



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 147 • NUMBER 065 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, March 31, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 31, 2014

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1100)

[*English*]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling, in both official languages, six orders in council respecting appointments that have been made by this government.

I regret to inform the House that due to an administrative error, these appointments were not tabled pursuant to Standing Order 110 (1) on Friday afternoon when they should have been.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

MEAT INSPECTION ACT

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP) moved that Bill C-571, An Act to amend the Meat Inspection Act and the Safe Food for Canadians Act (slaughter of equines for human consumption), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to my Bill C-571 today. I will begin by recognizing and thanking all those Canadians who have written letters, signed petitions, and shared information about the horse slaughter industry with me.

Bill C-571 seeks to recognize that horses are ordinarily kept as domestic animals for recreational and sporting purposes, not to produce meat for human consumption, and may contain substances that are prohibited in food animals.

The bill would prohibit horses from being conveyed to slaughter and horsemeat from being sold for human consumption. The only exception to the prohibition would be for horses that are raised primarily for the food chain and are accompanied by a complete lifetime record, in chronological order, of all medical treatments ever administered.

To understand why such a distinction needs to be made, it is necessary to examine the nature of the equine industry, the medications that are administered to horses, the purposes for which these medications are commonly used, the implications that are posed to human health from ingesting equine drugs that may be present in horsemeat, and the adequacy of the regulations that currently govern the Canadian horse slaughter industry.

The question that needs to be answered is: Without the enactment of Bill C-571, is it possible to guarantee a safe horsemeat product if it is produced from horses that were not raised or regulated within an agricultural industry and were never intended to enter the human food chain until the day of being purchased by a kill buyer under contract to a Canadian horse processor.

Last year, 71,961 horses were slaughtered in Canada. Some 85% of the meat derived from these horses was exported to the EU and the remaining 15% sold domestically. Over half of these horses were imported from the U.S., a country, I will note, that is not permitted to export horsemeat to the EU, and where a 2007 ban on horse slaughter remains in place today. It bears keeping in mind that out of a population of some ten million Canadian and U.S. horses, little more than 1% is slaughtered to produce meat, meaning nearly 99% are not.

Whether bred for show, racing, jumping, breeding, pleasure, rodeo, dressage, companionship as pets, or for work, horses enter the slaughter supply chain to Canada for processing from a multitude of owners and a myriad of directions.

Throughout their lives, a wide variety of medications are administered to keep horses healthy and able to perform in their racing or sporting career and any other capacity required by their owners.

“WARNING: Do not use in horses intended for human consumption”, reads the label found on an extensive array of common horse drugs and includes, among others, wormers, vaccines, painkillers, tranquilizers, bronchodilators, anabolic steroids, ulcer medications, diuretics, antibiotics, and fertility drugs. Most of these drugs are listed in Chapter 17, Annex E.5 of Canada's Meat Hygiene Manual of Procedures, under the heading List of Veterinary Drugs Not Permitted for Use in Equine Slaughtered for Food. When something is not permitted, any administration of these drugs renders their meat unfit and unapproved whether or not it can be detected in tests.

Private Members' Business

In his detailed letter of notice to European Commissioner Tony Borg, Bruce Wagman of the legal firm Schiff Hardin, representing Front Range Equine Rescue and the U.S. Humane Society, includes as Exhibit 1, a list of 115 banned and dangerous substances commonly administered to U.S. horses that are slaughtered for horsemeat exports to the EU, in contravention of numerous food safety and transparency laws.

Also included in Mr. Wagman's letter are 13 signed declarations representing the sworn testimonies of a broad spectrum of American veterinarians, breeders, trainers, and owners attesting to the administration of these drugs to horses they have raised or cared for. In one example, Dr. Holly Colella, a veterinarian who attends to more than 1,200 horses annually in her practice, testifies that a majority of the substances on Exhibit 1 is regularly and routinely administered to the horses she works with.

In her article for *Newsweek* entitled “What's In Your Horse Burger? Chemicals That Pose Serious Health Risks”, Vickery Eckoff writes, “Horses—and particularly racehorses—are walking pharmacies”.

Dr. Nicholas Dodman, one of the authors of the study entitled, “Association of Phenylbutazone Usage with Horses Bought for Slaughter: A Public-Health Risk” that was published in the scientific journal *Food and Chemical Toxicology*, has stated in interviews that “Eating them [that is horses] is about as healthful as eating food contaminated with DDT”.

● (1105)

Dodman's study had clearly shown that mechanisms to ensure the removal from the food chain of horses treated with the drug phenylbutazone, or “bute”, as it is commonly called, are inadequate at best. By matching the registered name to their racetrack drug record over a five-year period, the Dodman study revealed that 18 thoroughbred racehorses sent for slaughter had been given “bute” on race day, a drug that is banned for use in any animal intended for human consumption because it causes serious and lethal idiosyncratic adverse effects in humans.

Mindy Lovell, a Canadian, has owned horses for over 35 years. She has competed extensively and trained professionally for many years. Currently, she operates a boarding stable in conjunction with a thoroughbred aftercare program. In her experience, the one thing she notes that all horses have in common is the way in which they are cared for with respect to veterinary care and medications. As she writes in her letter to me:

One can simply walk into ANY boarding/training/schooling facility and open the medicine cabinet to clearly see the array of drugs and medications easily available and commonly used on these horses. The majority of these are clearly labelled—not to be used on horses intended for human consumption.

In testimony before a 2012 congressional committee that was struck on the heels of *The New York Times* exposé on the use of drugs in the racing industry and its relationship to an increased number of horse breakdowns leading to jockey deaths on American racetracks, Arthur B. Hancock III, a fourth-generation horse breeder, declares that:

Today, only 5% of all horses are bleeders and yet almost 100 percent receive Lasix on race day. There is only one reason for this. Lasix is a powerful diuretic that allows a racehorse to shed 20 to 30 pounds at race time, thus making it a performance-enhancing drug.

Further down in his testimony he states, “In addition to Lasix, nearly 100 percent of all racehorses run with Butazolidin, Ketofen, or Banamine along with other ‘therapeutic drugs’ in their systems”.

At the same Congressional hearing, Kathryn Papp, a veterinary practitioner at Penn National Race Course in Grantville, Pennsylvania, states:

The overuse and abuse of medication is rampant at our Thoroughbred racetracks and training centers. The abuse is not limited to just performance enhancing drugs, it encompasses all substances that our trainers think may improve their horse's performance, from valid treatments to hokey and possibly dangerous therapies. Medications that are currently being overused at our racetracks include but are not limited to antibiotics, corticosteroids, NSAIDs, hormones and their analogues, caliative agents, hyper sensitizing agents, and respiratory aids, amongst many others. These substances are not just being used inappropriately around race time, more commonly they are employed during training and the time leading up to races. I cannot tell you how many barns I know that train every one of their horses on phenylbutazone daily whether they need it or not. And bute alone has many adverse effects to consider, ranging from GI issues to renal issues.

Also at this committee meeting, Congress heard from Glenn Thompson, a thoroughbred trainer for 30 years and author of the book, *The Tradition of Cheating in the Sport of Kings*, who stated:

From the time you start your first hot walking job until you take out your trainer's license you were taught, if a horse has a problem, you do whatever it takes to get them healthy to race. If there is an ankle problem, you give the horse bute...., if a horse has a bleeding problem, you give him Lasix...., if a filly is in season, you give her a drug to take her out of season.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

Clearly, everyone involved in the horse slaughter industry, including Canadian, American and European regulators, know perfectly well that they simply cannot guarantee the safety of horse meat.

Lastly, given that the United States has no program in place to monitor the drugs given to horses and has no intention of creating one, the U.S. cannot export its horse meat directly to Europe. A report produced by the European Commission's Food and Veterinary Office very clearly outlines the inadequacies of our regulatory regime when it comes to horse slaughter. Here are some examples from the 2010 audit.

First of all, the oversight regime in place in Canada to verify the use of drugs in horses intended for slaughter, as set out in Council Directive 96/23/EC, is inadequate because it does not provide official verification of the identification, movement and medical records of a limited number of horses destined for slaughter.

Imported horses were accompanied by an affidavit signed by the last owner—often a horse dealer—indicating any medical treatments administered over the previous six months. Nevertheless, no official guarantee was requested from the United States authorities that affidavits were verified and could be considered as reliable.

Private Members' Business

Supervision and certification are not enough to correct the problems noted.

In addition, in such areas as the export of horse meat, standards did not fully provide adequate guarantees.

The affidavit regarding any medical treatments administered is required for all horses slaughtered, regardless of their origin. However, there are no official controls to verify the authenticity or reliability of the affidavit.

Imported animals are accompanied by an affidavit indicating all medical treatments administered. However, the USDA assumes no responsibility regarding the origin of the animals, the controls in American institutions or the authenticity of the affidavit.

One might expect that, given the damning results of the audit and the serious risk to human health posed by horse medications, the slaughter industry would have been forced to significantly curtail its activities until a reliable medication oversight system could be developed and implemented. That did not happen. On the contrary, the European Union asked Canada to come up with a new plan to address the problem of medications in horse meat. While Canadian and European authorities look for ways to amend their regulations in accordance with trade agreements, the slaughter of Canadian and American horses continues as though nothing happened.

A *Star* investigation has found that Canada's food inspection system has serious flaws when dealing with the steady stream of racehorses sent to slaughter every year. Throughout his life, like many competitive horses, Backstreet Bully was given powerful performance-enhancing drugs that are potentially deadly in meat eaten by humans.

Two of these, nitrofurazone and phenylbutazone, had been administered to Backstreet Bully dozens of times, but the shoddy paperwork and poor oversight allowed by Canada's food watchdog cleared him for human consumption in a market that includes Quebec, Europe and some Toronto restaurants.

"You can't kill that horse", Stacie Clark, who works for the Stronach farm, recalled pleading with an abattoir official. It was not just small amounts of these drugs that had once been given to the horse: 21 doses of nitrofurazone, which has been linked to cancer in humans, and at least 23 doses of bute, a drug linked to bone marrow disease.

• (1115)

[*English*]

We have an industry where the primary consideration of owners in the care and treatment of horses is to ensure that they perform their career as required, not whether they will end up on someone's dinner plate.

We see a wide variety of substances that are commonly, and in many cases routinely, administered to horses that are prohibited for use even once if intended for the human food supply. We have exceedingly lax enforcement of a highly inadequate regulatory system, and whereas governments in the EU and the U.S. have conducted various studies and considered at length the issues of horse medication and food supply, Canada's Parliament has not yet seen it fit to do the same.

I am asking my hon. colleagues to support Bill C-571 at second reading.

I will close with the following statement by Dr. Peggy Larson, a former USDA veterinarian medical officer. She said:

Based on longstanding medical and scientific principles, it is impossible to declare horse meat safe for human consumption when the horses who are slaughtered for that meat have been exposed to an unidentified (and unidentifiable) number of drugs, treatments and substances, in unknown (and unknowable) quantities, at various times during their life.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if this bill were to pass into law, it would take effect here in Canada. A lot of the comments that the member made might be concerns that are outside of Canada.

CFIA has very strict protocols in place to detect bute, and any horse with bute is not processed for human consumption; it does not happen. There is a 98% compliance rate with that protocol.

Does my colleague have concrete examples of where this law might apply in Canada, which would validate the concerns he raised in his speech?

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, the point is that if once in its lifetime an animal has any of these prohibited substances administered to it, then that meat is no longer fit for human consumption, whether or not it is detectable according to the tests we use. The consensus is that roughly 85% or higher of horses in North America, in both countries, have at some point in their life been administered with these drugs. Once an animal is administered with these drugs, then at no point should that animal go into the food chain.

• (1120)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior for pursuing this matter for so long. He obviously has a very deep concern about this and has been consulting with the community which is concerned about food safety.

Could the member speak to the issue of the precautionary principle? The member from across the way said that we have a 98% compliance rate. Given the concerns that have been raised over the last several years about the credibility of the capabilities of our food safety program, does the member have faith that we are stopping the spread of contaminated meat through our food supply system by allowing racehorses to be used for meat?

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I do not have that faith.

The former head of one of the slaughterhouses in Saskatchewan that was shut down, said in an interview that he could not see how these horses were being sent to the slaughter. He said there was no control or way of verifying what had been administered to them. For example, in the case of Backstreet Bully, the kill buyer verified that the horse had not had any medication in the last six months, and in fact he only had it for 24 hours. The system of verification is not present.

Private Members' Business

In Europe, a horse needs to have an equine passport at the age of six months and the list of all the medications has to follow that horse throughout its lifetime. We do not have that kind of control. We need to have a precautionary principle on food safety that is based on the European system.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for sharing all that relevant information.

By way of comparison, what about cattle? Beef farmers also use antibiotics and various products.

Can my colleague give us a percentage on how the harmful effects of products used in raising these two types of livestock compare?

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, the beef industry is regulated.

Some antibiotics are used but these antibiotics are allowed in the food chain. In the horse slaughter industry, there is a long list of prohibited medications, but as we have already said, those medications are given to horses. There is no control.

Even though the beef industry is regulated, there have still been problems. Without regulations, the meat on our plates is not safe to eat.

[English]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure members that our government takes animal welfare concerns very seriously. Horses, or equines, have played an important role in Canada's history, and I think we all agree that horses and indeed all animals need to be treated humanely.

Where Conservatives disagree is whether the subject before us today is one of food safety. While this bill is being presented as such, in fact it is not. To remind members, this bill proposes to amend the Meat Inspection Act and the Safe Food for Canadians Act. It would prohibit the import or export of equines for slaughter along with equine meat products for human consumption, unless the equine was raised primarily for human consumption and unless a complete lifetime medical record was provided.

I want to point that it is not just about restricting the movement of horses across the border. This bill includes preventing horses from moving from one province to another within Canada. This is not a food safety issue, and it is certainly not an import-export issue, so I appreciate the opportunity to present clear facts to the House.

• (1125)

[Translation]

Here are the facts of the matter. Horse slaughter is a legitimate business activity in Canada. There are indeed Canadians who eat equine meat. Our government is committed to the humane treatment of animals.

With regard to my first point, equine meat production is a major and legitimate industry in Canada. I would like to provide some additional facts. Over a billion people throughout the world eat approximately one million tonnes of equine meat per year. China

alone consumes some 400,000 tonnes. In 2012, the estimated value of the Canadian horse slaughter industry was \$122 million. This industry produced approximately 24 million kilograms of equine meat. That same year, 17.7 million kilograms of equine products were exported, which contributed approximately \$90 million to the Canadian processing industry.

[English]

This industry is important to the economy. It is also a matter of individual choice. Right now, each horse owner in Canada has the right to choose the best end-of-life option for their animals. Canadians care about their horses, and while I appreciate that some people have difficulty with the idea of horse slaughter, the fact is that this is a humane end-of-life option. Let me be clear. Our government does not support taking away rights from horse owners, and this is a matter of principle.

Canada's equine herd grows by approximately 34,000 foals each year. Canadians use end-of-life slaughter for 85% of the annual increase in the domestic horse population. As we can see, this is an important population management tool. The decision to choose slaughter as an end-of-life option should therefore remain a decision for each horse owner to make. As well, the equine slaughter industry employs well over 600 people directly in rural Canada, jobs that will be in danger with the passage of this bill. I would encourage the NDP to stand up for hard-working Canadians instead of trying to ban this industry through the back door.

[Translation]

With regard to my second point, there are in fact Canadians who eat equine meat. They eat approximately 2,000 tonnes per year. The consumption of equine meat is commonplace in Quebec and in the other provinces of Canada. In Quebec, equine meat can be found in supermarkets right next to the beef, chicken and pork.

It is not up to the government to tell Canadians what they can or cannot eat. However, we are responsible for making sure that the food they choose to eat is safe. That is why there are already strict food safety regulations in place.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency performs daily inspections in all federally registered meat establishments to verify that all products are manufactured in accordance with food safety regulations.

[English]

Let me further clarify the facts about veterinary drugs such as phenylbutazone, also known as bute.

Bute is an anti-inflammatory commonly used to treat lameness in horses. It is approved by Health Canada for this use as an anti-inflammatory, but it is not approved for use in food-producing animals, and that includes equines destined for human consumption.

For this reason, the CFIA regularly tests equine meat for veterinary drugs, including phenylbutazone. The overwhelming majority of tests reveal freedom from drug residues. In fact, compliance rates are very high, at over 98%.

Private Members' Business

In addition to testing, other precautions are taken. Since July 2011, the CFIA has required that equines presented for slaughter be accompanied by a complete treatment history for the six months prior to slaughter. The European Union, our largest export market for equine products, accepts this requirement as an appropriate assurance that non-permitted residues are not present.

Under Canada's *Meat Hygiene Manual of Procedures*, all equines presented for slaughter must be accompanied by an equine information document, or EID. The EID links the identity of the animal to a six-month medical history. The six-month period exceeds the recommended withdrawal period for a number of veterinary drugs, including bute. EIDs are just one part of a larger integrated system designed to prevent trace residues in all meat products.

It is important to note that no case of human illness has been attributed to the consumption of horsemeat or veterinary residues therein in North America or in countries of any of our trading partners, so as members can see, Canada already has firm protocols in place to verify that meat products are safe to eat.

To my third point, our government is committed to verifying that all animals destined for slaughter are treated humanely. Here are facts about what we are doing.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's slaughter improvement program has made up to \$60 million available to improve federally regulated slaughter facilities. This includes specific investments aimed at improving animal welfare practices. We have committed up to \$3.4 million for the development and updating of codes of practices for farm animal care.

Animal welfare assurance systems continue to be eligible for funding under Growing Forward 2. For example, up to \$100,000 has been committed to the National Cattle Feeders' Association to help develop and implement a national feedlot animal care assessment program.

As I said earlier, we all agree that animals must be treated humanely. That is why CFIA inspectors are present on site in all federally registered slaughter facilities each day to verify that animal welfare requirements are met. However, if something unfortunate should occur, the CFIA has the authority to investigate animal welfare concerns in instances of non-compliance. The CFIA also has the authority to respond to findings with a full suite of enforcement tools, including criminal prosecution. This is the reality right now, but I cannot speak to the consequences if the current end-of-life option was no longer available.

According to Equine Canada, Bill C-571 would not enhance or add value to existing food safety legislation in Canada, it would not improve the humane welfare of horses in Canada, and it would cause serious implications for Canadian horse owners moving horses interprovincially within Canada.

For all these reasons, our government opposes Bill C-571.

• (1130)

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say from the very start that the Liberal Party supports the bill.

The bill tries to find a balance between the cultural consumption of horsemeat by many people around the world. In Kazakhstan,

Quebec, France, et cetera, people do consume horsemeat. It has been a tradition, so we want to understand that cultural difference.

We want to understand also that Canada has a \$19 million horsemeat industry, mostly for export, that brings in money for people in that industry. There are only five areas across Canada: two in Quebec, two in Ontario, and one in British Columbia. We do not want to stop these people from having an industry.

The bill strikes to find a balance between the valid reason for exporting horsemeat for slaughter to countries where people eat horsemeat, but it also recognizes that there is a difference between a horse and a cow. Cows are raised primarily for slaughter. From the moment we start raising cows or sheep or chickens or any other animals that we raise for slaughter, there is a fair sense that we need to ensure that the animal has not had unsafe hormones or unsafe drugs in its blood.

Horses raised as pets or for racing or for other reasons tend to have a very long history of injections of some kind, either a lot of corticosteroids for arthritis or injuries or else a fair amount of hormones to build the right kind of muscle.

Horses that are raised to be pets, to be household friends, to draw carriages, et cetera, and horses raised for racing and for other equestrian purposes have a history of having been given certain medications. If, at the end of their lives, we slaughter them for human consumption, those medications in the horsemeat could pose a threat to human health. We do not ordinarily give these drugs to humans or to livestock that is raised for human consumption.

The bill is saying that if we wish to have a horse slaughter industry, we should breed horses as we do cows, primarily for that purpose, so that they would be raised with all of those checks and balances in place in terms of the way they are raised, the medications that are taken, the type of food that they eat, et cetera, so that they would be safe.

That is an important step for Canada to take.

The United States eradicated its horsemeat industry in 2007, and now the only two countries that actually use horses for slaughter in North America are Mexico and Canada.

All the bill is saying is that there needs to be this kind of balance so that we do not endanger human health.

Private Members' Business

We heard earlier that some prohibitions are in place. However, at the end of a horse's life, when it is no longer useful for the purpose it was bred for, that still does not mean that the horse has not been given, over its years, the kinds of medications needed to make it perform as well as it needed to for the purposes for which it was raised. Therefore, we cannot say after the fact that we are going to check the meat, because the bottom line is that we do not have the ability to ensure that down the road it would be safe for humans to eat horses that are bred for purposes other than for slaughter.

What the bill would do, really, is prohibit most horses from being transported for slaughter for meat, but it would make an exception for horses that have been bred primarily for human consumption and that are accompanied by a complete lifetime medical history.

Basically, we are saying that we want to put in checks and balances.

For those who say this is all emotional, it is not, actually. I think there is fairly good evidence to show that horses that are not bred for slaughter carry medications that could actually harm people. The proponents of the bill in Canada are the Canadian Horse Defence Coalition, the Humane Society International, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Basically we think that the bill is eminently supportable. We do not want to put the businesses that are currently in Canada out of business.

•(1135)

What we are saying is that here is a plan to be followed if we are going to maintain what we do for every kind of animal food that we eat, which is to ensure that it is safe, that all of the health precautions have been taken, and that the animals have not been given medications that are stored in their muscles and in their fat and that will be passed on to humans who are not able to survive with that level of a lifetime of medication.

This bill is an extension of a former bill introduced in October, Bill C-322, which was a bill to amend the Health of Animals Act. The member moving this bill says that the former bill did not extend far enough and did not include the checks and balances he wanted. What we now have is a very thoughtful bill, and we support it.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on the bill introduced by my friend and colleague, a bill dealing with horse slaughter.

The Liberal Party just wants to make slaughter a better thing, a safer thing. The bill, for all intents and purposes, would end slaughter in this country.

That may have been the unintended consequence of the bill, because while the bill actually says that horses have to be raised for slaughter and have a passport, in this country we really do not have anybody who raises horses for slaughter. There are some who are on the edges of it, but it is unlike the beef industry, in which that is the entire industry. There are some who do some slaughter, but primarily horses are not raised for that. Most are raised for other purposes, whether for racing or for recreational use. Quite often kids get involved in riding horses, and sometimes adults get involved in racing horses later on in life.

There is an industry in this country. There are concerns about bute, and those are legitimate concerns. In fact, the CFIA takes those concerns very seriously, to the extent that bute is listed as a controlled substance. It has made sure it is not allowed. The evidence on bute is clear. No one argues that. I do not think anyone in this House would argue that.

People are basically saying that those are the rules, and it should not happen. There are some folks who may not be complying, and at the end of the day the authorities and the regulatory bodies are supposed to make sure they catch them. They are supposed to look at the industry to make sure that it does not happen.

The general accounting office in the United States has done a study. The U.S. did not actually ban horse slaughter. Quite often those in Canada who oppose horse slaughter say that the U.S. has banned horse slaughter, but it actually did not. What Congress did was withdraw funding to the USDA for inspections. Consequently, since the industry did not have a federal inspector, it could not export the meat, which is similar to this country.

Therefore, since the market for slaughtered horsemeat was primarily an export market and not an internal market, the facilities were shut down. It was not because it was banned, and it is still not banned in the U.S., but simply because it had to be done somewhere else, so then the horses were transported here.

The general accounting office in the U.S. did a study in the last while that examined horse welfare across country from the time the slaughterhouses closed until now. The study came to the conclusion that it has gone into decline. There are more horses being abandoned. There are more horses that are simply mistreated and are not being fed as much.

Those horses that are now being abandoned would have gone to a slaughter facility. I recognize a lot of folks do not necessarily like that the end of a horse's life, which may not be its natural life, is in a slaughter facility. I think one has to understand that there is a bit of cycle to this when it comes to horses, and indeed this has been going on for a long time.

The proponents of the bill, those who defend it, are saying it is a health and safety concern. There is no question that legislation is in place already about health and safety concerns. We still have regulations about transport, about how horses should be slaughtered, and about the types of drugs being used and whether they are or are not allowed.

Ultimately, this industry exists in this country and is regulated under the CFIA. People are engaged in this industry. In some folks' eyes, it may not be a particularly nice thing that is happening. I would suggest that if people have ever been to a slaughter facility, they would know that most of it is not nice. Their sensibilities probably would be upset by it, and correctly so. However, at the end of the day we do slaughter animals.

The Canadian equine association is the major umbrella group for horse owners, whether their horses are shown in an arena jumping or used for commercial purposes or for horse racing. The Canadian equine association opposes the bill, and I think correctly so.

Private Members' Business

•(1140)

It does not believe that it enhances the value of existing legislation for food safety. It does not believe that the welfare of horses in Canada will improve, and it thinks there are serious implications for Canadian horse owners who move horses interprovincially. Clearly, the group that is engaged with horse owners and the horse industry across Canada is saying that this is not a helpful bill. I think they are right. I think they are headed in the right direction.

Yes, we can always do better with inspections to make sure that horses in auction houses have correct documentation that is lined up properly so that the CFIA and inspectors can ensure that we do not get another story like the one we saw in the paper, because they are always the one-offs. Thousands of horses go through the system. There is always a one-off, such as a horse being purchased only 24 hours or two or three days earlier, when the owner has attested to a six-month certificate. When those folks are found out, their licences have to be removed. If they are caught egregiously breaking the law and the rules, they have to be dealt with. There are things in place to make sure that actually happens.

Ultimately, this is a bill that for all intents and purposes would end horse slaughter in Canada. Unfortunately, when one reads the restrictive practices in the bill, it says “must” be this and that. In other words, it must be only horse slaughter they are raised for and they must have a passport. It does not say “or”. If it said “or”, perhaps there would be an opportunity. However, it does not. Therefore the majority of horses that have been used in some sort of commercial activity or recreational activity would be abandoned over time, because folks would say that they do not want that horse anymore. If no one wanted to buy it, they would abandon it.

Horses are expensive. Many people buy horses thinking that they are nice animals, and they are. Many of us look at them and think they are majestic. They almost seem to feel what we are thinking. There is that closeness with a horse that perhaps one does not have with a chicken. Then again, the mayor of my municipality many years ago judged bantam chickens. He loved those multi-coloured bantam chickens. He loved those animals, much more than many of us in the House or across the country would think.

Folks' attachment to animals varies greatly from one group to another. For some, it is domestic cats or dogs. For some, it is snakes, and for others, it is horses. I can sympathize with the sensibilities around horses, but one cannot lose sight of what we are trying to attain. The end result of this bill would be to end horse slaughter. It would not be an unintended consequence. It would be the intended consequence. The GAO in the U.S. has said that the unintended consequence of shutting down the facilities, not banning them, is that for horses, life has become worse.

I find myself in a strange position, as the critic for agriculture on this side, having to disagree with my good friend from British Columbia Southern Interior. I will not be able to support the bill at second reading.

•(1145)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for British Columbia Southern Interior for raising this issue and for bringing it to the attention of the House. I

would also like to thank the individuals who have already spoken here this morning.

I will begin by stating that the slaughter of equines for human consumption is a legitimate economic activity in Canada. We see that Canadians value their freedoms and choices, and so do horse owners. If anything, this bill would only take away choices. It would take away the choice of Canadians to eat what they want, as long as it is safe, and the choice of importers and exporters to buy and sell a product that is legitimate.

I must say that I have read this bill a number of times, and I have given it a great deal of thought. I appreciate that some people have difficulty with the idea of slaughtering horses for meat production. There is no question that Canadians care about horses, and in fact, about the humane treatment of all animals. Our Conservative government understands that. However, this bill is not the way to proceed.

The choice by horse owners to use a safe end-of-life option for their animals is paramount. As a government, our role is to protect Canadians' rights and choices, not to take them away. The choice of Canadians to eat what they want, as long as it safe, is important. It is not the role of government to tell Canadians what they can and cannot eat. Canadians in Quebec and other provinces, like Alberta, choose to consume horsemeat. In fact, supermarkets in Quebec offer it right next to the beef, chicken, and pork.

What is our role? It is certainly not to tell Canadians what they can or cannot eat. It is our role to verify that the food they choose to eat is safe. While this bill is presented as a food safety matter, in reality it is not.

This last January, I was privileged to speak at the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum on the topic of food safety and food security. The world looks to Canada as a leader in food safety. We have an international reputation as having the finest food safety system in the world. The innuendo that works its way in from the margins as we debate issues like this does everyone a disservice.

Let me point out to the House just what it is that we Canadians can be so proud of. Horsemeat is a safe and wholesome source of protein, and Canada has strict food safety regulations already in place to ensure this. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency performs daily inspections in all federally registered meat establishments to verify that all products are manufactured in accordance with federal food safety rules.

The CFIA requires that all equines presented for slaughter have an equine information document, or an EID, which identifies the animal, with its six-month medical history. The CFIA also regularly tests equine meat for veterinary drug residue. That is happening right now. The six-month period well exceeds the recommended withdrawal period for a number of veterinary drugs. The overwhelming majority of tests reveal freedom from drug residues. Compliance rates are very high. They are over 98%, in fact.

Private Members' Business

The CFIA would be well within its mandate, though, to halt any practices that pose a threat to the public, but that is absolutely not the case here.

While the slaughter of equines for the purpose of human consumption is a legal activity in Canada, this bill would effectively ban that industry through the back door. I would like to explain and expand upon this as we look at the next choice this bill would put in place, which is the choice of importers and exporters to buy and sell a product that is legitimate.

I have talked about how there are Canadians who choose to eat equine products. They have the right and the freedom to do so, and we will protect their rights and freedoms.

Equine production is a significant part of Canada's economy, as well. In 2012, the estimated value of the Canadian equine slaughter industry was \$122 million. Approximately 24 million kilograms of this product were produced. That same year, 17.7 million kilograms of equine products were exported, for an estimated value, for the Canadian processing industry, of \$90 million.

•(1150)

This bill proposes to prohibit the import or export of equines for slaughter, along with equine meat products for human consumption, unless the equine is raised primarily for human consumption and unless a complete lifetime medical record is provided. This would include their being moved from one Canadian province to another or across the border. By imposing these restrictions, this bill would take away the industry's right to accept equines for slaughter, even though they meet federal food safety and animal welfare regulations.

While the bill would not prohibit the consumption of equine meat or equine slaughter, it opts to cut off the movement of equines for slaughter and equine products. This is a backdoor strategy to destroy a legitimate industry. This bill would essentially end or curtail all equine meat products in Canada.

The equine slaughter industry employs well over 600 people directly in rural Canada, jobs that would be in danger with the passage of a bill such as this. We also need to think about these people and their families and the economic hardship they would endure if this bill were adopted.

This bill would also hopelessly erode our ability to export to countries that want our top-quality Canadian equine products, countries such as Japan, China, France, Italy, Mongolia, and Belgium, to name just a few. What about choices for Canadian consumers?

We have to look at the principles. Let us explore a little further the last choice this bill would take away, the choice of horse owners who may want this end-of-life option for their animals. Right now, each horse owner has the right to determine the best end-of-life option for his or her animals. As I said at the beginning, I appreciate that some people have difficulty with the idea of slaughtering horses, but humane slaughter for meat processing is a humane end-of-life option.

Canada's national equine herd grows by approximately 34,000 foals each and every year. In 2012, owners chose humane slaughter for meat processing for 26,000 Canadian-born horses. Canadians use

the end-of-life slaughter option for 85% of this annual increase in the domestic horse population. Restricting choice here directly affects an important management tool, so I suggest that the decision to choose slaughter as the best end-of-life option for horses should remain a logical, well thought out decision for each horse owner to make. This option generates value for Canadian horse owners who appreciate the revenues they receive from the sale of surplus equines for slaughter.

The other concern I have, which is even worse, is that this bill could have negative animal welfare consequences. If we took away this humane end-of-life option, what would horse owners resort to: abandonment or unsupervised euthanasia? We do not want to facilitate undue suffering for horses, or any animals, for that matter. That is why it is important that industry be allowed the option to slaughter equines in a humane and hygienic manner, that consumers be permitted to consume equine products, and that importers and exporters be free to buy and sell equine products.

In closing, let me add some personal thoughts. My first recollections as a child on the farm were trips I made on the hayrack pulled by my family's team of horses. I also know that the \$12.50 colt my dad bought when I was a kid was the best cattle horse I have ever ridden. These horses were farm animals, great animals. They were part of our business, but growing up, their end-of-life options were as obvious to me as were those of the chickens, pigs, and cattle we butchered as part of farm life.

As part of the Knee Hill Valley 4H Beef Club, I remember sale days vividly. We just had average calves cut from our herd, but when I was about 10 years old, my calf and I came second in showmanship. The man who bought my pet steer told me that he was going to maybe take it to another show, since it was so well trained. I never forgot how that made me feel. Thinking back, I doubt if that ever happened, but it did make our final farewells easier. Even so, it never changed the fact that I knew that this was business and that soon after, many people would be enjoying this fine animal of mine.

It is our great privilege that we have different opinions heard in the House as our democratic way, and I want to thank the hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior for raising this issue, but Conservatives will be opposing this bill.

•(1155)

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain will have approximately four minutes for debate this afternoon.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also would like to take this opportunity to speak to Bill C-571 and would like to begin with a statement from Equine Canada, the dedicated national voice working to serve, promote, and protect the interests of horses and Canada's equestrian community. Equine Canada has stated:

Equine Canada believes that Bill C-571, if enacted: Will not enhance or add value to existing legislation for food safety in Canada; Will not improve the humane welfare of horses in Canada; and Will cause serious implications for Canadian horse owners for moving horses inter-provincially within Canada.

Government Orders

These are real concerns. Also, despite the way the bill was written, it appears that it is not really about food safety and not about imports and exports at all. It really is about the humane treatment of animals. On both sides of the House, we agree that all animals should be treated humanely and I know that our government takes the issue of animal welfare very seriously. In Canada, we have strict laws and regulations in place right now to verify that effective welfare standards are in place in all establishments. Canadian Food Inspection Agency inspectors work hard to enforce these regulations and operational policies under the Meat Inspection Act, which sets the standards for the humane treatment and slaughter of animals in federally registered abattoirs. Horses or equines are included in these protections.

The CFIA inspectors are present on-site in federally registered slaughter facilities each day to verify that animal welfare requirements are met. I take it that most people would not know there are on-site inspectors who inspect the facilities daily. Under the authority of the Meat Inspection Act and the meat inspection regulations, CFIA inspectors are empowered to intervene when they observe non-compliance concerning human handling of horses at slaughterhouses. This is an important job because, as I said earlier, we all agree that animals should be treated humanely.

The CFIA is also providing additional training to veterinarians and inspectors who oversee human handling of animals every day on the front lines. In addition to being on the floor to verify that humane handling is taking place, CFIA authorities want to hear about problems, concerns, and incidents of alleged non-compliance with the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act. If anyone is aware of any non-compliance, of course the CFIA want to hear about it because then it can be dealt with. That is not to say that from time to time there may be violations, but that said, there is an enforcement mechanism and there is a toolbox to deal with that issue. I want to say here that it is important for anyone with concerns to raise them as soon as possible so that if there is a problem, it can be investigated immediately. The CFIA also has the authority to respond to findings with a full suite of enforcement tools, including criminal prosecutions.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill.

• (1200)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have six minutes to complete his speech at the resumption of this debate, if he so desires.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA-HONDURAS ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed from March 6 consideration of the motion that 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, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in the strongest possible terms in opposition to Bill C-20, an act that would implement a free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague for Edmonton—Strathcona.

At the second reading stage of a debate, we are looking at the principles of a bill, and it is those principles that I want to address today.

Bill C-20 is a government bill that would bring Canada in closer economic terms with Honduras. I am ashamed and embarrassed that our country is considering such a bill. This agreement is about providing preferential trade terms to Honduras, and I cannot believe, for reasons I hope to outline, that Canadians would accept our doing so.

I will start by saluting the excellent work of our trade critic, my colleague for Vancouver Kingsway. He has reminded us that the NDP is fully aware of the importance of trade to our country. We want expanded trade deals that support Canada's exporters, which are important to our economy. However, the process and content of Bill C-20 are so wanting that I am embarrassed the bill is before Parliament today.

Canadians want a trade policy that will strengthen our economic relationships with significant economies. They want things that would assist our exporters. They want to encourage value-added production to many resources of our economy. They want a balanced trade policy. They want a process whereby we enter sectoral preferential trade agreements in a way that takes into account the views of Canadians and agreements that are not negotiated in absolute secrecy, as appears to have been the case here.

The Conservatives took office in 2006, and by all objective measures, their trade performance has been wanting. They came into office with a current account surplus of \$18 billion. Now, after their performance, we have a current account deficit of \$62 billion. So we have gone down about \$10 billion a year since the Conservatives came to power.

What about the kinds of things we are exporting? Well, the rip-and-ship approach to trade seems to be paramount for the Conservative government. Just we in British Columbia deplore the export of raw logs, the Conservative government seems to think that exporting raw bitumen is an acceptable trade policy.

Government Orders

Compared to other countries that had to weather the recession like us, we are about dead last when it comes to current account performance. Seventeen other countries around the world between 2006 to 2012 came into the same global recession. How did we do by comparison? Terribly.

The criteria that we need to use, in our judgment, to assess trade agreements of this sort are threefold.

First, is the country that Canada is proposing to enter into an agreement with a country that respects democracy, human rights, fair labour practices, and the environment? I will argue that is definitively not the case with Honduras.

Second, would this economy be of significant strategic value to Canada? That is hardly the case with Honduras.

Third, are the terms of the particular agreement satisfactory? I will argue that they are not.

Do not take my word for it. I will not repeat all of the human rights atrocities that my colleagues have brought to our attention, nor I will not talk about the recent military coups. All of that is well known. However, I will cite from the CIA's *World Factbook*, hardly a left-wing document, to talk about the country that our government wants to do business with in this preferential fashion:

• (1205)

Honduras, the second poorest country in Central America, suffers from extraordinarily unequal distribution of income, as well as high underemployment.

The US-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement...came into force in 2006 and has helped foster foreign direct investment, but physical and political insecurity, as well as crime and perceptions of corruption, may deter potential investors; about 70% of FDI is from US firms.

It goes on to say that:

An 18-month IMF Standby Arrangement expired in March 2012 and was not renewed, due to the country's growing budget deficit and weak current account performance. Public sector workers complained of not receiving their salaries in November and December 2012, and government suppliers are owed at least several hundred million dollars in unpaid contracts. The government announced in January 2013 that loss-making public enterprises will be forced to submit financial rescue plans before receiving their budget allotments for 2013.

Honduras is hardly an economic marvel for Canada to be associated with. It is our 104th export market in terms of export value, and thus is hardly an important economic trading partner.

How did we get here? We arrived here because of a complete lack of transparency in the negotiations and a failure to listen to civil society representatives, many of whom have been there, such as human rights activists, environmental organizations, and labour organizations. None of these people have been listened to at all. I just cannot understand the principled argument for entering this agreement.

For example, in 2012 the AFL-CIO in the United States and 12 Honduran labour organizations filed a formal petition with the U.S. Department of Labour alleging labour violations by companies in the apparel, textile, and other industries, accusing the Government of Honduras, and this is key, of "...failing to enforce its labour laws under the Central America Free Trade Agreement by not upholding laws that enable workers to unionize, organize and bargain collectively or promoting acceptable working conditions".

That is the kind of record this country has, and yet our government thinks we should have an agreement with it.

We believe in moving forward with trade. However, this is a very corrupt country, which Transparency International has talked about in such critical terms. Honduras is a country where attacks on journalists are rife; a country where rural violence is such that over 90 people have been killed in recent years in land disputes in one area, most since 2009; a country where more than 90 LGBT people were killed between 2009 and 2012; and a country where prison conditions are inhumane, including overcrowding, inadequate nutrition, and poor sanitation. All of this is from Human Rights Watch.

According to the Conservative government, this is the kind of country we should be doing business with and giving preferential trade agreements to. I disagree and my constituents disagree as well. The Council of Canadians has spoken powerfully in opposition to it. Experts from the Department of Foreign Affairs have also testified in negative terms about the kind of activities going on in this particular country.

In our judgment, if it is good for Canada, then let us do it. If it is good for the people on the other side of the table with whom we would be proposing to do business, let us do it, but this is not that kind of agreement. When we take into account the basic facts about Honduras, which I have brought to the House's attention today, this is not a country with which we want an agreement.

Again I have to go back to the process. Why does the government want to do this in secrecy? Why has it failed to make the text of the agreement available to those organizations that could comment intelligently on it? Rather, it wants us to have a yes or no vote on something.

The failure of the government in Honduras to enforce the rules on the environment and labour issues is telling. The kind of corruption that the government has experienced and its lack of concern for democracy is telling. The Conservative government, in our judgment, ought not to be entering into an agreement of this kind. It is easy for the Conservatives to say that our party is opposed to trade, but we are not. We believe in trade. We understand it is important, but a trade agreement with a country like this is abominable.

• (1210)

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite made the statement that this country is hardly an important trading partner for Canada. Yet it is my understanding that, in 2010, Honduras saw Canadian imports to the magnitude of \$151 million as well as Canadian direct investments of over \$100 million.

When we talk about the economic prospects of a country and its social development, certainly trade would be a good thing. I would like him to clarify his statement that it is hardly an important trading partner, when trade can be a force that spurs growth and social change in a country.

Government Orders

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that trade agreements can often do that. However, in terms of the statistics she raised and the number of dollars involved, I should point out that Honduras, as a trading partner, is 120th out of 186 countries on the human development index. It is a country that is very poor. According to the World Bank, it is a lower-middle income country. In 2012, two-thirds of the population lived in poverty and 46%, almost half, in what they call extreme poverty.

It does not seem like the kind of country with which we can get into robust trade arrangements that would benefit Canadians in this country. The issue is how it would enhance our value-added export economy, which is where the jobs of the future will be.

Is it a rip and ship kind of economy with which we are doing business? Would we be dealing with companies in that country that exploit the workers, as has been pointed out? Those are the issues that Canadians also have a right to be concerned about.

• (1215)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of ways that a country such as Canada can assist lesser developed nations in building good governance, democratic processes, rule of law, and, frankly, sustainability systems for their economy.

A country such as Honduras has a poor human rights record, poor record on rule of law, and dire poverty. Is this not a nation where we should perhaps be looking toward providing foreign aid in the form of good governance rather than seeking to trade? It is not clear that the majority of the people of Honduras would derive any benefit whatsoever from our trade. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, Canadians have a lot to teach other countries. We used to be able to talk about fair democracy. I am not so sure, in light of what is going on in our country, that we have much to brag about these days. However, generally speaking we have been experts in sending people to other countries to talk about good governance arrangements. We have a lot of NGOs that are involved in that field.

Before it was transformed, to use a neutral word from our Conservative government, we were very proud of CIDA and its work in trying to assist countries in development such as Honduras.

Professor Mark Ruhl has written about Honduras that opinion surveys over the last decade have shown that ordinary Hondurans are much less committed to democratic institutions than most other Latin Americans and are more willing to see their political leaders employ undemocratic means.

Understandably, the country itself, with almost half of its population in extreme poverty, may not be putting its attention on democratic institutions at this time, which is why the corruption is so high, why it is among the most violent areas in the world according to *The Economist* magazine, and maybe why, as my colleague suggests, Canada could make some contributions to improving that economy and that civil society. However, I fear that this trade agreement before Parliament is not that answer.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise in this place and speak to Bill

C-20, which would set forth a trade agreement between Canada and the country of Honduras.

As my colleague from Victoria has stated, the regrettable fact is that this transparency and participation by the members of this place has occurred late in the day, which has been the case with every trade agreement that the Conservative government has brought forward. It is unlike the process that is followed in most western democracies, where the duly elected members of Parliament are provided with information from day one of the negotiation process.

The kinds of matters that parliamentarians should be informed of before a bill comes to the House, where essentially the deal is already cast in stone, would include critical factors that the government professes it has given due consideration to. These factors would include the human rights record of the country that Canada is seeking to provide preferential treatment to in trade. It would include the value-added to Canadian trade and whether it is worthwhile to send officials off to spend time negotiating the trade deal, as opposed to putting efforts toward nations where these factors already exist. Is there a stable democratic regime, including democratic processes and the rule of law? That is clearly an important factor.

Surely one of the reasons we enter into trade agreements that provide preferential trade provisions is to showcase to potential investors from Canada that this is a place where they can do business and that we are giving preferential rights. Therefore, Canadian investors, whether large or small, would be given some level of assurance that their investment would be safe and protected under some kind of a rule of law regime.

We have seen recently, with the demise of some regimes around the world, that the government has not been willing to do that. Our party, frankly, has raised concerns in dissenting reports. Whether this bill goes through or not, one would raise the question of whether the government is providing any riders to this, informing Canadian investors that some of their investments may well be at risk because of the state of the government regime in Honduras.

I will briefly reiterate concerns that have been raised by others in the House about the state of the regime in Honduras. The current government regime came into place in 2010, through what was said to be a very undemocratic and illegitimate election. We have heard litany after litany of continuing human rights abuses, killings, arbitrary detentions, severe restrictions on public demonstrations, protests on freedom of expression, and interference with the independence of the judiciary. We are told that Honduras has the highest murder rate in the world and is considered a very dangerous country for journalists.

Normal investors would ask whether it would be safe for them to invest their dollars there. Is it going to be safe to send their workers there if they decide to set up some kind of special operation?

Government Orders

As has been shared in the House, Transparency International ranks Honduras as the most corrupt country in Central America. It is a major drug smuggling centre, and it has the worst income equality in the region. Clearly it is a nation that could use assistance. One would ask, instead of rushing into a trade deal to give preferential treatment to a small portion of the population that has control of the dollars, should we not be working with other donors around the world in trying to help Honduras build a more democratic regime?

For the remainder of my time, I wish to speak to the abject failure of the government in living up to its commitments that it would pursue an economic strategy for sustainable development. Trade deal after trade deal that the Conservative government has brought forward has undermined previous undertakings by the Government of Canada to make protection of the environment or sustainable development a key component of the trade deals.

Why am I deeply concerned about this? I had the privilege of being the first head of law and enforcement for the NAFTA Environment Commission, based in Montreal. It was a breakthrough agreement, under the NAFTA trade agreement with Mexico, Canada, and the United States. While some argued that it should have been encompassed in the actual trade deal and it was promised that it would happen in the next trade deals, at least it came forward and was signed by all three governments.

● (1220)

We have seen the government essentially shred the basics of that initial very well-founded credible agreement. Unlike under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, where the three signatories to the NAFTA agreement, Mexico, Canada, and the United States, signed on to create a council of environment ministers to oversee all of the issues to do with environment and trade, we see no such council here.

Every trade deal that the government has initiated, including this one in Bill C-20, does not have duly elected officials to provide the oversight. It will simply be a committee of government officials, unspecified. We do not know who in Canada or in Honduras will be overseeing and ensuring that the rights of the people in Honduras will be protected should there be Canadian investment.

There is no independent secretariat, which is a very important part of the NAFTA agreement. It should be a full-time, employed secretariat with experts, representatives from both nations, delivering the work. It should be ongoing, digging in to make sure that economic development actually protects the environment towards the future.

There is an absolutely zero accountability engagement of the public from impacted communities in this trade agreement under Bill C-20. That is unlike the NAFTA environmental side agreement where there was the creation of a joint public advisory committee, with representatives of industry, the public, and farmers, who would regularly advise the council of ministers. There is no such body.

Under the NAFTA agreement, we had a national advisory council appointed in each of the countries. There is no national advisory council. There is absolutely no scrutiny and no involvement from the Canadian public on how this deal would proceed and be implemented. Also, there is none of the same in Honduras.

Under the NAFTA environmental agreement, there was a provision for any citizen within North America to file a complaint of a failure to effectively enforce environmental law. When the NAFTA deal was signed, there was a great hue and cry that there was going to be all this economic development and wondering whether it was going to undermine environmental protections that were already in place. There was a provision allowing any resident of the three countries to file a complaint, which would be duly investigated and reported on publicly. There is no such provision.

Under Bill C-20, a resident of Honduras or Canada could file a complaint to some undesignated official in that country. Given the lack of credibility of the government regime in this country in taking environmental damage seriously, and given what has been stated about the state of governance in Honduras, how can we have faith that any citizen might be brave enough to come forward and file such a complaint? How can we have faith that it would be dealt with in any kind of a credible manner, unlike the NAFTA agreement where there is a clearly specified framework for effective environmental enforcement?

I can speak to that fact because I have been a member of a credible international body on co-operation, on effective environmental compliance and enforcement. It includes 180 countries around the world, working together and talking about the specific components of effective enforcement of environmental law, to give credibility to that kind of a structure. That framework was set out in the environmental side agreement to NAFTA. It is completely absent in Bill C-20.

My final comment would be that a very important part of the NAFTA environmental agreement is transparency and participation. Throughout the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, there are rights to file a complaint of failed enforcement, the right of private access to remedies if someone feels the environment is not being protected, and procedural guarantees to resort to courts if a community is damaged. None of these provisions exist in the side agreement.

We see a great downgrading of what once was a model for sustainable economic development around the world, a model that Canada helped initiate. The government has completely shredded that regime and paid it no heed whatsoever. Its talk about participation, transparency, and environment protection is clearly reflected in this agreement; it is completely absent.

● (1225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, questions with regard to trade agreements in principle is something we in the Liberal Party have always been fairly supportive of, recognizing the importance of trade to Canada's economic and social fabric.

My question to the member is related to trade agreements in general. What sort of considerations, and to what degree, would primarily be taken into account when the member's political party reviews trade agreements to determine whether or not to support them?

Government Orders

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I think that all the members in the official opposition have been very clear on what their priorities are: first and foremost, a record of human rights and transparency and good governance. A good number of my colleagues have spoken to that. I spoke briefly to that. I would think that would be a starting point.

The second priority is that there would actually be some kind of genuine benefit to Canadians from entering into such an agreement. That would include maintaining our reputation for honouring, as a precondition, that we only deal with people in good faith and that there would be rule of law, that there would be observance of human rights, and there would be protections for Canadian investors.

The third priority is that we not start undermining and downgrading the very provisions that many fought for and worked very diligently to put in place in trade agreements previously but we have not seen since, under the current government.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very compelling speech.

The Economist, which does not seem to be particularly left-leaning, says that Honduras is the most violent region on the planet.

Could my colleague comment on that? Is trade with a country that is considered so violent a good thing?

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I would think that one of the preconditions for entering into a preferential trade agreement would be to provide some level of assurance. Once we sign off on that deal, we would be sending signals to Canadian investors that this is a safe place, a good place to invest their dollars.

We have yet to have the government come forward and show us how the Government of Honduras is addressing the erosion of rule of law and the erosion of democratic processes, and frankly, I think credible Canadian investors would also want to look to the issue of human rights abuses.

No, I do not see that the government has brought forward a credible case for the signing off and the voting in favour of Bill C-20.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for her speech.

Honduras is a country with many repressive and undemocratic policies. The NDP does not want to foster or promote trade agreements with these kinds of countries. We prefer to promote agreements with countries where there is respect for human rights, policies are democratic and we have something to gain.

What does my colleague have to say about that?

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, in response to my colleague's question, I would simply share what the Canadian Council for International Co-operation's Americas Policy Group has said:

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.

Hon. Khristinn Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the MP for Northumberland—Quinte West.

As members know, our government has been focused on what matters to all Canadians: jobs, economic growth, and long-term prosperity. That is why we are currently pursuing the most ambitious trade expansion plan in our country's history. In less than seven years, Canada has concluded free trade agreements with 9 countries and is negotiating with 30 more. Consider this: one in five Canadian jobs are dependent on exports. That is 20% of all Canadian jobs. Our prosperity hinges on opening new markets for Canadian goods, services, and investments.

The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would have a tremendous impact on Canadian businesses and workers in the fields of agriculture, professional services, value-added food processing and manufacturing, and commodity- and resource-based industries. This agreement would open up significant opportunities for Canadian companies in Honduras, as well as the broader region. The free trade agreement between Canada and Honduras would also further Canada's foreign strategy of deepening our engagement in the Americas and support the vision of enhancing economic integration in the hemisphere.

On the other hand, the NDP's anti-trade record is very clear. Going all the way back to the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement in 1988, New Democrats have opposed every single free trade agreement Canada has ever signed into law. They believe that the global economy is something hard-working middle class Canadians should fear. Their vision for Canada to be a country that turns inward out of insecurity: a Canada that cowers, a Canada that lacks confidence, and a Canada that actually cannot compete. Our government categorically rejects this view. We know that Canadians can compete with the best in the world and win.

In November 2013, I signed the Canada-Honduras agreement on labour co-operation, which was negotiated in parallel with the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement. Our government strives to demonstrate on the international stage that a competitive economy includes safe, healthy, and productive workplaces. We expect all of our trading partners to ensure safe working conditions consistent with international standards. That said, this agreement would help ensure a level playing field for Canadian workers and employers when competing internationally for trade and investment in the context of our expanding economic relationship with Honduras.

Government Orders

Our government is pleased to work with our partner countries in the Americas to ensure mutual prosperity within the region and achieve greater levels of international co-operation on labour issues. This free trade agreement would increase export and investment opportunities for Canadians by creating a potential preferential and more predictable trade and investment environment. At the same time, the labour co-operation agreement would ensure that these economic advances are not made at the expense of workers' rights. The labour co-operation agreement between Canada and Honduras would help protect labour rights and maintain productive and healthy labour environments in both countries.

● (1235)

[*Translation*]

This agreement will create jobs and contribute greatly to Canada's continued economic growth and prosperity. As a Canadian, I want to see my country prosper. As Minister of Labour, I am happy to say that while we are working hard to advance our historical trade agenda, our government is ensuring that international labour rights and obligations are respected.

[*English*]

As Minister of Labour, I am happy to say we will be working hard to advance our historical trade agenda, and our government is ensuring that international labour rights and obligations are respected. It is of vital importance that prosperity does not come at the expense of workers' rights. That is why the free trade agreement with Honduras is accompanied by a parallel labour co-operation agreement. This agreement includes strong and comprehensive provisions for the enforcement of labour rights and a transparent complaint and dispute resolution mechanism.

Under the terms of this labour co-operation agreement, Canada and Honduras have committed to ensure that their laws respect and embody the International Labour Organization's 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The declaration covers the right of freedom of association, the right of collective bargaining, the abolition of child labour, the elimination of forced and compulsory labour, and the elimination of discrimination in the workplace. Through these provisions, we demonstrate our shared commitment to improving labour standards and protecting workers' rights.

In the Canada-Honduras labour co-operation agreement, both countries have committed to protect workers' health and safety on the job, as well as provide compensation in cases of work-related injuries or illnesses. Both countries have further committed to establishing and maintaining minimum employment standards, including standards with respect to wages and overtime pay.

[*Translation*]

Finally, we have also agreed to provide migrant workers with the same legal protections as those afforded to nationals. This prevents discriminatory working conditions and protects some of the most vulnerable workers.

Canada recognizes Honduras' ongoing efforts to bolster its enforcement of national laws and fundamental labour rights, and encourages its efforts to continue along this path.

[*English*]

It is clear that Honduras is just as committed as we are to the success of this accord. In fact, when I met with my Honduran counterpart in November 2013, we reaffirmed our commitment to the effective implementation of a high-quality labour co-operation agreement. However, as one can appreciate, the commitments we make in these agreements are only credible if there is a means of enforcing them. That is why I am pleased to say that the Canada-Honduras labour co-operation agreement includes a strong dispute-resolution mechanism that is transparent and easy to use.

If either Canada or Honduras should fail to respect internationally recognized labour rights and principles or not enforce domestic labour laws, they could ultimately face financial penalties. As part of the Canada-Honduras labour co-operation agreement, the Canadian government has agreed to work with Honduras to improve its labour standards and better protect workers.

Our government recently provided funding for various technical assistance projects that are strengthening the capacities of the Honduran Ministry of Labour to enforce domestic labour laws. These have focused on key issues including workers' rights, improving labour inspections, promoting more vibrant and constructive dialogue between government workers and employer representatives, and encouraging the development of sound occupational health and safety practices.

Our government has been clear that trade liberalization and labour rights go hand in hand. Canada has more to offer the global market than just the robust quality of its products and services. We also have a reputation for honesty and reliability. We keep our promises and we play by the rules. That is why the Canada-Honduras labour co-operation agreement is important, and I am confident that this agreement would help create well-paying jobs for Canadian workers, as well as making sure that those workers in Honduras are seeing a higher standard for the labours that they are embarking upon at home.

I ask my fellow parliamentarians to support Bill C-20 to implement the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement and the parallel labour co-operation and environment agreements. This legislation would further strengthen Canada's economy and provide a foundation for future trade opportunities. It would also promote and ensure fair and productive workplaces that would benefit both countries.

● (1240)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I notice in the minister's comments she skirted completely around the erasure of the former strong mechanisms for ensuring sustainable development and protection of the environment.

Government Orders

Perhaps the member would like to speak to why her government has decided not to build on the base provided by the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, which actually provides forums for dialogue not just between the governments of Honduras and Canada but between the peoples of Honduras and Canada, the workers of Honduras and Canada, and the communities of Honduras and Canada on what implications further economic development or Canadian investment might have.

Could she speak to why they have removed all the forums that would have been provided had they followed the model of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation?

Hon. Kristinn Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, our focus—and I think it is a very important one—is about creating jobs and prosperity. With that there are equal chapters—one on the environment and one on the labour co-operation agreement, which I spoke to—that are about making sure that those individuals in both countries are well supported.

While there may be a desire by the opposition members to find the reasons why they may not want to support a free trade agreement in the future to make sure there is prosperity here at home, as they have with every other free trade agreement that has been brought before them, not being willing to step up and support those Canadian workers and Canada's opportunities abroad, we are moving forward, making sure free trade agreements are a reason to increase prosperity here at home and create more jobs; and also, quite frankly, I think it is going to provide great benefits to individuals in Honduras.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the minister's comments about job creation. This is something that we in the Liberal Party have been raising for a number of months. The government has dropped the ball quite significantly on job creation and the impact of overall trade on our middle class in Canada. At the time the Conservatives inherited the reins of governance in Canada, we had a huge trade surplus. The Conservatives have turned that trade surplus into a trade deficit at a substantial cost to the middle class, a substantial cost in terms of the number of jobs here today.

So yes, we have given tentative support to this agreement and the bill today. However, one of the concerns has to be this. Why has the government done so poorly in terms of overall trade? When does the minister believe Canada will once again be on the plus side of trade? The Conservatives have demonstrated that they have been successful at negotiating some trade agreements, but the bottom line is that we have a net trade deficit, and that is something we have only had under this particular majority government.

Hon. Kristinn Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak about jobs, as the member has raised, because we have worked with the business sector and Canadians to generate more than one million net new jobs in Canada, over 80% of them full-time and over 80% of them in the private sector. So this government is doing its job. We are out creating jobs, working with industry and with Canadians to ensure that they can have long-term prosperity, unlike the opposition.

Unlike the opposition party sitting at the far end of the House, we are focused on what matters to Canadians: ensuring that Canadians have jobs. That is why we are so proud of having signed over nine

agreements, working with more than 30 countries. It is something that the government of the past, one that the Liberals had well before 2006, was unable to accomplish.

I encourage the members opposite to feel free to support this agreement. I am delighted to hear that they will be doing so, because it is the right thing. This government is moving forward in creating free trade agreements. We are going to continue to do that and to create jobs, something that that government was unable to do.

• (1245)

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in support of the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement and our government's goal of creating prosperity for all Canadians.

Our government is in the midst of the most ambitious pursuit of new and expanded trade and investment agreements in Canadian history. We will not sit on the sidelines while other countries vigorously pursue trade deals to secure better market access for their products and services. Indeed, the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement is yet another step this government is taking to help Canadians compete and succeed in the global economy.

No government in Canada's history has been more committed to the creation of jobs and prosperity for Canadian businesses, workers and their families. Deepening Canada's trading relationship in dynamic and high-growth markets around the world is key to those efforts.

In 2006, Canada had free trade agreements with only five countries. Since then, Canada has concluded free trade agreements with eight countries: Colombia; Jordan; Peru; the European Free Trade Association member states of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland; Panama; and has signed a trade agreement with Honduras. Last fall, we also announced that an agreement had been reached with the 28-member European Union.

That is not all. We are, of course, intensifying our focus on Asia.

On March 11 of this year, our Prime Minister and President Park of South Korea announced the conclusion of negotiations for a Canada-South Korea free trade agreement. This landmark achievement constitutes Canada's first free trade agreement in Asia.

The Canada-Korea agreement will strengthen economic ties with a key partner in that fast-growing and dynamic region of the world and generate significant benefits, jobs, and opportunities for Canadians. The agreement is projected to boost Canada's gross domestic product by \$1.7 billion and increase Canadian merchandise exports to South Korea by about 32%. It will also provide substantially improved access for Canadian businesses to South Korean markets, a key gateway to other markets in Asia.

Government Orders

Canada and South Korea are committed to bringing the Canada-South Korea free trade agreement into force as soon as possible.

It does not end there. Canada is actively pursuing an agreement with 11 other Asia-Pacific countries through the trans-Pacific partnership negotiations, which Canada joined in October 2012. With its current membership, the TPP represents a market of more than 793 million people and a combined gross domestic product of \$28.1 trillion.

Canada sees this agreement as a leading mechanism for regional economic integration and a critical tool for positioning Canadian businesses in the fast-growing Asia-Pacific market.

Negotiations are also well under way for major agreements with large dynamic economies, including Japan and India.

A Canada-Japan economic partnership agreement would strengthen access to the world's third largest economy. An agreement could increase Canada's GDP by \$3.8 billion and boost exports to Japan by 67%.

Just recently, the Prime Minister announced during his visit to Israel the launch of negotiations to expand and modernize the Canada-Israeli free trade agreement.

This Conservative government continues to update our existing agreements in order to maximize benefits for Canadians.

Let us not forget that 2014 marks the 20th anniversary of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Twenty years ago, trade within the North American region was somewhere around \$372 billion. In 2013, the total trilateral merchandise trade reached over \$1.1 trillion. That is nearly a fourfold increase.

Canada is now the top export destination for 35 U.S. states. Of course, the U.S. remains by far the top export destination for all provinces. Over eight million U.S. jobs depend on trade and investment within Canada; and over 2.5 million Canadian jobs, that is one in seven, depend on exports to the United States of America.

● (1250)

NAFTA has provided a solid foundation for Canada's future prosperity and is an agreement that Canada continues to build on to advance North American trade and competitiveness.

Deepening Canada's trade relationships in rapidly growing markets around the world, such as Honduras, is an important part of this government's pro-trade plan for jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity. The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement is a key part of our agenda to open new markets for Canadian businesses, create new opportunities for our workers, and contribute to Canada's future prosperity.

Free trade would provide numerous benefits to Canadian companies active or interested in Honduras. Not only would it eliminate the vast majority of Honduran tariffs, but it would also help raise the profile of Canadian businesses in the country, and further deepen and strengthen Canada's commercial and economic relationship with Honduras.

The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would also make us competitive with players from the United States and the European

Union, who already enjoy free trade with Honduras, not to mention giving Canadian companies a secure, predictable framework for business. Keeping pace with Canada's main competitors is just one reason that we need to move forward on this deal.

There are other benefits to the free trade agreement as well, which I would like to reiterate. It would help a variety of Canadian companies in sectors such as chemical products, wood, pulp and paper products, vehicles, auto parts, as well as fish and seafood. It would also be advantageous to Canadian agricultural producers in areas like beef, pork, and processed potato products.

Canada's service providers would enjoy enhanced commitments in export sectors that are of interest to Canada, such as natural resources, professional services, and information and communications technology. Clearly the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would create new opportunities for Canadian companies in the Honduran market.

Thanks to the actions taken under our government's free trade leadership, Canadian workers, businesses, and exporters now have preferred access and a real competitive edge in more markets around the world than at any other time in our history.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I keep saying that we do not understand why this government across the way wants to do business with this country that is known for violating human rights and as one of the most corrupt countries on the planet. Furthermore, as far as any benefit Canada might derive from entering into this agreement is concerned, Honduras ranks 104th on the list of countries we trade with.

Taking all that into account, what makes Honduras so attractive to the Conservatives when we know of all its human rights violations? Journalists are not well received in Honduras. They are treated very poorly there. The relationship Honduras has with the international community and journalists often gets tangled up in violence. Accordingly, this is hard to understand. Canada could forge trade relationships with many other countries. Why insist on concluding an agreement with Honduras?

● (1255)

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member was listening intently when the Minister of Labour was giving her speech.

The member will recall that the minister referred the House to the labour agreement she signed with Honduras, and she will recall that the minister mentioned some of the environmental aspects included in this free trade agreement.

Government Orders

I guess the best example I would suggest to the member is the history of Canada. Some 60 to 100 years ago, we had everything from child labour to persecution for the right of association, which is the right to organize labour unions, et cetera. How did that change? It changed because there were jobs for people. People organized. People were able to mature into this democracy we share today, with its respect for human rights.

We cannot allow countries such as Honduras to remain isolated, to not have free trade agreements with us, and to not offer their people an opportunity to provide a living for themselves and their families.

Eventually that country will mature into a country, hopefully, like ours. By signing the labour and environmental agreements associated with the free trade agreement, we are going to be assisting that country. We are going to be pushing it along and helping the very people the member talks about to have a better life. That is why we are in favour of free trade.

I could mention some of the things said by other members in her party, but I do not think it is constructive to take a negative attitude. I would like the member to think positively, as this is the first step on the road to Honduras becoming a country like ours, with respect for human rights. It can only do that when it has trade agreements that have written into them human rights and labour regulations, laws, and rules.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to express some thoughts and ideas in regard to the Honduras trade agreement.

I indicated that the Liberal Party wanted to see this agreement continue to go through the process. I made reference to the importance of trade.

The member made reference to Korea and the trade agreement with Korea. It was the first in Asia. As the member was talking about that I thought of the Philippines. The Philippines is a country that contributes immensely to Canada's immigration today. It was ranked in the top three over the last few years in terms of the number of immigrants who come to Canada, not to mention the number of workers, students, and so forth.

I want to ask the member if he would provide some comment in regard to the Philippines. Does he believe that his government is currently working to develop trade negotiations with that country?

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Speaker, from a trade perspective and from a trade agreement perspective, we are going to leave no stone unturned.

We are not only helping, as I previously mentioned to the NDP member, to bolster the lives of the people in that country. We have to be a little on the selfish side here. We have to think about the jobs Canadians depend on.

Whether it is the Philippines or Korea or any country, we will engage in free trade agreements with the rest of the world. We will write into those agreements labour and environmental agreements that will go to not only improving the lives of Canadians, through the jobs and benefits that derive from free trade, but to the benefits and jobs and human rights issues we have talked about in this House. We will only get there when we improve the livelihoods of everyone

in the world. I believe that free trade among countries and bringing other countries closer to our standards will do that very thing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-20, which would implement a trade agreement with Honduras.

In 2013, when I sat on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights, we studied what was happening in Honduras at length. I believe I know enough of the facts to oppose this bill.

The despotic regime that reigns in Honduras is characterized by its anti-democratic practices, its corruption, its failed institutions and its history of human rights violations.

Canada should not be signing a free trade agreement with that country. I do not understand how some of my colleagues from the other parties dare support such a treaty, considering what we know about Honduras.

In my view, when it comes to considering a trade agreement, we must determine whether the partner respects democracy and human rights. That is absolutely not the case here, as my NDP colleagues demonstrated earlier. I will add to the debate what we learned in the Subcommittee on International Human Rights.

Honduras has a poor record on rule of law, as we know. Human rights are being trampled there. There are many cases of murder and corruption, and they go largely unpunished. Professor Gordon of Wilfrid Laurier University, who testified before the committee, said that the possibility of a free election needs to be called into question. Some members of the opposition parties have been assassinated, others have been threatened and so on.

Violence and repression have reached new highs since the coup in 2009. In 2013, there was an average of 10 killings a month. According to Professor Dana Frank from the University of California, 80% of crimes in Honduras go unpunished. According to the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras, there were more than 10,000 complaints of human rights violations by security forces in 2010. The legal authorities did not follow up on these complaints.

Human Rights Watch published a report in December 2010 that mentioned that the state does not co-operate in investigations. There are widespread doubts about whether there is judicial independence. Another report published in February 2013 criticizes the fact that no progress has been made.

The NGO Freedom House ranks Honduras as the second most dangerous country for journalists. According to the National Human Rights Commission in Honduras, 36 journalists were killed between 2003 and 2013, and 29 have been killed since President Lobo took power.

In June 2013, Anibal Barrow, a TV news anchor, was kidnapped from his car and killed. No suspects were convicted.

Government Orders

Furthermore, a handful of companies with ties to the government own most media outlets. Self-censorship is common. It is alleged that journalists are corrupted and advertisements are manipulated to ensure that coverage is positive and to silence opponents. A recently passed law penalizes anyone for criticizing a company or unfairly criticizing the government. These conditions make it difficult to assess the real situation in the country.

These issues caught the attention of the U.S. Congress last summer. In June 2013, 24 American senators signed a letter to express their concerns about human rights in Honduras. In addition, 94 members of Congress urged the U.S. Department of State to cease all military assistance to Honduras in light of the violent repression.

• (1300)

Furthermore, there has been some criticism of the charter cities that Honduras wants to create. These charter cities would give foreign companies unrivalled and exclusive access to cheap labour and natural resources in Honduras. Basically, they want to create nations within Honduran territory. In all the areas where the charter cities are proposed, there are significant land issues that have been going on for decades.

The most significant area is in the Aguán valley. That area has been allocated for a potential charter city. It is also an area that has seen huge investments in tourism. There has been a significant amount of protest against the charter cities, once again because the communities where these cities will be built are being excluded from any sort of dialogue.

The individual who proposed the charter city project, an economist named Paul Romer, has since pulled out of the process, complaining that there is no accountability or transparency. This has raised a significant amount of controversy in Honduras, and yet the trade agreement we are currently debating seeks to take advantage of those charter cities.

The second criterion to take into account when assessing trade agreements is whether the agreement has any strategic value to Canada. Well, I have no idea, because this agreement was negotiated without any transparency.

Despite repeated requests, the Government of Canada refused to make the text of the agreement public during the negotiation process. I have to wonder how some members of the House can support a trade agreement without knowing the details, especially when we are well aware of the human rights situation in that country.

This agreement is stained with the blood of Hondurans. If we enter into a partnership with such a regime, we run the risk of tarnishing Canada's reputation on the international stage.

In 2011, the people of Brome—Missisquoi elected me to this place with the hope of building a different Canada. Considering the facts that I just outlined, I cannot support Bill C-20, and I encourage anyone who is still undecided to oppose it.

• (1305)

[English]

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to visit Honduras this year to meet with some of the business people there.

They would like Canadians to understand how important the free trade agreement is to them.

Canadian companies are responsible for one-third of Honduras' GDP. Gildan, one of the companies, employs 26,000 people. The company shows how Canadian companies in Honduras promote and respect human rights and work in a socially responsible manner. I would encourage these companies to have a dialogue with the opposition and those who are opposed to this free trade agreement.

I wonder if the opposition would be open to listening to some of the companies and what they have to offer with respect to human rights. The Minister of Labour has said that Canadian companies are doing a good job in this regard. The previous speaker for the Conservative Party said that having more jobs leads to less crime, and less crime helps with human rights.

I am wondering if the member would be open to hearing about some of the good things being done by our Canadian companies.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to listen to anyone, but I heard horror stories about Honduras at the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and the Subcommittee on International Human Rights.

For all the reasons I just mentioned, I would focus on countries that have high human rights and environmental standards such as Japan, India, Brazil and South Africa. Canada must enter into international agreements that will have a positive impact on Canada and abroad.

• (1310)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the member's comments, given the fact that the NDP has never ever stood in the House of Commons and voted in favour of a trade agreement. It has never done that. NDP members might say they support an agreement or something of that nature, but they have never actually stood and voted in favour of a free trade agreement.

Given the member's comments, am I to conclude that the NDP's position with regard to the trade file is that if there are human rights violations in countries, we should not be looking at trading with those countries?

China is an example. Does the member believe we should be trading with China, given its reputation?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

The NDP is very much aware of the importance of trade to our economy. However, we prefer to trade with countries that are on the right path, have a certain political will and are making strides when it comes to human rights and environmental protection. Honduras is not one of those countries. I am not going to repeat what I just said in my speech. It is not a country that I would do business with.

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House and talk about the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement.

Canada's prosperity is directly linked to reaching beyond our borders for economic opportunities that serve Canada's trade and investment. Our government is focused on the real priorities of Canadians: creating new jobs and new opportunities. That is why we continue to open new markets for our world-class exporters around the world.

With the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement, we would create new sources of prosperity for Canadian businesses of all sizes and for their workers. This agreement, along with the recently announced landmark agreements with the EU and South Korea, is further proof that the most ambitious trade expansion plan in Canada's history continues to deliver results for all Canadians.

Key sectors that would benefit immediately from better market access include beef, pork, potato products, vegetable oils, and grain products, as well as a range of processed food products.

The FTA also signifies Canada's support of Honduras' continued democratic, economic, and social development, as lagging as that may be. Honduras continues to follow a positive path of development, and the economic and social benefits accruing from the CHFTA with Canada would help to support this process.

Overall, Honduras would ultimately eliminate tariffs on almost 98% of tariff lines under the agreement. Canada would likewise eliminate its tariffs on almost 98% of tariff lines under the agreement.

Honduras is already an established market for Canadian exports and holds significant increase potential for Canadian business. With so much expertise, Canada can take advantage of significant opportunities in Honduras.

This agreement is a comprehensive free trade agreement with obligations that extend well beyond those subjects to include other areas of importance to Canadian business. The free trade agreement would provide comprehensive obligations in areas such as financial services; the temporary entry of business persons; electronic commerce and telecommunications; and competition, monopolies, and state enterprises.

The Canadian banking system is consistently recognized as being among the best in the world. In fact, the World Economic Forum has ranked Canada's banking system as the most sound in the world for six years in a row. This is an area where Canada is truly excelling. The Canadian financial services sector is a leader in providing high-quality, reliable financial services. Across the Americas, Canadian banks are helping foster economic growth through access to credit card and other financial services. In Honduras specifically, Canadian financial institutions such as Scotiabank have an active presence and offer a wide variety of banking services. This agreement would help those Canadian financial institutions to take advantage of opportunities in Honduras.

On financial services, this agreement would provide market access parity with what Honduras was offered to the U.S. through the trade

promotion agreement with that country and contains a robust prudential carve-out. These market access commitments are complemented by key obligations that would ensure non-discrimination, provide a right of establishment for financial institutions, and promote regulatory transparency in the financial sector.

These are key elements that the Canadian financial services sector is seeking in order to ensure that it is able to compete in an increasingly competitive global market. Our Conservative government is responding to this demand.

Another important area included in this trade agreement is to ensure that businesses are able to fully maximize the opportunities in Honduras for temporary entry for business persons. Ensuring that their employees are able to work in Honduras is an important issue for Canadian businesses is a natural complement to market access for goods, services, and investment.

In recognition of the significant number of Canadian companies operating in the region, the agreement would remove unnecessary barriers impairing the ability of companies to bring in the skilled workers they need. The agreement would extend to an extensive list of professions, including various technicians, and would include provisions for spousal employment.

The strength of this free trade agreement does not stop there. It would extend into the areas of electronic commerce and telecommunications. Electronic commerce is an important addition to previous free trade agreements in light of the importance of ensuring that new digital economy issues, such as the protection of personal information, consumer protection, and paperless trade, are not overlooked.

These issues are increasingly important for businesses in the 21st century, and Canada and Honduras have recognized this fact. In the free trade agreement with Canada, Honduras would agree to a permanent moratorium on customs duties for products delivered electronically. This includes items such as electronic software, music purchased online, and digital books. This moratorium is important not only for businesses but for consumers as well.

In addition to electronic commerce, telecommunications provisions were also included to support the competitive development of the telecommunications sector. Through this free trade agreement, Canadian telecommunications service providers would be able to better compete with their American and European counterparts in the Honduran market.

●(1315)

Clearly, there are many benefits to this free trade agreement with Honduras that go beyond trade in goods and investment. I would like to touch on the obligations of the free trade agreement that would relate to competition, monopolies, and state enterprises.

Government Orders

This agreement would meet Canada's objectives of ensuring that anti-competitive business practices and the actions of monopolies or state enterprises do not undermine the benefits of trade and investment liberalization that would be achieved in this agreement. Canada and Honduras would co-operate on issues related to competition policy through their respective authorities. The obligations would ensure that Canadian companies doing business in Honduras would be treated fairly, and there are many other areas in the agreement that would offer real commercial benefits to Canadian companies.

Upon implementation of the free trade agreement, 68.4% of Honduran tariff lines would be duty free. The remaining tariffs would be eliminated within periods of five to 15 years, with a small number of sensitive agricultural products being excluded from tariff liberalization or subjected to a tariff rate quota.

This free trade agreement would create enhanced market access opportunities and bring potential benefits for Canadian exporters in many sectors where products are currently subject to Honduran tariffs, including such areas as agriculture and agri-food products, wood, pulp and paper products, industrial machinery, vehicles and auto parts, aerospace, information and communications technology, fish and seafood chemical products, and plastic products.

More specifically, for my home province of Alberta, the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement would benefit exporters through the elimination of Honduran tariffs in sectors of export interest, such as beef, furniture, textiles, and construction equipment.

Overall, this is a high-quality and comprehensive trade agreement. It would allow Canadian businesses to compete and excel in the Honduran market. This is a market where many key exporters are seeing enormous potential. Honduras is a fast-growing market that presents real opportunities for Canadian businesses. It is important that Canadian firms establish an early presence in this emerging market and build solid relationships that will provide them with a competitive edge.

This free trade agreement has the support of key exporters and investors across Canada, and its passage through the House will ensure that Canadian business would be able to take advantage of opportunities in this important market. I look forward to support from those interested in fostering our economic future as a trading nation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite many requests from civil society, the government chose not to release the text to the public, thus preventing Canadians from making recommendations.

The agreement was negotiated behind closed doors. It is the government's current practice to negotiate free trade agreements behind closed doors without consulting civil society and the other members of the House.

Why is the government so opposed to transparency? Why does it not trust Canada's entrepreneurs and civil society when the time comes to make recommendations?

● (1320)

[*English*]

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, we consult extensively. We have been doing more free trade agreements than any other government in Canada's history. We have concluded 37 free trade agreements now, and that takes an awful lot of work from an awful lot of quarters, including people within the trade office, people around the world, and experts across Canada in various areas.

Quebec, of course, would be the beneficiary of this free trade agreement in many areas, such as chemical products, industrial machinery, articles of iron and steel, pork, and—my favourite—maple syrup.

A lot of work was done. Perhaps not all of it was to the liking of the hon. member or others, but there was extensive consultation and work. This agreement would move Canada's economy forward and move Canadian workers forward.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member says that the Conservative government has done more in terms of free trade agreements than any other government before it. One thing we need to recognize, of course, is that there is more to trade than just having free trade agreements. Let me provide an example.

When Jean Chrétien was prime minister, his government had the Team Canada approach to doing trade in Asia. As I was in the Manitoba legislature back then, I can recall that invitations went virtually throughout Canada, with some focus in Manitoba, because we wanted to be part of that trade mission. As a result of that particular trade mission, literally hundreds of millions of dollars of economic activity occurred, and that was an initiative taken by the prime minister.

Why do I say that? I say it because when the Conservative government inherited the trade file, there was a multi-billion-dollar surplus, and the Conservative government turned that multi-billion-dollar surplus into an overall trade deficit.

My question to the member is this: why is the Prime Minister or the government not putting a high priority on looking at the bottom line of trade, on surplus versus deficit? It is great to see this particular trade agreement, but what is the government doing to ensure that Canada's trade balance is on the plus side? That in itself would generate the thousands of jobs that the middle class needs today.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, the simple fact is that in 2008, the biggest economic downturn in the world since the Great Depression happened, which basically meant, because Canada had performed so well during that period, that other countries were not in a position to buy Canadian products as much as they did before. We are getting back out of that now. Canada is leading as we have led from the start. It is simply a matter of the world economic situation, which is improving.

Government Orders

In fact, as we complete, as I think we will, membership in the trans-Pacific partnership, with the EU free trade agreement and all the other free trade agreements we have brought into place, Canada will have access, and will probably be the only country in the world to have access, to 75% of the entire world's GDP. That is an accomplishment no other government in Canada's history can claim.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to further discuss the Canada–Honduras free trade agreement. From my standpoint as the critic for international human rights, I have a particular interest in the type of trade agreements that have been signed by the government.

From my standpoint as the critic for human rights, human rights must take a priority in the packaging and pulling together of any agreement with any country. When I look at the kinds of things that are important to me, is the partner we are about to do business with at a fundamental level, with an actual bilateral free trade agreement, is that a partner who respects democracy? For me, especially human rights, does it have adequate labour standards? Are these things codified in law? Is the economy of the proposed partner in balance with Canada? Are we very much higher than it is? Is there a sense of equity in that agreement?

Finally, once the free trade agreement has reached the draft form, are the terms of that satisfactory? I would suggest from the view of the NDP, it is not satisfactory. Honduras is the murder capital of the world. Think about it. More people are murdered there than anywhere else in the world. It has very undemocratic practices. Obviously, the institutions are weak because they are not able to give fundamental policing services to their people. It has very low standards when it comes to human rights and the so-called rule of law.

On this side of the House we recognize there is a significant importance to trade and to the agreements that are reached. We just do not believe the types of agreements that have been repeatedly put together by the government, where human rights and labour laws and many times environmental law are side agreements, unenforceable by law; in other words, are just window dressing to help sell this agreement.

For example, on May 15 of this year we are supposedly going to receive a report on what impact of the Colombia–Canada free trade agreement has had on human rights in Colombia. The last one we received was nowhere near the type of comprehensive report we were anticipating. When the debate on that free trade agreement happened in this place, we were told by the other side that we could look forward to a very comprehensive report. It just has not been forthcoming.

I want to draw attention to the U.S. Senate call for accountability in Honduras that took place on June 18, 2013. Senator Ben Cardin, a Democrat, which will not be a surprise, a senior member of the foreign relations committee and 20 of his Senate colleagues together sent a letter to John Kerry, urging him to work to support human rights in Honduras and free, fair and peaceful elections which were slated for that November. They went on to say that “Given the ‘reported violence and impunity linked to state entities in Honduras’, the letter questions the State Department’s decision to certify that the government is implementing policies to protect due process of law

and ‘prosecuting military and police personnel who are credibly alleged to have violated human rights’”.

We are talking about the military and the police, the ones who are supposed to enforce human rights and protect the public and enforce the laws of the land.

They went on to say that “U.S. taxpayers demand accountability at the highest levels when their resources are used for any purpose, especially in foreign assistance”.

This free trade agreement is not about direct foreign assistance but about an even closer working relationship between Canada and Honduras.

• (1325)

They went on to ask for “a detailed assessment of the effectiveness of the efficacy of current Honduran government efforts to protect freedom of expression and association, the rule of law, and due process, and to investigate extrajudicial killings and abuses allegedly [again] involving police and military...”.

Many of the murders taking place in this country are by these public officials or by the military. The rampant violence in Honduras has its roots further back in history. In the 1980s, Honduras was controlled by military governments. When they demilitarized, the process that followed failed to hold to account those who committed serious offences, serious human rights abuses were overlooked, plus a culture of impunity was widespread in that country. Again, there was a coup in 2009, and there is a continuation of that sense of impunity.

When we hear today that it is the military and police who are committing these crimes, it tells us very clearly that this country is very close to a failed state.

If we are going to have a free trade agreement with this country, would we not think it sensible for us, a nation of rights and human rights observation, to ask of the other country, as part of that agreement, to establish an improvement, benchmarks for changes to the human rights in that country, and to have that codified into the agreement?

Trade has to be more about the betterment of both parties, and in a country where the people deal with governments noted as being corrupt, it is very concerning that our officials, our government, could reach and conclude an agreement with such a nation.

Further to the agreement itself, there has been a complete lack of transparency in the negotiation process of this trade agreement. Despite repeated calls by civil society in Canada, the Government of Canada has failed to make public the text of the agreement during the negotiation process.

If we look at our country, when legislation is proposed and the lack of input to the development of legislation here at home, it should be no surprise, sadly, that this is the case in dealing with this agreement. We have people who are world experts in relationships with South American countries, in particular, who could have offered insight, but they were not allowed to take part in any fashion.

Government Orders

The government's token environmental impact assessment of the Canada–Honduras free trade agreement, which was released in October 2013, omitted any assessment of impact of Canadian investments in Honduras because those figures were considered confidential.

We have had, repeatedly in this House, calls for corporate and social responsibility for legislation to be put into place in this House. It went to a vote here previously, on Bill C-300, which was lost, as I recall, by about 12 votes.

Very clearly, when we talk about an environmental assessment and consider the impact of Canadian companies in another country, these things should not be confidential to Canadians. We have expectations of our companies. My presumption is that they are meeting our expectations, so why not provide the evidence? Those that are good companies and performing properly deserve the respect of this House. However, those who are not, deserve the criticism of this House.

Our view of this trade agreement is that it is a very flawed agreement with a very flawed nation. It leaves us wondering how far the Conservative government is prepared to go, when we think of Colombia and Honduras, and who it is willing to do business with.

• (1330)

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I was in Honduras, I learned that one-third of its GDP was attributed to Canadian companies. One of the companies in particular spoke about its respect for human rights and social responsibility. The company felt that while free trade agreements do not deter human rights abuses, human rights can be advanced by these agreements, because when one respects human rights like Canadian companies that are working there, it demonstrates good practices based on human rights.

Gildan itself would like to see its business grow and feels that a free trade agreement is important. If the member is open to hearing from some Canadian companies doing business there and what it means to them, I would like to hear his response to them, because I think it is important to hear from those on the ground trying to encourage human rights, such as he is speaking about. It is important for Honduras to have free trade with countries such as Canada.

• (1335)

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that important question, because there is a different perception between that side of the House and this side as to how that responsibility is completed.

The reality is that there is a belief in many circles that if we have a free trade agreement and raise all boats in that country, so to speak, human rights will float up with them. That is not the case. If we look at places that we have concluded arrangements with, there are still very troubling situations in those countries. So I am not satisfied that this is the case.

In the case of Gildan and its reputation, if we talk to social justice groups, the NGOs who work in that country, we would find a different message coming out about Gildan than what it is reporting.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to continue to push the idea that the NDP's position is to vote

against free trade agreements. The primary reason they vote against agreements such as this is human rights, or at least that seems to be why.

There are countries around the world with whom Canada has a significant amount of trade. If we take that argument as to why New Democrats are voting against the Honduras free trade agreement in particular, can one then expect that they would also oppose any trade with that country? If not and they support trade with that country, how then do they justify having such trade, based on the arguments they are using?

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, I want to take the member back to the very first part of my speech where I said that the fundamental criterion for the NDP is that the proposed partner is one who respects democracy, human rights, adequate environmental and labour standards, and Canadian values. If there are challenges in this regard, is the partner on a positive, direct trajectory toward our goal?

Is the proposed partner's economy of significance or strategic value to Canada?

If we use the same criteria for some of the countries we trade with, and whom we do not have free trade agreements, then I would call into question why we are trading with them.

I realize that the job of the business community is to go about trade as best they can. We want corporate social responsibility here in Canada so that when our companies are trading with other countries, they take into account the human rights record and standards of those particular countries.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today in the House to share how this free trade agreement with Honduras complements our government's Americas strategy.

I would like to speak about how our government's ambitious pro-trade plan and our global markets action plan are creating new opportunities around the world for Canadian exporters.

Our government's global markets action plan, developed in close consultation with Canada's business community, was our strategy to respond to changes in the global economy and to position Canada for long-term prosperity.

The global markets action plan identified 50 priority markets around the world where Canadian opportunities and interests have the greatest potential for growth. This strategy is part of the most ambitious pro-trade plan in Canada's history. It has driven Canadian leadership on the world stage in support of trade, job creation, economic growth, and prosperity for hard-working Canadians and their families.

Government Orders

The results have been impressive. Since 2006, Canada has concluded free trade agreements with 38 countries representing markets with a combined GDP of \$2.6 trillion. We have begun deepening trade and investment ties with the largest, most dynamic, and fastest-growing countries in the world, including India, Japan, South Korea, and the EU.

We have also concluded foreign investment promotion and protection agreements with 22 countries. In fact just last year, we concluded or brought into force 10 foreign investment promotion and protection agreements.

The Americas is a priority market for our government. In fact, our government plans to strengthen our engagement in the region to ensure that our efforts are focused where their impact will be the greatest.

I would like to share with the House a bit more about how free trade with Honduras fits into this Americas strategy. This renewed strategy has three goals: first, to increase Canadian and hemispheric economic opportunities; second, to address security issues and advance freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law through capacity-building; and third, to build a stable foundation for Canada's engagement and increased influence in the hemisphere.

Strengthening economic ties is crucial in today's challenging and uncertain global economic climate. Expanding Canada's trade and investment in the Americas will help protect existing jobs, create new jobs, and increase prosperity for Canadians.

Canada's efforts to increase economic opportunity depend on deepening trade and investment ties by advancing our trade agreements. The Americas is a key region for Canadian bilateral trade initiatives. In fact, 7 of Canada's 10 concluded free trade agreements have been with countries in the Americas.

It is not enough to simply sign agreements. Our government's Americas strategy recognizes the need to make Canadian companies aware of the advantages and opportunities these agreements create. Our government understands that it is through engagement, through developing trade and commercial ties, that Canada can support positive change and growth in the Americas. We favour engagement, not isolation.

Promoting freer trade in the Americas opens new doors and creates new opportunities for Canadian companies, increasing economic benefits for Canadians, including new jobs for hard-working Canadians across the country.

Canada's efforts to liberalize trade with the Americas is working. We are removing barriers to trade and facilitating two-way commerce. The Americas offer great potential. Total trade between countries in the Americas and Canada increased by nearly 40% from 2005 to 2010. In fact, we heard the minister of state talking just now about the fact that one-third of the GDP of Honduras depends on Canada. She experienced that and spoke to locals, businesses, and workers in the Honduras about this when she was there.

To continue to further that kind of opportunity, our government's Americas strategy will focus on intensifying trade promotion and relationship building efforts to ensure that Canadian businesses and

exporters are taking full advantage of new trade opportunities in the future.

By increasing economic opportunity with Honduras, Canada is growing our economic partnership and contributing to long-term prosperity in both of our countries.

• (1340)

The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement and its parallel labour and environmental agreements would promote trade and investment, while creating a winning advantage for Canadian businesses and exporters.

To protect Canadian and commercial investments, the security situation in Central America must be taken into consideration and is a core focus in our renewed Americas strategy.

Honduras has recognized its security challenges and has significantly increased spending on security. It has also committed to continued reform of its security institutions. Honduras continues to build strong security co-operation with the United States and co-operates with its Central American neighbours under the Central American Integration System regional security strategy.

Our government is pleased with the significant efforts that Honduras is making to meet its security challenges and in confronting the public security threats facing Central America.

International relationships are fundamental. Competition for market share is on the rise. Canada must demonstrate that it is a serious and committed partner. Our government is continuing to deliver on an ambitious pro-trade plan that would continue to deliver new opportunities, not only in the Americas but also in dynamic, high-growth markets around the world. Furthermore, while sustaining high-level engagement is essential, Canada would continue to benefit from building relationships more broadly across the private sector government and academia.

All countries in the Americas have a vested interest in prosperity, security, and stability. That is why our government is committed to building and sustaining relationships with our like-minded neighbours.

Through our strong bilateral relationships and the increasing people-to-people ties generated through educational exchanges and increased business links, our links with Honduras are growing stronger every day. Every day we are seeing more opportunities for Canadian businesses and exporters.

The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement is a key component to advance the goals of the Americas strategy.

Government Orders

Sadly, it seems as if the NDP will be voting against this agreement. I know that it has concerns, especially about things like human rights, as well as security issues, which I talked about as well. I would like to say, though, that it is the belief of this government that trade is a key driver of prosperity and that increasing trade could only lift people out of poverty. When isolationism is the ideology practised by a country, more often than not it is extremely difficult for that country to lift itself out of poverty.

We believe strongly that trade agreements, trade with like-minded countries and countries that understand that is the way to go, ultimately do lift people out of poverty, such as the people of Honduras. So the elimination of tariffs would be a positive step in the right direction. The agreement would also support human rights in a very direct way, including labour rights. As long as we are respecting other issues like security and environmental issues, these are the kinds of things that we can do and that have been written into the agreement and the side agreements to ensure that they would not only be beneficial to Canada and Canadian businesses and individuals but also to businesses in Honduras.

I ask all members of the House to support the bill and free trade between Canada and Honduras.

• (1345)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with riveted attention as my colleague spoke on this issue. Let me say at the outset that I do support free trade agreements that benefit both countries and that are based on the principle of fair trade where both countries benefit.

However, I am also reminded that, historically, we have used trade sanctions, South Africa being a prime example. When apartheid was in practice, we used trade sanctions to bring about fundamental change in South Africa. We have used trade sanctions with other countries as well when we have wanted to have an impact upon the human rights practices and policies of those countries.

Is my colleague saying that trade sanctions should never be used as a tool when we are unhappy with the actions of any country?

Mrs. Stella Ambler: I hope, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member for Newton—North Delta is not suggesting in some way that a free trade agreement is the flip side of the coin to sanctions. A free trade agreement simply codifies the business relationship one country has with another.

I hope the hon. member would see the benefits that can come out of a free trade agreement, especially for a country we have concerns about with respect to security, human rights, and labour rights. Free trade agreements are the kinds of things that would help the country and the people of the country get out of poverty, because economic growth drives prosperity and trade creates that prosperity.

This is an important and positive step in the right direction for the protection of human rights. Signing this agreement would only further that goal.

• (1350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it should come as no surprise that the Liberal Party has indicated its support for a free trade agreement with Honduras.

In 2001, a series of free trade agreements were signed between the government here in Ottawa and Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.

In most part, we recognize the benefits of trade for our country.

When I think of Honduras, I think of the pork industry in the province of Manitoba. The pork industry in my province stands to benefit from this agreement. We have seen press releases of that nature.

The Liberal Party is in favour of expanding trade opportunities.

I wonder if the member would acknowledge that a free trade agreement does not happen overnight. The agreement itself might have been signed by this particular Conservative government, but the background work in this particular case took place a number of years ago, in several countries. We started opening discussions in 2001 on free trade with Honduras.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Mr. Speaker, I am just delighted to hear that the member recognizes the benefits of trade.

I find it mildly amusing that he believes that this free trade agreement originated with the Liberal government. After 13 long, dark years in office, the Liberals had signed only 3 free trade agreements, while this Conservative government has reached 38 in much less time.

The member is right that free trade agreements do not happen overnight, but when it comes to creating jobs and opportunities through trade, it is very clear that the Liberals do not have the track record of getting it done, but the Conservative government does.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, based on those last comments by the member who just spoke in response to a question about all the agreements they signed, I cannot help thinking that it is not really hard to sign an agreement when one is giving away the shop. It really is not hard at all, and that is part of the problem with some of these agreements. We support free trade, but we want to negotiate an agreement that is of benefit to Canada. We will be supporting this Bill C-20 and the Honduras agreement, but we do think that, in most agreements, trade negotiations could have been negotiated a lot better for the benefit of Canada.

Bill C-20 would implement the free trade agreement and the related agreements on environmental and labour co-operation entered into between Canada and the Republic of Honduras and signed in this city on November 5 of last year. Both sides of that agreement are very important. I have listened to the criticism from the NDP and, in fact, I understand it. There are concerns, rightfully, about labour violations and about crime that is happening in Honduras, and that has to be uppermost in our minds in terms of the trade agreement we have signed with them.

Statements by Members

I would say to representatives from Honduras that we as Canadians expect improvements on the labour agreement side, and we expect improvements in terms of the abuse of their workers, of violations in terms of citizens of the country's communities that mining endeavours are engaged in, and on goes the list. I will not belabour the point, but we expect Honduras to do much better than what we have seen from its record in the past, and we are putting it on alert. As members of the Liberal Party, we believe we cannot work in isolation. When we sign a trade agreement with labour and environmental agreements on the side, we believe it gives us a better leverage as a county to demand better human rights and social and economic responsibility on the part of the government and the business community in that country with which we have signed an agreement.

Honduras has a relatively small economy. In 2012, Canadian businesses exported only \$39 million in quite a narrow field of goods and materials, which I will get to in a moment; and we imported \$219 million from the Honduran economy. In 2013, those numbers were improved upon somewhat, with \$45 million of products exported to Honduras and \$234 million of imports. We have a deficit trade balance and there is no question about that. We would like to see the numbers the other way, but it is a place to start. I know in the community I used to represent, the farming community, beef and hogs is one of the bigger exports that we think would gain an advantage and access into the Honduran market as a result of this particular agreement.

As the last speaker said, the agreement is one of many, and the last speaker as well—like many of the government speakers have done—talked about Canada positioning itself for long-term prosperity through these trade agreements.

● (1355)

The problem is that signing a trade agreement in and of itself does not mean long-term prosperity. We can look at the records of the countries with which we have signed trade agreements over the years, and we will find that, in many cases where we have had a surplus going into a trade agreement, we have found ourselves in a deficit trading situation over time.

Why is that? Why are other countries doing better under trade agreements after they sign with us than they were doing before? That is what we have to examine. What other things do we have to do within the country to ensure we take advantage of these trade agreements?

We should not just sign them, as the government is doing. It is not hard to sign an agreement, as we have seen with the CETA agreement under the current Prime Minister. He needed one because of the political domestic situation in his country. He basically pleaded to get agreement, sold out several industries in Canada, including dairy and the procurement for municipalities, and added \$900 million to \$1.9 billion to the drug costs in this country. That is the kind of agreement he signed because he pleaded to get one, rather than negotiating from a position of strength.

I will come back after question period to talk about what we have to do to make trade agreements work for us, rather than have the terrible record we have in this country. Over the last 62 months, 48 were in a trade deficit with the Conservative government in charge.

It is the first government in 30 years that has had an annual trade deficit. It is doing poorly in terms of the real facts.

Just negotiating an agreement is not the only answer.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights correctly observes that recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation for freedom, justice, and peace in the world. Laws which falsely condemn as non-human anyone who is in fact a human being are savage and inhumane in their denial of the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of the victims of such laws.

That is why I have introduced Motion No. 476, calling on the House to affirm that every Canadian law must be interpreted in a manner which recognizes the equal worth and dignity of everyone who is a human being. If even one member of the House refuses to consent to this essential principle of democratic governance, it will be a dark and dangerous day for Canada.

* * *

● (1400)

[Translation]

NATIONAL ORAL HEALTH MONTH

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, April is National Oral Health Month.

A big part of the celebration will take place during National Dental Hygienists Week, which takes place from April 6 to 12. The theme, “Oral Health for Total Health”, reminds us that taking care of our mouth, teeth and gums has a positive impact on other aspects of our lives.

[English]

Dental hygienists are valuable partners in prevention. They represent the sixth largest registered health profession in Canada. Whether calming down toddlers or providing care to adults with periodontal disease, the dental hygienist is a trained professional whose goal is people's happy healthy smiles for life.

[Translation]

Let us celebrate National Dental Hygienists Week by setting new dental health goals, starting with six simple steps: brush, floss, use an oral rinse, eat a healthy diet, eliminate tobacco use and see a dentist regularly.

*Statements by Members**[English]***PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES**

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to recognize the successes of Oakville Paralympian Greg Westlake for leading Canada's sledge hockey team to bronze medal success at the Sochi Paralympics.

Greg lost both of his legs at 18 months of age but never seemed to recognize what others call a physical disability, nor did it deter him from becoming a superb athlete or developing a love for Canada's favourite sport. Greg's popularity in Oakville came with a fiercely competitive spirit. The people of Oakville and Canada have borne witness to Greg's successes with joy over the years, including his team's gold win in the Torino Paralympics, in 2006, and his charity work as ambassador for sledge hockey.

Canada's Paralympians exemplify the qualities that Canadians strive for: courage, tenacity, supportive teamwork, and achieving success by never giving up. Their leadership and example inspire not only Canadian youth and Canadians with disabilities, but all Canadians in every area of endeavour.

Congratulations to Greg and his fellow Paralympians.

* * *

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 65 years ago today, Newfoundland and Labrador carved out one of the most significant parts of its history by becoming a province of Canada. At one minute after midnight, on March 31, 1949, Newfoundland and Labrador became the tenth province to join Confederation, or, as we affectionately say, Canada joined Newfoundland and Labrador.

This date in Newfoundland and Labrador history saw the end of three years of intense and emotional debate, a debate inscribed in the history books of Newfoundland and Labrador and which still continues today in many kitchens and living rooms in my province. At the time, residents voted to join Confederation and made a very emotional decision to end their status as the oldest colony. My parents voted for the terms of union, and the terms of union that followed have influenced the relationship we share in Confederation and the way we are governed.

While we can stand at any time to debate the management of the fisheries affecting the province, the transportation link, or its fair share of natural resources, today we stand as proud Canadians and proud Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. As Joey Smallwood believed, we also believe that Confederation was the beginning of a revolution in Newfoundland and Labrador. We continue to work hard to secure our place in Canada.

* * *

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just returned from Geneva where I attended the UN Human Rights Council. Canada supported the resolution that called on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to undertake a comprehensive investigation into the alleged serious violations of human rights, by both parties in Sri Lanka, from 2002 to 2009. This

resolution is a victory for all Sri Lankans who suffered through the terrible civil war.

It must be noted that this government designated the Tamil Tigers as a terrorist organization.

This is an historic resolution, which the government of Sri Lanka can seize, and not only work toward reconciliation but a sustainable prosperity and security for all Sri Lankans.

* * *

● (1405)

*[Translation]***JUNO AWARDS**

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher was in Winnipeg this weekend to celebrate the best of Canadian music at the Junos.

[English]

The proud people of Winnipeg were all about music last week, celebrating en masse how music brings culture to life and makes it travel the world.

Our music thrives from coast to coast, from Quebec City's Karim Ouellet and Burlington's own Walk Off the Earth, to Calgary's Tegan and Sara, the multi-talented and awarded Serena Ryder, and Métis band, A Tribe Called Red. Music in Canada is prolific, diverse, and alive.

I want to congratulate the winners of the Allan Waters Humanitarian Award, iconic couple Raine Maida and Chantal Kreviazuk, for all the work they have done with War Child Canada.

Times are changing for musicians as the digital world changes the way we access music. It is up to us as parliamentarians to make sure Canadian music shines and remains a strong cultural industry.

* * *

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take time to recognize a very special occasion in Canadian history, the 65th anniversary of Newfoundland and Labrador joining the Confederation of Canada.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have made tremendous contributions to Canada, in every measurable way and in every field of endeavour. Newfoundland and Labrador leads the country in economic growth. It is a have province and ranked among the best places to do business in North America.

Newfoundland and Labrador's strong economy, proud heritage, and rich culture are matched only by its exceptional natural beauty.

Without Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada would not be what it is today, the greatest country in the world.

On behalf of all members of the House, we wish to congratulate the people of Newfoundland and Labrador on the 65th anniversary of joining Canada.

*Statements by Members***JUNO AWARDS**

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg welcomed the Canadian music industry with open arms last week, as the 2014 Juno Awards rocked Manitoba's capital.

Juno week showcased the exceptional talents of Canadian singers, songwriters, composers, musicians, entrepreneurs, and other music professionals, and came to an exciting end last night with the awards broadcast.

I would like to share a couple of interesting facts with my hon. colleagues. Canada is the world's third-largest exporter of musical talent, and the Canadian music industry generates close to \$3 billion a year in economic activity.

I am proud that our government values the incredible artistic talent we have in this great country and that we recognize the critical importance of the Canadian music industry. In fact, budget 2014 includes permanent funding for the Canada Music Fund, demonstrating our commitment to a thriving Canadian music industry.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of this year's nominees and award winners. They have certainly made Canada and all of us very proud.

* * *

[Translation]

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the partial renewal of HPS funding was announced in budget 2013-14. Several months later, the Minister of Employment and Social Development still had not announced the new eligibility criteria. The negotiations planned with the provinces and communities had to wait. As a result of this incompetence, last Wednesday I received a call from British Columbia to inform me that some groups had to lay off staff because the tendering process had been delayed. The problem is that people who are already in an extremely tough situation are going to see their services cut. Today, at the end of the day, some groups will be without service.

Last Friday, I was very proud that a team of my NDP colleagues took part in the Hockey Helps the Homeless tournament to raise money for shelters in the Montreal area. Such tournaments are necessary because not enough money is being invested in fighting homelessness. The Conservatives need to do what it takes to make the money available.

Migwetch!

* * *

[English]

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday morning chaos erupted at the Brampton courthouse, on Hurontario Street.

After showing up to do his job, just like any other day during his 29-year career working to keep the people of Peel Region safe, Constable Mike Klarenbeek found himself confronted with an armed

gunman. He pursued the individual and was shot in the stomach. Thankfully, he is recovering in hospital and is well on his way to recovery.

I want to let Constable Klarenbeek and his family know that our thoughts and prayers are with him as he recovers.

I want to thank all law enforcement officers for the good work that they do each and every day protecting Canadians.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

QUEBEC CASSOULET APPRECIATION SOCIETY

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last October, I had the honour of being inducted into the Confrérie du cassoulet du Québec, or the Quebec cassoulet appreciation society, by grand master and chef Daniel Pachon and André Michel from the Maison amérindienne in Mont-Saint-Hilaire.

The society was created as a result of a collaborative effort between Mr. Pachon and Mr. Michel, and a number of public figures in my riding have been inducted, including Jean-Pierre Charbonneau, Jean-François Mercier, Philippe Hamelin and Gilles Plante, just to name a few.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank André Michel and Chantal Millette for the warm welcome they always extend to me, even though this time it involved a roast with stories provided by my mother, among others. I would also like to keep my promise and sing the praises of grand master Daniel Pachon's cassoulet here in the House. I had never tried cassoulet before becoming an MP, but this culinary talent introduced me to the dish, and I love it.

I invite all my colleagues to try Mr. Pachon's cassoulet at his restaurant in Jonquière or, better yet, at the Maison amérindienne in Mont-Saint-Hilaire at the next induction, which will likely take place at the end of this year.

Here's to the Confrérie du cassoulet du Québec.

* * *

[English]

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend we saw first-hand how the leader of the Liberal Party chooses to speak to Canadians.

At a charity event on Saturday evening, the Liberal leader said to the crowd, and I quote: "I'm going to tell you, there's no experience like stepping into this ring and measuring yourself.... your name, your fortune, your intelligence, your beauty—none of that [then he dropped the f-bomb to the people attending] matters".

This type of language is extremely unbecoming of a young man who one day wishes to be prime minister. It is too bad that his decision to speak candidly resulted in profanity instead of praise for the event organizers who raise money for cancer research. We just cannot make this stuff up.

Oral Questions

I cannot say this enough: the Liberal leader clearly lacks the judgment, the decorum, and the maturity to be prime minister of this country.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 1967, Liberal Prime Minister Pearson enacted national medicare. In 1984, Liberal Prime Minister Trudeau strengthened it with the Canada Health Act. In 2004, Liberal Prime Minister Martin and the premiers negotiated a 10-year accord establishing a new federal-provincial collaboration to enable structural changes needed to sustain medicare. Today, March 31, 2014, that health accord ends and marks the unravelling of medicare.

It began in 2006, when the current Conservative Prime Minister abandoned the elements of the health accord, refused to meet with premiers on health care, and unilaterally amended the funding formula for health transfers.

On April 1, funding will revert to a per-capita formula for health transfers, ignoring regional demographics, the concept of equalization, and relegating a federal leadership role in health care to that of a cheque writer, with no insight, no accountability, and no commitment to the collaborative changes needed to ensure that all—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wild Rose.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has delivered historic tax relief for all Canadians. We have cut taxes over 160 times. Because of this tax relief, a typical family of four will save nearly \$3,400 in taxes in 2014.

Statistics Canada has confirmed that middle-income families are better off today under our Conservative government than under the previous Liberal government. In fact, the net worth of families is up over 44% from 2005.

Unfortunately, the Liberal leader has no idea what it is like to be middle class. Middle-class families do not live pampered lifestyles while fleecing charities for thousands of dollars in speaking fees. Middle-class families do not promote easier access to illegal drugs for children or blurt out obscene remarks at charity events. Middle-class families know that budgets do not magically balance themselves.

Despite the antics of the Liberal leader, Canadians can rest assured that this government will continue to look out for the interests of middle-income families, and all Canadians.

* * *

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last night the Conservative Party pulled the plug on Dimitri Soudas, the right-hand man of the Prime Minister. He was bounced after firing a popular Conservative organizer, who blew the whistle on Dimitri interfering with the local ridings. Of course, this is just the latest Prime Ministerial appointment to go south.

The Prime Minister blew the Supreme Court appointment, and his chief of staff is facing the cops. The Conservative brand is now synonymous with Duffy, Wallin, Brazeau, and Carson. Oh, and he rewarded bagman Irving Gerstein, a law-breaker, with a plum appointment.

Speaking of which, here is Gerstein on Soudas: "...I am writing to direct your full attention to the Confidential Memo I received today from Dimitri Soudas, the dynamic...Director of the Conservative Party hand-picked by Prime Minister...". Yes, hand-picked to handle a pink slip.

What is going on with the Prime Minister's judgment when yet another insider goes down to the eve of destruction?

* * *

● (1415)

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today Stats Canada announced that Canada's GDP grew faster than expected in January: 0.5%. This builds on the 10 consecutive quarters of economic growth under the strong leadership of the Prime Minister. Indeed, since the depth of the global recession, Canada has created over one million new jobs, the best record in the G7.

We are on track to balance the budget in 2015, and we have done it while keeping taxes low. We know that good economic management requires a strong leader, tough decisions, and sound judgment.

Unfortunately, the Liberal leader has a total lack of judgment. No tough choices and no discipline is required when one is the Liberal leader. He is more concerned about dropping obscenities at charity events and making it easier to smoke marijuana.

Canadians can rest assured that we will take no lessons from a Liberal leader who is in way over his head. Our Conservative government continues to focus on job creation, economic growth, and long-term prosperity for all Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today marks the last day of Canada's health accord and the start of \$36 billion in Conservative cuts to Canada's health care system.

Oral Questions

The Health Council of Canada, the only agency tracking government performance on health care, will be shut down today. There will be less accountability for health spending for veterans, first nations, and the commitments in the health accord. How will slashing accountability and cutting federal investments improve health care for Canadians?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear that the current framework for funding is not expiring. It continues on with a 6% escalator until 2017, and after 2017, of course, its tied to economic growth, with a guarantee of a 3% escalator. That means that the Government of Canada will continue to provide record transfers for health care to the provinces and territories.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Really, Mr. Speaker? Let us get serious. Let us get past the doublespeak.

Eight years in power and Conservatives have failed on every single count. They failed to reduce wait times, failed to live up to their commitments on health care transfers, and failed on key commitments in the accord on things like electronic health records, pharmacare, home care, and the list goes on and on.

When will the government stop misleading Canadians, stop avoiding accountability, and start working with the provinces to build a strong, stable, and accessible public health care system in this country?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the member that of course we do work closely with the provinces and territories.

In terms of the current federal framework that is in place with the provinces and territories for funding for health care, it continues in its current form, which is record levels of funding for transfers to the provinces and territories. After 2017, it is tied to economic growth, which we think is a sustainable formula. It is important for the provinces and territories.

I can assure the member that I have been the Minister of Health now for ten months, and not one provincial health minister has asked me to renew the health accord in its current form. What they have asked for is funding predictability, and we have given them that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the provinces and territories do not believe the Conservative rhetoric, and Canadians do not either.

The Conservatives' unilateral cuts will create a \$36 billion hole in the provinces' budgets over the next 10 years. That is \$36 billion less to hire doctors and nurses or to invest in our clinics, CLSCs and drug purchasing programs.

Can the minister tell us how the changes to the health funding formula will improve health care for Canadians?

• (1420)

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can reassure the member, and I would encourage her to look at the information that comes out of the Canadian Institute for Health Information, that we now have record numbers of physicians. That

will definitely help Canadians across the country to find doctors in their local communities. That is something we have worked very hard with the provinces and territories on and that we are proud of.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is not only ignoring the provinces' health care needs, but it is also ignoring municipalities.

The new building Canada fund will no longer allow municipalities to fund their local roads and sport and recreation infrastructure projects. The new condition for assessing the feasibility of projects in public-private partnership could mean further delays. Plus, the new building Canada fund does not allocate any money to municipalities.

Why is the minister getting in the way of the municipalities that want to develop their infrastructure?

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, my colleague is misleading people by deliberately neglecting to mention the building Canada plan, one of the four components of the plan.

The building Canada plan represents \$53 billion over 10 years. It is the longest and most significant plan in the country's history. Municipalities will directly receive 71% for infrastructure. As for the component she mentioned, we have set aside \$1 billion for municipalities with 100,000 people or less.

[*English*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the number the minister is looking for is \$5.8 billion. That is \$5.8 billion for infrastructure less for local communities over the next five years, the minister's \$5.8 billion broken promise.

Canadians across the country are stuck in gridlock and are travelling on crumbling infrastructure. As one of Canada's key infrastructure funds expires today, will the minister reverse course, honour his promises to our cities and communities, and give them what they need?

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, never in Canadian history has a government supported municipalities as much as ours has. With the gas tax fund, municipalities already have 100% of this part of the component.

Oral Questions

We respect jurisdictions. She probably does not care about provinces and territories, but to respect provinces and territories, we continue to work with them. For the component for PTs, we will work with them.

* * *

PENSIONS

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian middle-class families are worried about retirement. Recently a Department of Finance Canada report prepared for the minister states:

In the long run, expanding the CPP would bring economic benefits. Higher savings will lead to higher income in the future and higher consumption possibilities for seniors.

Will the minister listen to his own department's advice and research? Will he listen to the provinces, and will he finally work with the provincial governments to strengthen CPP for Canadian families?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the global economic recovery still very fragile, we need to be mindful not to impose costs on Canadians that would hurt the workers, certainly hurt the employers, and definitely threaten the recovery.

Canadians cannot afford to pay higher CPP payroll taxes. That is why we have brought forward pension income splitting for seniors, pooled registered pension plans, and tax free savings accounts. That is what Canadians are asking for to help them in their retirement years.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians cannot afford inaction and indifference from the Conservative government.

When the provinces proposed higher CPP premiums to improve Canadian pension incomes, Conservatives called it a job-killing payroll tax, but when the Conservatives keep EI premiums artificially high just to pad their books to create a phony pre-election surplus, it is okay. It is fair game.

Why are higher payroll premiums okay if they help Conservative politics but not okay if they help Canadian pensioners?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from the Liberal Party, which votes against seniors every time in protecting their hard-earned dollars. It even voted against pension income splitting, but we are not surprised. The Liberal leader thinks that budgets magically balance themselves. He has no idea what it costs and what it is like to be in the middle class.

Despite the Liberal leader, we continue to take action to put more money back into the pockets of Canadians, back into the pockets of seniors, retirees, and all Canadians.

* * *

• (1425)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just hours before build Canada infrastructure funding is supposed to start, the

government finally has something on its website. What does it say for the most part? “Go talk to the provinces”.

It is totally arbitrary. Certain projects are eliminated. Funding possibilities are reduced, and the overall budget is cut by \$1.4 billion per year. It is 87% gone.

The Conservatives can claim that this is a silk purse, but municipalities know a sow's ear when they see one. What good is an application when there is no real funding until 2019?

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, if the former minister of finance does not know how government finances work, we will be happy to talk with him.

We just launched the program. We will continue to work with four different—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Infrastructure still has the floor.

Hon. Denis Lebel: Mr. Speaker, I have heard “balance the budget” and “the budget will balance by itself”. That is what I have heard.

We will continue to work with our partners. We respect jurisdictions. There are four different components to the plan. One is with the provinces and territories, and we will respect that.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives managed to cram 40 laws into their latest monster budget bill. There are 40 changes to 40 laws. There are 350 deeply flawed pages, fully hidden from Canadians and never once mentioned in the budget.

Conservatives have even killed the small business hiring tax credit and eliminated this practical incentive to hire more workers. Conservatives love rhetoric about economic growth—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley is still asking a question. There will be an opportunity to answer it, but we will let him put the question first.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the truth hurts, but it will set them free one day.

Conservatives love rhetoric about economic growth and job creation, but their omnibus bills do the exact opposite. Three hundred thousand more Canadians are still out of work since before the recession, so why are the Conservatives killing this popular tax credit that helps small businesses hire more employees?

Oral Questions

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada leads the G7, with more than one million jobs created since the global economic recession, but we are not immune to the challenges beyond our borders. That is why our government supports economic growth and job creation while keeping taxes low and returning to a balanced budget by 2015.

What the member opposite did not mention is that we had excellent growth in January of 0.5%, a lot higher than forecast. This is part of the success that our economic action plan—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after terrible numbers in the GDP in December, I guess cherry-picking is what we get from the finance minister for the Conservative Party.

The budget should be a place for practical measures to increase job creation, but not with the Conservatives. With them it is a kitchen sink of nasty Conservative schemes they want to keep hidden from Canadians.

The government decided to sell out Canadians and their private banking information to the IRS. The CRA will hand over personal financial information on over a million dual citizens to the U.S. government.

Why did the Conservatives bury this deeply unpopular measure in their monster omnibus budget bill?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, reading off the latest economic data is not cherry-picking. When there is good news, it is considered bad news by the opposition.

FATCA has raised a number of concerns in Canada. The agreement addresses these concerns by relying on the existing framework under the Canada-U.S. tax treaty. The CRA will not assist the IRS in collecting U.S. taxes, and no new taxes will be imposed. In our negotiations, we obtained a number of concessions, including exempting certain accounts, like RRSPs, RDSPs, and TFSAs from—

• (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Victoria.

* * *

PENSIONS

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for months the Conservatives have refused to hear any demands from the provinces on expanding the Canada pension plan, saying it would cost us tens of thousands of jobs. The thing is, Finance Canada's own report on the CPP says:

In the long run, expanding the CPP would bring economic benefits. Higher savings will lead to higher incomes in the future and higher consumption possibilities for seniors"

Why did the Conservatives mislead Canadians about the positive impacts of expanding the CPP?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the global economic recovery still fragile, we need to be very mindful not to impose costs on workers and also on employers that could threaten the economy.

The NDP plan to raise the CPP payroll tax could force a family to pay as much as \$2,600 more per year in taxes. While our economy is still fragile, the NDP's irresponsible plan could kill up to 70,000 jobs. Those members should know that it is difficult for someone to have a retirement plan for tomorrow if they do not have a job today.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives keep claiming that expansion of the CPP and the QPP could result in the loss of 70,000 jobs. However, the finance department's fall 2013 report contradicts this utterly partisan Conservative claim.

Not only is the job loss figure wrong, but the report suggests that the positive effects on the economy would for the most part offset the impact of an increase in premiums. Expanding public pension plans is a good thing for the economy. It is the right thing to do for the economy.

Why are the Conservatives ignoring the provinces' needs as well as expert advice?

[English]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite the New Democratic Party, we continue to stand up for lower taxes, job creation, and economic growth for all Canadians.

Let me quote Laura Jones, the executive vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who said:

An increase in the CPP tax takes more money out of all employees' and employers' pockets. ... Worse still, small businesses report that a mandatory CPP increase would force many to lower wages and even reduce their workforce.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives once again tried to pull a fast one with Friday's budget bill.

They put the replacement of the Champlain Bridge in the bill and precluded any kind of consultation on their toll system. It is obvious that the Conservatives are afraid to meet with the people of the south shore.

Why did the minister put in place a system that allows the Conservatives to impose a toll without any consultation?

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, on October 5, 2011, when we made the announcement about the new bridge over the St. Lawrence, we announced that a toll would be charged as part of a public-private partnership and that public transit would use the new bridge.

Nothing has changed. This is certainly no surprise for my colleague. The New Democrats had already said that they would be prepared to consider a toll.

Oral Questions

[English]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the former head of B.C. Elections has been delivering stark warnings about the minister's unfair election act changes and his constant misquoting of Mr. Neufeld's report. Harry Neufeld says the bill either needs to be amended or it needs to be killed altogether.

This is about people's basic right to vote, yet that minister simply will not listen, and he continues, like a broken record, to misquote statistics and mislead Canadians.

How does he expect Canadians to trust this bill when they cannot even trust his facts?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we think it is entirely reasonable that when people show up to vote, they present some ID to prove who they are. That is a basic necessity if we are going to prevent people from voting more than once, voting in a riding where they do not live, or voting when they are ineligible to cast a ballot at all.

When posed the question, "Do you think you should present some ID when you arrive to cast your ballot?", the average Canadian would say, "That sounds reasonable to me."

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is almost as though the minister thinks that if he keeps misquoting Mr. Neufeld, somebody will start to believe him, but nobody is fooled. When pushed on his—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

•(1435)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain still has the floor.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, when pushed on his very selective interpretation of the report, the minister eventually admitted he disagreed with Neufeld's recommendations, yet he continues to rely on the very same report he disagrees with.

When will he stop using misleading evidence to justify unfair changes that could disenfranchise seniors, aboriginals, and young Canadians?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we live in a democracy. Canadians are entitled to disagree with the recommendations of one person.

At the same time, I have quoted the facts accurately. As well, the fact is that it is reasonable to ask people to present some ID when they show up to vote. In Canada, we do not require people to use photo ID or even government-issued ID when they show up to vote. They can use anything from a utility bill to a student ID card, and there are a total of 39 options to identify who they are. We think that is pretty reasonable.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, listening to the Minister of State for Democratic Reform trying to defend the indefensible, one would think that hordes of fraudsters are getting ready to rig the next election.

Basically, the minister is relying on a report by elections expert Harry Neufeld, who believes that the minister has misinterpreted his report and is reading selectively from it and, in fact, that the Conservatives are simply trying to stack the deck in their favour.

Why did the minister resort to inventing support and twisting Harry Neufeld's words to try to sell his electoral reform?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have always said that I did not agree with Mr. Neufeld's recommendations. In a democracy, people are entitled to disagree when it comes to recommendations.

We believe it is reasonable to have to present a piece of ID in order to vote in Canada, so that elections officials can know who we are and where we live. That is a reasonable requirement and what is required under the fair elections act.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for the minister, when it comes to credibility, he is not in the same class as Mr. Neufeld, Mr. Mayrand and Mr. Kingsley. I would even go so far as to say that he is a featherweight.

Experts and commentators everywhere are against this reform: academics, editorialists, the current and former chief electoral officers, and international experts. That explains why the minister resorted to basing his arguments on little snippets of the Neufeld report, twisting the facts and misrepresenting the report. His reform could disenfranchise 520,000 voters.

Why is the minister so determined to deny the facts?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, when she talks about 500,000 voters, she is assuming that every person who used a voter information card had no other option. The vast majority of Canadians did not even have the right to use voter information cards as proof of identity during the last election.

We believe it is reasonable to let Canadians choose one of 39 pieces of identification to prove their identity when they go to vote. I think that is reasonable.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the plan to sell Nordion shows the lack of transparency in the Investment Canada Act review process. Canadians who rely on medical isotopes hope that this agreement will be approved only if it is in their best interest.

Will the minister add to this government's incompetence or will he publicly announce the criteria on which he will base his decision?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to matters involving international investment, there will always be a process that is open to new ideas for our medical system and for the good of Canadians.

*Oral Questions***SEARCH AND RESCUE**

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is warning of escalating risks to global human security.

Rather than doing its part to fight climate change, the government's track record is clear: take credit for provincial actions, mock all proposals to make polluters pay, cut Environment Canada's climate change and clean air budget massively, heckle from across the aisle, and cheat future Canadians of their right to climate security.

When there is such an urgent need for real action, why do the Conservatives mock the issue, and why is the minister completely missing in action?

• (1440)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this question is coming from an individual who received a fossil award when she was environment minister for B.C.

Our government is committed to protecting the environment while keeping the Canadian economy strong. Since 2006, our government has invested significant funds in more efficient technologies, better infrastructure and adaptation, and clean energy. We have also taken action on two of the largest sources of emission in this country, namely the transportation and electricity generation sectors. In fact, in the first 21 years of our coal regulations, we expect a cumulative reduction in greenhouse gas emissions equal to removing 2.6 million vehicles from the road.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I took the liberty of notifying the minister that I would be asking a question on the IPCC report in order to relieve her of the burden of reading from her talking points.

In light of the decimation of her budget and the even greater decimation of the climate change file, how does the minister and the Government of Canada respond to the IPCC report? It says:

Human interference with the climate system is occurring, and climate change poses risks for human and natural systems.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of the Environment has the floor, and I would like to hear the answer.

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, our government is taking action on climate change.

We are a founding member of, and a major financial contributor to, an international coalition taking action to reduce pollutants such as black carbon and methane. We have also made addressing these pollutants a priority under Canada's chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

We have contributed \$1.2 billion in developing countries so that they can reduce emissions. For example, we are making investments in projects in Kenya, Mexico, Colombia, and Chile to help them adapt to climate change and strengthen their economies.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, new fixed-wing search and rescue capability is desperately needed now to save lives off our coast, especially in British Columbia and the north, yet because of continued Conservative mismanagement in procurement, six whole years have been wasted. This restart is on top of the minister's decision to push off more than \$3 billion in procurement spending until after the next election.

These planes have been promised for more than a decade. Can the minister explain what it will take to make these desperately needed planes a priority for the government?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are making our men and women in uniform and our armed forces a priority of this government. There have been a number of huge successes in the area of procurement: the C-17 Globemasters; Hercules; medium-support vehicles; Leopard tanks. We are making a commitment to our armed forces to get them the very best equipment, and that will continue, under this government.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's half-answers are not enough. The acquisition of a new fleet of search and rescue planes has been a fiasco under both the Liberals and the Conservatives. All of these delays have driven up costs and forced search and rescue teams to work with aging and failing equipment.

It does not make sense to ignore the six years of research done by the Department of National Defence. We want clear answers.

When will we finally get a new fleet of search and rescue planes?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to give the hon. member clear responses and clear direction. We have increased defence spending over 27%. It is unprecedented the commitment that this government has made. Yes, we too take all of these matters seriously. They have been a priority of this government, and this will continue.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, scientists from more than 100 countries contributed to the report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which paints a bleak picture of the situation in Canada and throughout the rest of the world. Arctic temperatures are increasing four times faster than the global average, and all people on all continents will be affected by climate change.

Speaking of fossils, why does the minister refuse to regulate the oil and gas industry?

• (1445)

[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, our government is a world leader when it comes to addressing climate change. We continue to work with the provinces on reducing emissions from the oil and gas sector. It is premature to comment further on any future regulations, but what I can tell members is that thanks to our actions, we have seen significant reductions in greenhouse gas, unlike the Liberal government which increased greenhouse emissions by 130 megatonnes.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Is that a fact, Mr. Speaker? The fact is that Canada now ranks dead last among OECD countries when it comes to climate change. From pulling out of the Kyoto accord, to sabotaging international climate talks, to appointing a minister who doubts the climate science, the Conservatives' dismal record on climate change speaks for itself.

The IPCC report is clear. Canadians are already dealing with the stark realities of climate change, and it is only going to get worse.

When will the government drop the rhetoric and actually act on fighting climate change?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2006, we have invested more than \$10 billion in green infrastructure, energy efficiency, adaptation, clean technology, and cleaner fuels. Thanks to our actions, carbon emissions will go down by close to 130 megatonnes from what they would have been under the Liberals. We are accomplishing this without the Liberal and NDP carbon tax.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians rely on our country's public health system to treat themselves and their families. That is why my constituents are so pleased to see our historic support to the provinces and territories in health care and innovation.

This is in stark contrast to the Liberal policy of balancing budgets at the expense of health care transfers.

Would the Minister of Health please update the House on how our government is delivering on health care?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, our government is delivering the highest health transfer dollars in Canadian history, to provinces and territories. This record funding will reach \$40 billion by the end of the decade, and provinces would have the stability and predictability of funding that they need.

However, and I have said this before in the House, more money is not the only answer here to fix the inefficiencies in our health system. What we have learned in the past 10 years is that innovation really is the key. We know that innovation is making a difference and we will build upon that success by creating a wise persons' panel to examine, not only the state of health innovation, but also ensure that our federal actions create a more innovative health system.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs proposed amendments to create new mandatory service agreements. Today, the CEO of CN said that other key players in the supply chain had to be held to account for their performance. The Conservatives had a chance to take action six months ago, but they chose to reject the NDP's call to implement service level agreements.

Will the government finally listen to farmers and agree to these amendments?

[English]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows there will be full hearings at the SCAAF committee all this week, starting today, where I and the Minister of Transport will appear. A lot of the witnesses will be bringing forward different ideas. I think it is too soon to prejudge what form any of those amendments should take or what they will be. We are there to listen and we are there to put forward the best foot that we can.

Oral Questions

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the farmers, as we know, are getting frustrated across the prairie provinces because of the minister's failure to do his homework. He rammed through changes to the Canadian Wheat Board, calling it "marketing freedom". They are free to lose \$140 million a week is exactly what farmers are free to do now, and there is chaos throughout the system. Even the CEO of CN says that the lack of coordination across the supply chain is one of the biggest causes of the grain transportation crisis, and the minister is still trying to speed through a new bill that even his Conservative colleagues are saying needs to be amended.

Will the minister now do the right thing and fix this bill?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the CEO of CN runs down his list of excuses, I would be appreciative if the member opposite would actually listen to all the witnesses that will be coming before the SCAAF committee this coming week, and look at the reasoned positions that a lot of them will put forward. I have had the opportunity to meet with all of the bulk shippers in western Canada. They all tell the same story. They are under capacity. They are a lot of tonnage and bushels behind, including Canpotex, which is a quasi-single desk and is several hundred thousand tonnes of potash behind.

The answer is not a single desk. The answer is increased capacity and increased awareness of all sectors in that supply chain.

* * *

● (1450)

CANADA POST

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): With another example of the government failing to deliver for Canadians, Mr. Speaker, starting today small and medium-size businesses will pay between 35% and 59% more to send mail. An individual stamp now costs \$1. Once again, the Conservatives are making it harder to get by.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates that 98% of small and medium-size businesses will be affected. What does the government have to say to those whose costs just got so dramatically higher overnight?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that there are one billion fewer pieces of mail being delivered in Canada since 2006. Along with that, of course, comes the reality that the revenues are not exceeding what the expenses are and, in fact, it is estimated that it is going to cost \$1 billion per year to Canadian taxpayers.

Canada Post has a five-point plan. That five-point plan includes the increase in postal rate stamps today, and we support Canada Post on its path forward to return to self-sufficiency.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are so incompetent that they are not even capable of delivering the mail to people anymore. That makes no sense. People want the government to improve services, not cut them.

With the increased cost of a stamp, we will now be paying 35% to 59% more to send a letter. Once again, this measure will hurt the

least fortunate and small businesses. Meanwhile, the 23 Canada Post executives are pocketing \$20 million a year.

Instead of letting their buddies gut our postal service and take money from taxpayers' pockets, why do the Conservatives not try to find new revenue streams for this public service to secure its future?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I may have missed it in translation, but I am sure the hon. member understands that the government does not actually deliver the mail. In fact, it is his buddies at CUPW that deliver the mail.

What I would say to what he indicated is this. In the greater good, we want to ensure that the taxpayer is not on the hook for the ongoing potential losses at Canada Post as a result of the delivery of mail not happening at the rate that it used to in terms of letters being sent. It has a five-point plan. It has recognized the problem. The government recognizes the problem. It is time to move on and implement this plan.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the century since Robert Borden established our social covenant with brave Canadians who risk their lives in the service of our country, it has been the job of the government to hold up its end of that deal. Yet veterans seeking fairness in a B.C. courtroom are told by government lawyers that this social covenant was only a political statement. Imagine.

The minister finally acknowledged that a social covenant and sacred obligation does exist. Does the minister actually believe in the social covenant and will he drop his defence of the suit, or his new-found faith in our sacred obligation just a political statement only intended to get votes?

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 19, the minister appeared at the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, where he stated on the record his support for the social contract:

The work our government does each day has been and can be called many things: duty, responsibility, commitment, social contract, obligation, sacred or not, or covenant. Colleagues, I believe it is all of those things.

This is nothing new. I call on the member and his party to stop playing partisan games and get onboard.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2006, Conservatives abandoned the collaborative goals of the 2004 health accord and began the erosion of medicare. The Prime Minister has refused to meet with the premiers on health, despite their requests. Instead, he unilaterally imposed a new per capita funding for health, ignored regional demographics, and left smaller provinces without the ability to provide equal access to care.

Could the Prime Minister assure us that he would meet with the premiers and reverse this damaging trend that threatens the very essence of the Canada Health Act?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can reassure the member that increasing funding and transfers to the provinces by 50% for health care does not in any way violate the Canada Health Act. In fact, it provides the provinces and territories with the predictable and sustainable funding for the next decade to make sure that they can make the tough decisions, within their own jurisdiction, for health delivery.

* * *

• (1455)

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the seventh and final event held by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, mandated to honour all those affected by the Indian residential schools system, just drew to a close in Edmonton. At the same time we learned that the Conservatives are going to eliminate the Indian residential schools resolution health support program—formerly the mental health support program—for former residential school students. This will do nothing for reconciliation.

How can the Conservatives abandon the survivors who continue to suffer from the trauma they experienced because of the Canadian government's actions?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I recently stated, the government continues to honour its obligations under the agreement. Health Canada will continue to offer and provide services to first nations across Canada.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is odd that the Minister of Health could not respond.

[English]

The Prime Minister promised honest reconciliation as far as the historic 2008 residential school apology, but real reconciliation means providing adequate health support for survivors who come forward and tell their stories, not leaving them out in the cold. How insensitive can the government be?

It took great strength and courage for survivors to come forward and participate in truth and reconciliation. Will the government do the right thing, reverse its decision, and maintain funding to the resolution health support program in order to meet the needs of survivors?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can reassure the member that the federal government is very committed to the work that we do with first nations. In fact, beyond the \$40 billion that we are transferring to the provinces for health care, in addition we provide another \$2.4 billion annually on top of this, toward programs and services aimed specifically at improving aboriginal health, including primary care nursing in 76 remote communities and, of course, investing \$48 million to improve the quality of health services in aboriginal communities.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government has made unprecedented investments toward infrastructure to support our provincial, territorial, and municipal partners with their priorities.

Could the minister update the House on the important achievement made last Friday on our infrastructure funding?

[Translation]

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, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his work on this issue. We promised that the new building Canada plan would be in place by the end of March. It is. The new fund became effective last Friday.

The provinces, territories and municipalities can submit projects. This marks the end of a long consultation process that began in 2011. Round tables and consultations were held across the country. Our provincial, territorial and municipal partners will be able to take advantage of federal support totalling \$53 billion over the next decade for infrastructure priorities. This is unprecedented in our nation's history.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been four days now since I asked a question of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness about his neglecting to ensure that Canadians' laws are maintained by CBSA. I refer to a directive by a director general who stated: "...export examinations...including outbound smuggling of narcotics...should not be undertaken".

Imagine, a directive stating not to look for narcotics.

Can the minister now come clean and explain how this directive was put out there and if he is going to maintain—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

It allows me to highlight the excellent work being done by the Canada Border Services Agency. Indeed, over the past year, border services officers have seized nearly \$300 million worth of drugs. That represents a 4% increase over the previous year. This demonstrates the remarkable job that the agency has done, and above all, it proves that our government's investment of 26% is getting results. Now if only the Liberals would get on board.

* * *

• (1500)

[English]

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives are once again ducking accountability at ACOA.

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency will no longer prepare reports on regional disparity, hiding any negative impact of eliminating the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation.

Conservatives also used their monster budget bill to scrap ACOA's board. The board had guaranteed regional representation and could have been fixed, because it is broken, to provide proper oversight.

The real problem at ACOA is obvious: rampant Conservative patronage.

Why is the government mismanaging ACOA and reducing oversight even further?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has been going on and on about this. There are no facts to the information he has been supplying.

The reality is that our government is committed to supporting economic development in Cape Breton and throughout Atlantic Canada. Subject to the passage of the legislation by Parliament, the economic and community development activities of the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, including the associated budget, will transition over to ACOA. The level of economic development funding that was delivered through ECBC will be maintained.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the International Energy Agency predicts that the world energy demand will increase by 33% in the next 20 years. With up to 37 trillion cubic metres of natural gas resources, Canada and my province of British Columbia are well placed to benefit from this opportunity.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources update this House on what action our government is taking to allow for the export of liquefied natural gas?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Prince George—Peace River for that question.

Oral Questions

Last week we approved four long-term LNG export licences in British Columbia. The growing demand for natural gas makes Asia an ideal place for diversifying our energy markets. Estimates suggest that the natural gas sector could create 54,000 jobs per year between 2012 and 2035 in British Columbia.

Our government is focused on responsible resource development, protecting the environment, and creating jobs that are good for British Columbia, its communities, and its first nation communities, and that is good for Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, an unprecedented coalition is forming in the Gatineau area to oppose the Conservative cuts to the fight against homelessness. Many organizations that help these vulnerable persons are seeing their funding cut by thousands of dollars. Politicians from all levels of government and from all parties have come together in support of this cause. Will the Conservatives reverse their cuts to the fight against homelessness?

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome that member to this file, and I want to assure her that there have been absolutely no cuts to the funding on our homelessness partnering strategy. In fact, we have renewed that funding.

I would be happy to sit down with the member and explain to her how the agreements have been reached and how the funding is allocated. Again, I can assure her, her constituents, and folks across the country that the funding has not been cut. In fact, it has been renewed by our government

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the 2004 health accord expires today. Under the new framework, Quebec will lose almost \$10 billion in 10 years. Quebeckers who have been anxiously waiting for health care will have to do without that \$10 billion. Like the Liberals before them, the Conservatives are forcing sick people to pay the price of their return to a balanced budget. Even worse, with the money saved at the expense of patients, the Conservatives promised to allow income splitting, a measure that helps only the richest members of our society. Is that how the federal government operates? Does it put less money toward health care so that it can give even more to the wealthy?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely false. In fact, since 2006, our government has increased transfers for health to 50%.

Points of Order

We have also now committed to the provinces and territories what is the highest reported health transfer dollars in Canadian history, which will reach a record \$40 billion by the end of the decade to provide predictability and sustainability.

I am surprised the member would ask this question, because one of the things that is new with our agreement with the provinces is that there are no strings attached and we are not interfering in provincial jurisdiction. We are providing the funding, but we are allowing provinces to make those decisions themselves for health care.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the primarily Armenian-inhabited village of Kessab in Syria was recently attacked by armed men, including possible jihadists from the al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Nusra Front, who allegedly passed through the Turkish border.

This is similar to what happened in the Christian village of Maaloula. Another minority group has become a victim of this dirty war.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs confirm this information and call on Turkey to take the action necessary to prevent the incursion of armed gangs that are terrorizing civilians?

• (1505)

[*English*]

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising this question. It is very important that Canada work with its allies to ensure there is stability in the Middle East and in that region.

We will continue to work with the government of Turkey and with other allies in that area to ensure that safety is of prime concern, considering what is happening in the region, and I would be more than happy to give her more information later on in the day.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, back in 2012, the Conservatives tried to kill the experimental lakes area. Later, after a huge public outcry, the minister promised to find a way to transfer the ELA.

Last September, Ontario and the International Institute for Sustainable Development signed an interim agreement with the government to keep the ELA open.

That agreement expires today. Time has run out. Are the Conservatives again delaying a deal on this important science at the ELA?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are working hard to transition the experimental lakes area to a new operator, and I am pleased to say we have signed an

agreement with the Province of Ontario, returning the ELA in safe and clean condition.

We are working toward signing a final agreement with the International Institute for Sustainable Development and the Province of Ontario today. We are prepared to sign this final agreement, pending an agreement between IISD and the Province of Ontario.

Last month, we also published regulations that will help make that happen. I call on the other parties to sign the agreement to guarantee the ongoing operation of the experimental lakes.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Christy Clark, Premier of British Columbia, and the delegation of cabinet ministers and first nations leaders.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a matter to bring to the attention of this place, in my point of order.

On Tuesday, March 18, I rose in the House to answer a question by the member for Hamilton Mountain. This question related to an article written by Glen McGregor of the *Ottawa Citizen* and posted online on Monday, March 17. My response to the member is recorded at page 3,841 of the House of Commons *Debates*.

The moment I became aware of the allegations contained in Mr. McGregor's article regarding a specific fund he cited, I contacted the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, which confirmed that the fund he cited complied with the law and any suggestion that these assets were somehow inappropriate was completely untrue. It is also important to note that I did not hold a fraction of the investment that Mr. McGregor implied.

However, in view of my answer on Tuesday, I want to bring to the attention of the House that, out of an abundance of caution, I directed my financial institution to perform an up-to-the-minute review of my investments with the Office of the Ethics Commissioner following my appointment as Minister of Natural Resources. After a normal review of my financial holdings by the Ethics Commissioner following the cabinet shuffle, a minor discrepancy was discovered. An account asset in the amount of \$2,152.19 was found to be non-compliant. I emphasize that this small account asset was completely unrelated to the matter I just raised. As soon as I was made aware of this fact, I immediately contacted my financial institution with directions to dispose of this account asset, and did so. I have since been advised by the Office of the Ethics Commissioner that I am in full compliance with all the rules pertaining to my investments as a public office holder for the purposes of the Conflict of Interest Act.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER OF CANADA**

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada on the administration of the Labrador by-election held on May 13, 2013; and the Bourassa, Brandon—Souris, Provencher, and Toronto Centre by-elections held on November 25, 2013.

This document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

* * *

DOCUMENTS REGARDING AFGHAN DETAINEES

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I am retabling documents concerning the transfer of Afghan detainees, originally tabled on June 22, 2011. Following the House's unanimous consent, we originally tabled this important information in untranslated form in order to expedite its availability to the public.

Pursuant to recommendations received from the Office of the Official Languages Commissioner in October 2013, I am now retabling these documents in both official languages, in good faith, and in order to ensure that the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development is fully complying with its obligations under the Official Languages Act.

* * *

● (1510)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding membership in committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 10th report later this day.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-583, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today. I should thank the member for Sault Ste. Marie for seconding this bill on my behalf.

As mentioned, it is an act to amend the Criminal Code of Canada in respect to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Specifically, this bill would define fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and allow the courts to order assessments and to consider mitigating circumstances where conditions of FASD contribute to the offence.

I would like to thank all the groups and organizations in the Yukon Territory for demonstrating their leadership on FASD in our territory and right across Canada, in particular FASSY, Options for Independence, the Yukon government, the Yukon division of the Canadian Bar Association, Rod Snow, and Heather McFadgen for all their support.

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

* * *

*[Translation]***CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF EXTRACTIVE CORPORATIONS OUTSIDE CANADA ACT**

Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-584, An Act respecting the Corporate Social Responsibility Inherent in the Activities of Canadian Extractive Corporations in Developing Countries.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to rise to introduce my bill today.

Canada is in a unique position. Over 75% of all mining corporations and corporations in the extractive sector are incorporated here in Canada.

In most cases, these companies operate in countries with populations that are vulnerable because of factors such as political instability and lack of security. They also operate in countries where workers' rights, human rights and environmental protections are neither adequately respected nor effectively enforced.

Respect for these principles should not be limited by a state's ability to fulfill its obligations in this arena or its interest in doing so. That is why, today, I am introducing a bill that calls for the creation of an ombudsman for the corporate social responsibility of Canadian extractive corporations, to promote the responsible mining development values that all Canadians subscribe to outside Canada.

This bill was drafted in response to a recommendation from the 2007 report of the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility.

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

* * *

*[English]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier today, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

• (1515)

PETITIONS

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present two petitions.

The first has several hundred signatures from both Vancouver and Calgary. I have presented these petitions on many occasions in the House. The petition draws to the attention of the Government of Canada and parliamentarians that every year hundreds of thousands of dogs and cats are brutally slaughtered for their fur in a number of Asian regions and that these animals live in deplorable conditions. The petitioners are calling on Government of Canada to join the U.S. A., Australia, and the European Union in banning the import and sale of dog and cat fur.

I want to thank the organizations that are collecting these signatures. I have now tabled thousands and thousands of these petitions over the last year. They are obviously very dedicated organizations that are very concerned about this issue and urge us to take action.

CANADA POST

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from people who are very concerned about the cuts to Canada Post.

We know that postal increases are taking place. The petitioners are calling on us to reverse the elimination of door-to-door delivery. They are very concerned that these cuts will hurt seniors and disabled Canadians in particular. They believe that Canada Post is a public institution and that public service should be protected. The petitioners are urging the Government of Canada to reverse the cuts to services announced by Canada Post.

JERICHO GARRISON LANDS

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition from my riding of Vancouver Quadra.

There are literally hundreds of people who have signed the petition so far, expressing their concern about the imminent strategic disposal of a parcel of property called the Jericho Garrison lands, currently owned by the Department of National Defence.

There has been no consultation with local residents, and no plan for a full consultation process on the future uses of these lands has been made known. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to commit to a complete public consultation and accommodation regarding any potential divestment of the Jericho Garrison lands.

CANADA POST

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions.

The first is a petition asking the Government of Canada to reverse the cuts to services announced by Canada Post.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is calling on Parliament to refrain from making any changes to the Seeds Act or the Plant Breeders' Rights Act through Bill C-18.

DEMENTIA

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by many Canadians asking for a national dementia strategy. They call on the Minister of Health and the House of Commons to pass Bill C-356, an act respecting a national strategy for dementia, introduced by the member for Nickel Belt.

CANADA POST

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table two petitions. The first is one that we have heard over and over today, about Canada Post. The petitioners are concerned about the elimination of door-to-door delivery and the closing of post offices, the loss of jobs, and how this will impact seniors. They are asking the government to reverse the cuts to services and to look instead for ways to innovate.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the other petition is about the cuts to the Algoma Central Railway line. I am pleased to rise on behalf of people from Sault Ste. Marie, since their member is not getting up in the House to speak on this; and from Wawa; Collingwood; and Leduc, Alberta as well. They are asking the government to reinstate the funding for this critical piece of infrastructure and rail, which has such an impact on their economy. They would certainly like the government to act before the train leaves the station.

[*Translation*]

VIA RAIL

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions with similar themes. Both have to do with VIA Rail.

A number of petitioners in my riding denounce the total abandonment of my region by VIA Rail.

I also have a petition from northern New Brunswick that denounces the potential abandonment of that region by VIA Rail, which may happen by July 1.

I would like to point out that I had the pleasure of taking the train today. With the storm we had in eastern Canada, there is no way that I would be here in the House of Commons if it were not for the train. A number of people on the train were in the same situation. The only way to get out of the storm was by VIA Rail.

We depend on this service a great deal. I hope that the government is taking note.

• (1520)

[English]

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from people across Canada who are concerned about voter suppression and the deliberate misleading of voters in the May, 2011 election. They are asking for a complete and independent well-resourced investigation to determine the responsible persons or organizations. They are further asking that any financial awards for that election be cancelled and returned to Elections Canada.

PENSIONS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to table today. The first is from residents of Edmonton—Sherwood Park, expressing concern about the cuts to old age security, which they say will slash \$11 billion in retirement income from seniors. They are calling on the government to immediately agree to the request made by the provincial and territorial finance ministers to move forward with pension benefits under the Canada and Quebec pension plans, and to phase in those increases without delay.

HOUSING

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of Saskatchewan and Alberta, expressing concern about the failure to properly support housing for the homeless. They are calling for a reinvestment of \$1.7 billion annually in social housing subsidies, and are calling on the federal government to coordinate a pan-Canadian housing strategy based on the human right to housing.

PENSIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition from residents of Winnipeg North, who are concerned about Canada's pension programs. They state 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, GIS, and the CPP.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. The first is in regard to a terrible tragedy that we experienced in London, Ontario, where we lost three members of a family.

The petitioners are very cognizant of the fact that there has been a reduction in public service staffing levels and that this has increased the workload in federal departments. They are asking, therefore, that Citizenship and Immigration Canada ensure that the department is properly staffed and resourced in order to reach decisions on applications in a fair and timely manner, and to ensure that immigration officials consider all factors in regard to an individual's application for status, including humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

Routine Proceedings

DEMENTIA

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is to draw the attention of the Minister of Health and the House of Commons to the fact that the federal government absolutely needs a national strategy for dementia and the health care of persons afflicted with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia-related diseases. The petitioners ask—

The Speaker: I am going to remind members to provide a brief summary of the petitions they are presenting. We still have members standing and we are running out of time.

CANADA POST

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my constituents in Newton—North Delta to present the following petition in protest of the Conservative government's decision to end door-to-door mail service for Canadians, increase postal rates, and close post offices across the country. The petitioners are calling on the government to reverse these job-killing changes and protect a public service that hundreds of thousands of Canadians depend on.

DEMENTIA

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to present petitions from dozens of people from Sudbury, Garson, Falconbridge, Noelville, Alban, and French River.

These petitioners call on the Minister of Health and the House of Commons to pass Bill C-356, An Act respecting a National Strategy for Dementia. As members might be aware, Canada is one of the only G8 countries that does not have a national dementia strategy. It is time the Canadian government stood up for dementia patients, caregivers, and doctors.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise on behalf of the residents of Toronto to present three different petitions.

Given the widespread opposition to the government's unfair elections act, it becomes even more crucial that we work in Parliament toward proportional representation. The first petition calls on Parliament to do exactly that.

• (1525)

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is from residents of my city of Toronto. This is a focused petition around the issue of precarious work and the need for Parliament to address this issue through a national urban worker strategy.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the decision of the National Energy Board, residents of Toronto are very concerned about the decision to reverse the flow of Line 9. The petitioners are calling on the government to look at that very seriously.

Privilege

HEALTH OF ANIMALS AND MEAT INSPECTION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to present three petitions.

The first petition is relevant to the private members' business of earlier today. I thank the hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior for his work to bring forward Bill C-322, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act (slaughter of horses for human consumption), to prohibit the importation or exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption.

I certainly hope that other members will consider this bill carefully.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the next petition is for my own private member's bill, Bill C-442, National Lyme Disease Strategy Act. I thank all members of the House, as I understand that at this point I have quite a lot of support. The petitioners from Milton, Brampton, and Thornhill also hope that the House will pass the bill.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the last petition is from residents of Vancouver. The petitioners are calling for respect for the tanker moratorium on the coast of British Columbia that has been in place since 1972 to protect the B.C. coast from supertankers.

[*Translation*]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today in the House to present a petition signed by constituents of Rivière-du-Nord. They are outraged at the idea of having to pay to receive paper copies of their bills.

I would remind the House that in this year's Speech from the Throne, the government said that it would abolish these fees for paper bills. The government repeated that message during the budget presentation. I just received my latest bill from Bell and it still includes that charge.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition that was sent to me by over 20 people from Brome—Missisquoi. They are concerned that the current system gives people the impression that their vote does not count. With the current voting system the party that gets the most votes is not necessarily the one that forms the government.

That is why those who signed this petition want the voting system to be changed to make it more proportional. With proportional representation, the number of seats a party holds represents the percentage of votes received. The petitioners hope that a Parliament elected by proportional representation would have greater legitimacy since it would better represent the will of the people.

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 303 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Question No. 303—**Ms. Laurin Liu:**

With regard to the riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, since fiscal year 2009-2010, specifying the name of each department or agency, the year, the initiative, the amount, the name and the municipality of the beneficiary, what is the total amount of government funding allocated to the riding?

(Return tabled)

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

REMARKS BY MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a question of privilege, pursuant to section 48(1) of the Standing Orders. The matter I wish to raise is, in my view, very serious.

The Speaker and his predecessors have ruled on numerous occasions that deliberately misleading the House is a grave affront to the rights and privileges of this place. I believe that the member for Crowfoot, the Minister of State for Finance, has deliberately and repeatedly misled the House in interventions made in the House of Commons, specifically those regarding the repercussions of the NDP's plan to increase the Canada pension plan and the Quebec pension plan.

Members of the House are well aware of the rights and immunities afforded to parliamentarians so that they can carry out their duties as members of Parliament. However, for the sake of clarity, let me remind my colleagues that on page 75 of Erskine May's *A Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, "parliamentary privilege" is defined as follows:

...the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively...and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions...

What I believe we are looking at here is a contempt of Parliament, one that is an offence against the authority and dignity of the House, and one that chips away at the foundation of our parliamentary democracy and the requisites for healthy debate.

Let me take a moment to provide the House with an account of what has taken place. Following my remarks, I will ask you to find this as a prima facie case of contempt of Parliament, at which point I will be prepared to move a motion to have the matter referred to the appropriate committee for further study.

On December 9, 2013, the House was debating an NDP opposition day motion, placed in my name, asking the government to support a “phase-in of increases to basic public pension benefits under the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans” ahead of the meeting of finance ministers that took place in December 2013. This we asked in the face of a serious retirement crisis facing this country, and an apparent consensus at that time of provincial and territorial finance ministers that such a measure was necessary to ensure the income security of retired Canadians.

During the debate of this motion, the Minister of State for Finance said the following:

Departments have said that under the NDP plan, up to 70,000 jobs will be lost. That is straight from Finance Canada. They have also talked about other provincial plans, whereby between 17,000 and 50,000 jobs would be lost. Those are not figures we alone are citing; those are the figures cited by finance departments.

He then went on to state:

...Finance Canada officials estimate that the NDP plan would kill up to 70,000 jobs.

The hon. member repeated that figure today.

He also said, referring to a Prince Edward Island plan to increase the CPP:

One recent provincial proposal, according to Finance Canada, would threaten and could kill between 17,000 and 50,000 jobs.

These misleading numbers were repeated by the minister of state in the media, notably in an op-ed piece that appeared in the *Financial Post* on December 4, 2013. The op-ed was also put on the finance department website until the media noted its partisan nature, and it was subsequently removed.

Documents obtained through an access to information request and released late last week have now revealed that the Minister of State for Finance was deliberately drawing false conclusions about alleged job losses associated with the increase in CPP. There is not, in fact, any study of the NDP or the P.E.I. plans for CPP expansion. The minister of state suggested that the finance department had assessed the NDP and P.E.I. plans, when in fact it had done no such thing. The numbers used by the minister of state have no relation to either of these plans and, in truth, come from studies of a plan that does not exist, a plan “fully implemented in one year, without prior notification”.

● (1530)

To be clear, the numbers given by the Minister of State for Finance come from a study based on the assumption that the expansion of the CPP would occur within one year without notification to employers. However, the P.E.I. and NDP plans both propose phase-in periods to avoid any shock to the economy. The minister of state knew this, yet he misled the House by omitting to note that the basic assumption behind his numbers was different from the real NDP and P.E.I. plans. Thus, the minister of state was making misleading statements when he said that the job loss numbers he used referred to the NDP and P.E.I. plans. They did not.

It is important to note that this is not an issue of whether the studies in question are accurate; that is not a matter of debate. This, rather, is a question of whether the minister of state misrepresented the very studies he cited. He said that there were studies of the NDP and P.E.I. plans to expand the CPP; there were not.

Privilege

For the record—and this is likely beyond the scope of your mandate, Mr. Speaker, to rule on this situation—the minister of state also completely omitted the fact that according to internal research by the federal Department of Finance, there would in fact be economic benefits from expanding the Canada pension plan. A briefing note from the Department of Finance from December 13, 2013, addressed to the then minister of finance said:

In the long run, expanding the CPP would bring economic benefits. Higher savings will lead to higher income in the future and higher consumption possibilities for seniors.

Mr. Speaker, there is an extremely disturbing trend with the Conservative government of deliberately providing misleading information to the House to justify wrong-headed policies. You will recall that it was barely a few weeks ago that you ruled that there was prima facie contempt of the House when the member for Mississauga—Streetsville falsely stated that he had witnessed cases of fraudulent voting when in fact he had not, all to justify his party's misguided unfair elections act.

Once again we have learned that the Minister of State for Finance provided misleading information to parliamentarians and the public at a crucial point in time when federal and provincial ministers were debating the expansion of the Canada and Quebec pension plans. He made up numbers to justify his government's ideological opposition to the NDP's plan. Once again we see a case of a government that invents partisan-based facts to refuse to elaborate good, evidence-based policies. It is irresponsible for the government to maintain the facts around the CPP and QPP when our country is facing a retirement crisis.

● (1535)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, members need to be certain that they are receiving the information they need to adequately represent voters, and they must be able to have confidence in the information provided, especially when it is provided by ministers and ministers of state. Likewise, the Canadians who follow the debates and who count on their MPs to make laws need to be able to believe in the truth of the information shared in this place.

[*English*]

To think that it is somehow acceptable for members of the government to come into the House and make up stories as justification for their wrong-headed policies is simply ludicrous and should not be allowed to simply pass by unnoticed. That is why I am raising this question today, hoping the necessary measures will be taken so that the situation does not repeat itself in the future.

In his ruling on February 1, 2002, in an analogous matter, Speaker Milliken stated:

The authorities are consistent about the need for clarity in our proceedings and about the need to ensure the integrity of the information provided by the government to the House.

Privilege

The authorities to which the Speaker was referring include, but are not limited to, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, which states on page 115:

Misleading a Minister or a Member has also been considered a form of obstruction and thus a *prima facie* breach of privilege.

Page 63 of the 22nd edition of Erskine May states as follows:

...it is of paramount importance that ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament, correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, on March 3, 2014, you ruled that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville was in *prima facie* contempt of the House for providing misleading information. This is what you stated:

This incident highlights the primordial importance of accuracy and truthfulness in our deliberations. All members bear a responsibility, individually and collectively, to select the words they use very carefully and to be ever mindful of the serious consequences that can result when this responsibility is forgotten.

You also recalled that members:

...must be able to depend on the integrity of the information with which they are provided in order to perform their parliamentary duties.

Let me also remind the House that on that day as well, as in a handful of rulings since 2011, you had stated the following regarding the conditions that have emerged surrounding misleading statements in the House:

It has become accepted practice in this House that the following elements have to be established when it is alleged that a member is in contempt for deliberately misleading the House: one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement, the member intended to mislead the House.

This seems like a very straightforward case, and I am sure all members would agree. The first of these conditions has been met, since the minister of state claimed in the House that the Department of Finance had estimated that the NDP plan to increase the CPP and QPP would kill jobs across Canada, when in reality his number did not at all come from a study of the NDP plan, and the finance department actually concluded that expanding the plan would bring long-term economic benefits and higher income for seniors. This we now know, thanks to documents released through an access to information request by the Canadian Labour Congress.

I believe the second of these conditions is also met, since the minister of state had access to the entire study and thus knew that the numbers he used as projected results of the NDP plan came in fact from a completely different study of a plan that did not exist and that was significantly different from the NDP plan. However, the minister of state chose to misrepresent the facts, which brings me to say that the third condition is also present.

The minister of state deliberately chose to bring these so-called facts to the House and repeatedly stated that the numbers from the Department of Finance applied to the NDP and P.E.I. plans to expand the CPP, even if he knew that was not the case.

Why would he do this? I believe it is obvious. Just as when the member for Mississauga—Streetsville wrongfully said he had witnessed cases of voter fraud to justify his government's unfair elections act, in the present case the minister of state used these misstatements of fact to justify his government's wrong-headed

opposition to a policy that many experts and provincial governments believe to be key in addressing Canada's retirement crisis.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

Members of this House will remember a case in 2001-02 in which my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst, among others, argued that Senator Eggleton—who was defence minister at the time—had deliberately misled the House. It happened during question period, when he was responding to questions regarding how much he knew about when exactly prisoners captured by Canadian troops in Afghanistan were transferred to the Americans.

Speaker Milliken ruled that there was a *prima facie* case of privilege and referred the issue to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for further study. After hearing a former clerk of the House, Bill Corbett, testify about the issue, the committee indicated the following in its 50th report to the House:

[*English*]

...it is not uncommon for inaccurate statements to be made in the course of debate or Question Period in the House. The issue is whether the statements were made deliberately, with the intent of misleading the House or its Members. In the case where a Member later admits to having knowingly provided false information... the issue of intent is clear.

We have come to the point in the Conservative government's life cycle when the Conservatives are simply spinning their wheels. We saw it with the unfair elections act, when they created solutions to problems that do not exist and made up stories in the House to try to persuade members to vote a certain way on that flawed bill. Now we have one more case of the government misleading parliamentarians and Canadians. To justify his government's wrong-headed policies, the Minister of State for Finance cited what he said in the House were studies on the NDP and P.E.I. plans to increase the CPP, when in fact what he cited were not studies of these proposals but rather a dubious assessment of a plan that would be fully implemented in one year without notification to employers.

Time and time again the Conservatives' lack of judgment has been exposed, but despite all of this, instead of changing their behaviour to fit the rules of the game, they are changing the rules of the game to fit their behaviour.

In conclusion, I would like to leave the final word not to me but to another hon. member of this place, who said the following:

I would suggest in the strongest possible terms that members of the House of Commons must be able to rely on the information they receive in response to questions placed to ministers. This goes to the very cut and thrust of the responsibilities of members of the House of Commons. A high standard has to be met....

These are the words that were said on January 31 and February 1, 2002, by the hon. member for Central Nova, who incidentally is now the Conservative Minister of Justice. These are wise words, in my submission, and I hope that the minister and all other hon. members will begin to follow them.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will keep my remarks very brief and advise you that the government will be making a more detailed and comprehensive response in the very near future.

Government Orders

However, I want to point out one quick fact that the member opposite conveniently ignores, which is that there have been many studies by many organizations throughout Canada, all agreeing on one thing, that increasing payroll taxes, which this would be—an increase to the CPP is an increase in payroll taxes—for both the employer and the employee could very easily result in job loss.

We heard today in question period that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, in a study and a research paper done of all of its membership, indicated that if CPP increases did take effect that the members themselves said there would very likely be job loss.

I would suggest to the member opposite that in light of the various studies that have been conducted across Canada by various organizations on this particular matter that there would be no firm position on how many jobs may be lost, depending on which organization is conducting the study.

We will be presenting a detailed response to refute the member's allegations in very short order.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you give us at least a few days to prepare our response for presentation in this chamber.

• (1545)

The Speaker: I see two more members rising to speak to this point. I have taken careful note of the points that were raised in the speech from the member for Victoria while he had the floor.

I will first go to the member for Winnipeg North. However, I do encourage him to limit his remarks to anything new that he feels might need to be added and that may not yet have been made to the chair, and then I will go to the opposition House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is more of an indication that we would like to be able to review the matter of privilege that has been raised.

Obviously, we are very much concerned about information and how it is provided to the House. It is always an issue, especially as earlier today I stood on the issue of pensions, which is critically important. We are very dependent on the information being provided by the Department of Finance.

On the surface, it would appear as if there are some contradictions of fact. Therefore, I would like to at least give an indication that we be given a day or two to review the message that has been put on the record to date, look at some of the other facts, and then come back to give a more detailed response.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief, but as a placeholder, I would like to say that we will be responding when the government responds.

I think the response from the parliamentary secretary did not deny that the minister did stand in the House and reference a key study from Finance Canada, not once, but a number of times. The parliamentary secretary seemed to cite something else out there that may come from outside of government.

The reality is that I think the point of privilege that has been raised by the member for Victoria is very sound. The minister stood, did not table a document afterward, and very clearly cited, a number of times, a study that clearly does not exist.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that you will take that into consideration as you deliberate. We reserve the right to come back to the House to speak further on this as well.

The Speaker: I look forward to the further submissions on this point.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA-HONDURAS ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that 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, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The last time this bill was before the House, the hon. member for Malpeque had the floor, and he has three minutes to conclude his remarks.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier about why Liberals support Bill C-20. What I would like to discuss is what the government lacks in overall trade strategy, what is going wrong, and why, after signing all these trade agreements, we still have deficits.

I will lay a few facts on the table. The more trade agreements that the government signs, it seems the more persistent the long-term trade deficit is. Liberals are hopeful that will change. The government seems good at making announcements, but for all the announcements it has made, what have the results been?

I will lay out a couple of facts. A recently released report from Stats Canada on manufacturing exports for the past decade had this to say:

Canadian exports of manufactured products fell by more than 7% from 2002 to 2012, a drop of \$20.7 billion. The United States led the decrease, as their imports of Canadian manufactured products—

Keep in mind that these are manufactured products.

—declined by \$44.8 billion.

That is serious.

The share of Canadian manufacturing exports to the United States also declined, falling from 88.0% in 2002 to 78.2% in 2012.

Those figures are from Stats Canada.

Having said that, in terms of the decline of exports to the United States, we do know, and I think we would all agree in the House, that we have to expand our trade beyond the United States. We are too dependent on that one market. When we look at the global situation—and I have a chart here, which members cannot see—in terms of the trade balance, Statistics Canada has reported that in 48 of the past 62 months Canada has faced a trade deficit. That is worrisome. We are not doing well.

Government Orders

Why are we not doing well? A prime example is the grain crisis right now. When the government made the changes in so-called grain marketing, it forgot that transportation is functional to marketing. The government destroyed the logistical system in its decision to get that product to market. Marketing is not just about signing a deal; it is having the infrastructure, the ship turnaround time, the railway capacity, and the logistics of the total system in place to feed that market.

That is where the government is going wrong. It is not looking at all of the other factors in trade that need to be put in place to take advantage of the trade deals, and that is what is short in all of the trade deals that the government has signed.

• (1550)

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a bit about my trip to Honduras and how Honduras wants to be competitive and comparative in the production of cacao. It knows it has an excellent market for that and that it creates economic and environmental benefits. It is a crop that is appropriate for small farmers. Honduras feels that social benefits generate long-term employment and gives permanence to land tenure. Cacao also benefits the environment and agroforestry systems, as cacao protects soil against erosion, improves soil conditions, and protects and improves water sources. This is one of the many areas that is important to trade deals such as the one we are working to make on Honduras.

I would like to know if the member has any experience in how important this trade could be for the agriculture area in Honduras and whether he could please tell the House about it.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the minister made a valid point. These deals are extremely important on the agricultural side, into Central America and other countries. My own province depends a lot on those markets for the export of seed potatoes. There is an opportunity in hogs and beef for us.

I want to emphasize, again, to the minister that it is not just about signing an agreement. We already have a substantial deficit with Honduras. We need to bring that into better balance. When we open up a market and sign a trade agreement, we have to have the infrastructure in place, and the capacity and the support of the Government of Canada, if there is a trade dispute, to get into that market, maintain that market, and service that market.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has shown that it completely agrees with the Conservative Party about the free trade agreement with Honduras.

However, we know that Honduras ranks 104th on Canada's list of trade partners. Experts have said that this agreement will have only marginal benefits for Canadian exporters.

Why does the Liberal Party agree with the Conservative Party that we should sign an agreement with a country that violates human rights, that does not have the same environmental standards as Canada and that abuses workers?

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I recognize the points that the NDP made earlier on the human rights issue and criminal behaviour

in Honduras, and I made it very clear that it is a serious issue. We are saying to Honduras, and I expect the government is also saying, that it has to clean up its act.

There are side agreements on labour rights and the environment. They do not have as much teeth in them as I would certainly like, but they are there. That is a step forward.

It drives me—I should not say it drives me crazy, but it near does, when the government uses the fact that it has signed 9, 10, or 11 deals. What matters is what is in those deals for Canadians, and there is not enough in this one. However, it is a step.

• (1555)

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been in this House since 2008. I have listened to the member for Malpeque, and there are very few people in this House who understand the trade file and the agricultural file more than that man.

While I have been on the agriculture committee, I have heard many comments about the incredible quality of Canadian agricultural products, livestock, grains, oilseeds, and the rest. However, in international discussions, the complaint is that while we produce good stuff we can never get it delivered to market. That is evident in what we are facing right now, with the inability to get our wheat to market.

I wonder if the member for Malpeque would comment on whether he believes it is the fault of the current government, or the railroad, or both.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, certainly the railways hold a great deal of responsibility in terms of the lack of movement of grain in the Prairies. However, ultimately the responsibility rests with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

When he changed the marketing system, he failed to lay out a plan of the logistics. He failed to recognize the other things that the Canadian Wheat Board had done in terms of drawing grain from hundreds of thousands of farmers, putting it on the two rail lines, and getting it to Vancouver in an efficient manner. He failed to recognize the authority that the Wheat Board had to hold the railways and the grain companies to account.

An hon. member: Is the Wheat Board in Honduras?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Nobody is talking about wanting the Wheat Board back, Mr. Speaker.

However, what we are saying is that the minister failed to understand the total supply chain, and he ultimately has the responsibility for the mess in western Canada at the moment.

Government Orders

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will get back to the topic at hand, which is the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement. It is a great pleasure to rise in the House to speak to the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement. I will spend a few minutes talking about the concrete benefits this trade agreement would provide to Canadian businesses exporting to Honduras.

The NDP trade critic has criticized this agreement by saying that trade with Honduras is insignificant and that the government is exaggerating its benefits to Canadians. In 2013, Canada exported more than \$45 million worth of merchandise to Honduras. This fact serves to further highlight why this agreement is so important for Canadian workers, producers, processors, manufacturers and exporters. What that member fails to realize is that every dollar of our exports directly supports our economy and Canadian jobs, and that is in no way insignificant.

During 13 long years in office, the Liberals signed only three trade agreements, but in eight years, our Conservative government has concluded agreements with 38 countries, and we are negotiating many more, including the trans-Pacific partnership.

That is why today I would like to share with this House the impact this agreement would have on Canadian companies and exporters.

The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement is a high-quality, comprehensive agreement that would bring tremendous benefit to our economy. A free trade agreement with Honduras would give Canadian exporters, investors, and service providers preferential access to a dynamic and fast-growing economy with recorded GDP growth of 3.5% in 2013.

Once implemented, the agreement would improve market access for Canadian exports in the Honduras market by lowering trade barriers. The elimination of tariffs would create tremendous opportunities for increasing Canadian exports to Honduras.

Once the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement was in place, Honduras would eliminate tariffs on over 68.4% of all Canadian goods and services. The remaining tariffs would be phased out over five to 15 years. This is significant, considering that Canadian exports of non-agricultural products are currently facing tariff peaks of up to 15% in Honduras.

The elimination of the vast majority of tariffs would benefit Canadian workers from coast to coast to coast, including producers of forest products, pharmaceuticals, machinery, automotive parts, information and communications technology, and aerospace products.

Let us look at the impact of the agreement on some of the specific sectors of our economy. For Canada, the industrial machinery sector represents an important sector for exports to Honduras. In 2013, Canada exported \$4.3 million worth of merchandise to Honduras. The Honduran market could be of interest for companies located throughout Canada, from British Columbia to Prince Edward Island, including Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec.

In 2013, Canada's top exports in this sector included furnaces and ovens, refrigerating equipment, pumps, and machinery parts. The elimination of Honduran tariffs of up to 15% under this agreement could open up new export opportunities.

Companies producing plastics and chemical products are employing Canadians throughout our country. Companies presently in Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan are already exporting Canadian products to Honduras.

In 2013, Canada exported \$6.6 million worth of chemical products and almost \$2.6 million worth of plastics to Honduras. With tariffs of up to 15%, it is clear that the complete elimination of Honduran tariffs in these two sectors could allow Canadian companies to export a wider range of products, such as paints, varnishes, plastic tubing, and plastic packaging products.

● (1600)

Canada is an important manufacturer and exporter of high-quality wood and pulp and paper products worldwide. We are blessed with a vast and abundant forest resource, and our workers, producers, and manufacturers in provinces such as Quebec, British Columbia, Ontario, Alberta, and Nova Scotia possess the technical expertise and ingenuity to transform this natural resource into value-added products. In 2013, Canada exported \$1.5 million worth of forest products to Honduras. The elimination of all tariffs by Honduras of up to 15% in this sector could unleash important gains for Canadian forest products.

Canada has one of the world's most valuable commercial fishing industries. While Canadian exports of fish and seafood to Honduras have historically been low, Honduras' high tariffs of up to 15% on these products are certainly a factor that has contributed to this situation. The complete elimination of Honduran tariffs on fish and seafood under the agreement would allow Canadian fishers and fish and seafood producers from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, for instance, to fully capture all the export opportunities the Honduran market has to offer.

If Canadian businesses have been able to sell their products to Honduras despite these tariffs, imagine how much more successful they will be when their products gain preferential access. It is undeniable that by creating new export opportunities in these sectors, this agreement will help foster greater economic growth.

There are many more examples I could cite, but the fundamental point is that the tariff elimination driven by this agreement would create the potential for increased Canadian exports to Honduras, and that is good for all Canadians. Pursuing new trade opportunities is a win-win for Canada and its trading partners. Canadians benefit from the jobs, prosperity, and consumer benefits that come from increased trade, and that is why it should not come as a surprise to the members of the House that Canadian companies are in support of this agreement.

Government Orders

Throughout the negotiations, government officials consulted with the private sector, and the message was consistent and clear: Canadian companies want this deal. If Canadian companies are telling us that they want their government to implement this agreement, why would we, as elected officials, deny them these benefits? Canadians value the real and tangible benefits that trade brings to our country, and that is why Canadian companies support our government's efforts to forge new trade opportunities around the world.

Closer economic integration with Honduras promises to deliver further gains for Canadian exporters, investors, consumers, and the economy as a whole. For all these reasons, I ask all hon. members to support the implementation of the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as much as I am enjoying this conversation with my colleague through you, I would like us to come back to reality.

Members are exaggerating the economic benefits of this bill on a free trade agreement with Honduras, and I will leave it to the subject matter experts to talk more about that.

I am concerned about the human rights aspect of this free trade agreement. According to Human Rights Watch, Honduras suffers from rampant crime and impunity for human rights abuses. The murder rate, which has risen consistently over the last decade, was the highest in the world in 2013. 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.

What can my colleague tell Human Rights Watch, which is concerned about the human rights situation in Honduras?

[*English*]

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I have been to Honduras and have seen the proud people who live in that country. All they want is a chance to sell their goods outside of Honduras. We are going to give them that opportunity from the perspective of a free trade agreement. We believe in engagement as opposed to isolation. When a country is isolated, it ends up having internal rifts. We believe that if we can include Honduras in an opportunity for free trade with Canada, it will be good for both countries.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I like about this debate is that there is a different way of dealing with trade when it comes to the Liberals, Conservatives, and New Democrats. New Democrats have never stood in the House of Commons and supported or voted in favour of a free trade agreement. On the other hand, the Conservatives seem to think that the only way to get trade is through free trade agreements.

We look at free trade agreements as positive and as a step forward, but we also recognize how important it is to continue to look at ways we can build on the trade we currently have. Prime Minister Chrétien, as an example I cited earlier, had the team Canada approach, with the hundreds of millions of dollars in trade generated

because of it. It was not a trade agreement; it was a promotion of international trade, where Canada benefited.

Why does the member believe Canada today has a trade deficit? When the Conservatives took over the reins of power, the Liberals had given them a strong, healthy trade surplus.

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question, but I do not know what it has to do with Canada and Honduras. I do know that during the Liberals' tenure in power, they only did three trade agreements. We still continue to fix those, so we will not be taking any lessons from the Liberals.

The reality is that this is a good agreement for both Canada and Honduras. It would boost economic prosperity in our country, and it would provide the Hondurans with an opportunity to export to Canada.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his very thoughtful presentation with respect to trade agreements. Picking up on one of the points the Liberal member just made, to put the NDP position in context, it is only fair to point out that the NDP has almost a perfect record over the last 50 years of opposing all trade agreements. To be fair, New Democrats always say that they like trade agreements, but all the ones that have been presented, they have had problems with.

They have almost a perfect record on this, going back to the auto pact, which was a huge benefit to southern Ontario. It was NDP members in the House of Commons and their leader who were calling it into question. I do not have to tell members how vociferous they were in fighting the U.S. free trade agreement, NAFTA, and on and on.

I know that the hon. member pointed out the NDP criticism with respect to this, but I think we have to put it in the context of where the NDP has been for the last 50 years, which is basically to oppose all trade agreements. Would the member agree?

• (1610)

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, the minister could not have put it more eloquently. I completely agree with him that the NDP members for some reason do not quite grasp the fact that free trade agreements are a great opportunity, not only for Canadians but for other countries as well.

Our government has signed 38 free trade agreements since we have taken power, and we will continue to move forward with others. I hope the NDP will get on board and recognize the importance of free trade agreements.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. There are three fundamentally important criteria for assessing the merits of trade agreements.

First, does the proposed partner respect democracy, human rights, adequate labour and environmental standards, and Canadian values? If there are challenges in these regards, is the partner on a positive trajectory toward these goals?

Government Orders

Second, is the proposed partner's economy of significant or strategic value to Canada? Third, are the terms of the proposed agreement satisfactory?

The proposed free trade agreement with Honduras clearly fails this test. Honduras is a country with undemocratic practices, a corrupt government, weak institutions and a record of human rights abuses. It has low standards and insignificant strategic value.

Honduras is a very poor country with a history of repressive, undemocratic politics and a seriously flawed human rights record. Leftist president Manuel Zelaya's democratically elected government was toppled by a military coup in 2009. Since then, international observers have severely criticized the government's actions and the elections because they fail to meet acceptable democratic standards.

[English]

I recently received some information from a friend on Vancouver Island as a response to an op-ed that I had written on the Canada–Honduras trade agreement. He had just conducted a development and peace workshop about Honduras, and had spent six weeks in northern Honduras last fall on a personal accompaniment project with Father Melo Moreno, S.J., the director of an independent radio station and a human rights centre called ERIC.

This is what he wrote me when referring to Father Melo:

Either job puts him at the front of the firing squad and he lives with death threats and intimidation. As well some of his workers have received death threats. Twice I accompanied Melo to a prison near La Ceiba to visit a political prisoner—a peasant farmer who has been in jail for almost 6 years but a leader of a campesino community.

...Canada is very much present in Honduras through mining companies and through the sweatshops...which are there because labour laws and environmental protection laws are weak or non-existent thanks to the Free trade agreement conditions that Canada imposed.

I would like to read again from a paper entitled “Faith in Action: Padra Melo”, written by a woman by the name of Molly Holden. It says:

On October 9, Rev. Ismael Moreno Coto, S.J. popularly known as “Padre Melo” spoke to a group of Boston College students and faculty on the violence and ongoing human rights violations in Honduras, currently the ‘murder Capital of the world’. His presentation, the Price of Truth: Human rights in Honduras since the Coup, addressed the struggles and successes of building a fair and inclusive society. In his testimony before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Committee of the US Congress in 2012, Padre Melo asked members of the Committee how freedom of expression could be defended in a country like Honduras where the biggest violators of this fundamental freedom are the friends and partners of a “democracy” backed by the policies and agencies of the U.S. government? Padre Melo stated that around 80% of cocaine imported to the United States comes through Honduras by way of Colombia. However, U.S. attempts to combat drug trafficking in Honduras (and elsewhere in Latin America) place power and money in the hands of the Honduran military officials and politicians who are deeply tied to the drug lords. In other words, drug traffickers, weakening the rule of law and increasing violence, control the Honduran government at all levels.

I would like to finish by sharing an article entitled “Canada profiting off the backs of Honduras' poor”, by the *Troy Media* publication columnist Mark Taliano, who was part of a Canadian delegation that went to Honduras to observe elections. The article states:

In March of 2007, Gildan Activewear Inc., a Montreal-based textile manufacturer, decided to leave Canada for sunnier climes.

The company laid off hundreds of Canadian workers, and resettled where business was good: Honduras. The end result? Canada lost jobs and Honduras' asymmetrical, toxic economy, was further entrenched.

●(1615)

Honduran sweatshop workers are basically commodities and their status will likely remain unchanged, or get worse. The 2009 coup that removed the democratically-elected President Manuel Zelaya was condemned internationally (even U.S. resident Obama declared it illegal), and the new regime dismantled or corrupted institutions that might be of benefit to humans (including constitutional judges), and created a heavily militarized and murderous environment. “Since 2010,” reported Raul Burbano, delegation leader of election observers from Canada, “there have been more than 200 politically motivated killings.”

In the meantime, Canada's Gildan profits from the misery. Gildan pays no taxes in Honduras, and the workforce (primarily women) is easily exploited. Unions and collective bargaining are not allowed and human rights are not a concern.

This is who we are dealing with in the free trade agreement.

It continues:

The Collective Of Honduran Women...a brave voice for freedom in Honduras, comprehensively documents the exploitation of workers. Spokespeople told us:

1) Workers produce T-shirts from about 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. four days a week, at jobs that are physically repetitive. Repetitive strain injuries are common, proper care is elusive, and injured workers are easily discarded.

Further, it states:

At Gildan, inspectors aren't allowed in to the plant, and workers are fired (or worse) if they try to organize unions.

2) One former worker explained that she would be given a cortisone shot to treat her calcified tendinitis, and then sent immediately back to work.

Later, it states:

It's no surprise then, that by age 25, chronic work injuries, coupled with poor medical treatment, often prevent workers from performing their fast-paced tasks.

Worse still, once a worker leaves Gildan, she is likely to have irreversible health problems which preclude her from finding alternate employment. Some women need crutches to walk; others can't hold their babies or do housework. Savage poverty imposes itself on their already precarious existences, and decimated social institutions perpetuate the misery.

Healthcare, schooling, and other social/public institutions are abysmal, and only those (few) with money get adequate service.

What are the drivers behind such misery?

Those who control the levels of power in Honduras are governed by interests that do not include the common good, consequently, society and the economy have been spirally downward since the coup.

Prior to the 2009 military coup, freedom and democracy were making inroads into the malaise, but now the power structure looks something like this:

At the top of this asymmetrical and entirely dysfunctional political economy are transnational corporations, including banks. They are seamlessly aligned with governments in Canada and the U.S. They tacitly, if not overtly, drive foreign policy decisions.

On the ground in Honduras looms the invisible hand of the U.S. military, viewed by locals as an “occupying force”, that arguably enables destabilization—drug trafficking has increased since the coup—and is allied with the corrupt dictator Juan Orlando Hernandez.

Locally, the nexus of powerful polities includes narco gangs, the police, the military, the para-police...and rich oligarch....

Corruption throughout society is so pervasive that people trying to make a living often have to pay extortion money not only to gangs, but also to the police.

Government Orders

Now, with a growing number of U.S. military bases and the murderous dictatorship of Juan Orlando Hernandez solidified, profits are basically guaranteed for transnational corporations.

As Canadians, we need to continue asking important questions. For example,

“Why are these “Free Trade” Agreements, such as the Canada-Honduras Free Trade Agreement, so secret?” and “Why have we chosen to profit from the misery of others?”

Once we get some answers, we might choose to pay a couple dollars more for our next T-shirt.—

This is who we are dealing with. This is the country we are trying to do a free trade agreement with.

By the way, in these agreements, we have provisions allowing companies to sue governments, similar to chapter 11 in NAFTA, if they are not treated to their liking. Theoretically, a Canadian company perpetuating injustices in Honduras could actually sue the Honduran government if it were not happy with the policies of that government.

Why are we signing an agreement with a country with this record of human rights abuse and that even allows our companies to continue this abuse in their country?

I think that is the question we have to answer here today before we talk about free trade with a country like Honduras.

• (1620)

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the real concern that we on this side of the House have is not with this agreement, nor the CETA agreement, but just with the New Democratic Party's view of trade in general and its spectre that trade is bad for our country, despite two million jobs being attributable to NAFTA, which the NDP opposed. That member, in his own release on the European trade agreement, said that it would put the Canadian way of life under threat. Whether it is small trade agreements or large, the NDP's philosophical opposition to trade is that it is holding back our economy.

If that member is not in favour of even a huge agreement like CETA, is he not in favour of trade at all?

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that my hon. colleague is reading the stuff I have put out. That is excellent, and I thank him for that.

We have to look at trade agreements as benefiting our country first and foremost, and second, to look at what effect they will have on the countries we deal with. Here we are talking specifically about what is happening in Honduras, but I will go a bit further since my colleague mentioned CETA.

If someone were to come from another planet and say there are trade agreements being signed by this country that allow foreign corporations to sue our federal government so that our tax dollars go to fight these lawsuits or pay out to these corporations, we would think these were ludicrous. We have had companies suing our federal government, using our taxpayers' dollars, because they were not happy with our environmental laws or with what a provincial or municipal government was doing. Australia and other countries are removing provisions that something like Chapter 11.

If we include provisions in trade agreements that go against the best interests of our country, then we are bordering close to treason.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier today I asked a question of the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and I was really interested in his response. I wonder if that member concurs with the response by his colleague. Basically, I asked him if he were not in favour of having a free trade agreement with Honduras because of humanitarian concerns, would he not apply that same principle to trade in general? That is the essence of the question I asked him. The member responded by saying that if we use the same criteria for some of the countries we trade with, and with whom we do not have free trade agreements, then why are we trading with them?

Does that member agree with his NDP colleague?

• (1625)

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, do we apply the same criteria to every country that we deal with? There is trade and then there is free trade. Canada has been a trading nation for many years. We continue to trade with some countries that are dictatorships and countries that violate human rights. But there is the idea of free trade.

When we sign a free trade agreement, there should be certain criteria. Regardless of the country, if it does not meet the criteria of a free trade agreement, then we should not sign an agreement with it. In spite of my objections to CETA, for example, Europe meets the criteria that we have established for free trade, as does South Korea, in regard to human rights. There is free trade, which is preferential trade, and there is trade, which we have with the Soviet Union and other countries.

I am not sure if that answered my colleague's question but that is my comment.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, like me, members are concerned that we would be doing a trade deal with a country that is now the murder capital of the world. Since the coup, journalists, trade union workers, members of the clergy, anyone who is speaking out for justice and democracy is at risk of being murdered with no effort being made by the state to bring the murderers to justice. That means that this trade deal would sanction a government that is behaving in ways that we should not encourage.

Does my hon. colleague think there is still time to get the current administration to rethink this trade deal?

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, there always has to be time and we always have to hope.

Yes, I believe that the government could look at this agreement and say that it would give them some time to clean up these violations. We could send in a team to observe what is going on, have a look at our companies that are there, and make sure that they are observing the laws of Honduras. If all of that was put in place, then the government could sign on the dotted line.

Government Orders

That would be the reasonable thing to do. It would respect the people of Honduras and go against the human rights violations that are currently in place.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on this topic. I have been to Honduras more than once. It is a wonderful country with very warm, friendly, and welcoming people. They are a very proud and hard-working people. I am so pleased to see this agreement now come before the House.

Canada's development solidarity with Honduras is truly helping to build prosperity in that country. I also want to say a little bit about how we in Canada are helping to address inequality, social exclusion, and insecurity in that country. This work provides a positive platform, of course, for the Canada–Honduras free trade agreement.

Our Conservative government believes strongly that engagement, not isolationism, is the best way to be a good neighbour and friend to Honduras. We want to be truly helpful in addressing its development, security, and human rights challenges. We profoundly disagree with the NDP approach, which can be summed up as: “The beatings will continue until morale improves”. Shame on them.

We are pleased to say that Canada is working on several fronts with the Honduran government in this regard. We are also proud that Canada is making a difference. Canada has a long-standing and substantial development relationship with Honduras.

Honduras is one of 20 countries of focus for Canada's development work. We have provided close to \$40 million in the last fiscal year. Canada also delivered close to \$70 million in security programming in all of Central America to support regional efforts, which include Honduras, to address insecurity in this region.

The people of Honduras appreciate their development and security partnership with Canada that has been provided over the years, and we have a strong relationship with that country, based on an open and frank dialogue. I have been there and have had these discussions. There are some wonderful leaders looking for friends and collaborators to help pull their country out of some of the deep difficulties they have faced for many years. These are issues important to both Canadians and the citizens of Honduras.

I would like to take a few minutes to talk about Honduras' challenging social economic situation and present some compelling statistics on poverty and insecurity in Honduras. These are issues which Honduras leaders are determined to address, and things like this new trade agreement will provide a real boost.

At this time, unfortunately, Honduras is one of the poorest and most unequal countries in the Americas. Sixty percent of the population of Honduras is considered poor. Nearly one-fifth live in extreme poverty. In fact, they live on less than \$1.25 a day.

The poverty in Honduras is concentrated in rural areas. It affects mostly women, young people, and indigenous communities. They need the kinds of opportunities that this trade agreement would provide. It goes without saying that this situation is not meeting the aspirations of the country's proud and hard-working citizens.

When I say “hard-working”, I would point out that Honduras' unemployment rate remains relatively low, but underemployment is huge. In fact, just over half of the total workforce is underemployed. It holds part-time jobs despite seeking full-time work, or the workforce is overqualified based on education, experience, and skills. They need opportunities.

In addition, Honduras' informal sector accounts for nearly three-quarters of non-agricultural employment and nearly 60% of total employment. Members can appreciate that many of these workers in the informal sector are therefore working under poor conditions in terms of safety, income, and social benefits.

● (1630)

A free trade agreement opens up the door. It provides certainty and a framework for Canadian investors and Canadian businesses to partner with Hondurans to provide the kind of strong, stable employment opportunities that Hondurans need and want.

Here is another huge challenge. Over half of Hondurans are under the age of 19. It is a very young population, so it does not take a genius to figure out that the lack of economic opportunities for these young people is a major driving force behind the country's persistent social and security problems. There are criminal elements who are very happy to draw young Hondurans into their net, and it is very sad to see that. Legitimate business opportunities are so needed to counteract that.

The Honduran government has made an effort to address poverty and security issues, but resources are scarce and progress has been slow.

The crime rate and insecurity have increased to the point where, today, this beautiful little country, this gem of a country, is one of the most violent in the world. I am sorry to say that Honduras has the highest intentional homicide rate in the world, averaging 20 murders per day, in addition to other violent crime. That is, to a large extent, criminal elements are having their way, using this country as a drug route and drawing young people into this terrible, violent activity.

That is why Canada's bilateral development partnership promotes sustainable economic growth through investment in rural development and works to reduce social exclusion and inequality through ongoing investments in health, education, human rights, and democratic development.

Canada is helping to achieve strong results toward increasing food security and securing the future of poor Honduran children and youth, particularly in rural areas.

Government Orders

We are making a real difference in the lives of small farmers and their families by sharing best practices that are improving their sustainable farming practices. To date, over 27,000 farmers have received critical collaboration to improve the quantity and quality of crops, access new markets, and diversify income. Many of these are now ready to integrate into more structured supply chains and access local, regional, and global markets, like Canada.

We are also collaborating to help strengthen health in this country, to improve the quality of education. I want to pay tribute to Dave Hubert and Canadian Peacemakers International, who are putting computers into rural villages and putting the country's education system on the computers. People in the villages and small towns come to these computer stations and work through the programs to increase their education through self-help programs. It is an amazing program by Canadian Peacemakers International.

We are working through the Organization of American States, the International Program for Professional Labour Administration—Americas to promote respect for international labour standards and to work with the leaders of Honduras on many fronts to lift this country up.

Prosperity, security, and democratic governance, including the full respect of human rights, go together. They are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. That is why this trade agreement is such good news, a bright light on the horizon for Honduras.

In short, this agreement would benefit Hondurans. It would also help create jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity for Canadians. That is called a win-win, and I hope that all members will leave aside the nonsensical rhetoric of the NDP and support this important new partnership with our friends in Honduras.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of Honduras and Canadian companies do not want a trade agreement at any cost. Everything being said in the House has to do with trade; however, there are still a lot of problems in Honduras, and trade agreements will not solve all of those problems.

Furthermore, when we enter into a trade agreement, we have the upper hand. That is precisely the right time to use the negotiations for that agreement as an opportunity to try to solve those problems. The economic aspect alone will not solve everything. We therefore need to take this a little further, beyond a simple trade agreement, to help a country overcome the problems that the member talked about earlier.

[*English*]

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: Of course we do, Mr. Speaker. I just talked about all of the partnerships, the sharing of best practices, and all the work that has been done by Canada in that country. We are good friends with Honduras. There are many NGOs working with Honduras, like Peacemakers International. The Honduran people have strong friendships with them.

Yes, the free trade agreement is only a part of what we want to do, but it is an important part. It is a part that Hondurans have longed for, worked for, dreamed of, and it is finally in the House, its dream

coming to fruition. I cannot imagine why the NDP would want to stick a knife in something so important to this little country.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to say it has long been a dream of mine to stand up in the House of Commons and ask the member for Calgary—Nose Hill a question. Since I have the floor, I want to tell the House what a wonderful person and mentor to me she has been, and it is a great pleasure to stand here and ask her the following question.

Many of the assertions today in debate have been that Canada somehow has not contributed to cultural and social change in Honduras. I know that the member did a lot of good work in this particular country during her time as minister of state for the Americas. Some of the statistics that I have around Canada's recent contributions, include our co-operation programming through DFAITD, in which we provided over \$39 million to the country in support for food security, sustainable economic growth, addressing issues related to human rights and gender equality.

Can the member talk about some of the assertions that have been made here today?

I believe one of the members of the NDP today said that this country is not an important trading partner for Canada. Could the member for Calgary—Nose Hill talk about Canada's contributions to Honduras in terms of our international aid and what that has done for the community, and also to sort of speak against the assertion that somehow trade cannot help social change in a country?

• (1640)

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her kind words.

To give some specifics, Canada's support has led to a reduction in newborn mortality in Honduras by 11% in the regions we have concentrated on. We have provided health and counselling services to over 85,000 young people. We have contributed to reducing primary school dropout rates, so that now the dropout rate is only 1%, and to reducing the average of grade repetition rates to under 5%. This progress is important. These are real people. These are people who are striving and struggling. Corruption and insecurity is not something confined to Honduras. It is part and parcel of the entire region. It is preyed on by criminal elements and those in the drug trade. It has a very young population and very low incomes.

I am proud of the work that we have done to be a friend and neighbour to Honduras. Honduras is important to me. Honduras is important to Canada. It may not be important to the NDP, but even the poorest and smallest among us deserve support, respect, and friendship.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this free trade agreement. I was a member of the Standing Committee on International Trade when I was first elected, and I think it is a very important committee. I do have to wonder about one thing. Not only should Canada create trade relationships with other countries, but it should also use its status—which unfortunately has diminished since the Conservatives won a majority government in the House of Commons, and even before that—to initiate change in countries where people are more vulnerable and where the political will to do so might unfortunately be lacking.

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: That is not true.

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Yes, it is true, Mr. Speaker. I think my colleague across the aisle, who just shouted at me, did not understand what I said. I did not say Canada never got involved; I said that Canada should use its status to initiate change in some countries. I am not saying that Canada was never involved in Honduras. I simply wanted to correct my hon. colleague.

I understand that Canada donates money to Honduras through a number of international co-operation programs. I also understand that it is trying to achieve certain things. However, what message is Canada sending by signing such an agreement? That is what I wonder about. This is not the first free trade agreement the Conservatives have rushed through behind closed doors and with no transparency.

What message are we sending to a government that, unfortunately, does not respect human rights? We will lose our best bargaining chip if we sign this free trade agreement. Then, when we negotiate with the government, what will we say? We will be making our demands after we have already signed the agreement. We need to do that before we sign. We need to ask our economic partner to meet our criteria before we sign the agreement.

I could give all sorts of examples. For one, if we tell a child that we will give him \$5 if he does the dishes, then he must do the dishes before he gets the money. That is a basic principle. It is not a political ideology. It is common sense. We must ask our economic partner to meet our criteria before signing the agreement. We must not sign the agreement and then wash our hands of the situation, saying that we have done our duty as a government and as a nation. If we reach out to a country to sign a free trade agreement, does that mean that what happens afterward does not concern us? No. That is not how things work. That is what is called cheap diplomacy. The Conservatives' international trade policy is basically cheap diplomacy that puts commercial interests before everything else.

I would like to quote a witness who appeared before the Standing Committee on International Trade, Sheila Katz, a representative of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation's Americas Policy Group. I would like to quote what she had to say because she addresses this very point. She said:

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.

...[Let us take for] example Canada's eager recognition of a president who came to power in a military coup in Honduras in 2009. This 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.

• (1645)

As a number of my colleagues have already mentioned, the homicide rate in Honduras is the highest in the world. Opposing this free trade agreement is not just about political ideology. It is common sense. It is too bad that my colleagues across the way and the Conservative government are ignoring common sense and using easy political attacks just to make us look bad. To me, it is the Conservatives who look bad.

There is no basic principle that could defend Honduras' record when it comes to protection for human rights and individual freedoms, the homicide rate and drug trafficking. The Conservatives cannot justify this agreement.

It is true that it looks good from an economic perspective. However, can we really validate this type of behaviour? We are losing our clout and Canada's fundamental role in this type of negotiations. We must not sign the agreement and wash our hands of everything that is happening. On the contrary, before signing the agreement, we must ask our economic partners to meet the basic criteria recognized around the world as being the fundamental principles of human rights.

My colleagues across the way can attack us all they want. I have no problem rising in the House to say that they made a mistake or to vote against this free trade agreement.

It is true that Honduras is an economic partner of Canada. I understand that. However, Honduras has been widely criticized by all the Latin American countries, the European Union, the United States and the United Nations General Assembly. All of our largest partners have denounced the situation.

Once again, in typical fashion, the Conservatives have decided to ignore the terrible situation and move forward by recognizing a government that does not respect fundamental human rights. It makes absolutely no sense. This is a prime example of the Conservatives' agenda.

Honduras has the highest murder rate in the world. What is more, according to Transparency International, Honduras is the most corrupt country in Central America.

How can the government negotiate a free trade agreement with a country that is considered to be the most corrupt in Central America and not even mention that?

None of my colleagues who spoke today condemned the situation in Honduras. Can we really trust the Conservatives when they tell us not to worry and that they will ask Honduras to abide by our highest standards? No, we cannot trust them. They cannot even condemn the situation in Parliament. They are not even able to say that many NGOs rank the Honduran government as the most corrupt in the world. We cannot trust them.

Government Orders

I just introduced my private member's bill on corporate social responsibility, which is another big problem. The extractive sector is a significant commercial interest for Canada, and the provisions to protect investors are an important part of the agreement. Mining companies, which have gotten caught up in conflicts, are unfortunately at more of an advantage in this free trade agreement than the very vulnerable people of Honduras.

• (1650)

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to congratulate my colleague on introducing her bill. This is always an extremely important moment in a parliamentary democracy. The member's speeches are always passionate and we know they are heartfelt.

I am always shocked when the Conservative and Liberal members say that the NDP is opposed to trade and international agreements. They have all forgotten the Canada-Jordan Free Trade Agreement, but that is not the issue.

Some claim that it is sometimes better to do business with countries that have serious problems and that we should sign treaties with them. They believe that we must do business with them and convert them in the process. I cannot believe that the members opposite do not recognize the human rights problems in Honduras.

What concerns me is that the Conservatives are not talking about this. The member dealt with this aspect at length, but I would nevertheless like her to answer my question. I am wondering whether they are really going to do what it takes to change their ways and to ensure that there is strong protection for human rights.

In this case, would it not be more prudent to ensure that the countries we trade with are good international citizens? Or should we instead, like the leader of the third party at the other end of the House, congratulate the government and then ask for a copy of the agreements?

• (1655)

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

Several of the witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on International Trade said that the Conservatives' first mistake was making Canada the first country to recognize the Honduran government.

This proves that they wanted to advance their trade agenda with no regard for the extremely difficult and problematic situation in Honduras. As a result, we have lost our key bargaining chip.

Typically, you do not ask a state to respect human rights after signing a free trade agreement. There are lawyers, economists and business people in the House, and they know that that is not how things work.

We have to ensure that the economic partners are on equal footing before signing an agreement. That is how it should work. The Conservatives' logic makes no sense because it eliminates our key bargaining chip.

No Conservative member mentioned the reports by the UN and various NGOs detailing the extremely serious problems with human

rights, journalistic freedom, the highest murder rate in the world and corruption.

Can we trust the Conservatives? No.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would have liked to hear my colleague's thoughts on the Canadian mines in Honduras, particularly the Goldcorp mine in San Martin.

Before 2009, there were complaints about the use of toxic chemicals in this open-pit mine. Then-president Manuel Zelaya had drafted a legal framework to crack down on mines. Just a few days before the measure was to be passed in 2009, there was a coup. The subject never came up again.

I would like my colleague to tell us what she thinks of this.

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

As he knows, this is an important issue for me. I have been working on it for three years, and I am very pleased to have introduced my bill today to create an ombudsman for the corporate social responsibility of Canadian extractive corporations.

Canadian companies must be subject to the same rules as any government or individual and must respect human rights. It is extremely important for the Canadian government to understand that, at this time, it cannot condone such extensive and significant human rights abuses.

What message is the Conservative government sending the Honduran authorities? Unfortunately, it is not a clear message asking them to immediately pass regulations. It is a meaningless message.

[English]

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, others have mentioned in the House the many benefits this agreement would bring to Canadians. Today, I would like to speak of the importance to Canadian investors. Foreign investment is crucial to any modern economy. It not only brings with it jobs, but it increases the transfer of knowledge, efficiencies, and economies of scale to the host economy.

Foreign investment builds people-to-people ties, helps strengthen the country's competitiveness, and in turn paves the way for new opportunities for Canadian companies in dynamic fast-growing markets around the world, markets like Honduras.

Investment opportunities help Canadian companies remain globally competitive by ensuring their integration into the global economy. At the end of 2012, Canadian direct investment abroad had reached an all-time high of \$711.6 billion. The value of the stock in foreign direct investment within Canada is also impressive. By the end of 2012, Canada had attracted more than \$633 billion in foreign direct investment.

The global economy has faced tremendous challenges over the last few years; but throughout, Canada proved to be a safe harbour as the global economy faced challenges. It is no wonder Canada has proven to be such a draw for foreign investment.

Government Orders

Canada is home to 26 of the *Financial Times* global 500 companies. More top companies have headquarters in Canada than in Germany, India, Brazil, Russia, or Italy.

Canada has outpaced its G7 partners, with its economy growing the fastest in the last 10 years as a result of low corporate taxes, prudent fiscal management, a business climate that rewards innovation and entrepreneurship, and an open economy that welcomes foreign investment.

That being said, we all know Canada is not an island. We are not immune to the global economic turbulence. That is why we remain focused on helping create more jobs for today and tomorrow with ambitious pro-trade and pro-economic growth measures.

Canada must remain vigilant to ensure that our economic fundamentals remain strong at home and that Canadian businesses continue to have an increasing number of investment opportunities abroad. This is why it is important for us to leverage the investment relationships we have around the world with countries like Honduras.

Canadian direct investment in Honduras was estimated by Statistics Canada to be \$105 million at the end of 2007. This was predominantly in the financial services and mining sectors, both of which offer strong potential for growth; and these opportunities are just the beginning for Canadian investors.

We have heard about the tremendous opportunities that exist in Honduras with respect to large infrastructure projects. These projects include the building or improvement of ports, roads, hospitals, bridges, and airports. A country like Canada, with so much expertise in these areas, can take advantage of these significant opportunities in Honduras.

Just these few examples clearly illustrate how important it is to enhance our investment relationship with countries like Honduras.

A free trade agreement with Honduras would provide investors from both countries with the benefits that come with enhanced investment protection and stability. These provisions, which would promote the two-way flow of investments, provide a range of obligations that benefit investors from both countries. They are designed to protect investment abroad through legally binding rights and obligations. The investment obligations of this agreement incorporate several key principles, including treatment that is non-discriminatory and that meets a minimum standard, protection against expropriation without compensation, and the free transfer of funds.

In short, Canadian investors would be treated in a non-discriminatory manner. This dynamic would help foster an investment relationship between our two countries and pave the way for an increased flow of investments in the years ahead.

This agreement would also provide investors with access to transparent, impartial, and binding dispute settlement.

I would like to make clear to the House, however, that while this agreement would ensure that investors and their investments are protected, it would not prevent either Canada or Honduras from regulating in the public interest with respect to such areas as health,

safety, and the environment. This is the position our government has consistently taken in our trade and investment agreements.

The investment provisions also include an article on corporate social responsibility. This provision recognizes that Canada expects and encourages Canadian companies operating abroad to observe internationally recognized standards of responsible business conduct. This provision also helps level the playing field for Canadian investors when they invest abroad, by encouraging CSR principles among all investors.

Fundamentally, this agreement would send a positive signal to our trade and investment partners around the world. The agreement would enhance investment opportunities for Canadian investors in one of the most dynamic markets of the Americas. To date, Canadian companies have shown a significant interest in investing in the Honduran economy.

● (1700)

It is important this legislation moves quickly through this House. As time lapses, opportunities for Canadian investors are placed at risk. That is why it is critical that Canadian companies have the ability to strike while the iron is hot.

The United States is Canada's biggest competitor in Honduras, and many Canadian goods and services compete directly with those of the United States in Honduras. Our government will not stand by and let Canadian companies compete on an uneven playing field.

I encourage all members not to delay approval of the agreement. Our government has been very clear that trade and investment are vital to economic growth and the long-term prosperity of Canadians. That is why our government continues to move forward with an ambitious pro-trade plan that focuses on creating partnerships in key markets around the world.

Our government is committed to doing everything we can do to open doors for Canadians. That is why I ask all hon. members to show their support for the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement.

● (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question for the government is rather simple.

Historically, Honduras is undemocratic, does not respect human rights and mistreats its citizens. Drug trafficking is rampant and the extent of corruption is extraordinary.

Why does the government not have the will and the strength to use a free trade agreement to impose international laws or Canadian values in order to ensure a better future for Honduran society?

My question is simple. I do not see the government making any effort to head in that direction.

Government Orders

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, we will certainly not encourage a country to adopt the democratic principles of a country like Canada by ignoring problems with democracy.

We know that there has been financial support in a number of areas, especially when it comes to setting an example regarding labour and occupational health standards. We have also provided training for those working in the area of justice in Honduras. Additionally, Foreign Affairs provides financial support to encourage respect for human rights.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the speech by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice. In fact, I greatly appreciate the work we do together on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I will emphasize human rights in keeping with the question by the hon. member who preceded me.

Can the parliamentary secretary say a few words about other efforts and the types of initiatives that have been taken? Earlier, my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île spoke of the importance of putting the cards on the table during negotiations, and she explained that when we do business with people, we have to see what is involved.

What obligations did the government impose on itself to follow up on these extremely serious and major human rights violations in Honduras?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her good question. As far as justice is concerned, for example, so far we have provided funding to train people working in the field of justice in Honduras.

From 2009 to 2013, \$4.9 million was invested to train police officers and those who work in justice, such as prosecutors, judges and crime scene technicians. That money was used to provide them with the necessary training to truly and finally have a more stable justice system.

There was also a coup d'état in 2009. Since then, funding has been provided to establish a type of truth and reconciliation commission in Honduras, in order to address human rights violations.

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier I spoke about the situation in Honduras and the murders and assassinations that are not reported to the police and whose perpetrators are not prosecuted, which means that people and their families cannot get justice.

I also learned that journalists, peasant activists and members of the LGBT community are particularly vulnerable to attacks. However, the government is not doing anything to bring those responsible to justice or to offer protection to people at risk.

Does Canada really want to sign free trade agreements—and we know that free trade agreements require nations to respect one another—with governments that can turn a blind eye to the murders of members of minorities for unknown reasons? I still do not understand why the government wants to sign agreements with this kind of country.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, as I already said, if we turn our backs on abuses, we will not be setting a good example of how to act democratically. I mentioned that financial support had been provided

to encourage the country to respect human rights. This financial support needs to continue, and as the trade and contractual relationship develops, there will be more faith in our system and more trade between the people of Honduras and Canada. This will enable them to see how fantastic democracy in Canada is, and they will be able to adopt this model in their country in the future.

● (1710)

[English]

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the House to talk about the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement.

Our Conservative government has made very clear the priority it places on implementing free trade agreements that will help Canadian business compete in overseas markets. In an export-driven economy, Canadian companies, producers, and investors grow when they have greater access to international markets. One in five jobs in Canada are related to trade. It is clear that jobs in communities across Canada depend on the business we do with other countries.

Our Conservative government committed to protecting and strengthening the long-term financial security of hard-working Canadians, and this is why this government has established the most ambitious pro-trade plan in Canadian history. We recognize that bilateral and regional trade brings ever-increasing prosperity to Canada and Canadians.

By signing these trade agreements, the Government of Canada helps increase the export of Canadian products to rapidly growing markets around the world, such as Honduras. Deepening our trade relationship with these emerging markets is important for jobs and for the long-term prosperity of the Canadian economy. Trade agreements promote Canadian exports to foreign markets by increasing the flow of products to FTA partners. In fact, statistics demonstrate that trade flows more than double with our FTA partners after 10 years.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of trade agreements on various sectors of the economy. For example, it has been shown that the free trade agreement between Canada and the United States led to an improvement of 13.8% in productivity in the Canadian manufacturing sector, a remarkable trade-related achievement. In turn, this increase in productivity led to higher wages and higher standards of living.

The Conservative government understands that by improving access to foreign markets for Canadian businesses, we are supporting domestic economic growth and are creating new opportunities for Canadians. The benefits these trade agreements provide are clear. That is why our government is in the midst of the most ambitious pursuit of new and expanded trade and investment agreements in Canadian history.

Since 2006, Canada has concluded free trade agreements with 10 countries: Colombia, Jordan, Peru; the European Free Trade Association member states of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland; Honduras; Panama; and most recently, South Korea. As well, the historic agreement with European Union represents the most significant trade initiative since the North American Free Trade Agreement and could potentially boost our bilateral trade with this important partner by 20%. It would also provide a \$12 billion annual boost to Canada's economy, which is equivalent to a \$1,000 increase in the average Canadian family's income, or almost 80,000 new jobs.

At a time of such economic uncertainty, Canadian companies welcome the many benefits a Canada-EU trade agreement would bring. We are also intensifying our focus on the Asia Pacific region. On October 8, 2012, Canada officially joined the trans-Pacific partnership. This initiative is currently being negotiated by a group of 12 countries, which includes Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States, Vietnam, and now Japan. TPP membership will bring jobs, growth, and prosperity to hard-working Canadians. The potential benefits of this initiative are enormous. The TPP market represents more than 658 million people and a combined GDP of over \$20.5 trillion.

• (1715)

Just last week, the Minister of International Trade announced the launch of the fifth round of negotiations toward a free trade agreement with Japan. In addition, Canada is working to modernize its existing bilateral free trade agreements with Chile, Costa Rica, and Israel. These were signed under the former Liberal government, so of course we need to improve them.

All these initiatives are critical for the economic future of our country. To grow at home, Canadian enterprise must be allowed to succeed abroad. It must be able to compete in a predictable, transparent, and rules-based trading environment. More importantly, Canadian firms must be able to compete on a level playing field. They must not be at a competitive disadvantage in markets where other countries have trade agreements in place.

There are a growing number of countries where Canadian companies are at a competitive disadvantage, because their competitors have preferential market access under some form of preferential trade agreement. This is precisely what will continue if we do not sign these trade agreements. Honduras is an example of this.

While the House debates the merits of a trade agreement with Honduras, the United States and the European Union are moving toward implementation of their respective trade agreements with this prosperous economy. The United States-Honduras trade promotion agreement entered into force in 2006. Honduras signed a free trade agreement with the European Union that entered into force on August 1, 2013.

Many Canadian goods and services are in direct competition with those of the United States and the European Union in Honduras. Those trade agreements will provide American and European firms with preferential access to the Honduran market for a number of products that are key exports of Canadian firms. Right now, Canadian firms exporting goods such as frozen french fries, pharmaceuticals, pulp and paper, and vehicles are at a competitive

Government Orders

disadvantage. They continue to face difficulties because products from the United States enjoy preferential access.

In my home province of Saskatchewan, export sectors include linseed oil, industrial machinery, plastics, pulses, and beef and pork. All of these sectors would have preferential access after ratification of the agreement.

Canada cannot afford to sit on the sidelines while other countries vigorously pursue trade deals to secure better market access for their products and services. The Conservative government will not stand by and let Canadian companies compete on an uneven playing field. It is imperative that we implement the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement to ensure that Canadian companies remain competitive in the Honduran market and reap the benefits of this trade agreement.

The benefits to Saskatchewan and to all of Canada that would be generated from this trade agreement are very clear.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to ask the member opposite whether he knows that Honduras tolerates companies that damage the environment, violate the rights of indigenous peoples, disregard the wishes of the local communities and allow paramilitary death squads to intimidate citizens and commit acts of violence against people who are protesting peacefully?

Why does his party support this kind of country, and does it think we should reward these countries with preferential trade agreements?

• (1720)

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, the Partnership for Development Innovative Branch is from the province of British Columbia. The Honduras budget, \$1,099,278, is working with the Honduran law enforcement and justice institutions to reduce impunity and improve human rights.

There is something in place. It is through the University of British Columbia. It works with the Honduras program. There are also trainees from the training program working in internships in the Canadian justice sector. There is work between Canada and Honduras in terms of human relationships. That is in effect and it is growing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable for Canada to close its eyes and shake hands with Honduras when that country does not respect human rights.

Government Orders

Criminals go virtually unpunished in Honduras. According to Honduran government statistics released by PEN International, police investigate less than 1% of crimes in Honduras.

How can the Conservatives make plum deals with a country like Honduras? We have already mentioned that Canada is a role model for Honduras. Before signing an economic agreement with us, why does Honduras not take responsibility and investigate the murders that take place every week, in order to bring justice to victims?

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, let me share this with members:

Canada's Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START) and the Deployment for Democratic Development [the DDD] have supported the implementation of recommendations of the Honduras Truth and Reconciliation Commission [the TRC]. The TRC was established following the 2009 coup d'état to identify mechanisms to avoid repetition of similar events. START supported the TRC Monitoring Office, working under Honduras' Justice and Human Rights Secretariat, for the effective implementation of recommendations....

It is safe to say that it takes time to create change, so Canada is not only working on the trade agreement, it is working with the human element to create that change. I am sure that we are going to see the evidence of that in the very near future.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to talk about the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement and the many benefits it would bring to our agriculture and agri-food producers and exporters.

First I would like to emphasize that our Conservative government clearly understands that our standard of living and Canadians' future prosperity will be generated by deepening and broadening our trading relationships, which is something missing from the comments earlier today by the Liberals and the New Democrats. That is why our government is committed to securing and deepening access to traditional markets such as the United States while broadening and expanding access to dynamic and fast-growing economies around the world.

Pursuing new trade opportunities is a win-win situation for Canada and its trading partners. Canadians benefit from the jobs, prosperity, and consumer benefits that come from increased trade. In turn, our international partners, many of which represent developing countries, benefit from the ever-expanding middle class and improved standard of living that is lifting more of the world's population out of poverty. This was mentioned earlier today by the member for Mississauga South in her comments.

We are also creating new opportunities for our exporters, opportunities that are bringing jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity to hard-working Canadians.

As Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector becomes more modern, innovative, and competitive, the sector is becoming a more significant part of Canada's economy. In fact, in 2012 the agriculture and agri-food industry accounted for one in eight jobs in Canada, which translated to employment for more than two million Canadians. It also accounted for 8% of Canada's gross domestic product.

In 2012 our overall agriculture and agri-food exports exceeded \$44 billion, ranking Canada the fifth-largest exporter of agriculture and agri-food products in the world. That is why our government

continues to work tirelessly to improve access to international markets for our agricultural exporters.

Whereas the Liberals completed only three trade agreements over their 13 years in government, in eight years Canada has signed or concluded new free trade agreements in 38 countries, including Colombia; Jordan; Panama; Peru; the European Free Trade Association, including Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland; Honduras; the 28 members of the European Union; and, most recently, South Korea. Sadly, the ideologically driven NDP has consistently opposed these agreements.

The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement we are debating here today is an example of the actions our government is taking to support Canadians as they compete and win in the global economy. Our government will ensure that Canadian agriculture and agri-food producers and exporters remain competitive with exporters to Honduras, and I want to emphasize why this is so important.

As members of this House are aware, Honduras has also concluded free trade agreements with the United States and the European Union. The United States is Canada's biggest competitor in Honduras, and many Canadian exports are in direct competition with those of the United States. Canadian products are now at a competitive disadvantage, as they continue to face duties, while exports from the United States enjoy duty-free access. Over 87% of U.S. exports of consumer and industrial goods to Honduras are now entering duty free.

Our government will not let Canadians compete on an unlevel playing field. It is time this House passed this agreement.

Our agreement with Honduras is a comprehensive agreement that covers market access for goods, including agriculture and agri-food products. Some of these products include Canada's high-quality beef, pork, wheat products, frozen french fries, malt, maple syrup, pulses, whisky, canola seed, and canary seed. These products would enter Honduras duty free upon implementation of this FTA. This is welcome news for our agriculture and agri-food industries and for our exporters.

● (1725)

For instance, our beef and pork exporters could take immediate advantage of restored access to the Honduran market following the recent approval of the Canadian meat inspection system. Our pork sector would also reap benefits from an FTA with Honduras. Canada's exporters of purebred breeding swine, swine genetics, and pork offal would benefit from the immediate elimination of Honduran tariffs of up to 15%. As well, cuts of Canada's fresh, chilled, and frozen pork would gain from immediate duty-free access. Our pork industry is optimistic about the potential for an increase in our pork exports to Honduras.

Government Orders

Canada's exporters of frozen french fries would also benefit from the immediate elimination of Honduran tariffs of 15%. Likewise, our pulse exporters would benefit not only from the immediate elimination of tariffs ranging from 10% to 15% but also from the eventual removal of tariffs of up to 30% within the next 10 years.

I have outlined only some of the benefits of the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement for Canadian agricultural exporters and their producers. Suffice to say, the Canada-Honduras agreement is excellent news for the Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector.

This agreement would support more Canadian jobs by enhancing our ability to export more goods and services to this market, including agricultural goods. Expanding Canada's trade and investment ties around the world will help protect and create new jobs and prosperity for hard-working Canadians.

All these initiatives are critical to the economic future of our country, yet they are also a representation of Canada's past. Canada has always been a trading nation. This year we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Twenty years ago, trade within the North American region was over U.S. \$288 billion. In 2012, total trilateral merchandise trade reached nearly \$1.1 trillion. That is nearly a fourfold increase.

Canada is now the top export destination for 38 out of 50 U.S. states. Of course, the U.S. remains by far the top export destination of all provinces. Over eight million U.S. jobs depend on trade and investment with Canada, and over 2.4 million Canadian jobs, one in seven, depend on exports to the U.S.

NAFTA has provided a solid foundation for Canada's future prosperity on which Canada continues to build to advance North American trade and competitiveness.

Canada has also punched above its weight when it comes to multilateral trade. By continuing to actively pursue broader market access and new investment opportunities, we are providing Canadian businesses and exporters with access on preferred terms to the largest, most dynamic, fastest-growing economies and regions around the world. That is why the implementation of this free trade agreement, and all free trade agreements, is a priority for this government.

I ask hon. members in the House to support Bill C-20.

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, I feel as though I have landed on a Conservative-Liberal planet that is obsessed with free trade agreements.

I would like to talk more specifically about the Conservative government's track record when it comes to free trade agreements. The Conservatives boast about signing more of these agreements than the Liberals. However, I would like to remind hon. members that, under the Conservatives, Canada's has gone from a \$26 billion trade surplus to a \$62 billion trade deficit.

How has Canada benefited from all these free trade agreements thus far? To date, the NDP has supported one of the free trade agreements. We were not satisfied with the others because of the humanitarian values of the countries in question, among other things.

How can my colleague justify the fact that Canada now has a \$62 billion trade deficit when we had a \$26 billion surplus when his party took office?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the NDP and we on the Conservative side of the House have different views of trade agreements. It is clear from the NDP trade critic, who has been quoted as saying that countries like Honduras, Colombia, Peru, Costa Rica, and others are not key economies with any kind of strategic value for Canada.

Clearly, when we can provide trade with countries like Honduras and some of the others that New Democrats have listed, we not only improve our own standard of living by providing more jobs and security here in our own country but also improve the lives of the people in those countries.

I have had the opportunity to visit a few of them, and we should do anything we can to try to promote trade with them, because they get to export their products in some of these cases as well. When a country relies as heavily on trade as Honduras does, this is a big benefit.

I talked about the benefits to the agricultural sector more than some of the others, but it would certainly be a benefit to us in terms of industrial machinery. The tariff on that is in the neighbourhood of 15%, and it would be eliminated. The tariffs on aerospace would be eliminated as well. That is a big industry in Manitoba, the province I come from. There are a number of other industries in coastal provinces that would benefit from this agreement as well. Certainly the plastic industries would gain from a trade agreement with Honduras.

In replying today to the same question that was just asked, one of my other colleagues indicated that there was a recession in 2008. Very clearly, we are all in recovery from that 2008 recession, and Honduras and the Central American countries are no different.

● (1735)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but notice that a number of Conservative members of Parliament stand in their place and talk about Bill C-20 and make reference to the fact that they have 38 free trade agreements under this particular Prime Minister. It is important that we distinguish, when we talk about the number of 38, one of them is with the European Union, and the European Union is 28 of that 38.

From my understanding, and I look for the member's comment, it is not the traditional type of agreement that we are talking about today. For example, in the case of the European Union and those 28 countries, there is no legislation before the House today regarding free trade.

Government Orders

I am wondering if the member might be able to inform the House as to when he believes we will actually have the legislation for the European Union agreement. If he likes, he could also provide comment on the pork industry in Honduras. The trade agreement would be of great benefit, we anticipate, in Manitoba, particularly in his riding.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the member for Winnipeg North and the years I spent in the Manitoba legislature with him.

Certainly the pork industry would benefit from this measure. As I have indicated, there is a tariff that would be removed, which would certainly help our Maple Leaf plant in Manitoba, which is located in Brandon, as the member has indicated. However, these are strategic agreements that we need in order to continue with trade.

The member is right in regard to the European Union trade agreement. It is 28 countries, and as was indicated in last fall's throne speech, it is a memorandum of understanding that we hope will be signed by all of those countries in the next two years.

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have heard, our Conservative government is undertaking the most ambitious trade agenda in Canadian history.

To date, the government has signed 38 trade agreements, and whether they are with countries large or small, each one is important. I want to underscore that because trade is both an opportunity and a necessity in Canada right now. Canada cannot consume all the products that we can produce, and there are other countries that need the products we produce.

In fact, 2013 was the most successful year for Canadian trade in history. We reached the historic Canada-EU comprehensive economic and trade agreement. We brought into force or signed free trade agreements with three priority countries. We concluded or brought into force a record ten foreign investment promotion and protection agreements.

The Minister of International Trade also unveiled Canada's new global market action plan, or GMAP. The GMAP is a comprehensive pro-trade and pro-investment plan that reflects a changing global landscape. It is focusing on core Canadian strengths.

It aligns Canada's trade, development, and foreign policy tools to advance our commercial interests around the world. It sets concrete targets to grow the presence of Canada's small and medium enterprises in emerging markets. This is where a lot of the job creation has taken place in Canada and where it will take place in the future.

The year 2014 is shaping up as another real banner year, with the Canada-Korea free trade agreement and the launch of negotiations on an expanded Canada-Israel FTA. The Prime Minister and the Minister of International Trade have secured Canada's status as a global champion of trade.

The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement is a high-quality, comprehensive agreement. It provides enhanced market access opportunities for producers, manufacturers, and exporters from every province and territory by eliminating tariffs. We have heard several

of the members of Parliament from those provinces talking about that today.

This is very good news for my particular province of Alberta. For Alberta, a free trade agreement with Honduras will benefit exporters through the elimination of tariffs on a number of key provincial exports. Alberta's merchandise exports to Honduras, while they were a modest \$629,000, showed an increase of nearly 200% from 2012. They are set to grow even further with the implementation of the Honduras free trade agreement.

Each of these agreements, as I have said, is important to growing our customer base and spreading our global reach. Each new opportunity means more jobs for Canadians.

Agriculture and agri-food products from Alberta, a key sector, is going to see a reduction in Honduran tariffs with this agreement. With more than 51-million acres of land used for crop and livestock production, Alberta produces an abundant supply of world-class agricultural commodities. In fact, the agriculture and agri-food sector contributed 2% to Alberta's GDP in 2012 and employed nearly 76,000 Albertans.

With this agreement in force, those agriculture and agri-food products can be competitive in the Honduran market, which is estimated by the Central American Economic Integration Secretariat to be \$1.3 billion annually.

However, this is really a story about beef. One exciting and growing agri-food export area to Honduras is Alberta beef. On November 5 of last year, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food announced full market access in Honduras for Canada's world-class beef and pork exports.

Upon entry into force, the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement will immediately provide duty-free access for high-quality cuts of Canadian beef, under a combined quota of 500 tons. Each year, that volume will grow.

After 15 years, Canada will have duty-free and quota-free access to the Honduran market for all types of beef. Honduran duties on beef offal currently sit at between 10% and 15%. These will be eliminated immediately upon implementation of this agreement.

I have a personal connection to this story because ranching runs in my family. My uncles have been ranchers in Alberta. My cousins are ranchers. In fact one of my uncles, Rodney James, brought Charolais Cattle to Canada.

We want to see the Alberta beef market expanded, with markets like Honduras and other markets around the world. Beef production is Alberta's largest agricultural sector, and it adds more than \$12.7 million to the economy.

Government Orders

● (1740)

Alberta is also the largest cattle-producing province in Canada, with 44% of the total, or nearly 4.87 million head in 2012. Nearly 7% of that production is being exported to countries outside of Canada and the United States. This free trade agreement with Honduras would enhance that. The Honduran market is a dynamic and growing one. It is growing between 3% and 4% annually, which is a nice clip. With full market access for beef in the Honduras free trade agreement, the time now is ripe to expand our beef production.

More and more Hondurans are moving up into the growing middle class every day. Studies show that these kinds of customers have a growing appetite for high-quality agriculture and agri-food products like Canadian beef. With tariffs on Canadian beef being eliminated, we could help satisfy the demand there and see more Hondurans using more Canadian beef in their dishes.

It should also be noted that Canada's development program is also promoting sustainable economic growth and development in Honduras through investments in rural development. We are working to reduce social exclusion and inequality, with ongoing investments in other social programs. This approach is creating opportunities for Hondurans to improve their household purchasing power, which in turn will allow them to better afford quality agriculture and agri-food products.

The U.S. already has a free trade agreement with Honduras. In fact, the Americans are out there right now talking to supermarkets and restaurants across Honduras about using more U.S. beef. There is some urgency for us to get into that market, because right now our Canadian farmers and agri-food producers are at a disadvantage there. While the quality of our product is higher, and Canadian beef is very well perceived in Honduras, right now our producers have been uncompetitive because of the 15% duty currently in place. Key Honduran meat importers are looking forward to the ratification of this agreement. It would finally allow our Canadian product to compete in this marketplace. The agreement would level the playing field and make the Honduras market accessible.

I have spent a lot of time talking about beef, but many Alberta exports to Honduras are set to grow with the implementation of the free trade agreement. Beyond that, many Canadian exports to Honduras are set to grow, as are many exports from Honduras to Canada.

Throughout the negotiation of this agreement, our Conservative government consulted with a broad range of stakeholders, and the message was clear: Canadian companies look forward to the implementation of this agreement and the benefits it would create. Canadians value these kinds of real and tangible benefits. That is why Canadian companies are supporting our government's initiative to forge these new trade opportunities around the world.

We are a leader in trade. The U.S. and the E.U. have already recognized that with their FTAs. The Honduras free trade agreement recognizes that.

Our businesses deserve the right to compete on a level playing field. They seek this trade agreement, they welcome this trade agreement, and they deserve to have this trade agreement implemented.

● (1745)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not long ago, Canada imposed economic sanctions on former Ukrainian officials because of crimes they committed against their own people.

Now it wants to sign a trade agreement with Honduras, which also commits crimes against its own people, including journalists. If I am not mistaken, that is the former profession of the member who just spoke. I would like to know how she feels about this. What is the logic behind all this? Why, as my colleague said, is there a double standard for two different countries?

[*English*]

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, of course, we know that Honduras is not Ukraine and that the two situations are not directly comparable. We really believe on this side of the House that engagement, not isolation, is the best way to promote Canadian values in a country like Honduras. Lifting Hondurans out of poverty, engaging in trade with them, and treating them as equal partners who are ready to participate in the world is the best way to a future all Hondurans can participate in.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party is supporting Bill C-20 because we see the value of free trade agreements. We believe it is one very effective tool in being able to increase overall trade in Canada. We could ultimately deliver on more middle-class jobs and provide other opportunities for both businessmen and women.

The question I have for the member is this. To what degree does she believe her government is going beyond free trade agreements to attract investment in Canada, to increase the trade coming into Canada and going out, but, more importantly, to deal with the trade deficit that the government is ultimately responsible for? What is the government doing, beyond free trade agreements, to get Canada back on track to having a trade surplus, something we had prior to the Prime Minister taking office?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, I am gratified to know that the Liberal Party will be supporting this bill. Free trade is a very essential component of the Conservatives' platform. We are headed toward some 60 free trade agreements, with 38 of them now in place. This is the key to prosperity.

The Liberals might be surprised to know that some countries are asking what is in it for them. Canada is a land that is rich, not only in natural resources but also many manufactured goods, environmental technologies, and intellectual property, which we are able to export around the world. They are somewhat concerned that they will not be able to benefit as much as Canada is benefiting from these free trade agreements.

Government Orders

Make no mistake about it, that is something we are concerned about. We want to make sure that other countries can benefit from having these agreements, but these agreements will very much benefit Canada. This is a way to get our exports out into the world. We used to depend on the U.S. as our primary trading partner. It had \$368 billion worth of trade in Canadian exports in 2008. In 2009, that dropped to \$270 billion, and it has not been back to the 2008 levels. We must go out to the world to sell our products, and that is the key to Canadian jobs and Canadian success.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have this opportunity to speak to the bill to implement the free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras. Contrary to what the Conservatives keep saying, the NDP has always been a strong supporter of fair trade.

The NDP believes that Canada should pursue free trade agreements when such agreements benefit Canada. I have been a member of the Standing Committee on International Trade for a few months now, and I always emphasize the NDP's balanced approach to free trade. I talked about it during our study of the free trade agreement between Canada and the European Union, and I keep talking about it during our ongoing study of the proposed trans-Pacific partnership. Unlike the Conservative Party members, who are ideologically programmed to support every trade agreement, regardless of which country is the partner, we believe it is important to choose our trading partners and to insist that they implement good environmental protection, human rights and labour relations practices.

We believe that Canada's trade policy should be based on the principles of fair, sustainable and equitable trade that builds trading partnerships with other countries that support the principles of social justice and human rights, while also expanding business opportunity.

It is important that I emphasize our vision of international trade before I address the Canada-Honduras agreement specifically. I think it is important to clearly state what sets the NDP apart from the Conservative Party. We in the NDP believe that Canada's trade agreements should be part of an overall strategy that includes the following five elements.

The first element is an impact analysis to determine whether the trade agreements being negotiated by Canada are good for Canadian families, Canadian workers and Canadian industries. The government should not sign any trade agreement that is likely to lead to a net loss of jobs.

The second element involves a guarantee that trade agreements negotiated by Canada will strengthen Canada's sovereignty and its freedom to establish its own policy, that they will help make us a force to be reckoned with on the world stage and that they will support the principles of a fair multilateral trade system.

Third, all trade agreements must protect and promote human rights by prohibiting the import, export or sale in Canada of any products considered to have been manufactured in sweatshops, by forced labour, or under any other conditions that do not meet basic international standards for labour or human rights.

Fourth, all trade agreements should respect the notion of sustainable development, as well as the integrity of all ecosystems.

Fifth, and finally, every time the Government of Canada signs a free trade agreement, the decision to adopt the enabling legislation must be submitted to a mandatory vote on whether or not the terms of the agreement are acceptable.

The current system, which consists of tabling a free trade agreement in the House for a period of 21 sitting days prior to ratification, is not mandatory and does not bind the government to accept a decision of the House.

Coming back to the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement in particular, basically, as my NDP colleagues have already said, we oppose this free trade agreement because of Honduras's poor human rights record. Need I remind the House that Honduras is led by an authoritarian, repressive and undemocratic regime?

In 2009, the disputed but democratically elected Zelaya government was toppled by a military coup. Subsequent elections have been heavily criticized by the international community as failing to meet basic democratic standards. The situation was so bad that most foreign governments and NGOs refused to send observers.

Let us not forget that Honduras has the highest murder rate in the world and is considered the most dangerous country in the world for journalists. It should also be noted that the current government does not tolerate dissidence.

• (1755)

Mistreatment and systematic persecution of dissidents and serious human rights abuses have been documented. Killings, arbitrary detentions, severe restrictions on public demonstrations and freedom of expression, and interference in the independence of the judiciary are all well-established.

The Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development conducted a major study of the human rights situation in Honduras last spring. I was present for the troubling testimony of Esther Major of Amnesty International at the committee last March. She relayed a number of cases of human rights violations, particularly against women.

For example, she spoke to us about a young female journalist who received death threats and was physically assaulted for filming forced evictions and police brutality. She also told us the story of Antonio Trejo, a well-known human rights lawyer who defended the campesino communities in the Aguán. He was murdered. No one in the current government spoke out against this crime. Worse yet, Antonio Trejo's brother was murdered a few days later for trying to draw attention to his brother's murder.

In short, the culture of impunity and violence in some parts of the country is such that the UN special rapporteur who visited Honduras and prepared a report on the situation of human rights defenders was not able to visit the Bajo Aguán region owing to security concerns. This gives an idea of the seriousness of the situation in the country.

There is also the issue of corruption. According to Transparency International, Honduras is the most corrupt country in Central America. Police corruption has been well documented.

To summarize, as things stand and in light of the human rights situation, the culture of violence, and the weakness of Honduran institutions, I definitely am not convinced that it is a good idea to sign a free trade agreement with this country. That does not mean that we are abandoning the Honduran people. I believe that Honduras mainly needs help to reform its institutions and to deal with its security and human rights challenges.

Canada provides bilateral and regional security assistance to Honduras. The Department of Foreign Affairs' Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force is supporting follow-up to recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on reparations to victims of human rights abuses that occurred following the 2009 political crisis.

I believe that we need to continue in that direction. Without national reconciliation, it will be difficult to rebuild this country and establish a democratic rule of law.

Since 2009, the department's anti-crime capacity building program has provided \$2 million to Honduras to equip and train police and other investigative units. In particular, this program provides equipment and training to the Honduran National Police on the use of special investigative techniques to combat crime.

The Conservatives seem to think that trade and an influx of cash will magically solve all problems; however, these are some examples of targeted interventions that have a better chance of contributing to development in Honduras.

In conclusion, clearly, it is time to change course. We propose putting more effort into restarting multilateral negotiations and signing agreements with developed countries that meet high standards and that are on the right track, such as Japan, India, Brazil, and South Africa. Canada should be signing trade agreements with these countries, not with countries like Honduras, where democracy and human rights are not respected and whose poor standards will harm Canadian businesses.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all of the speakers coming from the New Democratic Party are very clear about their position on the trade agreement with Honduras. They do not support it, and the primary reason for that is the human rights issues.

In response to one of the questions I posed to the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, he went even further by making a statement regarding trade in general. The question I have for the member, thinking about what her colleague from Hamilton East—

Government Orders

Stoney Creek said, is whether she opposes the free trade agreement because of human rights.

Today, we have two-way trade with Honduras in excess of \$200 million. Based on the arguments that members of the New Democratic Party are making, does the member believe it is okay to have trade with Honduras, and is it just the trade agreement that the NDP opposes?

It seems to be a bit of a contradiction. The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek seems to put into question the value of even having trade with Honduras, given its human rights violations.

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The NDP supports trade with countries that respect human rights and have high environmental standards, labour standards, and standards for human rights.

We see as well that DFAIT itself has produced a report saying that the benefits for Canada upon concluding this trade agreement would be marginal. We would encourage the government to listen to the reports produced by its own civil servants. We would also encourage the government to negotiate trade agreements with countries that are developed, like Japan, India, and South Africa, as I mentioned in my speech.

No, we do not believe that this trade agreement with Honduras would bring great benefit to Canadians, considering its atrocious record on human rights.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am beginning to understand why the Liberals and the Conservatives agree on this free trade agreement with Honduras. It will benefit big business. Once again in this case, money talks. Profit is always the key word. Lobbyists spoke and influenced the Liberals and the Conservatives.

The Liberals and the Conservatives do not care that Honduras is an undemocratic country and that it has the worst human rights track record in the world. It is not a society governed by the rule of law. The Liberals and Conservatives do not care that Honduras has the highest rate of journalist murders in the world. The Conservatives do not care that Honduras tolerates cocaine trafficking and tolerates environmentally destructive policies.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

[English]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his comments, and I would like to reiterate what he mentioned: the fact that the Conservatives and Liberals are actually of the same stripe on the issue of negotiating an agreement with a country with such an atrocious human rights record.

The approach of the Conservative government is to negotiate the trade agreements behind closed doors, and we should just trust it. However, we know this cannot be the case. We have seen it negotiate free trade agreements in the past in bad faith with civil society.

Government Orders

We can only mention the fact that Amnesty International last week revealed that the Conservative government limited the online consultation process to only six working days for the Canada-Colombia FTA human rights report, thus preventing any civil society groups from participating. Amnesty International also mentioned in committee last week that it had not been consulted by DFAIT on human rights implications to the trans-Pacific partnership, particularly considering that countries such as Vietnam may have lower human rights standards than Canada.

We see that the Conservative government, on the issue of human rights and free trade agreements, has consistently worked in bad faith with civil society.

• (1805)

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to join my colleagues and voice my support for the Canada–Honduras free trade agreement.

I should also indicate that in my prior life I was in the business of doing business internationally, and Latin America was one of my areas of focus. It certainly has opened a whole new market for my business. I will also talk about what free trade would do for us.

Canada has always been a trading country. As an export-driven economy, Canada needs open borders. One in five Canadian jobs is related to exports, and that includes not just the export part of it, but also the transportation and communication. The fact is, we bring business people in and we also need transportation to go abroad.

Our bilateral regional trade agreements are essential to bringing continued prosperity to Canadians. This year, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the North American Free Trade Agreement. NAFTA has provided a solid foundation for Canada's future prosperity. Canada continues to build on North American trade and competitiveness.

Only our Conservative government understands the importance and benefits of trade. Last fall, we announced that a historic agreement had been reached with the 28-member European Union.

The Canada–EU comprehensive economic and trade agreement, or CETA, is by far the most ambitious trade initiative Canada has ever negotiated. Once implemented, it will cover virtually all sectors and aspects of Canada–EU trade, from goods and services to labour mobility, investment, procurement, including sub-national procurement, and many regulatory matters.

With CETA, Canada will gain preferential access to the world's biggest market, with more than 500 million customers and a \$17 trillion GDP. The potential benefits for Canada are tremendous. A joint Canada–EU study found that CETA could boost Canada's GDP by \$12 billion annually and bilateral trade by 20 percent.

While the agreement with the EU will bring important benefits for Canada and Canadian companies, it would be short-sighted to focus exclusively on one area of the world. Canada's prosperity requires expansion beyond our borders into new markets for economic opportunities that serve to grow Canada's exports and investment.

On March 11, 2014, our Prime Minister and President Park of South Korea announced the conclusion of the negotiations for a

Canada–South Korea free trade agreement, Canada's first free trade agreement in the fast-growing and dynamic Asia-Pacific region.

I might also add that in 1983, I represented a Canadian company exporting Canadian mass transit equipment to South Korea. It was a pleasure, indeed, a joy for me to see that 42 kilometres of that technology developed by us is now exported by Bombardier to South Korea.

In October 2012, Canada joined the multilateral Trans-Pacific Partnership, TPP, talks and bilateral negotiations are also well under way with Japan and India. Furthermore, during his first official visit to the region, the Prime Minister announced the launch of negotiations to expand and modernize the Canada–Israel free trade agreement.

Free trade agreements are but one tool that we have. Our negotiators are very active in every corner of the world, negotiating agreements that will benefit all Canadians. Canada currently has 25 foreign investment promotion and protection agreements in force; 15 additional concluded FIPAs and 10 ongoing FIPA negotiations. We continue to explore the possibility of FIPA negotiations with other commercial partners.

Since the introduction of Canada's blue sky policy in 2006, we have concluded new or expanded existing air transport agreements that now cover over 80 countries, facilitating the movement of Canadians and Canadian goods and services, and enhancing trade and investment relationships across all sectors. Canada has also been a key architect of international trade rules at the World Trade Organization, helping to establish principles of non-discrimination, transparency, and effective dispute settlement. Canada continues to welcome progress at the WTO, an organization that advances trade liberalization around the world.

Canada was an active participant in the negotiations leading up to the Bali declaration last December. This led to a new trade facilitation agreement, an agreement that will cut red tape and reduce border transaction costs for Canadian businesses, directly benefiting Canada's small and medium-size enterprises. It is estimated that this trade facilitation agreement could stimulate the world economy by up to \$1 trillion and create as many as 20 million jobs worldwide.

• (1810)

Canada is also an active participant in the trade in services agreement currently being negotiated with 23 other countries representing 1.6 billion people and a combined GDP of more than \$48 trillion.

Government Orders

Our government has made it a priority to diversify our international trade negotiations agenda and place increased focus on concluding regional and bilateral free trade agreements, such as the Canada-Honduras agreement that we are discussing today.

We need to be sure that we can compete. We cannot afford to hold back while our competitors are securing international trade deals. This is precisely why bolstering Canada's commercial relations in rapidly growing markets around the world, such as Honduras, is an important part of our plan for long-term prosperity.

The issue of competitiveness is also at the heart of why we need to implement our free trade agreement with Honduras. The U.S. and the EU already have free trade agreements with Honduras. How can we give our companies an edge if we do not even ensure they are on a level playing field?

Keeping pace with Canada's main competitors is just one reason we need to move forward on this deal. Both the 2013 Speech from the Throne and the budget made it clear that the government's top priority is to create jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity for all Canadians.

As Canada is an export-driven economy, international trade is fundamental to achieving this objective. One in five jobs are related to exports. Over 40,000 Canadian companies are global exporters, including global leaders in such sectors as aerospace and information and communications technology.

The Canada-Honduras free trade agreement is part of our efforts to liberalize trade with our partners in the Americas. The Americas offer great potential. Total merchandise trade between countries in the Americas and Canada, at \$56.2 billion in 2012, has increased by 32% since 2007, and Canadian direct investment in the region, at \$169 billion in 2012, has increased by 58% since 2007.

Our government recognizes that protectionist restrictions stifle our exporters and undermine Canada's competitiveness, in turn adversely affecting middle-class Canadian families.

Canada's Trade Commissioner Service already works with Canadian companies that are interested in doing business in Honduras, such as Gildan Activewear, Aura Minerals, and the Canadian Bank Note Company.

Once the free trade agreement is ratified, our trade commissioners will ensure that companies, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, are aware of how they can benefit from the agreement and fully take advantage of greater stability, transparency, and protection in the Honduran market.

In addition to opening doors for Canadian companies and building our trade relationships, Canada is also committed to supporting Honduras in other ways. Canada and Honduras established diplomatic relations in 1961 and have a broad and diverse relationship driven by a wide range of links and collaboration, from political dialogue and commercial exchanges to people-to-people ties, as well as long-standing and substantial Canadian development co-operation.

We maintain an open dialogue with the Government of Honduras, as we believe that engagement, not isolationism, is the best way for us to help Honduras meet its challenges.

Thanks to these actions under our government's free trade leadership, Canada's workers, businesses, and exporters now have preferred access and a real competitive edge in more markets around the world than at any other time in our history.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, March 6, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1840)

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

(*Division No. 93*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anderson
Andrews	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Bélanger
Bennett	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinoogee	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Carmichael	Carrie
Casey	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Cuzner
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Devolin
Dion	Dreeshen
Dubourg	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Easter

Government Orders

Eyking
 Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
 Fletcher
 Fry
 Gallant
 Gill
 Goguen
 Goodale
 Gosal
 Grewal
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hayes
 Hillyer
 Hsu
 Jones
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Lauzon
 LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
 Leitch
 Leung
 Lobb
 Lunney
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Maguire
 McColeman
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 Menegakis
 Miller
 Murray
 Norlock
 O'Connor
 O'Neill Gordon
 O'Toole
 Payne
 Preston
 Rajotte
 Regan
 Rempel
 Rickford
 Saxton
 Schellenberger
 Sgro
 Shipley
 Smith
 Sorenson
 St-Denis
 Strahl
 Tilson
 Trost
 Truppe
 Valcourt
 Van Loan
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Wilks
 Woodworth
 Young (Oakville)
 Zimmer— 175

Falk
 Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
 Freeland
 Galipeau
 Garneau
 Glover
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Gourde
 Harper
 Hawn
 Hiebert
 Holder
 James
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lamoureux
 Lebel
 Leef
 Lemieux
 Lizon
 Lukiwski
 MacAulay
 MacKenzie
 Mayes
 McGuinty
 McLeod
 Merrifield
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Nicholson
 Obhrai
 Oliver
 Opitz
 Paradis
 Poilievre
 Raitt
 Rathgeber
 Reid
 Richards
 Ritz
 Scarpaleggia
 Seeback
 Shea
 Shory
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Toet
 Trottier
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Warawa
 Watson
 Wong
 Yelich
 Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
 Ashton
 Aubin
 Benskin
 Blanchette
 Boivin
 Boutin-Sweet
 Brosseau
 Cash
 Chicoine
 Christopherson
 Comartin
 Cullen
 Day
 Dionne Labelle
 Doré Lefebvre
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Fortin
 Garrison
 Genest-Jourdain
 Gravelle
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
 Hughes
 Jacob
 Kellway
 Larose
 Laverdière
 Leslie
 Mai
 Masse
 May
 Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
 Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
 Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
 Nash
 Nunez-Melo
 Perreault
 Plamondon
 Rafferty
 Raynault
 Saganash
 Scott
 Sims (Newton—North Delta)
 Stewart
 Thibeault
 Tremblay

Angus
 Atamanenko
 Bellavance
 Bevington
 Blanchette-Lamothe
 Boulerville
 Brahmi
 Caron
 Charlton
 Chisholm
 Cleary
 Crowder
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Dewar
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Dusseault
 Freeman
 Genest
 Giguère
 Grogulé
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hyer
 Julian
 Lapointe
 Latendresse
 LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
 Liu
 Marston
 Mathysen
 Michaud
 Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
 Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
 Nantel
 Nicholls
 Péclet
 Pilon
 Quach
 Rankin
 Rousseau
 Sandhu
 Sellah
 Sitsabaiesan
 Stoffer
 Toone
 Turmel— 92

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on International Trade.

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

The Speaker: It being 6:44 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:44 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, March 31, 2014

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Order in Council Appointments

Mr. Van Loan 4027

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Meat Inspection Act

Mr. Atamanenko 4027
Bill C-571. Second reading 4027
Mr. Lemieux 4029
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) 4029
Mr. Dionne Labelle 4030
Mr. Lemieux 4030
Ms. Fry 4031
Mr. Allen (Welland) 4032
Mr. Dreeshen 4033
Mr. Komarnicki 4034

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canada-Honduras Economic Growth and Prosperity Act

Bill C-20. Second reading 4035
Mr. Rankin 4035
Ms. Rempel 4036
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) 4037
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) 4037
Mr. Lamoureux 4038
Mr. Jacob 4039
Ms. Quach 4039
Ms. Leitch 4039
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) 4040
Mr. Lamoureux 4041
Mr. Norlock 4041
Ms. Quach 4042
Mr. Lamoureux 4043
Mr. Jacob 4043
Mrs. Yelich 4044
Mr. Lamoureux 4044
Mr. Hawn 4045
Ms. Liu 4046
Mr. Lamoureux 4046
Mr. Marston 4047
Mrs. Yelich 4048
Mr. Lamoureux 4048
Mrs. Ambler 4048
Ms. Sims 4050
Mr. Lamoureux 4050
Mr. Easter 4050

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Human Rights

Mr. Woodworth 4051

National Oral Health Month

Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord) 4051

Paralympic Winter Games

Mr. Young (Oakville) 4052

Newfoundland and Labrador

Mr. Andrews 4052

UN Human Rights Council

Mr. Obhrai 4052

Juno Awards

Ms. Mathysen 4052

Newfoundland and Labrador

Mr. Armstrong 4052

Juno Awards

Mr. Sopuck 4053

Homelessness

Ms. Boutin-Sweet 4053

Law Enforcement

Mr. Seeback 4053

Quebec Cassoulet Appreciation Society

Mr. Dubé 4053

Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada

Mr. Menegakis 4053

Health

Ms. Fry 4054

The Economy

Mr. Richards 4054

Conservative Party of Canada

Mr. Angus 4054

The Economy

Mr. Lizon 4054

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health

Ms. Davies (Vancouver East) 4054

Ms. Ambrose 4055

Ms. Davies (Vancouver East) 4055

Ms. Ambrose 4055

Ms. Boutin-Sweet 4055

Ms. Ambrose 4055

Infrastructure

Ms. Boutin-Sweet 4055

Mr. Lebel 4055

Ms. Boutin-Sweet 4055

Mr. Lebel 4055

Pensions

Mr. Brison 4056

Mr. Sorenson 4056

Mr. Brison	4056	Canada Post	
Mr. Sorenson	4056	Mr. Kellway	4061
Infrastructure		Ms. Raitt	4061
Mr. Goodale	4056	Mr. Boulerice	4061
Mr. Lebel	4056	Ms. Raitt	4061
Small Business		Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Cullen	4056	Mr. Valerioté	4061
Mr. Oliver	4057	Mr. Gill	4061
Mr. Cullen	4057	Health	
Mr. Oliver	4057	Ms. Fry	4062
Pensions		Ms. Ambrose	4062
Mr. Rankin	4057	Aboriginal Affairs	
Mr. Sorenson	4057	Mrs. Hughes	4062
Mr. Caron	4057	Mr. Valcourt	4062
Mr. Sorenson	4057	Mrs. Hughes	4062
Infrastructure		Ms. Ambrose	4062
Mr. Mai	4057	Infrastructure	
Mr. Lebel	4057	Mr. Clarke	4062
Democratic Reform		Mr. Lebel	4062
Ms. Charlton	4058	Public Safety	
Mr. Poilievre	4058	Mr. Easter	4062
Ms. Charlton	4058	Mr. Blaney	4062
Mr. Poilievre	4058	Regional Development	
Ms. Latendresse	4058	Mr. Cleary	4063
Mr. Poilievre	4058	Mr. Keddy	4063
Ms. Latendresse	4058	Natural Resources	
Mr. Poilievre	4058	Mr. Zimmer	4063
Foreign Investment		Mr. Rickford	4063
Mr. Regan	4058	Homelessness	
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	4058	Ms. Turmel	4063
The Environment		Ms. Bergen	4063
Ms. Murray	4059	Health	
Mrs. Aglukkaq	4059	Mr. Bellavance	4063
Mr. McKay	4059	Ms. Ambrose	4063
Mrs. Aglukkaq	4059	Foreign Affairs	
Search and Rescue		Mrs. Mourani	4064
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	4059	Mr. Obhrai	4064
Mr. Nicholson	4059	The Environment	
Ms. Michaud	4059	Mr. Hyer	4064
Mr. Nicholson	4059	Mrs. Shea	4064
The Environment		Presence in Gallery	
Ms. Leslie	4060	The Speaker	4064
Mrs. Aglukkaq	4060	Points of Order	
Ms. Leslie	4060	Oral Questions	
Mrs. Aglukkaq	4060	Mr. Rickford	4064
Health		ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
Mr. Sweet	4060	Chief Electoral Officer of Canada	
Ms. Ambrose	4060	The Speaker	4065
Agriculture and Agri-Food		Documents Regarding Afghan Detainees	
Ms. Brosseau	4060	Mr. Obhrai	4065
Mr. Ritz	4060		
Mr. Allen (Welland)	4061		
Mr. Ritz	4061		

Committees of the House	
Procedure and House Affairs	
Mr. Preston	4065
Criminal Code	
Mr. Leef	4065
Bill C-583. Introduction and first reading	4065
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	4065
Corporate Social Responsibility of Extractive Corporations Outside Canada Act	
Ms. Péclet	4065
Bill C-584. Introduction and first reading	4065
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	4065
Committees of the House	
Procedure and House Affairs	
Mr. Preston	4065
Motion for concurrence	4065
(Motion agreed to)	4066
Petitions	
Animal Welfare	
Ms. Davies (Vancouver East)	4066
Canada Post	
Ms. Davies (Vancouver East)	4066
Jericho Garrison Lands	
Ms. Murray	4066
Canada Post	
Mr. Tilson	4066
Agriculture	
Mr. Tilson	4066
Dementia	
Mr. Bevington	4066
Canada Post	
Mrs. Hughes	4066
Rail Transportation	
Mrs. Hughes	4066
VIA Rail	
Mr. Toone	4066
41st General Election	
Mr. Hyer	4067
Pensions	
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	4067
Housing	
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	4067
Pensions	
Mr. Lamoureux	4067
Citizenship and Immigration	
Ms. Mathysen	4067
Dementia	
Ms. Mathysen	4067
Canada Post	
Ms. Sims	4067
Dementia	
Mr. Gravelle	4067
Proportional Representation	
Mr. Cash	4067

Employment	
Mr. Cash	4067
Natural Resources	
Mr. Cash	4067
Health of Animals and Meat Inspection	
Ms. May	4068
Lyme Disease	
Ms. May	4068
The Environment	
Ms. May	4068
Consumer Protection	
Mr. Dionne Labelle	4068
Proportional Representation	
Mr. Jacob	4068
Questions Passed as Orders for Returns	
Mr. Lukiwski	4068
Mr. Lukiwski	4068
Privilege	
Remarks by Minister of State for Finance	
Mr. Rankin	4068
Mr. Lukiwski	4070
Mr. Lamoureux	4071
Mr. Julian	4071

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canada-Honduras Economic Growth and Prosperity Act	
Bill C-20. Second reading	4071
Mr. Easter	4071
Mrs. Yelich	4072
Ms. Liu	4072
Mr. Valeriote	4072
Mr. Wilks	4073
Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	4074
Mr. Lamoureux	4074
Mr. Nicholson	4074
Mr. Atamanenko	4074
Mr. O'Toole	4076
Mr. Lamoureux	4076
Ms. May	4076
Mrs. Ablonczy	4077
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	4078
Ms. Rempel	4078
Ms. Péclet	4079
Ms. Boivin	4080
Mr. Dionne Labelle	4080
Mr. Goguen	4080
Mr. Larose	4081
Ms. Boivin	4082
Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	4082
Mr. Boughen	4082
Mr. Jacob	4083
Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	4083
Mr. Maguire	4084
Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	4085
Mr. Lamoureux	4085
Ms. Crockatt	4086

Ms. Boutin-Sweet	4087
Mr. Lamoureux.....	4087
Ms. Liu.....	4088
Mr. Lamoureux.....	4089

Mr. Jacob.....	4089
Mr. Leung.....	4090
Motion agreed to.....	4092
(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee) .	4092

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>