insignificant strategic value and has a horrendous record of human rights abuses that have been documented many times over.

The New Democrats recognize the importance of trade to our economy, and we favour expanding trade opportunities that actually support Canada's exporters, the growth of Canada's economy and our continued economic viability. We do not want to continue to sign trade agreements that increase our trade deficit; rather, we would like to see a more balanced trade position for Canada with nations that respect Canadian values.

Honduras is not a country that actually respects or has anything similar to our Canadian values. These trade agreements need to be beneficial for the Canadian economy as well. We do not want to go down the path of what the Conservative government has done, which is to continue our trade deficit with these agreements.

I will give a quick overview of the country with which the Prime Minister is in such a hurry to implement a free trade agreement.

Honduras is a very poor country with a seriously flawed human rights record and a history of repressive, undemocratic politics. The democratically elected government of President Manuel Zelaya was toppled by a military coup in 2009. The subsequent elections, of which my colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca spoke, have been heavily criticized by international observers as failing to meet acceptable democratic standards.

I want to read a quote from Mr. Neil Reeder, the director general for the Latin America and Caribbean Bureau of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. He said:

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in the hemisphere, with 65% of its people living in poverty. It suffers from extremely unequal income distribution. The country also suffers from social inequality, high unemployment, poor health and education. More than 60% of all Hondurans are highly vulnerable to food insecurity. I'd also point out that the GDP per capita in Honduras is \$2,000. The total GDP for the country is \$17 billion, in a population of eight million.

In addition, we'd like to talk a bit about the institutions in Honduras, which are in some cases weak. Impunity is pervasive and corruption is a challenge.

Corruption within the Honduran police force is a particular problem, which the Government of Honduras also recognizes. Largely because Central America is situated between the drug-producing countries of South America and the drug-consuming countries to the north, Honduras and its neighbours have been particularly affected by the growth of transnational drug trafficking, human trafficking, and the impact of organized crime. It's estimated that nearly 80% of all cocaine-smuggling flights departing South America touch land in Honduras before continuing northward.

Clearly, from what the director general of the Latin America and Caribbean Bureau of our Department of Foreign Affairs has said, Honduras is not a country that espouses Canadian values. It is not a country that protects its citizens and values.

● (2005)

I know that my constituents in Scarborough—Rouge River do not support drug trafficking or human trafficking. They want to see our country grow and make relationships with other countries that are moving toward improving the global standard and are not supporting decreasing the value of people's lives, as human traffickers do.

In January 2010, Porfirio Lobo Sosa assumed the presidency of Honduras through what many deemed a very undemocratic and illegitimate election in that country. Of course, as we learned from my colleague for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, many opposition members were killed during that election. Also, the former president was under house arrest in Brazil, in the Brazilian embassy, during the election. It was not a genuine democratic election that took place in the country, and most foreign governments and election monitoring agencies refused to send observers. Many countries even rejected the results of that election.

Today I have a group of students visiting from Banting and Best Public School from my constituency. These are young minds of Canada who want to see our country's democracy in action, yet we are discussing the implementation of a trade agreement with a country that is not democratic, to the point that their elections are not even recognized by many foreign countries or election observers from around the world.

Human Rights Watch and many other NGOs have documented serious human rights abuses in Honduras. We have seen killings; arbitrary detention of thousands of people; severe restrictions on public demonstrations, protests, and freedom of expression; and interference in the independence of the judiciary. These are well-established facts.

Recently Human Rights Watch has also documented the ongoing land grabs that are happening in Honduras, about which the government is doing nothing. The government is very well aware of the situation, but it is doing nothing.

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New Democrats want to support a free trade agreement that will promote growth in this country and in the country with which we have the free trade agreement. We want a strategic trade policy through which we would start multilateral negotiations and sign trade deals with developed countries that have high standards.

We also want trade deals with developing countries, but with those that are on a progressive trajectory. Examples are Japan, India, Brazil, and South Africa. These countries are showing improvement and movement in a positive way. These are countries that we should be signing trade agreements with, not countries like Honduras, where drug trafficking operates with impunity, human rights are regularly abused, democracy is continuously under threat, and low standards continue to hurt Canadian businesses operating there.

An FTA should be beneficial for both countries, as I said. When dealing with a developing country, we need to make sure that we have a beneficial relationship for both countries involved.

Some might argue that we are actually helping the poor people in Honduras. However, I would like to read a quote from Mr. Ricardo Grinspun, an associate professor in the Department of Economics at York University, who appeared before the Standing Committee on International Trade. I will end with this one last quote.

● (2010)

He said:

...the idea that Canadians can help the most needy people in Honduras through this FTA is a public relations message, nothing more. Moreover, an FTA would provide international legitimacy to a political regime and economic model that is oligarchic, oppressive, and unjust. There are other more effective ways in which Canada could contribute to poverty alleviation, human security, and environmental sustainability in that part of the world....

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this bill and I look forward to answering some questions.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague speaking about the Canada-Honduras trade agreement. She spoke at length of the drug trade and the pernicious effects of the drug trade on Honduran society. She also spoke of human rights abuses in Honduras. One of the greatest drivers of human rights abuse in Honduras is the illicit drug trade.

First, I would like her to explain to us how limiting legitimate economic trade and opportunity for the people of Honduras helps them. The reality is that the isolation of the Honduran people from legitimate, rules-based trade would only drive more of them into the drug trade, which is the greatest perpetrator of human rights abuses in Honduras.

Second, we already have a trade relationship with Honduras. How would the addition of rules around that trade agreement make the situation worse?

Third, the NDP supports the free trade agreement with Jordan—

● (2015)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I appreciate the hon. member wanting to get a third aspect in there. We are squeezing into the time allowed for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Liberal Party members finally want to start participating in the debate, so I am happy to have the attempted three questions from my hon. colleague.

He said that he was listening intently to my speech, but I guess he missed that last quote from a professor from the Department of Economics at York University, who said that people may make the argument that this free trade agreement and its quick implementation would actually help the poor people in Honduras, but really it is just a PR tactic that would not really help the people of Honduras.

Let me give members another quote. This one is from Pablo Heidrich, an economist at the North-South Institute. He said the Honduran government:

...needs a certain level of pressure so that the government becomes more responsive to wider social demands and it stops being sort of a committee that administers the gains of a very limited group of people.

As the member mentioned, these people are the drug lords and the oligarchs in the country.

Honduras is not a large trading partner for this country. We need—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

The hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at times, I am almost startled by the questions that come from the Liberal Party. This is one of those times.

Very clearly, it is significantly important that in any agreement Canada has with a nearly failed nation such as Honduras or Colombia, when we put the package together, we have to find a way to lever human rights and labour standards. We do that by including them in the trade agreement.

That has not happened under the Conservative government. My colleague mentioned the professor talking about window dressing, and there is so much window dressing.

I am actually startled, because there was a time when the Liberals used to stand up for human rights. Now they are standing up for dollars, and that is very disappointing.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with the comments made by my hon. colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. Canada, internationally, was known as a country that stood up for human rights and fought for the rights and equality of people around the world. The current government's track record is the total opposite. When I go to any country, internationally, they are surprised that Canada is there. They say, "Wow. Canada cares?" That is because Canada's reputation on the global scene now is that we do not really care about human rights and we are not going to defend them.

We need to change that, and New Democrats will work to ensure that.

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I want to add one thing to my colleague's earlier question. Honduras is actually Canada's 104th export market, so it is not a very important market for Canada. In 2012, merchandise exports totalled \$38 million, whereas imports were at \$218 million. That is a significant trade deficit with that country, which is our 104th trading partner. It really is not a country that is adding a lot of value to our economy, and we are not really helping, as they would say, the poor people in Honduras with this trade agreement.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to stand in the House on behalf of my constituents of Surrey North to speak to this legislation tonight.

Before I get to the contents of this legislation, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate some individuals. There are four high schools in my riding: Kwantlen Park Secondary School; Guildford Park Secondary School; Queen Elizabeth Secondary School, my former school from which I graduated 28 years ago; and L.A. Matheson Secondary School. I had the opportunity to attend high school graduations at these four schools. Young people across this country are in the process of graduating from high school. I want to congratulate not only the students but their parents. It is reassuring to know that we have such bright young people going to universities. Canada has a bright future ahead with these young people. Again, congratulations to all the parents and students.

I had the opportunity to sit on the international trade committee, where I learned this file fairly extensively. I will be talking about some of the things I learned while on this committee and in particular about the things I learned with respect to this agreement between Canada and Honduras.

We need criteria as to who we will have free trade agreements with. There has to be some sort of yardstick when we enter into trade agreements with countries around the world. Before we sign an agreement, we should look at the country's labour standards and environmental standards and whether it has Canadian values or is on the path toward some of the values we cherish in this country. Democracy is another basic foundation we should look at before we enter into any sort of trade agreement with a foreign country.

Second, we should look at whether the economy of that particular country is of strategic value to Canada. Would it make sense for us to engage with that country?

Third, we should look at the deal itself. Is it satisfactory? Would it improve our lot and at the same time, hopefully, improve the lot of the country we are engaging with?

I want to point out that this particular agreement does not meet these criteria.

A number of speakers have talked about the horrendous democratic and human rights record in Honduras as well as the drug trafficking that goes on there, the military coups that are taking place, and the unfair, undemocratic elections. These certainly do not pass the test for negotiating an agreement with a democratic country or a country with Canadian values. Honduras certainly does not fit into that particular category.

With regard to the strategic value of Honduras, as the previous member pointed out, Honduras ranks 104th on the list of countries

we have trade with. We do an insignificant amount of trade with that country.

The fourth criterion is whether this agreement would be satisfactory for us. That is clearly not the case.

Canadians had the opportunity to engage in a wider trade agreement on a regional level. When we could not find the regional areas to dance with, we looked at picking a weak link in Central America to try to negotiate a one-on-one deal with Honduras. We should be looking at a multi-country, multilateral trade deal that would help not only Canadian interests but also regions in Central America.

● (2020)

Let me talk about the Conservative record. My friends across the aisle do not like the facts. I know that they are used to Kijiji facts or making up facts, but I am going to share some facts with the members that will surprise the Speaker as well as Canadians.

The trade record of the government is horrendous. When we look at the facts, the bare numbers, they are quite surprising. When the Conservatives formed the government back in 2006, we had a trade surplus of \$18 billion. Let me put that into layman's terms. I know that my constituents would appreciate that. That trade surplus of \$18 billion meant that we were selling more products to other countries than we were buying. That was a good number, and that was when the Conservatives took over the government.

Eight years later, Canada's current account deficit stands at \$62 billion. That is a turnaround of \$80 billion over eight years. That is like \$10 billion less we export every year than we import. It is evident that the government's policy of signing so many free trade agreements is not bearing fruit for Canadians. We are exporting less than we are importing.

A deficit of \$62 billion is a lot of money and a lot of jobs being exported out of our country. That is the current government's record. It talks about having signed eight trade agreements to improve our economy. I looked at some of those deals. One of them was with Liechtenstein. I had to look at the map to see where Liechtenstein was. It is a small country in Europe with very few people. These are the kinds of facts the Conservatives like to present to Canadians. They say that they are negotiating these trade deals and improving the lot of Canadians. That is clearly not the case.

We have been advocating a fair free trade agreement with Europe. The Prime Minister took the plane and flew over to Europe to say that he signed the deal, but we have not seen the text. Eight months later, we have not seen the text of the agreement. The third party, the Liberal leader and his caucus, endorsed the deal without even seeing the text. This is how the Conservatives and the Liberals work. How can we approve a deal or say we like a deal when we have not even seen the text? This is the Conservative record.

Government Orders

I also want to talk about a couple of other things. The merchandise trade agreement has ballooned under the government. That means that the amount of value-added goods we are manufacturing and exporting is going down. We are importing more merchandise, more value-added goods. Basically, we are exporting jobs out of Canada to other countries. Any trade agreement that needs to be negotiated has to take into consideration how we help our exporters and how we bring well-paying jobs to Canada, which is not what the Conservatives are doing. Their record has been that they have clearly mismanaged international trade. We have gone from a surplus of \$18 billion to a current deficit of \$62 billion. That is not acceptable to me or to my constituents. We need to do better. We need to create more local jobs, and the government needs to start working on that.

• (2025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always find it interesting to observe certain members of the New Democratic caucus. Sometimes they are challenged in their ability to think through what I think is an important issue to all Canadians, which is the importance of international trade. We are in fact a trading nation. There are great benefits. There are concerns we have about this particular bill, and there are many concern people have, generally speaking.

Having said that, there is one thing I thought was interesting. He made reference to the Liberal Party supporting the legislation. I think it is important that we recognize that there is one political party, the New Democrats, that has never, ever stood in their places and voted in favour of a trade agreement.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Never ever?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Never. It is true. The hon. member cannot name one. I look to the member, because one of his colleagues—

Mr. Dan Harris: Jordan.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: No, the NDP did not vote in favour of Jordan.

The point is that the New Democrats have never, ever stood in their places and voted in favour of a trade agreement. If we listened to a lot of the logic of the New Democrats, we would be reducing our trade with countries like China based on some of the previous member's arguments.

The question I have for the member is actually fairly simple and straightforward. Can the member indicate any occasion when they have actually stood inside the House of Commons chamber and voted in favour of an agreement? He should not fall into the trap his colleague is suggesting, because he did not vote in favour of Jordan.

• (2030)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with the member. Clearly we supported the free deal with Jordan. Not only that, our party leader suggested back in the 1980s that we start negotiating with like-minded countries, such as the European Union.

It is clear to New Democrats that we need to form trade ties with countries that have similar values, that respect labour laws, and that respect environmental laws. We are saying that we need to negotiate

with countries like Brazil, India, and Japan. Those are the countries with which we should be negotiating, countries that have strategic value for Canadian goods, not countries like Honduras, where we have seen human rights violations, drug trafficking, and undemocratic governments.

Clearly, the Liberal Party supported CETA without even seeing the deal. How can the Liberals support something when they have not even seen the text?

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my friend's speech. I recall that in 1988, when John Turner, the then leader of the Liberal Party, opposed the original free trade agreement, I agreed with him. Then in 1993—and, by the way, I am so old that I was a candidate in 1993—Mr. Chrétien, who was the leader at the time, posted five days before the election that he would not sign NAFTA, no matter what, because it was a violation of all the rights he believed in. Less than three months into his mandate, the Liberals signed it.

We are used to Liberals blowing hot and cold on trade, but the reality is that if we are to have trade, the idea is to raise all boats in Canada and in the nation we trade with. In the instance of any regime like the one in Honduras, we will not be able to do that unless we use the lever of that trade agreement to get into that agreement human rights and labour law and have them recognized with remedies. The Conservatives will not see the NDP support any deal that does not do that. The Liberals are free to do whatever they wish.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I was not around the House of Commons back in 1993, but I agree with the member that Liberals like to see which way the wind is blowing. Whichever way the wind is blowing, that is the way they go. They actually have no stand on a number of issues, not only the trade file.

The Liberal leader approved the CETA deal, the European Union deal. He said that they endorse it and think it is a good deal, but nobody has seen the text. We have been asking the government to bring the text forward so we can see it and evaluate it and offer it to Canadians. They can look at it to see if that deal is in the best interests of Canada.

We need to protect jobs locally, whether it is in Quebec, Ontario, on the east coast, or in my province, British Columbia. We need to see the text of it before we can approve a deal. Clearly this deal is not in the best interests of Canadians.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise tonight to speak to this bill. It is the first time I have risen to speak to a bill in a while because of the time allocation that keeps being brought forward by the government and has prevented me, as the member of Parliament for Scarborough Southwest, from representing my constituents' views on things like the budget or Bill C-23, the unfair elections act. The Conservatives continually cut off debate.

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I am rising to speak to Bill C-20, an act to implement the free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras. I have to say that I find it disturbing that the government is now presenting this bill. I believe that Canadians hold true a certain set of values based on decency, fairness, a respect for human rights, and, yes, the law as well. Many Canadians are very proud, as am I, of our country's record of peacekeeping in areas of international conflict. Many Canadians are proud of our tradition in history of being champions of human rights around the world. This bill is a definite departure from those values Canadians hold close and that we proudly identify as our own that make us all proud to be Canadians. This bill underscores the trend in Conservative foreign affairs that focuses less on our shared values of decency and fairness and respect for human rights and more on the narrow interests of a few industries.

It is disturbing, deeply troubling, and very sad. It is hard for me and for many Canadians to understand why the Conservatives would even want to negotiate a free trade agreement with a country like Honduras, which has one of the most horrendous records on human rights. I was particularly disturbed after reading the testimony and opinions of some of Canada's leading experts on foreign affairs in Central and Latin America. Stacey Gomez, coordinator of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation's Americas Policy Group, had this to say about a free trade agreement with Honduras:

We have long maintained that under the right conditions, trade can generate growth and support the realization of human rights. These conditions simply do not exist in Honduras...until there is a verifiable improvement in the country's democratic governance and human rights situation...the Canada-Honduras FTA will do more harm than good.

This is really the measure with which we have to negotiate and look at every trade agreement that we would sign with other countries in the world. The simple reality is that we are not going to get 100% of what we want in every trade agreement. It is not going to be 100% good and 0% bad no matter where we turn to do trade. We always have to find that right balance between the economic goods and the potential harms that might exist in a trade agreement. That is whether we are negotiating one with Europe, with China, or with Honduras. In this case, with Honduras, we truly do believe that this trade deal would actually enable the continued human rights abuses. It would enable the further degradation of life for many people in that country because it would embolden the regime that came about as the result of a military coup to continue doing the kinds of things that it has been doing.

That is why we also believe, as Stacey Gomez does, that the Canada-Honduras FTA would do more harm than good.

Before the provincial election was called in Ontario, I was out doing my regular "have your say" canvassing, where I go out to speak to constituents at their doorsteps to find out what issues matter to them. On that particular occasion, I was going out and speaking to constituents about the cuts that are proposed and coming to Canada Post, the ending of home mail delivery. I ran into a couple in an apartment building near Victoria Park and Queen Street who, out of the blue, thanked me for opposing this trade deal. I have to admit that I was taken aback because foreign affairs and trade is not a topic that comes up on the doorstep very often in Scarborough Southwest. I asked these constituents why they had problems with this particular trade deal. They worked for an agency that does work in Honduras,

one of those agencies that is trying to shine a light into those dark places in the world. Only two weeks earlier a Honduran staff member of that organization had been killed and is now one of the numbers of people who have been eliminated by the regime. That loss was felt throughout the organization. Sitting at their doorstep, it was clear to me the impact it had on these two individuals. This is the kind of thing that all of us we try to leave work at work and not bring home at night, but it was clear that had impacted them and they were taking that loss back home with them at the end of the workday.

● (2035)

It is hard for me, and I think for many Canadians, to see how the country of Honduras comes close to meeting the criteria that would justify us signing a trade agreement, the one that determines there would actually be more good generated than harm.

Many Canadians are wondering perhaps what is really at play here. Testifying before the Standing Committee on International Trade on April 22, 2013, Sheila Katz of Americas Policy Group, Canadian Council for International Co-operation, told members that "the Americas Policy Group has recommended that Canada refrain from concluding free trade agreements with countries that have poor democratic governance and human rights records".

She also said that, "Canada's eager recognition of a president who came to power in a military coup in Honduras in 2009" is another example of "Canada prioritizing the trade pillar of its Americas strategy above the rest. Since the coup, hundreds of regime opponents have been intimidated, arbitrarily arrested, disappeared, tortured and killed", just like the person who worked for that agency that two of my constituents work for.

Further, she said that, "The Americas Policy Group is concerned that Canada has validated this regime by adopting a business-as-usual approach and signing a free trade agreement with Honduras, in spite of its horrendous human rights record".

Honduras is a very poor country with a seriously flawed human rights record and a history of repressive undemocratic politics. The democratically elected government was toppled by a military coup in 2009 and subsequent governmental actions and elections have been heavily criticized by international observers as failing to meet acceptable democratic standards. NGOs have documented serious human rights abuses; killings; arbitrary detentions of thousands of people; severe restrictions on public demonstrations, protests, and freedom of expression; and interference in the independence of the judiciary. Of course, we perhaps have been encountering some of that here at home recently, but it really cannot be compared when there is an argument between the Prime Minister and the Chief Justice compared to the kinds of things and the interference that happens in Honduras, which is far worse. That said, none of it should be tolerated.

Government Orders

Honduras has the highest murder rate in the world and is considered the most dangerous country in the world for journalists, the ones who tell the stories about what is happening in the country. They are the people who tell the stories about what is happening in a parliament or the stories of what a government is doing that shines a light on the things that are happening back home.

Transparency International ranks it as the most corrupt country in Central America, yet our government is forging ahead, pushing to get this trade deal brought forward into law and having us sit until midnight. However, with all of these problems with the bill, where are the Conservatives to defend their actions, to get up and say this is why we should be signing the trade deal? Have we heard from any of them here tonight? They passed a motion to make us sit until midnight then they do not have the decency to get up and stand in their places, to actually take their speaking opportunities in order to defend the bills they are bringing forward.

Before we even include tonight, the Conservatives had missed 22 of the last speaking opportunities since the House started sitting late. That is at least 220 minutes of time they could have been using to defend their actions and to push their government's agenda ahead. Instead, they are asleep at the wheel. They actually got up and spoke last night. It was about time, but they only got up because the NDP was bringing attention to the fact that they were not showing up, that they were not doing their jobs. Well, New Democrats stand here every single night doing our job.

• (2040)

Honduras also has the worst income inequality in the region. After Canada struggled to get a multilateral deal with the Central American economies as a whole, Canada approached the weakest political actor, Honduras, and worked to negotiate a one-off deal as part of an ideological drive to get FTAs signed. In August 2011, the Prime Minister announced—

• (2045)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The time allocated for the member's comments has expired and now we will move to questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the member's comments he said that one of the reasons we should not be trading with Honduras is because of corruption. I wonder if he feels the same way about other countries. We know that today the NDP was singled out as having potentially used about \$3 million worth of taxpayers' money for partisan political purposes. That is, of course, a level of corruption that we have not seen in a long time.

Could he contrast the NDP's misuse of millions of dollars of taxpayers' funds for illegal partisan purposes with the type of corruption that he was talking about in Honduras? In the light of the fact that the NDP has had such corrupt practices with respect to taxpayers' dollars, does he feel that people should stop trading with us because of the poor example that the NDP has shown with taxpayer dollars?

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, here we have it again. We are talking about the trade deal with Honduras and the member wants to

talk about what is happening at home instead of standing to defend the government's actions for wanting to sign this trade deal in the first place.

We have heard a lot in the House about the member's family businesses, a pizza parlour and a hair salon. I found it very interesting that they are actually in my riding and that the member himself grew up in my riding.

Mr. Paul Calandra: No, I didn't grow up in your riding.

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, he did not grow up in the riding, but he grew up nearby.

Let us look at reasons other countries might not want to trade with Canada. If we look back a decade, there was the sponsorship scandal and the corruption of the Liberal governments. That would have been a very good reason. Then there was the in-and-out scandal that helped the current government come to power in the first place. That is another reason. There is another member of the House who is currently facing election charges for the 2008 election. Those are reasons that countries would look at Canada's government, one of those two parties, and the corruption that has existed here. Those would be reasons that would give other countries pause in doing business with Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the two-way trade between Honduras and Canada is estimated to be around \$250 million. It is a significant amount of money in trade.

My question for the member is this. Given the NDP's stance on trade and the concerns it has, would the member, as others have within his caucus, indicate that where there are poor track records on human rights, Canada should be looking at reducing trade? That seems to be consistent with the NDP's argument with regard to free trade agreements. If we follow through on its thinking, it would seem to imply that we should be reducing trade with countries that have the concerns that he expressed with regard to this bill.

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, I will not deny a little glee in what I am about to say next, which is that I reject the premise of the question.

If we look at the trade agreements that Canada is signing, the devil is always in the details. It is not about doing less trade with countries that we are already trading with without free trade deals. The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek laid it out flat. What we have to do is make sure that improvements to human rights and less corruption in government are part of the trade deals we are negotiating. That is how we make them fair trade deals: that they respect labour rights so that people can go home at the end of a workday, that they respect freedom of the press so that journalists do not fear for their lives when they report the truth, that it is not just about the almighty dollar and the amount of money that will go into a few pockets that will increase the inequality that exists in these countries.

Government Orders

Honduras is already listed as the most unequal country in the world. Therefore, why would the government not put measures into place when signing trade agreements so that the poor would become less poor and people could have a better quality of life? That is what should go into trade agreements.

• (2050)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House at a somewhat late hour, but I am highly motivated to speak to Bill C-20, oddly named the Canada-Honduras Economic Growth and Prosperity Act. In fact, what we are referring to is the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement.

First of all, I would like to set out three conditions that, in the opinion of the NDP, create a free trade agreement that is appropriate for Canada and for signatories to such an agreement. First, the country that we want to sign an agreement with has an appreciable strategic value, and said agreement benefits the Canadian economy. Second, this agreement fosters an increase in trade opportunities and supports Canadian exporters. Third, the potential partner respects values that it has in common with Canada.

The NDP believes that these three conditions would favour the conclusion of trade agreements with partners in other countries.

Canada's economy is sustained by trade as a result of its natural characteristics, geography, demographics and history. Countries can enter into different types of agreements. The Conservatives' approach focuses only on one type, the free trade agreement.

In an article entitled "Questioning Conventional Wisdom", Jim Stanford makes the following suggestion:

[English]

Canadian trade officials should take a page from Chinese and Brazilian strategists, to maximum the opportunities for domestic exporters through reciprocal trade and export-oriented development plans... ..should work...to devise focused strategies to promote the presence of key valuable industries here—and to nurture Canadian-based globally-oriented firms in those industries.

[Translation]

Canada has signed several free trade agreements, notably the free trade agreement with the United States. However, since coming to power, the Conservatives seem to have become obsessed with signing such agreements. I am wondering whether it is to Canada's advantage to sign this type of agreement or whether it would be worthwhile exploring other avenues. When it comes to trade, we must identify advantages for the partners and ask certain questions, especially about the impact of NAFTA on the Canadian economy.

Let us take a moment to examine the changes observed in the Canadian economy in recent years. In the 1990s, value-added goods such as machinery, consumer goods and automobiles represented 60% of our exports. This trend has completely reversed in the last 10 years. Products with high value-added only account for 40% of our exports.

What has happened? The free trade agreement has opened Canada's doors to the U.S. so that the U.S. can export consumer products and other value-added goods to Canada. For its part, Canada has opened its doors to the U.S. so that they can provide Canadian natural or primary resources with lower value-added.

As a result of these facts and others, Canada's trade balance dropped steadily over 10 years going from 5.8% in 2000 to its lowest level of -1.9% in 2010.

• (2055)

In January 2014, *La Presse* reported that Canada had a huge trade deficit. Indeed, in March 2014, Canadian exports dropped by 1.4%.

Just this past Monday, *The Globe and Mail* also reported, again with regard to the so-called free trade agreement that we have with the United States, that the U.S. government was going to enhance the famous Buy American Act. That means that there would be barriers to the so-called free trade between Canada and the United States, not for the United States, but for Canada.

I will read an excerpt from that article that appeared in *The Globe and Mail*:

[English]

The unfortunate reality is that the North American free-trade agreement did not create a true free-trade zone. It enshrined existing protectionist barriers, and left some gaping loopholes.

[Translation]

What would the consequences be for Canadian exporters?

This measure that seems to be developing in the U.S. right now is called the *Grow American Act*. This is what is being said about it:

[English]

...which would ratchet up U.S. content requirements to 100 per cent by 2019 from the current 60 per cent... ..[which] would likely force Canadian companies, such as subway car maker Bombardier Inc. and bus makers Nova Bus and New Flyer Industries, to shift more production—and jobs—to their U.S. plants.

[Translation]

There is an imbalance in some of the free trade agreements that Canada has negotiated over the years.

Canada's trade deficit is truly worrisome because it has a very significant impact on our economy. According to experts, this trend will not improve significantly in the coming years, despite the many free trade agreements this government brags about. In fact, one has to wonder whether it might be possible to conclude better trade agreements.

This government does not have a strategy. What is the Conservatives' economic vision for a 21st century Canada? What are the strategic sectors that the government is promoting abroad? Are we promoting Canada's value added sectors such as the aerospace, green technologies and high technologies sectors? Those are value added sectors where Canada has demonstrated its knowledge and expertise.

Government Orders

Do our partners in these trade agreements show an interest in Canadian products? Does the government showcase the high quality of Canadian exports and explain that, in Canada, we treat workers' health and safety, as well as their working conditions, as a priority, and that workers are paid a good salary?

Furthermore, does the government point out that Canadian businesses comply with environmental standards and that Canada is a democratic country with a stable economy? All these factors add to Canada's value as an exporter.

In the NDP's view, the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement will not promote economic growth and prosperity in either of the countries involved. For this reason and for many others, I will not support this bill.

• (2100)

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again I am surprised to be the first questioner when there are other parties here in the House that could be taking part in the debate, but they only seem to stand up to raise irrelevant issues instead of discussing the issue at hand.

My question is for the member, after a really good analysis of free trade. Who would the member say benefits when we sign an agreement with a country that does not have adequate labour or environmental standards?

I know in the member's conclusion she talked about how agreements like this one might sometimes not benefit either one. Who, then, would benefit if we went ahead with such an agreement?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. He raises an important question that we really need to answer as we go around the world looking to build relationships and partnerships with other countries.

We talked about building partnerships, possibly multilateral ones, with South American countries. These negotiations may take a long time, but in the end, the partnerships may benefit everyone, that is, Canada and its South American partners, of which Honduras could be one.

The agreement we are discussing right now, however, would be signed with a partner plagued with major problems, whose economy is really not at par ours, and where the democratic structure is hugely different. Canada could play a more helpful role if it focused, instead, on building another type of relationship with a country experiencing a wide array of governance problems.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could indicate to the House whether or not the NDP applied the same criteria in the decision on this particular agreement, and the manner in which it is going to be voting, as it applied when it voted against NAFTA. Did the NDP use the same criteria? I would be interested in knowing.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Winnipeg North, who surprised me this time around by asking a fairly short question.

NAFTA has been in effect for several years. Its positive impact is plain to see, as are its long-term consequences. It is only so many years later that we are able to assess these kinds of agreements in order to determine how to make the needed adjustments.

As I have said, the NDP readily acknowledges the fact that Canada relies on imports and exports. We are in favour of trade. The real question is how the current government, namely the Conservative government, promotes Canada's strategic industries. Does it negotiate in favour of Canadian interests or not? I often wonder about that.

Furthermore, it seems we only consider free trade agreements instead of looking at other types of trade agreements that could prove to be very instrumental to improving Canada's balance of trade, which is currently negative, as it has been for the past ten years. In fact, our trade deficit has grown over the years. Free trade agreements are not the only issue, however; other factors come into play as well, which is why we need to ask broader questions.

• (2105)

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this evening, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-20 on the free trade agreement between Canada the Republic of Honduras. This debate will go on until midnight. Back home, it will be 1 a.m.

We are calling this a debate but usually in a debate there are people to debate with. As we can see, the only people who are working tonight are members of the NDP, with the exception of a few people who are asking questions. When we bug them a bit, the Conservatives will ask us a question. I would like the parliamentary secretary to talk to me about the question he asked earlier. I could answer him and tell him what I think about the issue.

Today, with regard to the free trade agreement with Honduras, the government is once again saying that the NDP is against free trade. Are you kidding me? The government is lucky to have the NDP. At least we are capable of debating and having a discussion. Is the free trade agreement a good idea or not? The Liberals have not seen it, but they support it. At least when Jean Chrétien was a member of the opposition, he did not agree with free trade. He only agreed to it once he was elected prime minister.

Government Orders

It is interesting to see how things develop between the Liberals and the Conservatives. It is important to remember that the Liberals and the Conservatives answer only to big business and Bay Street in Toronto. It seems to be almost a crime to talk about workers. They talk about us as if we were union bosses. In a developed country like Canada, it is normal for workers to have an organization, an association or a union to look after their interests. The Conservatives and the Liberals go out of their way to rise in the House and insult labour organizations. With all due respect, I have never seen the Conservatives rise in the House and insult representatives of chambers of commerce. I call them the employers' union. I have never seen the Conservatives rise in the House to insult chambers of commerce or make comments about them like they do with the unions.

In a country like ours, a democratic country, I think that workers have the right to be represented. It is part of Canadian law.

When we were talking about free trade with the United States, the NDP was focused on one provision of NAFTA and that was chapter 11, which deals with health and safety rights and that sort of thing. Now we are talking about a free trade agreement with Honduras, a country that does not respect human, civil or workers' rights. This Conservative government cares only about the economy. It is not thinking about Canada's economy. It is thinking about the economy of a few of its buddies and how they can make money. It is looking at how they could go to a country like Honduras and develop it. It is looking at how money could be made with workers who work at the lowest salary of \$1.25 U.S. a day. It is looking at how we could exploit these workers.

The Liberals have done an about-face and now support the agreement even though they have not seen it. It was the same with the European agreement. Agreements will happen, but we must remember that this is not about free trade; it is about fair trade. We cannot say that we have not been affected by the government's free trade negotiations. A lot of small factories in Ontario have closed down and Electrolux left Quebec to set up shop in Mexico. We have lost some great companies and good jobs.

Back home, paper mills in Miramichi, Bathurst and Campbellton have shut down, as has the one in New Richmond, in the Gaspé. These four paper mills have shut down. Now they take the wood, put it on ships and send it to Finland and all over. That is some great free trade there. Free indeed. We are sending our products overseas and we are left with nothing. That is what they are doing. Just take a look at the Atlantic provinces. The job situation in those provinces is not good. We do not even have free trade among the provinces and we are negotiating with other countries.

With all due respect, our Prime Minister turns around and says that Russia is terrible and that we will boycott it because it is not good for people in the surrounding countries.

● (2110)

He says we are going to team up with the Americans and the whole world to boycott Russia because of the civil rights issue. We send our troops to Afghanistan under the pretext that we want girls to attend school. Well, I would love to see Canada's aboriginal children go to school. I wish that aboriginal people in the north had schools. The Prime Minister travels all over the world to preach civil and

human rights, but he is prepared to sign an agreement with a totalitarian government that does not even believe in these principles. Then they say that the New Democrats are the bad guys.

Is this not an opportunity to tell that country we are prepared to conclude a free trade agreement provided it respects human rights and pay equity, among other things? The Conservatives only want to sign this agreement to give our businesses an opportunity to exploit workers in that country, just like they have begun to exploit our own workers.

Pursuant to the changes to employment insurance, if an unemployed worker cannot find a job within six weeks, he must take one at 70% of his salary. Then, if he loses that job and cannot find another one the following year, he must again take a job that pays 70% of his last salary. This drives workers' salaries down. This is why the Conservatives support such a free trade agreement with a country that does not pay its workers.

The Prime Minister is very pleased because his friends will be able to exploit workers in countries where workers are not paid, or where people are locked up if they express their views.

It is the same with the Keystone XL pipeline that they want to build to the United States. The NDP wants that pipeline to be built in Canada, from west to east. We want to have refineries in Canada and work in the secondary and tertiary processing plants.

The Conservatives would rather send all that to the United States. They say that building the pipeline will create jobs, but once the work is completed no other jobs will be created. If the pipeline went to Montreal, Quebec City or Saint John, New Brunswick, in my region, we would expand our refineries and create jobs. However, this government is against regional economic development. It only wants to give large corporations an opportunity to make money elsewhere. This is precisely the purpose of this free trade agreement with Honduras.

Then the Liberals ask us if we are using the same criteria as we did the last time around. Of course we are. If the proposed partners do not respect human rights and workers, we must not sign any free-trade agreement with them. Otherwise, we take the side of the "big shots". Back home, that is how we call those who earn a lot of money. The Liberals are good at that.

There is only one difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives: the Conservatives tell us in advance how they are going to hurt us, whereas the Liberals say that they will not hurt us. However, once elected, they do the same thing as the Conservatives.

Let us keep in mind the 57 billion dollars in the employment insurance fund that they dipped into and robbed from workers. Now, those workers are suffering and are being forced to work at lower wages. Then the government wants to sign deals like this one, without even providing the details to Parliament. They have to give us the real figures.

The same thing happened with the agreement between Canada and Europe. The Conservatives are not even able to show parliamentarians, the elected representatives of this country, the kind of deal that they sign with other governments.

Government Orders

As for the Liberals, they do not even bother rising tonight. That is not to say that they are not in the House. The Liberals and Conservatives are actually here, but they do not stand up and tell us why they want to sign that agreement. Instead of extolling the virtues of the agreement, they just sit there and watch us.

The Conservatives like to send employment insurance inspectors to visit the unemployed, with the hope that they will catch a few misbehaving ones. Well, if one of these inspectors were to come here, many people would have their pay docked because they really are not doing much. We are in the House of Commons to debate a bill, but these people have yet to take part in the debate. The House will be working until midnight, and during all that time, they will not expend the energy to actually stand up and support their own bill.

• (2115)

If the New Democrats were to introduce a bill, they would rise and tell Canadians why it is a positive move. We have not heard from the Conservatives tonight, although they may ask a few silly questions later. That is what they have done so far tonight, so I expect more of the same.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Acadie—Bathurst for the passion he always brings to this place. He reminded me that he and I both come out of the labour movement.

I talked earlier about the human rights situation in Honduras. I also talked about how Mr. Turner, the leader of the Liberals, opposed the original free trade agreement in 1988. Over the next two years, as a result of that free trade agreement, we lost 520,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario. Between NAFTA and the free trade agreement, we lost 1,500 plants in Hamilton.

If the member thinks in terms of the average wage in Honduras of \$5 a day, who will buy Canadian goods?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, people are surely not going to buy Canadian goods. However, 18% of the Honduran people live on less than \$1.25 American, not an hour but a day. It is not the people who will make good on it; it is those big businesses in the country that the government gives tax breaks to of \$40 billion. After they have that money, they do not create jobs for Canadians. They create jobs in the mining industry in Australia or Mexico or any other place except our country.

The Minister of Finance even said that if the government gave big businesses a break on taxes, the government hoped they would spend the money to create jobs. The former minister of finance even recognized all the good he had given to the big corporations, and after that they just ran to the bank or another country to spend the money and create jobs there. It was not the jobs they were interested in; it was how they could make money without paying money. At \$1.25 a day, they are sure to make money, but they are not paying money.

That is wrong in today's society. It is wrong that in 2014 they cannot respect human rights and ensure that the workers are well paid, have good benefits, and are working and building a country. I believe they are on the wrong path—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that the New Democrats have never voted in favour of a free trade agreement, but they did come close once. There were a number of members of Parliament who stood and implied that if there was to be a recorded vote, they might have voted in favour of the Jordan free trade agreement.

The member came very close to voting in favour of the agreement with Jordan. It is interesting that the UN Human Rights Council adopted a motion of the UPR outcome of Jordan, which states in part, “the reform agenda has so far fallen short of making basic changes to ensure respect for the rights to free expression, association, freedom of the press, and an end to impunity for torture and other ill-treatment”.

This was an agreement that many the New Democrats might have supported. Do the New Democrats base their vote on the same criteria for all free trade agreements with all countries?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I know I have to answer the question, but the member will not be able to answer one question that I would like to ask him. Did he see this agreement? Will it say in this agreement that the workers will be treated well or have higher pay?

In 1992 the Liberal Party said that it would get rid of the GST. I remember Sheila Copps said at that time that if her government ever accepted the GST, she would resign her seat, and she did. She then had to be re-elected. The Liberals could not deliver everything they said they would in the 1992 red book. They said that they would never cut employment insurance and they took \$57 billion from the working people. After that, the Conservative Party came into the House to legalize the money stolen from the working people.

The Liberal Party is all about that. The Liberals work the same way as the Conservatives. They all report to Bay Street in Toronto.

• (2120)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst for putting forward our position as New Democrats on this legislation.

Bill C-20 is a bill that would implement the free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras. It is a bill that we very much oppose and, sadly, it is a bill that reflects the Conservative government's agenda, which is to disregard human rights, environmental sustainability, and the reputation that we as a country have built over the last number of years, and throw it all away in the name of presumably creating some wealth for probably some of the government's friends.

Government Orders

We oppose the bill because of three fundamentally important criteria: is the proposed partner one that respects democracy, human rights, adequate environmental and labour standards, and Canadian values? If there are challenges in these regards, is the partner on a positive trajectory toward these goals? We have also made it clear that we are concerned about the terms of the proposed agreement and the strategic value that this kind of relationship would pose for Canada. On these three criteria, this agreement fails.

We have indicated, and members have heard this tonight only from New Democrat members who have been speaking in the House, that Honduras is a country with undemocratic practices, a corrupt government, weak institutions, and low standards. It is of insignificant strategic value and it has a dark record of human rights abuses.

We have heard about the military coup d'état in 2009 in Honduras. We have heard about the attack on journalists and freedom of speech. We have heard about the persecution of trade unionists and human rights advocates. We have heard of the danger that LGBTQ Hondurans have faced in their country, and in fact of the murder of members of that community. We have heard of the incredible inequality that exists in that country. We have heard in so many ways that the situation for Hondurans in their own country is becoming worse, yet the Government of Canada is proclaiming that somehow it is fitting for Honduras to have a closer relationship with Canada, that somehow this agreement would make a difference for the people of Honduras.

We do not have to look any further than the free trade agreement with Colombia, as we have heard from my NDP colleagues tonight. The trade agreement with Colombia is a perfect example of the way in which the government pursued a hardball economic agenda and said that human rights and environmental sustainability would be regulated and encouraged through side agreements and mechanisms parallel to the actual agreement. However, the human rights violations in Colombia continue. Trade unionists and human rights activists continue to be under threat. Indigenous peoples continue to be displaced. Colombians are no better off as a result of that agreement.

As a Canadian member of Parliament, what I would like to focus on today is the way in which the Conservative government is steadfastly dismantling the reputation that Canadians have built for so many years, a reputation that we have worked at as leaders in human rights, equality, and justice.

Sadly, there is no shortage of examples of the way in which the government has sought to change Canada's reputation, has chosen to reverse its position when it comes to the importance of human rights and equality, and has removed itself from any sort of multilateral co-operative approach to making the world a better place. Sadly, this legislation is yet one more example of that failure to live up to a reputation that many Canadians value, and sadly, there are too many other cases in which we see the government support corporate interests that in turn take away our stellar reputation around the world.

● (2125)

Let us look at the mining sector. Around 75% of the world's mining companies are based in Canada. We know that most of these

mining companies do not actually have Canadian operations, but they benefit from the market scenarios and government policies when they set up shop here. In fact, a number of these companies are doing business around the world in a way that no Canadian can be proud of.

Canada's mining reputation is beginning to be noticed in the worst way around the world. There are too many examples to speak of to illustrate the ways in which companies that get support through Export Development Canada or even through direct investments from the Conservative government are creating havoc around the world.

I got to see one of these examples first-hand in a country that I know well, Greece. A company based in Canada, Eldorado Gold, with the help of money from Export Development Canada, has pursued mining development without the support of the public.

It has employed security forces to beat protesters. It has destroyed a tremendously valuable environment agriculturally and in terms of its natural wealth in northern Greece, to the point where people see the Canadian flag as something with a negative connotation. People are extremely critical, and they are saying things like "What happened to Canada?" They are very clear in their opposition not just to this mining development but to the kind of agenda that they see Canada putting forward around the world.

That is not something that makes me proud to be a Canadian member of Parliament. I am somebody who takes pride in being in the House, but the actions of the Conservative government affect all of us through the very correct perception that people have of us around the world.

Let us look at another area, the environment.

We know that Canada used to be seen as a leader. Sadly, under the Liberal government, a lot was left to be desired. Now, under the Conservative government, we have gone from being a leader to a laggard to an obstructionist when it comes to making a difference in terms of the environment. If we keep reducing emissions at the rate that we are going now every year, we will reach our 2020 targets in 2057.

Let us look at areas like maternal health. I had the chance to speak to this issue over the last number of weeks in great depth. We saw the way that Canada, often seen as a leader when it comes to women's rights, was very explicit in its exclusion of a fundamental aspect of a woman's right to health, which is her reproductive rights. All of this was to pursue the government's own ideological agenda.

The list goes on. Let us look at peacekeeping, at our role in conflicts around the world, our role more broadly in terms of the United Nations and the multilateral work that we used to be involved with but have now forgotten about.

This bill, in line with so many other bills and, more broadly, the agenda of the Conservative government, would contribute to sully our reputation around the world. It would allow us to sit by as situations become worse for people in countries around the world, as well.

I would also like to touch on the way in which this kind of free trade agreement would not benefit Canadians.

Government Orders

We know that in Canada, we are seeing worsening income and wealth inequality. We know that 86 of the wealthiest Canadian residents hold the same amount as the bottom 11.4 million Canadians combined. We also know that with greater inequality in our country, when there is inequality in our safety and prosperity, everybody suffers.

• (2130)

I also want to note that, sadly, while the bill should be another effort in driving our ability as a country to provide for our own citizens and build our own economy, it is only an attempt by the current government to continue to pursue an agenda whereby few would benefit from trade programs like this. I am proud to stand with the NDP in opposition to the bill and in opposition to the government's agenda around the world.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. She raised the major elements of this free trade agreement.

I am talking here about the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement. We know that many free trade agreements have been signed. I have a feeling that these deals are like figurines and that the Conservatives absolutely want the whole collection. However, they do not realize that an agreement has to be negotiated, particularly according to the specific conditions of both countries. This deal does not have the conditions required for an effective free trade agreement.

Unfortunately, right now, Honduras is not showing any progress in terms of improving its record on human rights, labour rights, environment rights and indigenous rights.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about this, because these considerations are not reflected in the agreement, which, on top of that, does not have any economic benefits.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for raising the main issues we are debating here in the House.

Obviously, this government's ideology benefits a few of the party's friends but does not really offer much to the Canadian people. The government certainly makes it easy for Honduras to maintain an economic system in which citizens are exploited and marginalized.

It is such a shame to see Canada resort to that. We forget the reputation our country used to have; we forget that we used to have a strong reputation for promoting human rights and the environment. Now, the government is going in the opposite direction. I am proud to stand firm with my colleague and all NDP members, and to speak out against an ideology that will have destructive effects across the world and here, in Canada.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to commend the hon. member for Churchill.

There has been a lot of talk about defending labour rights, human rights, and environmental rights. However, I would like my colleague to talk about how important it is to have a good trade relationship so that the two countries can fully prosper from that trade. The process needs to ensure mutual respect.

There is talk in this bill about Canadian investments in Honduras, but those investments require a healthy, proper atmosphere. If we do trade with a country that we respect, investments will increase and our trade deficit will finally return to an acceptable level.

• (2135)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is asking a very important question.

If that is the future we want, we need to get rid of this government. For seven years now, the government has been imposing this same ideology, be it with regard to the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement or our role on the international stage. This ideology serves the interests of the Conservatives and their friends, not of Canadians and the people we are working with.

The ministers and the Prime Minister travel around the world, claiming that they want to build relationships and contribute at the global level. However, the reality is that they are signing deals that further marginalize people.

There is a growing inequality among Canadians, and a free trade agreement is not going to change that. That is why we are opposed to this bill. We need to rethink our vision for Canada's trade, co-operation and future.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats believe that Canadians recognize the importance of trade for our economy, and that they want a strategic and effective trade policy that increases our trade opportunities and supports our exporters.

The government wants to enter into a free trade agreement with Honduras. Honduras is characterized by its undemocratic practices, corrupt government, failing institutions, and record of human rights violations. Honduras has low standards and negligible strategic value.

This is why the New Democrats do not support Bill C-20, An Act to Implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras. This evening, I rise to explain why this agreement will not benefit the Canadian economy, and how it goes against our values.

Honduras' human rights record leaves a lot to be desired. Its institutions are weak, its police forces and army corrupt and, still today, its policies are oppressive and undemocratic.

Violence in Honduras has increased considerably since 2009, which is particularly troubling in terms of its human rights record and the level of impunity in the country. Not many crimes are investigated and fewer still are heard by the courts.

The Supreme Court of Honduras has estimated the rate of impunity to be approximately 98%. However, according to those consulted, the actual degree of impunity ranges from 80 to 98%. A report on political assassinations in Honduras, published one and half years prior to the November 2013 election, revealed that 36 candidates or aspiring candidates in the November 2013 election were assassinated. Furthermore, there were 24 cases of armed assault against candidates.

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It is very difficult, therefore, to address the human rights problems. Canadian investments in the region have very real consequences for human rights, given such high levels of impunity. That about sums up a country that the Conservatives want to provide preferential trade access to, and with which they want to foster closer economic ties. Impunity reigns in Honduras.

Bill C-20 would implement a treaty that turns a blind eye to human rights. It is a yet another missed opportunity. Bilateral trade negotiations, and the planned intensification of the relationship between Canada and Honduras, puts our country in a unique position to put pressure on Honduras so that the country can do more to address this crisis. It is not too late for us to seize this opportunity.

Unfortunately, I have very little hope that the government is listening to us. If we look at the various free trade agreements signed with other Latin American and Central American countries, human rights are still being violated.

As far as the agreement itself is concerned, I would like to reiterate what a number of witnesses mentioned when the bill was in committee. Currently, Honduras is Canada's 104th export market in terms of the value of exports. In 2012, exports totalled a measly \$38 million and imports amounted to \$218 million, which represents a major trade deficit.

● (2140)

Internal analyses by Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada confirm that this agreement will generate only marginal benefits for the Canadian economy.

It is important to note that the United Nations conference on trade and development ranks countries according to the access they have to their main partners' markets. Honduras is one of the countries at the top of the list. In other words, Honduras does not need more access to the market to boost its exports in the rest of the world, unlike most of the other developing countries.

Instead of concluding agreements with undemocratic countries that do not respect the rights and values that are important to Canadians, the government should be concluding agreements with countries where it has been proven that such an agreement is advisable, such as Brazil.

The government says that this agreement will guarantee our economic prosperity. However, signing such a free trade agreement will not benefit Canadians. The government fails to mention that Canada's manufacturing sector will be hit hard by this free trade. It will be more profitable to manufacture in Honduras, where there is no viable regulation in the textiles industry, than to manufacture in Canada. Competition is totally unfair in this sector.

I will close by saying that, just like the free trade agreements with Colombia and Ecuador, this agreement will benefit Canadian extractive industries. The Canadian extractive industry has interests in Honduras, but Canadian mining companies there are embroiled in controversial conflicts with citizens and aboriginal groups or are facing allegations of environmental contamination.

The extractive sector is one of Canada's most significant commercial interests. Investor protection provisions are therefore an important part of the agreement. Canadian mining companies

have been involved in controversial local conflicts with citizens and aboriginal groups and are facing environmental contamination allegations. CIDA and the Department of Foreign Affairs have helped develop the Honduran mining code, but that code does not respect the interests of local residents and does not provide acceptable social, environmental and economic protection.

New Democrats believe that Canada's corporate social responsibility strategy does not go far enough toward ensuring that Canadian companies operating in developing countries respect applicable standards and laws. Where it has a presence abroad, Canada must promote values of respect, social justice, environmental protection and human rights. Practices that are prohibited in Canada should not be allowed abroad.

New Democrats will continue to pressure the government to pass stricter legislation that will make Canadian mining, gas and oil companies responsible for their activities in developing countries. I will vote against this bill, the latest in a long line of bills subject to time allocation. This is yet another undemocratic act on the part of our government, which is preventing us from talking about a bill that is very important to our economic and trade policy.

Did the government use what it learned from Honduran institutions to pursue its own interests?

● (2145)

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the coup d'état in 2009, and even though Honduras and the United States have a trade agreement, extreme poverty has continued to increase in Honduras, rising from a rate of 13% to 26%.

I think we can conclude that, despite the fact that Honduras is a friend to the United States, this free trade agreement is a catastrophe and has huge consequences on the population, aside from what we know of the massacres and everything else we know about this country.

Could the member explain what a fair and equitable free trade agreement that reflects Canadian democracy would look like?

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her relevant question.

As I said, our country should do business and sign free trade agreements with countries that share our values on topics such as social welfare, environmental protection and human rights. We believe it is important to maintain our credibility and to respect our Canadian values, both here in Canada and in the countries where we are mining, running oil facilities or what have you.

It is important to do business with people whose standards are similar to our own.

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[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know we will be concluding debate at second reading of this bill some time in the next 45 minutes, and I want to take this opportunity to emphasize what I think is really important, and that is that trade agreements are just one aspect of international trade. One thing we need to take a look at is the bigger picture. It is more than just trade agreements that are important; it is the bottom line. It is trade surplus versus trade deficit, and it is the amount of trade that takes place between Canada and the U.S. and other countries that has a severe impact on the number of jobs in Canada.

The Honduras free trade agreement is an important agreement in its own right, but we need to put more time and energy into the area of trade that we believe is ultimately going to be of great benefit for Canadians. In part, the government has lost sight of what really needs to happen, which is to look at expanding world trade. It is not just about trade agreements. We just happen to be talking about a trade agreement that deals with Honduras, and we understand the positioning of all political issues on the issue.

I would ask the member if she could provide her thoughts with regard to the bottom line and how important it is that we have an overall approach in dealing with international trade, which improves the quality of life for all Canadians.

• (2150)

[Translation]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As I already mentioned, the New Democrats are in favour of a strategic and effective trade policy that increases our trade opportunities and supports our exporters. Furthermore, we want to do business with countries that have values similar to our own, which means countries that respect working conditions, human rights and the environment, and countries that respect all people, whether we are talking about journalists or critics of the government.

Since the coup d'état in 2009, there have been a lot of assassinations. Unfortunately, impunity reigns in this country.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-20 concerning the free trade agreement between Canada and Honduras.

Since we often hear this from the Conservatives and Liberals, it is important to mention that in the NDP, we are in favour of trade. We believe that it is important to our economy. However, unlike the Conservatives and Liberals, we are not ready to trade freely at just any cost. We understand that there are trade opportunities for our exporters and that these must be supported. Having worked abroad and in business law, I understand how important it is to trade with other countries, but we must do so intelligently.

My colleagues on the other side, just like the Liberals, undoubtedly have not read the book *Fair Trade For All*, written by Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize recipient in economics, and Andrew Charlton. Many statements from this book are very important, but what I want to do today is to sum up our position on trade agreements.

When entering into and negotiating a free trade agreement, it is important to ensure that the partner respects democracy, human rights, adequate labour standards, environmental protection standards and Canadian values. This is in a broader sense. If these countries cannot have these elements in place, what can we do to help them? Moreover, we have to determine whether the partner brings something to the Canadian economy, in other words, whether the country holds strategic value for Canada. Of course, we also have to consider whether the agreement is beneficial in and of itself.

It is clear that the Liberals supported the agreement with Europe, without having even read it. Once again, this is simply ideological. They say that they agree, regardless of the conditions in the agreement, just to be able to claim that they are in favour of trade. In the NDP, we are more pragmatic. We review the trade details, and the partners with whom we negotiate to determine whether the agreement is beneficial or not to Canada.

Turning back to Honduras, more specifically, I would like to talk about an issue that affects us very deeply, and about which most of my colleagues have spoken, that is, human rights. I am going to quote Carmen Cheung, a researcher for the international human rights program:

These past five years [since the coup] have seen a dramatic erosion in protections for expressive life in Honduras. Journalists are threatened, they're harassed, attacked, and murdered with near impunity, and sometimes in circumstances that strongly suggest the involvement of state agents....

Among the journalists and human rights defenders we spoke with, there is a pervasive sense that they are under threat, and that the state is, at best, unable or unwilling to defend them, or at worst, complicit in the abuses.

In short, we know that there are human rights problems in Honduras. I hear my Liberal colleagues saying that we will sign a free trade agreement in order to help them. In other words, we will sign the agreement and cross our fingers and hope that it will help the people of Honduras.

In that case, I will quote Pablo Heidrich, an economist at the North-South Institute:

• (2155)

[English]

...I don't find signing an FTA [or a free trade agreement] at this point to be an effective way of engaging with Honduras if the purpose is to bring development and security and stability to Honduras....

I think what the Honduran government needs...is a certain level of pressure so that the government becomes more responsive to wider social demands and it stops being sort of a committee that administers the gains of a very limited group of people.

[Translation]

I believe that clearly summarizes the NDP's position and concerns. That is why we will not be supporting this free trade agreement.

However, we know that the Conservatives are willing to sign every possible free trade agreement just to say that they are pro-trade and to hide, to some extent, their results and their actual record.

[English]

When the Conservatives came to power, Canada had a current account surplus of \$18 billion, but eight years later, there is a trade deficit of \$80 billion, a decline of \$10 billion per year. This is the trade report for the Conservative government. It is pretty shameful.

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[Translation]

As for the Liberals, they will sign agreements and say they support them. However, they will do what they did with Kyoto. They will sign these agreements and say the will is there, but they will not do anything to implement them afterwards. Again, in this case, they say they support a free trade agreement and hope Hondurans will benefit from it, but let us look at their actions.

[English]

That is what is really important, to look at the actions of each party. Right now we have the Conservatives signing all sorts of trade agreements, regardless of who they are signing with and regardless of the benefits for the other country or for our country. We have the Liberals supporting them and just hoping that they can change things.

It is really important for me to raise this issue, if I may make a parallel with what is happening right now with the Trans-Pacific Partnership. As we all know, there are some discussions being made. Unfortunately, we do not have all the information here, but what is happening in the U.S. right now is really important for us to look at.

In the U.S. last week, on May 29, 153 members of the House of Representatives signed a letter asking that the ongoing TPP negotiations include an enhancement framework for protecting international human and labour rights.

Again, that is an example for my Liberal friends over there who say we cannot do anything and we will cross our fingers and hope that it will make it better. What they are doing right now is actually pushing forward and asking, when they negotiate, to have concrete measures to actually tackle the human rights issue.

I will read part of the letter that was signed by members in the U.S., part of which is important for me:

In this context, we were alarmed by recent reports in Vietnamese media that Truong Dinh Tuyen, the former Vietnamese Minister of Trade and current senior advisor on international negotiations, said that Vietnam would not accept a TPP requirement that workers be allowed to establish independent labor unions, but would instead accept a compromise that devolved some power to local unions. While we are pleased to see that Vietnamese officials are beginning to realize that continuation of the country's flagrant violations of core labor standards—which has been documented at length by the Departments of Labor and State—is unacceptable, we were concerned that Mr. Tuyen seems to believe that halfway measures will be adequate. That is not the case. All TPP member nations, including Vietnam, must fully comply with TPP labor obligations, including those related to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

In countries like Vietnam in which workers have faced extraordinary abuses, there must be binding and enforceable plans to bring those countries' laws and practices into compliance with TPP labor requirements. Those plans must be made public, and the changes to the laws and practices must be fully implemented, before Congress takes up TPP for consideration, while trade benefits granted by the agreement must be contingent on the plans' continued implementation. In countries such as Vietnam, where the labor regime must be substantially transformed, an additional mechanism is needed to link those benefits to Vietnam's regular demonstration of the effective enforcement of its new law laws.

It is clear that Vietnam, in particular, must do substantial work to achieve a minimally acceptable level of respect for workers' rights for a trading partner of the United States. Vietnamese law requires that all unions in the country be affiliated with the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor, which describes itself as "a member of the political system under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam," and in so doing violates workers' rights to form and join independent labor unions of their own choosing. Meanwhile, the Department of Labor lists Vietnam as one of just four countries where there is reason to believe that garments might have been produced by forced or indentured child labor.

This is an example of what we can do when we negotiate. In the case of Honduras, the government obviously has not negotiated in terms of bringing forward better human rights and better labour rights for people in Honduras. The Liberals are saying we should sign an agreement and hopefully it would help Honduras, clearly we can see that while we are negotiating, we can actually do something. We can ask for something in return.

We are not desperate to sign a trade agreement with Honduras, knowing that it is not our biggest trade partner. It is our 104th partner. There is also a trade deficit that we have with Honduras right now. Why not take the time to negotiate and to bring forward real amendments that would help the countries with which we negotiate? When we look at what the Liberals are doing in terms of supporting the trade agreement with Honduras, we see they do not really care and they do not think we can change things. However, New Democrats think we can change things and make the world better.

● (2200)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the remarks of the member for Brossard—La Prairie about what it would take to make an appropriate deal for the NDP and how we do these particular trade agreements.

There is one story I would add before I ask my question. We had indigenous people from Honduras, Venezuela, Philippines, and Mexico come to my office, as I am the critic for human rights. They talked about how they were pushed off their land by their government. They felt that part of it was because Canadian mining interests were in their country. Our leader, the member for Outremont, was at one of these meetings, and he said that in the next Canadian government, an NDP government, in any trade decisions it makes, one of the lenses it will look through will be that of human rights.

My question for the member, who has just given this eloquent speech, is this: how does he feel being in the House, where we have been legislated to be until midnight, when the NDP is speaking in this debate but the government is not putting up any members at all to defend the trade agreement it is so proud of?

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. More importantly, I thank him for his work on human rights. I know he cares deeply about this issue and he does an extraordinary job.

As for the fact that members opposite do not defend their own free trade agreement, that is not really surprising. They do not want to defend the indefensible. They are not able to present arguments showing it is a good thing. Therefore, they just listen to what we have to say.

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Having said that, I am pleased to be here to speak to an issue dear to me, and to discuss interesting topics, even though the government wants to limit debate with its 68th gag order. It does not want us to have a debate and it does not want Canadians to hear what we have to say on its bill, which is very flawed and which they cannot defend, as we see today.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

He referred to the Liberal Party's position a number of times, but he made many mistakes in presenting our position.

The last three or four speeches were made by NDP members, and not two of them said the same thing.

I wonder if the hon. member could explain the NDP's position? I do not think his position reflected that of his colleagues. Could he comment on that?

• (2205)

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for his question.

I am a little disappointed he did not listen to my speech, because I began by explaining our position. We said we support trade agreements and we agree on trade, but such agreements must be properly prepared and negotiated. They must not be done the Liberals' way, that is by signing them and then closing our eyes and hoping for the best.

[*English*]

This is a good opportunity to read what Mr. Thang Nguyen, president and CEO of BPSOS, Boat People SOS, had to say. He said:

We have a good opportunity right now through the negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership or TPP to demand that the Vietnamese government must fully respect the rights of workers to form or join a free and independent labour union and to unconditionally release all imprisoned labour organizers as a pre-condition for Vietnam's membership or partnership in the TPP negotiations.

Again, we have the Liberals supporting the Honduras free trade agreement, knowing all the issues happening there right now with respect to human rights and labour rights, but they do not care.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people are lively at this late hour and that is a good thing.

I would like to start with the comments made by the Liberal member who just spoke and ask my colleague a question. To be frank, perhaps he was not listening. The NDP has been very clear about its position on this free trade agreement in the many speeches we have made.

We cannot support a free trade bill that does not provide any clear benefit to Canadians and that could worsen the human rights situation in Honduras. We must absolutely not sign any agreement that could worsen the human rights situation. The Parliament of Canada should be defending human rights throughout the world. Unfortunately, this bill would do exactly the opposite.

I would like to point out that the Liberal Party seems prepared to support all of the free trade bills that the Conservative government introduces without even seeing the text of those agreements. That is what they did with the Canada-Europe free trade agreement, the text of which still has not been tabled in the House. Nevertheless, the Liberals are already supporting it.

The bill before us deals with a free trade agreement that, once again, was negotiated behind closed doors. It came into being like all of the other secretly prepared bills the government has introduced. This bill is badly put together because it does not honour the human rights commitments that Canadians should support, and the Liberals are okay with that. They have agreed to fully support it.

I would like my colleague to take the time to read the free trade agreements before criticizing the official opposition. He could share any concerns he might have about certain free trade agreements and bills. It might be a good thing for the members of the Liberal Party to take some time to think and to ask themselves whether they are really qualified to critique the bills introduced in the House when they do not even take the time to read the agreements they are supporting.

I hope that, from now on, the Liberal Party will take the time to ensure that it knows what it is talking about and really critically analyze the bills that are introduced.

We in the NDP insist that legislation benefit not only Canadians but also those countries with whom we sign trade agreements. In the case of the FTA with Honduras, one cannot help but wonder why we are in such a rush to sign an agreement with a country that is clearly going through a rough patch. Worse still, Honduras has been singled out for not protecting human rights.

The Conservative government announced it had reached an agreement in principle with Honduras on November 5, 2013, barely three weeks before that country's presidential election.

What I would like to know is this: Is this new President really able to protect human rights in the country? Clearly, the answer is no.

During a recent debate in committee, some witnesses asked questions about human rights; some of them, including James Bannantine, CEO of Aura Minerals Inc., denied any human rights abuses. I think he ought to qualify some of his statements. When he spoke about free trade with Honduras, his go-to argument was that any type of free trade was good, because signing an FTA with a country with a spotty human rights record could only improve the situation.

I would like to point out that the United States signed a free trade agreement with Honduras in 2006.

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● (2210)

Since then, another coup d'état took place, and such events do not normally improve the human rights situation. After the coup, a small portion of 10% of the population saw their real income increase by 100%. Poverty and extreme poverty grew by 13.2% and 26.3% respectively. The rise in poverty has been dramatic. Free trade did not improve the well-being of the vast majority of the population. We are told that the free trade agreement will produce positive economic results for the people of Honduras, but facts tell us exactly the opposite.

Worse still, human rights are threatened in Honduras. LGBT groups are targeted in Honduras. Lesbians and gays have great difficulty asserting their rights. The bill before us will not improve their lives at all.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers called for the Honduran government to dismiss four Supreme Court justices for administrative reasons, for violations of international standards and because there was a serious threat to democracy. If Honduras does not have a legal system, why are we in the process of signing a free trade agreement with that country? The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers called for the dismissal of four Supreme Court justices in Honduras. That is very worrisome. If we cannot rely on a country's judicial system, human rights are clearly at risk and will clearly not be defended. If the United Nations cannot say that human rights will be defended, why did negotiations not take place with Honduras to make sure that there is better respect for human rights?

Murder is a serious problem in Honduras. The homicide rate is 92 per 100,000 people. It is the most violent country in Latin America. It is the murder capital. In 2012, a record number of murders were committed: more than 7,000. This country does not deserve a free trade agreement with Canada.

Canada will not benefit very much from this free trade agreement. Honduras is not a significant trade partner. Clearly, if we sign the free trade agreement, the net effect for Canada will be nearly impossible to detect. There will be so little impact that very little will change in Canada. However, if we sign an agreement with Honduras, we need to be sure that minimum standards are put in place. It is imperative that Honduras complies with international rights standards, much like the vast majority of countries around the world.

Of the UN's 186 member countries, Honduras ranks 120th on the human development index. Even the United States-Honduras free trade agreement did not improve the lives of the poorest people. In fact, life has gotten worse for the country's poorest citizens. The free trade agreement with the United States did not improve things for them. Since 18% of Hondurans live on less than \$1.25 a day on average, it is hard to believe that a free trade agreement will significantly improve their situation.

I think we would benefit from inviting members of the U.S. Congress, who signed the agreement with Honduras in 2006, to share their experience with us, tell us why it did not improve things for Honduras, and explain why it did not improve the American economy.

● (2215)

We are headed in that same direction. We should not pass this bill. We should reject it. It is a matter of common sense. We should also be protecting human rights in Honduras.

[English]

Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have had a chance to speak in the House already on the importance of the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement for Canadians and also for Honduras. I have been on the trade committee for about eight and a half years and have had the opportunity to travel recently to South America. I was in Peru. I met with our Canadian officials on the ground and the corporate social responsibility leadership of Canadian companies and we talked about the integration of Honduras.

We have had several witnesses at the committee. One of the witnesses, a gentleman by the name of Vincent Taddeo, who is the vice-president international from Cavendish Farms, said:

Whenever...you create jobs, people tend to move away from the negatives, from the drug trade, from the stealing, from whatever is negative in that society. Whenever we do this, we see an improvement in the lives of the people on the ground.

I know the hon. colleague would like to live in a perfect world, in Utopia, and have a trade agreement that would be perfect. The reality is we live in an imperfect world. One of the aspects from our Conservative government, we believe, in this engaging country is to give them hope and opportunity. I was in Colombia in 2008, and we see the improvement in the middle class in Colombia now that jobs and hope and opportunities are created.

My question, through you, Mr. Speaker, for the hon. colleague is this: why would he not engage and provide hope and opportunity for individuals in Honduras, or would he rather just leave them on the sidelines and allow this murderous society to continue?

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that free trade creates a legal framework where corporations have rights, rights that can supersede individuals' rights.

We need a legal framework for that to function properly. We do not have that in Honduras. We have companies that are running amok. We have companies that will run roughshod over individual rights. A free trade deal would simply empower those corporations even more.

I would ask that member, in South Africa, during apartheid, would he have thought that free trade would have been the proper form to take to bring forward individual rights in South Africa, or does he think that challenging the state of the legal framework of that country was the proper line to take?

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, which issued the following warning on April 17, 2014:

HONDURAS—Exercise a high degree of caution. Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada advises against all travel to certain regions of Valle, Choluteca and Olancho due to high levels of violence and crime.

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If the Conservative MPs bothered to rise every once in a while and give a 10-minute speech, I would be able to ask them this question. However, since they do not do that and their constituents cannot hear what they have to say, I would like to ask the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine the question. I want to know why the Department of Foreign Affairs is issuing a travel advisory when, at the same time, the Conservative Party wants to send Canadian companies to get attacked in a dangerous country .

● (2220)

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her excellent question, which deserves a lot of attention.

In this situation, we have to wonder whether human rights have been set aside in favour of corporate rights. Are we saying that corporate rights should take precedence over human rights, the rights of real people? The question bears asking.

I believe that the Conservative government is in too much of a hurry to eliminate our huge trade deficit. It is trying to sign free trade agreements left and right in the hope that they will have a positive economic impact on Canada. However, I do not think that the government has taken the time to assess the impact this will have on real people, both individuals and families.

The Conservative government has to make sure that human rights are respected. Unfortunately, in this case, the evidence shows that the opposite is true. We should reject this bill. Instead, we should look at the issue raised by my colleague and ask ourselves how we could first improve the lives of individuals rather than the situation of corporations.

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure for me to speak late in the evening and even more so to wake up everyone in the House and everyone who is watching to say that, at this time, we are debating Bill C-20, with respect to the free trade agreement between Canada and Honduras.

Unfortunately, before I get into the specifics, I have to admit that I am somewhat surprised to see that neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals are participating as they should be. I am surprised but, at the same time, not so much. In fact, that is what is really happening here in Ottawa. They are not present. They say they will be in the House to participate in the debate and share ideas so that together we can properly represent Canadians, but they are not here. Only the NDP is here and it has not missed a single opportunity to speak. The New Democrats have always been here and we will sit day and night. We did it when we arrived in 2011. I arrived in 2011 and, in the first weeks, we sat day and night.

As for me, I will not fall asleep when the interests of Canadians are at stake. I will participate in the debate and fiercely defend their interests, because that is what democracy is all about. It is good that we can have this exchange when people from different parties are present. They can bring their points of view, we can bring ours, and we can strike a certain balance and find ways to really improve things, to really improve bills. I see that the Conservative government is there, and that it is not moving, not speaking and closing its eyes and ears. It is not moving and I find that unfortunate. It makes no sense. I think that the Conservatives have sunk very low.

What the NDP wants in this Canada-Honduras free trade agreement is very simple. New Democrats want to assure Canadians that we realize how important trade is to our economy. We support increasing trade opportunities and we support Canadian exporters. However, this obviously needs to be done with human, environmental and social rights in mind, and we must ensure that the agreement benefits both countries. That is what is truly important. We also want to see more trade agreements with countries that honour Canadian values and sign trade agreements that truly benefit the Canadian economy.

New Democrats want to implement a strategic trade policy in order to restart multilateral negotiations and sign agreements with developed countries that have high standards or that are implementing high standards. I am talking about countries such as Japan, India, Brazil and South Africa. These are all countries with which Canada should sign trade agreements, not countries like Honduras, where drug trafficking goes on with near impunity, where human rights are regularly violated, where democracy is in jeopardy and virtually absent, and where low standards will certainly harm our Canadian companies.

We believe there are three fundamentally important criteria that we should use in assessing trade agreements. I will not reinvent the wheel; it is very simple. First, is the proposed partner one who respects democracy, human rights, adequate environmental and labour standards, and Canadian values? If not, is the partner trying to achieve these objectives? That is something we need to ask, and this objective is not met in this agreement. Second, is the proposed partner's economy of significance or strategic value to Canada? Once again, this objective is not met in this free trade agreement. Third, are the terms of this proposed agreement satisfactory? I do not think so. The proposed free trade agreement with Honduras does not meet any of these three criteria.

Since Honduras is not a democratic country with adequate standards and institutions, since it represents little strategic interest to Canada, and since it is home to serious human rights violations, the majority of Canadians would certainly be opposed to giving this country preferential trade conditions.

● (2225)

Several interveners agree with the NDP and support our position. For example, Sheila Katz, a representative of the Americas Policy Group, Canadian Council for International Co-operation, had this to say when she appeared before the Standing Committee on International Trade on April 22, 2013:

The Americas Policy Group has recommended that Canada refrain from concluding free trade agreements with countries that have poor democratic governance and human rights records.

...Canada's eager recognition of a president who came to power in a military coup in Honduras in 2009...is another example of Canada prioritizing the trade pillar of its Americas strategy above the rest. Since the coup, hundreds of regime opponents have been intimidated, arbitrarily arrested, disappeared, tortured, and killed. The Americas Policy Group is concerned that Canada has validated this regime by adopting a business-as-usual approach and signing a free trade agreement with Honduras in spite of its human rights record.

Government Orders

In Quebec, in my riding, Lawyers Without Borders has done exceptional work. I know that they were on a mission from November 21 to 26, 2013. They issued this press release:

...the executive director of Lawyers Without Borders Canada, Pascal Paradis, along with approximately 10 other dignitaries and representatives of international human rights organizations, took part in a mission organized by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). The purpose of the mission was to observe whether human rights violations occurred during the general election held on Sunday, November 24.

In a press release issued on November 25...the mission reported a number of irregularities that it felt tainted the process and could discredit the results. The mission also made several recommendations to Honduran authorities and the international community.

I also have a comment from Neil Reeder, director general of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's Latin America and Caribbean Bureau:

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in the hemisphere, with 65% of its people living in poverty. It suffers from extremely unequal income distribution. The country also suffers from social inequality, high unemployment, poor health and education. More than 60% of all Hondurans are highly vulnerable to food insecurity.

I could go on, but I know that I do not have a lot of time. I could speak at length about people who have concerns about this free trade agreement with Honduras.

When I look at the government, I get the impression that it collects agreements just for the fun of bragging about signing so many free trade agreements. These agreements essentially represent a very small percentage of our trade. Contrary to what the Conservatives say, it is not really worth it, but they keep bragging and signing. We will not find out the consequences of our actions until later—the consequences of this Conservative government that has no idea what it is doing. It does things with its eyes closed, without listening to experts: the Canadians who travel abroad and report back these types of incidents.

I invite the Conservatives to stand up in the House and speak so that we can finally have a debate. The important thing in the House of Commons is to debate.

● (2230)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It being 10:32 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 to 53.

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:

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made Tuesday, May 27, 2014, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 4, 2014, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

* * *

[*English*]

VICTIMS BILL OF RIGHTS

The House resumed from May 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-32, An Act to enact the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights and to amend certain Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to ask my friends across the way what took so long. I ran in the 2006 election and debated candidates who talked about victims' rights. I ran in 2008 and debated other candidates who talked about victims' rights. Now it is finally before the House. This will come as a great shock, but the New Democrats will support sending the bill to committee. We believe that if members want to listen to us and work with us, we will find a way to make the bill even better.

We can actually work together if we try, if all sides want to work together on such a bill, because it is an important bill. If we think about it, it outlines federal rights for victims of crime to be informed, to be protected, to participate, and to receive compensation. I understand there is not much said in the bill about how much compensation the government will provide.

Another aspect of the bill that concerns us, and we may be able to work that out in committee, is that it does not establish any legal obligations for those working in the criminal justice system to implement any of the rights that are aforementioned in the bill, which is very troubling.

The Conservatives say that they truly want to make victims a priority. I am in my ninth year here, and I hear this regularly from the other side. We will take them at their word. Instead of photo ops and all the announcements about what they will do, let us get down to business, let us get to work and do it.

The NDP has always supported victims' rights. We will continue to consult victims, victims groups and experts in the field in order to determine how we can best assist the people who are the victims. Members will hear me say many times in this speech that we should work together on this and get this done. Instead of the push and shove that occurs in this place so often, when we talk about victims' rights, we should all agree. Hopefully, we will find a way to get through this together.

Government Orders

With the Conservatives, the devil is always in the details. Therefore, until it goes to committee and there is a full discussion, we will reserve our judgment on the bill. Hopefully, the committee will hear experts and victims. Those are the people who have lived these situations.

The Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime is an active participant in Justice Canada's consultations for victims. The suggestion was that we had to have a conclusive and applicable statement, integrated, accessible and simple resources and services that would establish baseline standards across the country. After all, this is the federal Government of Canada and equality before the law across our country is very important. There has to be an inclusion of the definition of "victim", encompassing all persons who have suffered from crimes committed in Canada, fair, respectful and adaptive rights, something to which we should all relate. Victims should have a voice, the ability to take action, the right to be informed, and, as I said a few moments ago, financial support and protections, psychological support mechanisms, and we should limit the ability for offenders to benefit from their crimes or to reoffend.

At first glance, the bill responds to some of those requests by widening the definition of "victims of crime", by codifying rights to be protected, to participate and to receive compensation. However, the bill does not designate legal obligations on other stakeholders in the judicial system. It simply provides access to a vague mechanism to file complaints with various federal departments, agencies and organizations that have a role to play in the justice system when victims have their rights infringed.

For example, complaints directed at provincial and territorial organizations, including the police, the crown and victims' rights organizations, will be processed directly under the appropriate provincial or territorial laws. No specific funds have yet been attributed to the implementation of these mechanisms for examining complaints or to help out the provinces.

● (2235)

Are we creating some kind of two-tier system where the federal government will pay for some of it and the province will have to pay for some of it? This is an example of the kinds of questions we would like to see answered at committee. Maybe we need to have some amendments made to the bill to make it better. Only time will tell.

The NDP very clearly wants victims to have access to the services and supports they deem they need. That would require investment and partnership with the provinces, not just press conferences and some of the hot air we have heard for the last eight years. We recognize that for many victims, having assurances that they can participate in sentencing and parole hearings and being informed of the status of the prosecution are very important steps. That said, we want the government to provide real support and processes that will work, not just measures that it thinks will score political points.

We are looking at the details of the bill very closely. I want to reach across the aisle one more time and say to the government that we are looking at these details and want to work with it on this very important bill.

I have a story I want to tell. Lori Triano-Antidormi is the mother of a murdered child. That child was murdered two blocks from my home. The child was a couple of years old. The daycare worker took the child out for a walk and a woman, who all of us in the community knew was troubled, decided that day that the child contained the soul of her child. She killed the child to release her child to her once again. Obviously, that is a terribly sad story.

However, I want to talk about the strength of this mother. She said, "Not everyone believes the bill will be effective". She thinks the bill will create false hope for victims. She is not only a victim of a crime, but is now a psychologist, 20-odd years later, so she treats others.

She also said:

My concern is promising [victims] more involvement in a very adversarial system...She says that, right now, victims have no role in a verdict unless they are a witness. "The crown has the final say." Government change would 'only fuel vengeance.

That is quite a statement for a mother who has lost a child, to have the depth of personality to say that. I have had the good fortune of meeting her.

If the government were to make that change, she is sure it would fuel vengeance in the victim, which from a psychological perspective, her trade being psychology. It does not help the healing and recovery. This is one of the reasons it is important for us to listen to victims of crime, because not all victims of crime are seeking vengeance. They are seeking a better way of dealing with crime in our communities so it does not happen in the first place.

There is another fairly well-known victim. Sheldon Kennedy is a name that has been spoken in this place before. Several victims' advocates were on hand for an announcement, including Sheldon Kennedy, who was sexually abused by his minor league coach. His words were:

I'm not naive to think that we're going to flip a switch and everything's going to be better...But being able to have this announcement...is going to start the process of trying to be better at the way we handle victims, not only through the court process, but really understanding the damage that happens to victims.

It is not about what we do with a person in jail; it is what we do to prevent people being victimized in the first place. Therefore, when we are at committee, when we are looking at the bill and talking about the rights of our citizens, we have to take into account how as a society, how as a government, we are going to put the resources into place to prevent these terrible crimes where people, children, are victimized so many times.

As a person who at one point in my life was assaulted by an individual, I know what it feels like to be a victim. It is not pleasant. It is more important that we understand in advance and find those places in society to make the difference so we will not have victims who pay prices they should not have to pay.

● (2240)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am truly pleased to be able to ask my hon. colleague a question. His speech moved me because he expressed something very important to me, as a member of Parliament, namely the opportunity or this hope to work together. I commend that aspect of his speech.

Government Orders

He also talked about the fact that it is better to prevent than to cure. He also talked about how not to further victimize the victims and how to not have victims.

Can my colleague elaborate on that? Also, how could we improve this bill? I know that he already alluded to that. However, I would like him to expand on that.

• (2245)

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, as a caring society, part of our role is to say to victims that we will take care of them. The other part of that equation, the other half, is to prevent having victims in the first place. There is that balancing act.

I am optimistic about working with the government at committee on something that is this significant, this important, to everyday Canadians. Have members thought about how significant this really is and how important it is for us to come together to find a way to make this the best possible bill?

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to thank my colleague across the way for his very heartfelt, insightful speech. Obviously the member of Parliament has strong empathy for victims, possibly because of the experiences he has had.

That said, could the member outline one or two things he thinks are very important to add to the bill? I think the bill is very strong. It needs to have members on all sides of the House put their ideas forward as well.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, part of the reason for my passion is that my sister was strangled to death when I was two years old. Our family was a victim of a circumstance. This was in 1949. Times were different. Police officers have come so very far from then, but even at that time, the RCMP officers involved did a very good job dealing with our family.

However, again, it is to come to that place of understanding of what motivates and creates these situations and to pre-empt them from ever happening in the first place. In our family's case, it was the mental illness of a family member, but in many cases, it is drug driven or other aspects. There are so many aspects of society we can reach out and touch if we want to do it. The committee is a place where this specific bill can be worked on so that we can accomplish that.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it was a very moving and affecting speech. The kinds of issues we are talking about here, and the reasons we want to be able to provide rights to victims that are accessible, are on our minds, but of course, we would all rather that the victimization had never taken place at all, particularly in the heart-wrenching story the hon. member shared with us.

I want to ask if he has had a chance to look at the recommendations that have come from the federal ombudsman for victims' rights. There were very few of them that made their way into the bill, and I am wondering if there are any specific ones. One that comes to mind for me is the idea that because there is so much going on that is emotionally wrenching at the time of victimization, there should be a standard printed card. It is a system used in other

jurisdictions, I believe in California. It sets out for the victims where to go for help and how one identifies oneself as someone who would continuously get notifications in the train of the correctional process, and so on. I would ask my hon. colleague if he has any thoughts about the recommendations of the federal ombudsman for victims' rights.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that is spoken of very often is giving victims a voice, but the other side is financial and psychological support.

For people who have been victims of these types of crimes, particularly where someone's life is lost, or a family member's, their world is destroyed in front of them, and they need all the help they can get. Their community helps, but the government having in place guidance, and having it clearly available to people, is very important.

• (2250)

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to have an opportunity to participate in the second reading debate on Bill C-32, the victims bill of rights.

This historic bill marks the culmination of the government's effort to finally give victims the voice and protection they deserve in Canada's criminal justice system.

I would like to pay particular attention in my speech to the rights and amendments relating to restitution that are designed to address the concerns expressed by many victims regarding the financial burden of crime. I will also discuss the amendment related to the victim surcharge.

We know that victims pay a disproportionate percentage of all costs related to crime. In 2008, a Justice Canada study found that victims pay 83% of the cost of all crime. A more recent Justice Canada study, published in 2013, found that victims also pay 83% of the cost of violent crime.

These findings are shocking. The rights proposed in this bill aim to correct this imbalance and to relieve the victims of some of the financial burden of crime.

[*Translation*]

On October 30, 2012, the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime made the following statement about the impact of crime on victims:

These costs include lost productivity and wages, costs of medical and psychological care, and time away from work to attend criminal proceedings.

We also hear from victims about their not being able to afford counselling sessions...

Therefore, members will understand that it is fair and logical for criminals to make a contribution and to pay restitution to the victim for the offences committed. Naturally, the provinces provide victim services, but why should honest taxpayers be the only ones to pay?

[*English*]

The Canadian victims bill of rights proposes to clearly indicate that every victim has the right to have the court consider making a restitution order against the offender and has the right to enforce the order as a civil judgment where not paid.

Government Orders

What is the purpose of a restitution order? The Criminal Code states that the purposes and principles of sentencing are to provide reparations for harm done to victims or to the community and to promote a sense of responsibility in offenders and an acknowledgement of the harm done to victims and the community.

Restitution orders, which help cover the victims' monetary losses due to, for example, bodily and psychological harm or damage to property caused by crime, follow these principles.

Restitution has been recognized in modern countries for a long time. In the United Kingdom, the right of a victim's family to compensation in any case of wrongful death was reinstated in legislation in 1946. In the United States, restitution re-emerged in the early 1900s, when new sentencing laws allowed the courts to impose alternatives to incarceration.

In Canada, since its inception in 1892, the Criminal Code has permitted a sentencing court to order compensation for property lost as a result of the commission of an offence. The Canadian provisions governing compensation were mostly unchanged until amendments in 1996 repealed the compensation provisions, replacing them with restitution order provisions. The terminology was changed to reflect that "restitution" refers to payments the offender should make, while "compensation" generally refers to payments from the state.

The amendments proposed in the victims bill of rights would be important for promoting a sense of responsibility in offenders and for their acknowledging the harm done to victims. Right now, judges do not have to consider the possibility of a restitution order. The victims are forgotten, because this provision of the Criminal Code is very rarely used. This means that the court ignores the suffering victims often face.

To ensure that the existing legislative framework properly supports these rights, the bill would make a number of amendments to the restitution regime in the Criminal Code.

The current regime in the Criminal Code allows courts to order restitution orders for loss, destruction, or damage to property as well as financial damages resulting from the commission of an offence, such as the loss of income, expenses associated with moving out of a household shared with an offender, or costs associated with identity theft. The amount sought in a restitution order must be readily ascertainable, which means that the amount of the loss is easy to calculate and is not in great dispute.

If the offender fails to pay the restitution as ordered, the Criminal Code allows the victim to whom restitution is owed to file the order in civil court and to have it enforced as a civil judgment. The government believes that restitution orders can be very useful sanctions in achieving the sentencing objectives of acknowledgement and reparation for the harm done to victims.

[*Translation*]

For some, restitution orders represent a way for offenders to make amends and contribute to society. It can also be a way of reconciling with the victim.

● (2255)

[*English*]

However, there is evidence to suggest that the needs of victims of crime are not being met through the current restitution regime. For example, Statistics Canada reported in 2010-11 that restitution orders form part of 82% of the sentences for crimes against property but are rarely imposed in relation to crimes against a person, only 10%.

In order to ensure that restitution rights stated in the Canadian victims bill of rights are meaningfully realized, the bill proposes to amend the Criminal Code to direct that the judge shall consider ordering restitution as part of an appropriate sentence in all cases. Where the court decided not to order restitution, the bill would require the court to state on the record the reasons for its decision.

[*Translation*]

For the victims, this is a great improvement because the court will have to ensure that it considers every situation and thus every case that comes before it.

[*English*]

However, before deciding to order the offender to pay the restitution or not, the court would have an obligation to inquire of the prosecutor if reasonable steps had been taken to provide the victims with an opportunity to indicate whether they were seeking restitution for losses or damages.

[*Translation*]

This is a great improvement because victims will have the opportunity to determine whether they are going to seek damages. They will have the right to be heard and to tell the court about the harm done. In that way, we will give victims one more voice in the justice system. For a victim, being able to obtain a restitution order is another step in the healing process and towards a more normal life.

Let us remember the victims, who pay out of their own pockets for such atrocious expenses as the cleaning of the crime scene, or property destroyed by a thief.

[*English*]

The proposed amendments would also provide victims with an optional form in the Criminal Code to assist them in calculating and describing their readily ascertainable losses. The courts would be allowed to accept this information in other formats, as approved by the court.

[*Translation*]

A court of law could, on its own initiative or at the prosecutor's request, adjourn the proceedings to give victims a chance either to indicate whether they are seeking restitution or to determine the loss or damage, as long as the adjournment does not hinder the proper administration of justice.

I can summarize in one word what will be gained from updating the restitution scheme: dignity. With this change, the victims' human dignity will be fully recognized. The scheme will more effectively recognize the harm done to victims and will help provide solutions.

*Government Orders**[English]*

One of the fundamental objectives of this bill is to give victims the voice they deserve in the criminal justice system. In the context of restitution, this would be achieved by permitting victims to speak to their readily ascertainable losses in a victim impact statement that is to be taken into account in determining the sentence to be imposed on an offender.

This bill also recognizes that the offender's financial means or inability to pay the restitution order must not by itself prevent a court from ordering a restitution order. This represents a codification of decisions of appellate courts and of the Supreme Court of Canada to the effect that the means of the offender must be considered along with other factors in determining the totality of the sentence.

The necessity for victims to receive reparation for their losses and damages was the foundation of the proposed reforms regarding the payment of restitution orders.

The proposed amendments would permit the court to either order that the full amount of the restitution order be paid on the day of sentencing or in a specified number of days following sentencing or in accordance with a payment schedule the court determined to be reasonable in the circumstances.

In addition to this approach, the court would provide that in cases of multiple victims who seek restitution, the court would specify the amount payable to each individual, and where applicable, the order of priority in which victims were to be paid. The offender's failure to pay restitution by the day specified in the order or the failure to make a periodic payment required under the order would allow the victim or victims to enter any amount that remains to be paid as a civil judgment in any court of Canada.

I believe that a carefully tailored restitution regime in criminal law would effectively ensure that offenders acknowledge the harm done, provide victims with effective financial reparations, and avoid lengthy civil proceedings.

Another important element of the bill is the proposed amendment relating to the victim surcharge. A victim surcharge is an additional penalty imposed on convicted offenders at the time of sentencing. It is collected and retained by the provincial and territorial governments and is used to help fund the most important programs and services for victims in the province or territory where the crime occurred.

This money does not go directly to the victim. It is placed in a special fund in the province or territory. The fund, sometimes called a victim assistance fund, is used to provide services and assistance to victims of crime, such as information on the criminal justice system and court processes, referrals to counselling, court support for vulnerable persons, assistance in preparing victim impact statements, and compensation programs.

• (2300)

Bill C-37, the Increasing Offenders' Accountability for Victims Act, came into force October 24, 2013. It amended the victim surcharge provisions of the Criminal Code to double the amount an offender must pay when sentenced and ensured that the surcharge is applied in all cases. Bill C-37 came into effect, and it has been

reported that some courts are providing exceedingly long periods of time to pay the surcharge, some up to 60 years.

This bill proposes to clarify that courts must require offenders to pay the victim surcharge within the time established by the Lieutenant Governor in Council of the province in which the surcharge is imposed. If no time has been established, the surcharge would be payable within a reasonable time after its imposition.

[Translation]

Judges will therefore have some flexibility to impose victim surcharges, which will have to be paid within a reasonable timeframe.

[English]

"Reasonable time" has been interpreted by the courts as a question of fact depending on the circumstances of the case and cannot be decided in the abstract. Reasonable time must allow the debtor to meet the demand. The criteria of "reasonable" would still preserve a certain level of judicial discretion in describing the timing of the payment of the surcharge, but would not allow the debt to extend into an absurd or unreasonable period. This discretion would still allow the judge to take into account the offender's financial and other relevant circumstances in establishing a reasonable time limit for the payment. This approach recognizes the fact that the test of reasonable is used throughout the Criminal Code and, although not defined, is well understood, interpreted, and applied by the courts.

By virtue of subsection 734.7(1) of the Criminal Code, courts continue to have discretion not to commit for imprisonment a person who by reason of poverty cannot pay a fine, even after a reasonable time has been allotted.

I wish to reiterate that the proposed amendments relating to restitution and to surcharges in this particular bill are very important in addressing the concerns expressed by many victims and in meeting the objective to give victims the voice and protection they deserve in the Canadian criminal justice system. I urge all members to join me in supporting the Canadian victims bill of rights.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to Sue O'Sullivan, Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, Bill C-32 needs to be amended, as it is too weak and fails to address many aspects of the problem. The main problem, in her view, is that the proposed charter gives victims rights but provides little in the way of enforcement.

Does the member think, like the ombudsman, that victims should be able to consult a lawyer without delay, so that they can assert their rights?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her question.

The committee will be hearing many witnesses, of course. The ombudsman will surely take part in these discussions. We will listen to each and every recommendation that could help improve the bill and make it more effective.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague on the justice committee for his speech. I realize the speech focused primarily on the provisions of the bill that deal with restitution and surcharges, but I want to ask him about clause 24 of the bill, which deals with aboriginal justice.

My colleague would know full well that aboriginal people are grossly overrepresented in the prisons of our country, and there is incorporated into the Criminal Code something called the Gladue principles, which require a judge to consider all available sanctions other than imprisonment, with particular attention to the circumstances of the aboriginal offenders. This bill actually would alter those principles and now includes the phrase “consistent with the harm done to victims or to the community”, which would change the aboriginal sentencing provisions that were existent in the Criminal Code.

I would be most interested in the comments from my colleague as to the impact on aboriginal justice of clause 24 of this legislation.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, that is obviously a very relevant question and I thank the hon. member for it. Obviously, this bill is not yet proclaimed. It is not in force, and jurisprudence will come forth to interpret the bill. Of course, the importance of the Gladue principles will have to be recognized. Certainly they will be made the intent of the bill, as the legislator has intended, while respecting the rights of aboriginals and their communities.

• (2305)

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very excited about this legislation. Victims have been asking about it for years.

I am really pleased that my colleague pointed out the restitution provisions in the bill, because we need to recognize the enormous cost of crime upon victims in Canada. My colleague also mentioned the victims surcharge and other issues. I wonder if he could tell us how the bill would be implemented and what funding might be available for its implementation.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, there are many other means of funding the provisions of this legislation other than the funding that has been allocated through the federal government. There is the victim surcharge, which has been doubled and now has become mandatory. There has been some debate as to the length of time to pay that, which would be clarified through the proposed bill. We recognize that there is a cost to giving victims a greater voice and greater participation in the justice system.

As my learned friend has said, it is long overdue that the bill is put in place, and the costs are warranted and will be dealt with efficiently by the government.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all of us are taking the bill very seriously.

One of the concerns I have with Bill C-32 is that it would create a certain expectation, but there is no legal obligation with respect to the bill within the judicial system. That leaves me questioning whether that would raise the expectations of victims when we have not really resolved it.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if it would be raising their expectations, but this legislation is premised on four main tenets. One is notification, notifying the victims of what is going on through the process. They are participating through it; they are made aware of the proceedings and counselled to go through it. Nothing can be worse than the fear of the unknown and not being guided through it.

There is also the aspect of protecting people who are scared when they are witnesses or when offenders are released. That is paramount. That is after the trial.

Then there is compensation, which is dealt with in the restitution aspects of the bill.

Expectations are high. The provisions are long overdue. The bill would certainly bring some balance to the justice system in favour of the victims, not at the detriment of the offenders, but they will have their just place and voice within the system.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the House that I am very much interested in the bill on victims' rights, but I am a little concerned about the emphasis on restitution, because the government at times slips over into an emphasis on the offender rather than the victim. People have to be lucky to be offended against by someone who has enough resources for restitution to do them any good.

I wonder whether in committee we will be talking about efforts to make sure compensation is available to all victims with some kind of federal-provincial deal on victims' criminal injury compensation funds, which do not exist in Newfoundland or in the territories and are under severe caps in most of the provinces. If people are not lucky enough, in that odd sense, to have an offender who has resources, sometimes there is no compensation available through restitution. I hope we will be discussing this at committee.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, when a person is a victim, the only luck we can talk about is the bad luck, quite frankly, of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Nine of the ten provinces have a victims compensation fund, and the sums are certainly modest. It is not the average perpetrator who has all kinds of resources to compensate the victim. Obviously, efforts are going to be made to analyze, in situations where they can, that it would be appropriate. There are the victims programs where there is the surcharge where it comes into funding.

It is far from a perfect system, but I think we would all agree that it is a step in the right direction. More negotiation with the provinces and territories is going to be required, and the good collaboration of all members of Parliament would be helpful as well.

Government Orders

• (2310)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was impressed with the fact that, for the first time, victims would be recognized as victims, and instead of having to bear the burden of being victimized, they would also have the opportunity to understand the process as they go through the trial and also restitution.

Would the parliamentary secretary talk a bit about why this particular legislation is so necessary and why it has been brought forward at this point in time in Canadian history?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, I believe the consensus is that most victims of crime, when they were put into the judicial system, went there not knowing how the system worked. As I said earlier, nothing can be worse than the fear of the unknown.

Being treated as a piece of the evidence and not with the respect required to participate in a process is not adequate for any human being. It is devoid of all dignity. The way the victims were being treated prior to this cried out for some reparations and some way of treating these people in, at least, an equal fashion to the accused.

That is not to say that the accused are not entitled to rehabilitation and that we should put them in jail and throw away the key. However, the victims could be piloted through this system in which they find themselves through no fault of their own, and have some certainty of what the process is. They could potentially receive some reparation, if at all possible. Obviously, not every perpetrator will be of the millionaire sort.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to this important bill, Bill C-32, an act to enact the Canadian victims bill of rights and to amend certain acts. We have indicated New Democrats will be supporting the bill at second reading, and we are looking forward to studying the bill in committee.

We have also made it clear that changes, such as a number of the ones that are suggested in the bill, are long overdue. We know this very clearly from victims, from advocates, from victims ombudsmen, current and past. We know it is the right thing to do in order for victims to have a sense of justice and be able to move forward.

However, we have also flagged the real concern that, like much of what the government commits to, it will not actually materialize, particularly when it comes to resources. We have indicated concern that the federal government does not have a real plan when it comes to the question of resources that would be required, including restitution and/or compensation, and that discussions with provinces and territories are not taking place the way they ought so that all Canadians, no matter where they live, can have equitable access.

Today I would like to talk about the incredible disconnect between what the government is saying and its commitment to victims, and the fact that the government has been notoriously inactive when it comes to prevention of violence in our country.

I am very passionate about violence against women. As the status of women critic for the NDP, I have had the opportunity to meet with women who have suffered violence and survived violence. I have met with women who work in women's shelters, women who advocate on behalf of women who are survivors. I have met lawyers who support these women's pursuit of justice in the courts, and I

have met with far too many Canadians, women and men, who feel the devastating impact of violence against women.

The situation, in terms of violence against women in our own country, a country where Canadians believe we are to be equal, I would only describe as being alarming. For example, half of all Canadian women have experienced physical or sexual abuse. The number from Statistics Canada indicates that at least half of the women over the age of 18 across the country have experienced physical or sexual violence.

I want to indicate that the survey was a one-time only survey and took place in 1993, so sadly we do not have more up-to-date information, but there are strong indications that the numbers have not changed.

Sexual assault and partner violence costs the country \$9 billion per year. Partially, there is a lack of data. The CCPA released a report earlier this year titled, "The Gap and the Gender Gap: Violence Against Women in Canada". That report attempted to total up all the costs, from the justice system to health care, incurred due to sexual assault and intimate partner violence, pegging the figure at \$9 billion, around \$334 per person per year. These victims were mostly women.

Just to give us a very realistic understanding of the cost of violence, and we are not talking about the emotional cost or the psychological cost or even the physical cost on one person, it costs each Canadian \$334 to cope with this violence, to deal with this violence. It is an expensive proposition and one that we can certainly do without if we do our job when it comes to prevention.

More than 3,000 women stay in shelters on a given night to escape abuse. Based on surveys filled out by most of the approximately 600 residential shelter facilities in Canada, Stats Canada studies found that on a given night, about 3,300 women across the country were sleeping in shelters to escape abuse.

About 420 women are turned away each day, half of them because the shelters they are trying to access are full. Other reasons for refusing admission include mental health issues and drug-related impairments.

• (2315)

Those are sobering statistics that 420 women each day, very often later in the day, are turned away from shelters. It is not because shelter staff do not want them. It is not because administrators do not see the urgency to deal with the situation. It is because, oftentimes, these shelters are struggling for funds and they do not have the capacity.

While provinces like Manitoba make a real investment in women's shelters, sadly, the federal government has pulled away from supporting programming and core funding for the kind of work that is necessary.

Government Orders

Another statistic is that women are 11 times more likely to be victims of sexual offences. Extrapolating from police reports, Statistics Canada reported earlier in 2013 that violent crime against women was about 5% higher than it was for men, but women were 11 times more likely to suffer a sexual offence than men were and were three times more likely to be the victim of criminal harassment. This provides a very clear understanding of the way in which violence affects women differently and the way in which different kinds of violence are used to victimize women.

We also know that young women are most at risk. The same Statistics Canada report, in 2013, found that the rate of reported violent crime against women between the ages of 15 and 24 was 42% higher than it was for women between 25 and 34 and almost double the rate for women between 35 and 44.

One more final fact to add is that thousands of children are exposed to partner violence. Estimates of the precise number of children exposed each year in Canada to partner violence range widely, from about 120,000 to a high of 800,000. Regardless of the exact number, there is a body of research that suggests that children who witness such violence are more likely to experience a range of negative outcomes, according to Statistics Canada. These include increased risks of emotional behaviour and cognitive and social problems, with more severe outcomes for younger children.

There are six key facts that indicate that violence against women, and the impacts on children, men, families, communities, and our economy cannot be ignored.

As much as the victims bill of rights is important in individual cases, we know from experts who have testified already, and we are sure to hear from others, that this is not the end game and that there needs to be a comprehensive prevention strategy. That is why I am proud to have put forward a motion in this House calling for a national action plan to end violence against women.

I am not sure how many members of the government know, but Canada is the only country among like-minded countries that does not have a national action plan to end violence against women. It is shameful.

We know that violence against women is a part of our daily reality, that it is a part of our shameful reality, that in Canada, despite the gains that we have made as women, we are subjected to violence at greater rates than men, different kinds of violence, and that we continue to suffer day in and day out.

While we are going to hear, undoubtedly, as the bill goes on, more pronouncements from the government that it cares about victims, I would ask where its compassion is on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women. When we talk about violence against women, there is a particular racial reality, which is that indigenous women in Canada face much greater rates of violence simply because they are indigenous women.

We know from an RCMP report that came out a couple of short weeks ago that indigenous women in Canada face four times more violence than non-indigenous women. We know that young indigenous women are five times more likely to be killed than non-aboriginal women. These facts are startling. They are startling in abstraction, but I would say that they are horrifying in reality.

● (2320)

As someone who comes from a part of the country that has been deeply affected by the tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women, I have seen what it means. I have seen the way families break, the way communities are traumatized, the way people are set back. That trauma and that pain are only exacerbated every time a family member or someone who knows about this issue turns on the TV and sees the latest pronouncement by the Minister of Justice or the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness or the Prime Minister that no, there does not need to be an inquiry, or that no, there does not need to be more action, because the government is doing enough, or that no, they do not have to look at the systemic issues, the systemic sexism and the systemic racism that are behind the high rates of violence against indigenous women.

We know that the 1,200 aboriginal women the RCMP have said have gone missing or have been murdered over the last 30 years means that over 30 women every year did not come home to their families. We know that they are sisters, mothers, daughters, cousins. We know that each one of these women lived in circumstances that often were out of their control and that put them at greater risk. They were often marginalized.

When I hear about a victims bill of rights, and when I hear the government's pronouncements when it comes to caring about victims, I want to see the government take that extra step and deal with what is a national tragedy, that of missing and murdered indigenous women, and call a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. I would like to see it commit to an action plan, including a national action plan, so that we prevent having more victims.

I think of one of the many rallies I have attended here on Parliament Hill, where I saw a little aboriginal girl hold up a sign with a hole in it where she put her face, and the sign said, "Am I next?" These are haunting images. This girl has a greater chance of being a victim, the very issue the Conservatives say they care so much about. She knows that she is at greater risk simply because of her identity, because of the colour of her skin, and because of her gender. In a country like Canada, that is shameful. It is shameful to see the way the current government turns its back on aboriginal women, on women in too many cases, and yet continues the rhetoric that somehow this bill or the answers in question period are enough to put a stop to what we are facing.

I am echoing our support for what is in this bill and our real hope that at committee, we can add to this bill and improve it and react to the gaps that clearly exist, particularly in terms of resources. However, I would ask that the Conservatives listen to their own message and their own compassion, as they call it, toward victims. I ask that they take action where it really matters and look at the systemic nature of the violence women face in our country, that aboriginal women face, and that too many communities still face, and deal with the root causes.

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We talk about victims after the fact, after the act of violence, the crime or the assault, has taken place. I wonder how much time members of the government take to look at the background of why there are higher levels of violence in certain parts of the country or why there is a greater propensity for there to be criminal acts in certain parts of the country. It is no secret. We have heard from experts who come to Parliament who point to the higher levels of poverty and marginalization among certain populations. I think of the first nations I represent.

● (2325)

I think of the way too many people in these first nations struggle for a basic quality of life. They live in third world living conditions. Their whole community has no running water. People live in mouldy, overcrowded homes with 17 people to a house.

Because of the history of colonization, people have been forced onto reserves that often have very limited capacity for economic development, so the levels of unemployment are outrageous. It can be as high as 80% or more. That means that the sense of economic marginalization people face is extreme. This is coupled with a history of residential schools, where children were taught to wipe away identity, culture, and pride in an attempt to assimilate them. All of these things were very much supported by the government. Those heinous acts have contributed to intergenerational impacts.

Too many people feel marginalized. Too many people experience social breakdown in their communities. Sadly, because of the way our justice system and even our police system have often responded, the element of systemic racism has also emerged. People, because of their identity, because of the colour of their skin, have been treated unfairly.

We know that aboriginal people, particularly aboriginal men, are more highly represented in our prison system. We know that this has everything to do with their living conditions and the way they have been marginalized economically, socially, and culturally in our country, yet the government's response has been to cut important programs, whether it is the prison farms, life skills programming, or healing programming. I think of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, which the government also got rid of.

I wonder how much Conservatives actually care about victims or preventing the emergence of other victims if they are cutting the very programs that allow people to gain strength, to heal, to become healthier, and to pull away from violence or violent situations.

I think of the lack of access to treatment programs in my constituency. People come from across Manitoba and across the country to get treatment and heal from drug addiction and alcohol abuse at the medicine lodge in Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation. I know that there has been a difficult relationship with the federal government in terms of ongoing funding, despite the overwhelming success of this program. The federal government and the Prime Minister have not been steadfast supporters of a type of programming that is sure to prevent violence and abuse in communities across the country.

Just last week, I gathered with leaders and health professionals in Manitoba to demand that the federal government renew its commitment to maternal health programming for aboriginal women.

It made a commitment to women around the world while ignoring aboriginal women here at home. These kinds of supports lift women up from conditions of poverty and marginalization. They support and restore the relationship to that next generation so that they build healthier relationships, build stronger families, and prevent the kind of violent or difficult situations that too many families have faced.

In conclusion, I have indicated our position as a party on the bill, but our position is clear that support for victims means preventing the existence of more victims. It means investing in Canadians. It means bringing people in from the margins. It means building a better country for all of us.

● (2330)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her very heartfelt speech. I know we can always depend on her to represent the interests of her constituents and those who are less fortunate in our society.

I know that previously the government placed a lot of emphasis on restitution and pursuing the offender through the courts. I know that we have seen recommendations from the victims ombudsman that this is something that is not likely to be profitable and is very difficult for people to pursue.

I wonder if the member has anything she would like to say on this reliance on restitution.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has been a very strong advocate when it comes to not just victims' rights, but holding the government to account and encouraging it to move past the rhetoric toward making a difference on the ground.

He raised a critical point. The most recent opposition to the government's emphasis on restitution and punishment in monetary terms has been from lawyers and even judges, who have indicated that there is a major number of offenders who live in abject poverty and cannot afford restitution, as the government puts it. Punishing people in these ways only contributes to the cycle of violence. This can also be a very traumatic experience for victims who have already clearly been traumatized and live with immense challenges. To see this unfold would further exacerbate that kind of trauma. When it comes to compensation in the financial piece, will the government step up?

Sadly, in the past, when it came to legislation that required financial commitment, no matter what the area might be, there had been a lot of talk by the government and no action. We have also been very clear that engagement with the provinces and territories has not existed, not just on this issue but, frankly, on almost anything the government does. Depending on where one lives, there might be greater access to compensation simply because of where the person lives, which is not the Canadian way.

We are asking the federal government to show leadership and to commit to working with the NDP at committee to address these gaps and truly stand up for victims.

Government Orders

• (2335)

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on a couple of themes she raised, one with respect to poverty and the other with respect to the mixed jurisdictions in terms of jurisdiction over the Criminal Code and jurisdiction over the administration of justice.

With regard to her comments on poverty, while we also support this bill, we see some potential problems that we hope will be addressed in committee. One of them the member has referred to, and that is this problem that the government has with respect to the constitutionality of many of its pieces of criminal legislation and the action that is being taken by judges, particularly with respect to victim surcharges.

I would ask for any comments the member would care to make with respect to the potential constitutional challenges around the victim surcharge provisions contained in the bill.

The other point that she touched upon, and that I would invite her to elaborate further on, is that this bill would actually impose costs on the provinces to the extent that it would introduce a complaints mechanism and a right to information mechanism. Given that the administration and prosecution of Criminal Code offences in provinces, not in territories, is done and funded by the provinces, it is effectively a download or an additional expense that will be incurred by the provinces.

I would be quite interested in her thoughts on federal-provincial consultation and the potential download of costs that would be the result of the bill.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising two important dimensions here. I appreciate that, earlier this evening, he referred to the need to respect the Gladue decision and the constitutional obligation to abide by that decision.

It connects with the question of “victim surcharges” and recognizing that people, particularly many aboriginal people, are so far in the situations of marginalization and poverty. This kind of model is unrealistic, and it would cause further marginalization and potential trauma.

This is absolutely a critical area that needs to be discussed, including the potential for constitutional challenges if the adequate changes are not made.

To the second point, sadly, the federal government has shown time and time again that it is not interested in working with provinces and territories on a host of different issues. We have seen the downloading, from health care to post-secondary education, to first nations programming, in many ways.

In terms of justice and cost, the administering of justice Bill S-2, another bill that the government is very proud of talking about, is an excellent example of the way that costs are being incurred by provincial justice departments to be able to comb through and apply the new matrimonial property rights law that the federal government has brought in. There is no aspect of the legislation that indicates that the government would support these costs or contribute to them at the provincial level. It simply goes ahead and says that this is how it has to get done.

That is not how Canada was built. It certainly challenges the notion of a confederate system and the Confederation that we are all a part of.

I hope that in committee, there is a steadfast commitment that the government is able to make to working with the provinces and making a difference for Canadians, no matter where they live.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was sitting here listening to the member's comments, and I found some of them rather disappointing.

For the first time in Canadian history, we would have a victims bill of rights that should be collaboratively put together by all sides of the House. It is not a political football. It is recognizing right now that victims do have rights.

I, personally, have worked with many victims who have been in courts and who are absolutely devastated by what happened to them. They had no one. They did not know how the process worked. They did not have any hope of restitution in any way, shape, or form.

What I have heard tonight is concern for the perpetrator who might not have the money to pay the restitution. I would ask the member across the way to consider the fact that knowing that there is some restitution involved when someone is victimized, maybe the perpetrator would stop for a minute and think that committing the crime against the victim would not be a good thing.

Having said that, I wonder if the member opposite could consider that we are considering victims here, and if she could talk about the victims a little bit and how this would help them. Could she talk about what she could contribute to enhance it in such a way that victims could be reassured that members on all sides of the House are on their side?

• (2340)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the member was disappointed. I was sent here by my constituents and as part of the NDP to speak out on their behalf.

I have been very clear on both the strengths and the major gaps and weaknesses that exist in this bill. It is incumbent on the government, instead of just sticking to good-sounding rhetoric, to actually step up. It should not just support this bill in terms of financing, but also make a real financial commitment to preventing violence and abuse in our country.

That starts by preventing more victims, investing in prevention, calling a national inquiry into missing and murdered women, looking to pull everyone out of the margins, and looking out for Canadians' well-being every day.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

I know it is getting late, but I would like to take this opportunity to share my views and take part in the debate on bill C-32, An Act to enact the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights and to amend certain Acts.

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In light of what is proposed in the bill, I think that we, as legislators, must all unite and support this government initiative. However, in my humble opinion, the bill does not go far enough in protecting the rights of the victims, and several experts share this view. I will come back later to the reasons why I think the bill should be improved.

Nevertheless, it is certainly a first step in the right direction, and we will be able to propose amendments in committee and at a later time, when the act is reviewed after being implemented, to identify what needs to be improved.

Therefore, I hope that my colleagues will join me in supporting the victims of crime in a meaningful way, and that they will make sure that this bill of rights does not remain just a statement of principles with no actual effect.

In its current form, Bill C-32 codifies the federal rights of victims of crime to information, protection, participation and restitution under the Canadian victims bill of rights. It also amends the Criminal Code, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and the Canada Evidence Act to incorporate these rights.

More specifically, the bill broadens the definition of “victim”, which will include any individual who has suffered physical or emotional harm, property damage or economic loss, and clarifies the fact that a victim's spouse can testify if the victim is dead or incapable of acting on their own behalf. This applies to conjugal relationships having lasted for at least a year. I think this provision is critical to enhancing protection and fairness for victims.

Second, the bill amends the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to give victims the right to see a photograph of the offender at the time of the offender's release, to obtain information about the offender, his progress in relation to his correctional plan, and his release date and conditions of release.

This provision will help prevent potentially traumatic situations should the victim inadvertently come into contact with the offender. It also permits the disclosure of information that the victim can use to make informed decisions about how to live his life once the offender has completed his sentence. For example, the victim might make decisions based on the offender's release date.

Bill C-32 also amends the Criminal Code to ensure that the court informs victims of any plea agreement entered into by the accused and the prosecutor once the plea of guilty has been accepted.

These changes will enable witnesses to testify using a pseudonym in some cases, make publication bans for witnesses under the age of 18 mandatory, permit victims who do not attend an offender's parole hearing to listen to an audio recording of the hearing, and enable witnesses speaking on a victim's behalf to have with them a photograph of the victim if it would not disrupt judicial proceedings.

Another change has to do with the Canada Evidence Act and states that no person is incompetent, or uncompellable, to testify for the prosecution by reason only that they are married to the accused.

Bill C-32 creates a mechanism that allows victims to file a complaint with federal and provincial departments if they feel that their charter rights were violated.

It also codifies the right to make a restitution order and specifies that the victim surcharge must be paid within the reasonable time established by the lieutenant governor of the province in which it is imposed.

This is an entire series of measures that will likely bring the debate back to victims' rights, if the measures are applied. On the other hand, I see two major gaps that, in my opinion, should prompt my colleagues to work together to give this bill more teeth in order to truly bring justice to victims of crime.

● (2345)

Bill C-32 creates no legal obligation for justice system stakeholders to implement these rights. The charter only provides for but does not guarantee access to a rather weak complaint mechanism within federal departments or agencies that play a role in the justice system when victims' rights have been violated.

To date, no specific amount of money seems to be allocated to implement complaint review mechanisms or to help the provinces with this. If the Conservatives are serious and want to do more than make grand announcements at press conferences, then Bill C-32 would set out legal requirements.

My other concern refers to the same point, the fact that there does not seem to be any financial resources set aside for this initiative. How can the government consider providing protection, financial support or psychological support, as proposed in the bill, without a budget?

It is important that victims have access to the support and the services they need. We must invest and work with the provinces. The government must ensure that it provides the kind of support that is needed. It must implement procedures that will really help the victims and avoid proposing measures just to score political points.

Sue O'Sullivan, the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, feels that the Conservative government's Bill C-32 should be amended because it could be stronger and it overlooks many aspects of the problem. She believes that the Conservative bill could improve Canada's penal system, but many of the measures could be far more forceful. In addition, many other issues affecting victims of crime were not even addressed.

She feels that this bill is problematic because the charter gives rights to victims of crime but provides little in the way of enforcement.

The ombudsman would like to see victims receive prompt redress by having access to a lawyer so that they can assert their rights during criminal proceedings. The ombudsman feels that the safety of victims is still a definite priority.

Government Orders

The NDP will always support victims in their quest for justice. We are mindful that those who have suffered are likely in the best position to educate us about what they need. They have lived through some potentially heinous experiences.

That is why we will continue consulting them and consulting victims' rights groups. By talking to those concerned, we will be able to create fair and effective legislation. I have no doubt that my colleagues will carefully consider any opportunities to improve the bill at committee stage.

The committee must ensure that the Canadian victims bill of rights works well with our justice system and that it addresses victims' expectations and recommendations. The government has taken eight years to get to work on a 2006 election promise. Victims have suffered enough.

I invite all of my colleagues to roll up their sleeves so that we can offer Canadian victims the protection and rights that will help them find justice.

• (2350)

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent speech, which was her second this evening.

I should point out that many NDP members have made speeches in the House this evening. However, many members of the other parties have remained very silent. In the last six hours, I think I heard only one Conservative member. Frankly, I think that this bill deserves a much more rigorous debate than what we have seen so far this evening. I am therefore wondering why the Conservatives were in such a hurry to force us to sit until midnight when, in fact, they have nothing to say.

However, my colleague has raised some very interesting points that deserve our attention.

Court decisions have shown that, when a person has no means to make restitution to a victim, that in fact is not a restitution. Moreover, a restitution risks being a sanction that adds to a sanction already handed down by the court or the Superior Court.

How could we have a bill that does not come with an envelope and that does not propose any funding for victims?

Restitutions to victims are monetary in nature. According to the Supreme Court, a restitution that an accused cannot afford to pay is a mechanical restitution, which should not exist.

I wonder if my colleague could comment on that.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, that perspective is actually quite interesting. We, in the NDP, want victims to have access to the support and services that they need.

Some members have been calling for years for the government to deal with the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women and commission an inquiry. Those women are among the victims of crime. This has to be done in co-operation with aboriginal nations.

We also have to work with the provinces. I am sure that the Conservatives are aware that some processes for victims of crime already exist, including in the province of Quebec. Those people also

receive financial support. If they cannot afford to hire a lawyer, they are assigned one. Some community organizations also look after victims of crime. Our province has gone quite far in that area.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I found perplexing in recent days is that the opposition House leader seems to have the perplexing notion that when the NDP members are filibustering bills, there is some obligation on the part of other parties to join them in that process and do the exact same thing. He is complaining of silence from the other side because we are not filibustering our own bills. Needless to say, on the government side, we think the bill is good and we have stated our position clearly. Let us get on with it and let it advance. If we think it is a good thing, Canadians want to have it in place.

My question for the hon. member is a very simple one. Since the NDP wants to see this go to committee, since much debate has already occurred, would the hon. member agree that the best way to get the bill to advance, as her party wants to have it advance, is to allow the debate to come to a conclusion so we can vote on it and send it to committee and that way help out victims?

• (2355)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that I have heard that member say such a thing. It even sounds like a broken record.

He is skipping a step. We have to have our say. If my constituents have never heard of Vanessa's law, it is because I never had the chance to speak to it in the House. It is important not to skip that step. Maybe the member has been in politics for such a long time that he does not feel like doing it anymore, but we need to express our views and our constituents need to know what we are talking about. The only way to communicate with our constituents is to be able to explain bills, whether they are Conservative bills or ours. This is totally democratic. What is undemocratic is limiting our ability to speak on a regular basis.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca will have only four minutes before we break for the evening.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a very important topic. Of course I am disappointed to be speaking on it somewhere near midnight.

I would like to start by thanking the House staff, the pages, the security people, the bus drivers, all of those who are supporting us in these midnight sittings.

Having heard the comments by the government House leader just a few minutes ago, I will have to try to condense everything into four minutes because it sounds a bit like he is about to move time allocation on this bill, which would not surprise me because there are hardly any bills left to move it on. Therefore, I will try to make my points as quickly as I can.

Adjournment Proceedings

The New Democrats support victims' rights. We have supported the private members' bills that have come forward. We have voted for those bills. We will be voting for Bill C-479 when it comes forward, and we will support this bill going to committee.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Do it now.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I hear a member on the other side say, "Do it now". I am not on the committee that this bill will go to and I have a very strong interest in victims' rights.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I'm sure the whip will sub you in.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I would like to represent my constituents and this is my opportunity to do that, whether or not the government House leader continues to heckle me about it.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Same speech all night long. Wrap it up.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, this is going to distract me, but this is really what it is all about. When members want to actually represent their constituents, we hear from the other side "shut up", "wrap it up", "sit down", "we don't want to hear from you", yet the people who are advocates of the bill are telling us they want dialogue on it. How can we have dialogue on the bill when people on the other side are telling me to sit down and be quiet? It does not make any sense to me.

I am also concerned that sometimes when we talk about victims' rights, we focus too much on their role in the legal system and we forget about the other needs of victims. Victims quite often need compensation for time lost at work, compensation for their real material losses, counselling and other things which are quite expensive. As I said earlier in one of my questions, the government's solution to that in this bill is to rely on restitution. I am disappointed to hear the member say that means I am worried about someone who cannot pay the restitution. I am not. I am worried about the victim who will get nothing out of the restitution process.

I am already out of time. Probably because of time allocation, I will not get to speak again. It is very disappointing, because this is an important bill on which dialogue could lead to much improvement.

The Deputy Speaker: Recognizing the clock as being at midnight, we will move on to the next order of business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during question period on April 4, I asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport about the Conservatives' position with regard to the revitalization of Canada Post, their support for job cuts, the decision to end home delivery and their support for a rate increase.

By supporting these cuts, the Conservatives are aiming to cut an essential service to Canadians and hoping for the corporation's ultimate demise.

The New Democratic Party has the interests of Canadians at heart and is determined to make our postal service more accessible, more affordable and more profitable. Our priority is people.

Canada Post is not facing a crisis, as the member suggested that day during question period. In fact, the crown corporation has been raking in profits every year since the mid-90s, with the exception of 2011, when two things happened, as we all remember thanks to our filibuster: the much talked-about lockout imposed by Canada Post and the pay equity settlement.

High-profile people and Conservatives argue that the crisis has been brought on by declining mail volumes. In fact, mail volumes are growing. Parcel delivery service is very profitable in a market economy. Service providers make good money.

Canada Post's decision to eliminate home mail delivery and install community mailboxes will affect close to 5 million homes. Community mailboxes are not safe and will not be easily accessible for people.

A report by *ICI Radio-Canada* noted that close to 5,000 criminal incidents, such as vandalism, fires and thefts, targeted mailboxes between 2008 and 2013.

In addition, Canada Post alone will determine the location of the mailboxes, without informing the community. The Conservative government supports these decisions, which will cause serious problems for people with reduced mobility and seniors.

As well, it is completely unjustifiable to increase rates when services are being reduced. Single stamps will now cost \$1 each.

Other countries, such as Switzerland, New Zealand, Italy and France, have maintained the profitability of their postal services through the provision of banking services. Canada Post did a study on banking services, which showed that financial services would be a winning strategy and would bring money into the coffers of the crown corporation. The public would have a stable public postal service as well as improved access to banking services.

The study report draws conclusions similar to the recommendations by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. Nevertheless, Canada Post put an end to the study and hid the report before announcing its action plan.

By reducing its services and eliminating 6,000 to 8,000 jobs, the Conservative government and the management of Canada Post hope that the crown corporation will again be able to make hundreds of millions of dollars in profit, which will be paid as dividends to the government or as bonuses to Canada Post managers. Let us kill jobs and hand out bonuses. Is this a desirable vision for the future? Does the postal service not belong to the public? The priority should be service to Canadians.

• (2400)

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her intervention again in this particular matter.

There is a fundamental proposition that is being asked of the government in the House on this matter, which is do we trust the member—whose colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, has said on the record that there is “no crisis at Canada Post currently”, a sentiment shared by Liberals on the record in the House as well—or do we trust the econometrics of a credible independent third party think tank in our country that applied an econometric model in forecasting, and not only analyzing, what Canada Post's current dire situation is?

There were a billion fewer individual stamped, addressed letters delivered in 2012 than in 2006, but that trend of e-substitution has not bottomed out yet. In fact, it is forecast to continue on into the future. Canada Post is posting annual deficits approaching \$1 billion only six years from now in a rapidly declining financial position. Does the government support Canada Post acting now? Yes. Canada Post is an independent arm's-length crown corporation, managed by a board of directors and a CEO, and is responsible for its own day-to-day operations. Do we support them acting? Yes, absolutely, we do.

Canada Post chose a five-point plan. The member has articulated the particular points that are part of that five-point plan. It has done so in consultation with Canadians. It continues to engage communities in the rollout and implementation of that particular plan. We support that something had to be done and done now.

I know the member opposite and her party like to posit the idea of postal banking somehow turning the post offices into branches for banking. However, not one think tank in the country yet, the Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives, or anyone else, has suggested how such a bank would be capitalized, what it would take, and how a crown corporation that is in a failing economic condition right now and rapidly declining, would somehow be able to convert itself into a postal bank. Why, for that matter, adopt the branch bank model that is currently already eroding and is likely to continue? Within nine years, more than half of banking consumers will be young millennials. They are already abandoning that particular model of going to visit their branch.

None of the ideas of the opposition make any amount of sense. We will continue to support Canada Post taking urgent action and doing it right now, so that we can actually have a Canada Post that delivers mail.

• (2405)

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the member's TV does not have rabbit ears anymore and that he has probably switched to an ultra-modern flat-screen TV. It remains a TV, nonetheless. As life changes, we adapt to new technologies.

The postal service is profitable and brings in millions of dollars for Canadians. That money is paid to the government as dividends then redistributed in many ways. A number of solutions exist. Canada

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Post could, for example, increase its deliveries of small and medium-sized parcels, offer banking services and advertise.

We are asking the Conservative Party to sit down with Canada Post representatives, the unions and members of the public to explore potential solutions. When I took part in the “I'm walking with my letter carrier” rally, I met hundreds of people who told me, among other things, that they wanted to keep these services. Two-thirds of Canadians want to keep postal services. That is something the Conservative government should think long and hard about.

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, I will not admit that I do have a TV that has rabbit ears.

Apart from that, Canada Post is facing an urgent situation, and it is facing it now. If we look at Canada Post's five-point plan, we see it is not suggesting somehow that it is cutting back on the profitable parts of its business. It is in fact quite the opposite. It is actually pursuing additional parcel services. It knows that is profitable.

However, what is profitable, but is losing money because the volumes are not there, is individual stamped letter mail. That business continues to decline. It is not just in Canada. This is part of a global transformation. This has happened in Europe, where the response has been to privatize the mail service and open up complete competition. It has slashed its workforce 26% to 40%. A stamp in the European Union is about 1.4 euros.

Those are the ways that other countries are choosing to deal with that particular thing. Canada Post has not. We can compare its five-point action plan to anyone else's, but we support that it had to take urgent action.

[Translation]

VETERANS

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to rise in the House and to close all these debates at a rather late hour and to speak to a subject that I am passionate about. It is an important issue. I am talking about veterans. These people sacrificed themselves for us. They gave everything. They went to where no one wanted to go. They served our country to the best of their ability. They truly gave everything.

On March 7, I asked a very clear question in the House. I asked the following:

Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives claim that cuts to Veterans Affairs Canada will not affect the quality of services provided.

Everyone knows that it is not possible to do more with less. Doing more with less is not possible.

On page 11, the Report on Plans and Priorities states that:

...there is a risk that quality service delivery could be affected due to VAC's increasing reliance on partners and service providers in the federal, provincial and municipal governments as well as private sector.

Why is the minister making decisions that are bad for our veterans?

Why are they trying to balance the budget in times of so-called austerity? Why are they trying to save money at the expense of those who served our country, at the expense of veterans?

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Even during times of austerity, the United States and Great Britain did not make as many cuts as this Conservative government has made to Veterans Affairs. The current government does not understand what needs to be done for our veterans. However, every year the ombudsman's report is very clear. The report says that we need to invest in front-line services for our veterans. The Conservatives seem to toss each report on a shelf, as they do with any report, and ignore what it says until something very bad happens.

If you look at the news, you can see that our veterans are facing far too much hardship. However, here, in the House, is where decisions are made. Where will we send our veterans? What will we do for them? Even if we make these decisions for them, we cannot later take them back and give them all the services they need, such as appropriate health care specialists or physical and psychological health care.

The NDP is flabbergasted that this government is doing absolutely nothing for our veterans. The needs and expectations are there. We hope that this government will take action.

Could my colleague opposite tell us that the Conservatives will change course and will finally invest, because we have invested in veterans, and that makes complete sense in light of the sacrifice they made.

• (2415)

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the intervention by the member opposite.

Let me first start by affirming, of course, that not only the Minister of Veterans Affairs but the parliamentary secretary and members of this government from the Prime Minister on down have nothing but the utmost respect for our veterans. We are obviously concerned and are always looking for ways to improve the level of service while delivering value for taxpayers, who support them as well.

Additionally, the premise of the member's question is absolutely false. What the public accounts will show over time is that this government, since coming to government and implementing the new veterans charter, has invested nearly \$5 billion in new investments. That is a year-by-year appropriation of somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$3.5 billion, 90% of which goes to front-line programs, services, and benefits for our veterans.

On the part that is for administration and overhead, if we go back and look at the decision to merge eight local or regional district offices into the Service Canada network, we see it was to capitalize on using the Service Canada network and its overhead by phasing out or moving into these offices that were underutilized.

I will use the example of Windsor, since that is in my area. We had a 10,000-square-foot building and six unionized workers with their wages plus benefits managing 23 files, with low foot traffic. Instead, we now have the Service Canada office one kilometre away with a VAC client service agent and the other Service Canada network employees who are trained to a standard to deliver that service.

More than that, we are now reaching more communities with information, such as Belle River, Amherstburg, Leamington, and Chatham-Kent. Veterans in those communities used to have to drive into Windsor to get basic services. They can now do that in all of the communities I listed. We are moving our service points closer and into more communities where veterans themselves actually live, saving them a ride.

Let me clear what the VAC offices are. They are administrative points of service. They are not medical clinics. They do not deliver support for PTSD. They are not stress injury clinics, which were created by this government two years ago to deliver that important support. These were places where one could come to pick up and drop off one's paperwork. Veterans can now do that in more communities than they did before. We did this by delivering greater value for taxpayers and enhancing the level of service. We stand by that commitment to our veterans.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, the difference between the Conservatives and the New Democrats is very simple. The Conservatives are interested in numbers, while we are interested in human lives. We are talking about people who have made sacrifices and need services. We are well aware that health care services have fallen off considerably even as the mission in Afghanistan has created a lot of needs. Nobody can deny that.

When the Minister of Veterans Affairs turns his back on a woman like Jenifer Migneault, who had questions for him, when they tell our veterans to dial 1-800-whatever and make them wait on hold for hours because their needs cannot be addressed right away, it does not seem to me that this government is making much of an effort. I do not think that it has followed through on its decisions. It deserves my criticism.

Closing offices all over the country is also a service cut. My colleague opposite cannot deny that; it is a fact. The Conservatives are just not there for our veterans. That is an undeniable fact.

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure the member was listening. We have more points of service for veterans than we did before.

Presumably, the member wants veterans to have to drive from Leamington to Windsor to drop off their paperwork. They do not have to do that anymore. They can go to a Service Canada office and get Veterans Affairs services there in Leamington. They can do it in Belle River and in Amherstburg.

That is more places, not fewer places, and they are in communities where more veterans live. Communities that never had service before or access to VAC programs are getting them now.

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By the way, there is a difference in approach. Every time the investments come down, whether it is in the new stress injury clinics that we created two years ago, in the JPSUs, in increasing more points of service, or in the nearly \$5 billion in new money this government has put into veteran services, their benefits, and their programs, that party opposite votes against it. The members speak loudly with their votes; they do not support in this place the investments that our veterans actually need.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until later today at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:18 a.m.)

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