

OFFICIAL REPORT (HANSARD)

Monday, May 15, 2006

Canada-U.S. Border

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has a keen desire to cozy up to American pollsters and strategists. The Prime Minister seems to forget that he needs to stand up for Canadians.

Governors and premiers are urging the U.S. Congress to delay implementation of any policy that would require people crossing the border to have a passport. The Prime Minister has, instead, muzzled his ministers and succumbed to a made-in-the-U.S.A. policy.

Will the government make a commitment to find a real solution instead of surrendering to the U.S.A. and help Canadian business and the Canadian tourism industry?

(1450)

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, at the meeting in Cancun that took place some time ago, it was our Prime Minister who made this issue a priority. He said that it was not acceptable that there could be a policy coming out of the United States which could have a negative effect on Canada and on Canadian business.

Since then, there have been agreements for officials to come together to see what kind of alternative documents would be acceptable. Other premiers are now engaged, as are cross-border chambers of commerce. Members of our caucus are also engaged with members of the Congress.

If the member wants to talk about surrender, she should know that her party did nothing about this for two years. Our Prime Minister has made it a priority.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I find it hard to believe that it is a priority because the Conservatives cannot count past five. Those are empty words and empty promises because they have no plan. If they had a plan they would have had action on this important issue.

Even the Quebec premier has taken action. The governor of Rhode Island has said that we should not be thickening the border. The governor of Vermont has said that new regulations would make daily life much more difficult.

Why are the premiers and the American leaders standing up for their citizens while the Conservative government continues to sleep on the job?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons, and perhaps the main reason, that people are catching on to what has been happening here is the fact the U.S. Congress, over two years ago, brought out a law that could have a negative effect on Canadians going across the border into the United States. This Prime Minister has made it a priority. We have put our working plans on the table.

If the member opposite would care to watch and see, she would see that plans are in place to change this for the betterment of Canada.

Again, it was the Prime Minister who did this. We asked for action for two years from