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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 4, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 4, 2014

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the pages.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

* * *

• (1405)

CANADA'S OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, May 29, the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to welcome Olympic and Paralympic athletes.

(House in committee of the whole to recognize Canada's 2014 Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Games athletes, Mr. Andrew Scheer in the chair)

[*And Canada's 2014 Olympic and Paralympic athletes being present in the chamber:*]

• (1410)

The Speaker: It is my pleasure today to welcome to the House of Commons athletes and coaches from Canada's Olympic and Paralympic teams who participated in the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi.

I know I speak on behalf of all members in the House, and indeed all Canadians, when I say how extremely proud we are of each and every one of you. Your successes in Sochi captivated our country and demonstrated the very best of what it means to be Canadian.

Not only did both our Olympic and Paralympic teams finish third in the overall medal standings, but they also competed with honour and truly exemplified the Olympic spirit.

[*Translation*]

Today, as we pay tribute to Canada's Olympians and Paralympians, let us also take a moment to commend the dedication of all those who have helped these athletes pursue their dreams.

I am thinking about the trainers, the support personnel, the sponsors, organizations such as the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic committees and, of course, the athletes' families.

• (1415)

[*English*]

On behalf of all members of Parliament, I offer our most heartfelt congratulations to the members of Canada's Olympic and Paralympic teams. Your hard work, sacrifice and determination are truly an inspiration to all Canadians. Thank you so much for all you have done for your country.

I understand there is agreement among all parties and members of the House to have the names of the Olympic and Paralympic athletes printed in the *Debates* of the House of Commons.

Canada's 2014 Olympic and Paralympic athletes:

Erin Mielzynski, Manuel Osborne-Paradis, Brittany Phelan, Brad Spence, Elli Terwiel, Megan Imrie, Zina Kocher, Jean-Philippe LeGuellec, Scott Perras, Nathan Smith, Jenny Ciochetti, Benjamin Coakwell, Justin Kripps, Jesse Lumsden, James McNaughton, Timothy Randall, Cody Sorensen, Christopher Spring, Jesse Cockney, Dasha Gaiazova, Perianne Jones, Devon Kershaw, Emily Nishikawa, Lenny Valjas, Heidi Widmer, Caleb Flaxey, Patrick Chan, Gabrielle Daleman, Mitchell Islam, Paige Lawrence, Scott Moir, Dylan Moscovitch, Kaetlyn Osmond, Alexandra Paul, Andrew Poje, Eric Radford, Kevin Reynolds, Rudi Swiegers, Tessa Virtue, Kaitlyn Weaver, Justin Dorey, Maxime Dufour-Lapointe, Justine Dufour-Lapointe, Chloé Dufour-Lapointe, Marc-Antoine Gagnon, Travis Gerrits, Rosalind Groenewoud, Keltie Hansen, Dara Howell, Mikael Kingsbury, Kim Lamarre, Philippe Marquis, Mike Riddle, Audrey Robichaud, Yuki Tsubota, Brady Leman, Kelsey Serwa, Marielle Thompson, Melodie Daoust, Haley Irwin, Rebecca Johnston, Charline Labonté, Geneviève Lacasse, Jocelyne Larocque, Caroline Ouellette, Marie-Philip Poulin, Lauriane Rougeau, Natalie Spooner, Shannon Szabados, Marc-Édouard Vlasic, Jennifer Wakefield, Catherine Ward, Sam Edney, John Fennell, Alex Gough, Arianne Jones, Mitch Malyk, Kim McRae, Justin Smith, Tristan Walker, John Fairbairn, Eric Neilson, Sarah Reid,

Statements by Members

Taylor Henrich, Trevor Morrice, Matthew Rowley, Caroline Calvé, Alexandra Duckworth, Rob Fagan, Kevin Hill, Jake Holden, Ariane Lavigne, Derek Livingston, Dominique Maltais, Mercedes Nicoll, Maelle Ricker, Chris Robanske Ivania Blondin, Anastasia Bucsis, Kali Christ, Vincent de Haitre, Jamie Gregg, Marsha Hudey, Gilmore Junio, Lucas Makowsky, Denny Morrison, Danielle Wotherspoon, Michael Gilday, Charles Hamelin, François Hamelin, Olivier Jean, Valérie Maltais, Marianne St-Gelais, Caleb Brousseau, Joshua Dueck, Robin Femy, Kimberly Joines, Erin Latimer, Mac Marcoux, Kurt Oatway, Kirk Schornstein, Alexandra Starker, Chris Williamson, Mark Arendz, Caroline Bisson, Colette Bourgonje, Sven Erik Carleton, Sébastien Fortier, Louis Fortin, Margarita Gorbounova, Brittany Hudak, Chris Klebl, Robbi Weldon, John Leslie, Tyler Mosher, Michelle Salt, Bradley Bowden, Adam Dixon, Dominic Larocque, Karl Ludwig, Tyler McGregor, Sonja Gaudet, Mark Ideson, Dennis Thiessen

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

• (1420)

The Speaker: The committee will rise and I will leave the chair.

Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, May 29, the House will now proceed to statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

STRATFORD FESTIVAL

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate the Stratford Festival on the opening of their 2014 season. The festival is an integral part of the economy of Perth—Wellington. It creates thousands of full-time jobs and generates more than \$130 million in economic activity.

Since 1953, people from around the world have come to Stratford for unparalleled performances from North America's leading theatre company. The fine list of productions this year includes *King Lear*, *Crazy for You*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Man of La Mancha*, and so many more.

Aside from world-class theatrical productions, the festival will host countless musical and cultural events.

I congratulate the Stratford Festival on its continued success and thank the festival for its enormous contributions to the city of Stratford, the surrounding area, and Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives claim that they are helping the economy grow, promoting the common good and standing up for Canadians. However, they are favouring their rich friends, while the majority of people are suffering and getting poorer.

In my riding, the Conservatives did nothing to address the closure of Electrolux. More than 2,000 jobs were lost. They stopped giving financial support to the Christmas market, which created millions of dollars in economic spinoffs. They have stripped the homeless shelter, La Hutte, of 25% of its budget. All of those cuts amount to direct attacks on my region's social and economic development.

We deserve better than a mediocre government that does not seem to understand anything about basic economics. We deserve a secure future. In 2015, let us make sure that we get rid of the Conservative pandemic once and for all.

* * *

[English]

SECOND WORLD WAR SOLDIERS

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, later this month, an Italian named Gino Farnetti-Bragaglia will be visiting Canada to thank three Canadian families.

In the Second World War, three Canadian soldiers, Lloyd "Red" Oliver, Paul Hagen, and Mert Massey, rescued five-year-old Gino while on campaign in Italy. They found him starving and alone, not even knowing his own last name. The soldiers and their company looked after him for almost a year, and the orphaned young boy was eventually adopted by an Italian family. Nearly 70 years after the war, Gino is coming to Canada to thank the families of the Canadian soldiers who saved his life.

Gino's story reminds us of the sacrifice and honour earned by the brave Canadian soldiers who fought for the liberation of Italy. Today I want to join Gino in thanking those three soldiers and their families as well as all Canadian veterans. It is important to remember that Canadian soldiers risked their lives not just for our freedom but so that people like Gino Farnetti-Bragaglia could live in freedom as well.

* * *

ATTACK ON AMRITSAR TEMPLE

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we stand in solidarity with the Sikh community as they remember the 30th anniversary of the invasion of the Darbar Sahib complex in Amritsar. That tragic episode, which resulted in the devastating loss of so many innocent lives, triggered a series of events that deeply impacted the Sikh community across the world, including here in Canada.

Liberals have long held that respect for human rights must be paramount and that those responsible for atrocities must be held accountable and brought to justice.

As we remember the innocent lives lost in 1984, we must remain vigilant to ensure that the basic human rights of all individuals are respected and that such tragedies are never repeated.

TABLE FOR 1200

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 31, I had the pleasure of attending Table for 1,200, a pop-up dinner that took place on the Esplanade Riel, alongside the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

This fantastic event, put on by Storefront Manitoba and 5468796 Architecture, was the opportunity of a lifetime and showcased the design community in Winnipeg and the truly collaborative spirit of Winnipeggers. Featuring a fabulous prairie-themed dinner, spear-headed by the team from RAW:almond, 1,200 guests were told the location just hours before the dinner started and brought their own chairs to a 366-metre-long table with the beautiful backdrop of Winnipeg's downtown.

This initiative encouraged design discussion and brought people together for a wonderful evening of food and fun. I was so happy to be there, and I congratulate all involved on their tremendous success. I know the conversations will continue long after the tables are taken down.

* * *

• (1425)

VETERANS

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to the men and women who bravely serve, and have served, our country in the Canadian military. Sadly, many of our soldiers and veterans feel forgotten.

Today veterans and their families from across Canada are here on Parliament Hill to protest their treatment by the Conservative government. They have been calling on the government for greater support, whether it be for financial needs, career transition, dealing with a disability, or ensuring that caregivers are recognized and helped. Sadly, these calls have fallen on deaf ears.

In my own riding of St. John's East and across Newfoundland and Labrador, veterans have felt the effects of government cuts, including the closure of the Veterans Affairs office in Corner Brook.

The unanimous report released by the veterans affairs committee, if implemented, is an important first step toward meaningful changes to the new veterans charter, but much more needs to be done. Veterans can count on the NDP to continue the fight to ensure that our veterans and their families get the support and help they need and deserve.

* * *

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on June 6, 1944, 25,000 Canadian forces from land, air, and sea came together on the beaches of Normandy to join the Allied invasion of occupied France. The Battle of Normandy, on D-Day, was one of Canada's most significant and successful military engagements, and it was a defining moment in our nation's history. However, this triumph was not without sacrifice. Over 5,000 Canadians laid down their lives defending freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

Statements by Members

On Friday, we mark the 70th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy, when we will honour the memory and legacy on those brave Canadians.

Lest we forget.

* * *

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government believes that the correctional system should actually correct criminal behaviour. Criminals should not be rewarded or given perks for violating the trust that exists between individuals in Canadian society. That is why we passed into law my private member's bill that put an end to vexatious complaints made by prisoners.

I was shocked to learn today that an individual who callously murdered his wife and her mother in front of their young son is trying to sue the government for misplacing lewd pictures he had taken of his new wife. It is shocking that this individual would try to force Canadians to compensate him for such a ludicrous issue as he sits in prison serving a life sentence.

Canadians expect that prisoners pay their debt to society, not the other way around.

* * *

[Translation]

MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on May 23, I had the immense pleasure of being the honorary chair of *Jazz ta vie pour un ami*, a performance fundraiser for Trait d'union montréalais, an organization that helps people with mental health issues who live in isolation.

This week, I will be the spokesperson for a fundraising dinner for Maison alternative de développement humain, a social reintegration organization for people with mental health issues.

Even though this is 2014, there are still people living with these problems who are ashamed. Why? Because there is still way too much discrimination against this health problem. Do people know that one in five of us will suffer from a mental health problem at some point?

That is why I have agreed to lend my voice to these organizations. They work so hard with so few resources to eradicate taboos and create an environment where people with these problems can be heard, listened to, and helped, where they can live full lives as citizens and take control of their lives. I congratulate them on their excellent work.

Statements by Members

[English]

CANADIAN GRAIN FARMERS

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three years ago, prairie farmers gave the Conservative government their overwhelming endorsement to bring in marketing freedom for wheat and barley. We immediately rolled up our sleeves, and despite the tactics of the NDP and Liberals to deny the rights of farmers to sell their crop at a time and price of their choosing, marketing freedom is the law of the land.

Marketing freedom has allowed increased wheat and barley acreages and access to record prices. When farmers faced transportation challenges, our government acted again to bring in an order in council and legislation to clear the backlog.

Now, with that grain moving, I am happy to report that yesterday, the courts dismissed the last of five lawsuits that the opponents of freedom brought to stifle our farmers. Now that farmers and the courts have spoken, will the opposition finally admit that it was wrong and embrace marketing freedom?

* * *

• (1430)

[Translation]

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, an investigation by *Maclean's* and *L'actualité* recently revealed cases of sexual assault within our Canadian Forces. This is a serious and worrisome situation.

Every day, five victims, men and women, but mostly women, are sexually assaulted. If we extrapolate over a 20-year period, there are 36,500 cases. If we consider that there are roughly 10,000 women in the Canadian Forces, then we might say that every woman who has a career in the forces will be a victim of these disgraceful acts one day or another. This is simply unacceptable.

We have had it with the inaction and empty action of the defence ministers, Liberal and Conservative alike. We must establish an independent judicial inquiry and have someone other than the forces look at this problem if we want real answers about such things as the aspects of military culture that aggravate this problem. If we want more women to join the Canadian Forces, then we must first keep them safe.

After all, they are our daughters, our sisters, our mothers.

* * *

[English]

POLAND

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, freedom was reborn in Poland 25 years ago today. The first free elections were held in Poland on this day because the Solidarity trade union, led by Lech Walesa, helped defeat the Soviet empire, a Communist system of evil that the Prime Minister recently called a “poisonous ideology”. Poland triumphed, loosening the bonds of other nations. Their fight for freedom was defended by Reagan, Thatcher, Mulroney, and the spiritual leadership of St. John Paul.

Prime Minister Harper stood among the Polish people today, sharing their joy and sharing Poland's determination to help freedom flourish in other places, like the commitment we share to stand with the people of Ukraine to help them rise and become a free and prosperous society.

Poles have long fought for freedom, and we know the heavy cost of it. They have built a nation that is called the Canada of Europe, a thriving democracy with a robust economy that is the envy of its neighbours. Poland and Canada stand united in a just cause to help other nations realize the same freedom we enjoy.

God bless the Polish people.

Jeszcze Polska nie zginela kiedy my zyjemy.

[Member spoke in Polish and provided the following translation:]

Poland has not yet perished as long as we live.

The Speaker: I want to remind the hon. member that we do not use proper names in the House. We use ridings or titles. I know he will want to keep that in mind.

The hon. member for Papineau.

* * *

[Translation]

EUGENIE BOUCHARD

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are celebrating our athletes, who inspire us and make us proud.

In that regard, tomorrow, Montrealer Eugenie Bouchard will be the first Canadian woman to compete in the semifinals at Roland-Garros in Paris.

Last January, Eugenie made Canadian tennis history when she reached the semifinals at the Australian Open, the first Grand Slam event of the season. Tomorrow, just a few months later, and at barely 20 years old, Eugenie will play her second Grand Slam semifinal.

Eugenie's accomplishments are absolutely extraordinary, and if, or I should say when, she wins tomorrow, she will be one of the top 10 female tennis players in the world.

Eugenie Bouchard's success reminds us of how the dedication and commitment of our athletes—like those who were in the House just a few minutes ago—can inspire all of us.

Quite often we think that hockey is Canada's sport. However, tomorrow, I think that Canadians' attention will shift from the ice rink to the clay court as we cheer on Eugenie Bouchard.

Oral Questions

[English]

TIANANMEN SQUARE

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in countries across the world, 1989 was the *annus mirabilis*, during which Communism gave way peacefully to democracy. In April of that year, students and civilians across China began peaceful demonstrations in support of democracy. For the next six weeks, these protests were the pole star of freedom, guiding oppressed people across the Communist world, but in China itself, the democracy movement was brutally crushed when 25 years ago today, the Politburo ordered the army to attack its own unarmed civilians. Nobody knows exactly how many Chinese citizens were gunned down or crushed by tanks. Estimates range from 240 to 2,600.

For a quarter of a century, the PRC government has denied its responsibility. To this day, the government denies its civilians the basic freedoms that were sought by the martyrs of Tiananmen.

Let us never forget our responsibility to preserve the memory of those who were killed or imprisoned for their steadfast determination to bring forward democracy and human rights in China.

* * *

• (1435)

[Translation]

EUGENIE BOUCHARD

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, at the French Open, Canadians across the country learned a valuable lesson about how to react in the face of adversity, a little like what we saw with the Montreal Canadiens earlier this spring.

Young Montreal prodigy Eugenie Bouchard once again dazzled the world by qualifying for the semifinals of one of the most prestigious international tennis tournaments.

It was not a guaranteed victory. She was up against a tough opponent, but she held her ground and triumphed.

As we have just seen on the floor of the House, Canada has many athletes who know what it is like to face such adversity.

We are particularly excited about the incredible success of this young Quebecker, who has a promising future on the world circuit.

As a proud member of the Genie Army, I wish Eugenie the greatest success at the French Open, and I join with millions of fans and Canadians, particularly my colleagues in the House, to say, “Go, Eugenie, go!”

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Prime Minister on appointing Justice Clément Gascon to the Supreme Court of Canada. Justice Gascon's extensive legal knowledge, as well as his experience in this area, will certainly be a great asset to this important Canadian institution.

We said that we would act quickly to ensure that the Supreme Court has a full complement of judges, and we kept that promise.

Our government made sure to conduct extensive consultations with prominent members of Quebec's legal community. Justice Gascon was a judge of the Quebec Court of Appeal, so there is no doubt that he is qualified and eligible to sit on the highest court in the country.

This appointment has been widely applauded. As the member for Gatineau said yesterday, Justice Gascon has a stellar reputation and he was a great nomination. We agree.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday members of all parties on the veterans affairs committee made a series of modest recommendations to the minister for how he could improve services and begin to win back the trust of the veterans he is supposed to serve.

Will the Minister of Veterans Affairs immediately make those recommendations a reality and help improve the lives of veterans and their families?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition, but equally and more importantly, thank all members of the veterans affairs committee, which came forward with a unanimous report.

To quote briefly from that report:

The Committee members unanimously agree that the principles of the NVC should be upheld and that these principles foster an approach that is well suited to today's veterans.

The minister is going to, of course, deal with the recommendations found within that report, and since we have seen a record increase in the expenditures for Canadian veterans as a result of our government and our Prime Minister, we continue to support veterans.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what does “deal with the recommendations” mean?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has been around here for a while. I think that means that we act on them.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Jenifer Migneault, the wife of a veteran who is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, asked the Prime Minister to provide more support to veterans' families who are caregivers. Ms. Migneault is calling on the government to provide services for veterans' spouses, such as mental health training.

Instead of running away from Ms. Migneault, will the minister listen to veterans' families and do something about this once and for all?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first let me thank Madame Migneault and her husband for their incredible service to our country. Of course, we respect the challenges they are facing with respect to post-traumatic stress within their family unit.

The reality is that we are dealing in a very comprehensive way with the challenges faced by veterans and their families with respect to improving benefits. I note that, through eight budgets, our government has now earmarked more than \$4.7 billion to improve upon the services available to veterans and their families. I note the NDP has voted against those improvements.

* * *

• (1440)

PRIVACY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister's candidate for privacy commissioner admitted that he would have to recuse himself from any case that involved a conflict of interest with his current job as a government lawyer. For example, he would not be able to investigate any surveillance program that he had helped develop or had approved. He would not be able to work on any case where he might know about secret government information that might be relevant.

What will happen in all these cases where the privacy commissioner will be obliged to step aside? Have Conservatives even thought about that?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, allow me the opportunity to repeat that this individual has over 30 years of experience on legal matters as well as privacy matters as a public servant, a person who has served our country. Indeed, that is why there is not just a privacy commissioner; there is a privacy commission. There are individuals who well trained to deal with all matters dealing with privacy, and I am sure in any instance where the Privacy Commissioner cannot act, the office can still act.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): So they are admitting, Mr. Speaker, that they are naming an officer of Parliament without the agreement of the official opposition—therefore not a nomination of Parliament—and he is admitting that he is going to have to step aside the minute these cases come before him because he has already been involved in them.

Does he understand that is the essence of a conflict of interest and that it is why Daniel Therrien cannot be the privacy commissioner for Canadians?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I say no such thing. What I have said repeatedly is that we have a nominee who is well versed on legal matters and privacy matters. He has over 30 years of experience working for the Canadian public. He is an exceptional candidate. That is why I was proud to recommend him to the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister to this Parliament.

For this member to drag him through the mud without any regard for his service to this country is, quite frankly, shameful.

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Justice Gascon on his long-awaited appointment to the Supreme Court.

Nonetheless, this fall, another seat on the bench will be empty. The Conservatives made an election promise to the effect that parliamentarians would be consulted during this process. When replacing Justice LeBel, will the Minister of Justice keep this promise and consult parliamentarians?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the third party. I agree with him. I think this is an inspired choice. It has been a choice widely applauded, particularly in the province of Quebec.

With respect to a future process for the appointment of the Supreme Court judges, of course we intend to, again, consult widely and certainly within Quebec and with those in the legal community.

However, we are concerned with the process and the compromise that occurred in the leaking of information around it the last time, and so we will proceed with caution and haste in the future.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout our history, Canada's immigration policy has brought people here to fulfill their dream of becoming Canadians.

However, because of the current government's policy, we are now on track to having more temporary foreign workers in our country next year than newcomers who we will admit as permanent residents.

Will the government's still-not-released temporary foreign worker reforms ensure that this does not happen?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member should know, as the leader of the third party should know, as a result of eight years of reform by this government, backlogs are smaller, economic immigration has never been stronger, and we are accepting the highest levels of sustained immigration in Canadian history.

I am proud to report that, last year 44,000 of those economic immigrants to Canada were coming precisely from those groups that the member opposite mentions: temporary foreign workers and students. That is a record number. It is about seven times what it was under the Liberals.

Oral Questions

● (1445)

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the minister should know, as a share of our population, the Conservatives have cut immigration by 10%, while doubling the number of temporary foreign workers.

We are still waiting for the government's plan to fix this broken temporary foreign worker program.

Will that plan restore our system's historic focus of allowing newcomers to achieve their dream of becoming Canadians?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again I have to correct the record because of the misunderstanding that the leader of the third party is seeking to propagate.

The Canadian experience class was created in 2008 by this government. It targets explicitly those working and studying in Canada already. That is an innovation of our government.

We have also expanded the provincial nominee program that converts those working or studying here into immigrants.

None of that happened under Liberal governments over many long years of darkness and neglect. It was on a much smaller scale. We are cleaning up their mess—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Drummond.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a former Conservative environment minister, the member for Thornhill, is complaining that his government is not getting enough credit for its efforts combatting climate change. Come on.

In his opinion, it is difficult to cut greenhouse gas emissions in Canada because hydroelectric power is already a clean form of energy. As if we did not already know that. The real problem is that the Conservatives and the Liberals have never forced the oil and gas sectors to do their part.

When will the Conservatives announce the regulations limiting greenhouse gas emissions for the industry that is the largest polluter in Canada?

[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, Canada only accounts for less than 2% of the global greenhouse gas emissions. For this reason, Canada is pursuing a new international agreement on climate change that includes real action by all major emitters.

In the meantime, our government is also doing its part by taking action domestically to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Since 2006, we have invested significant funds in more efficient technology, better infrastructure, adaptation, and clean energy.

[Translation]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives think that the best way to fight climate change is to advertise in the United States to promote the Keystone XL pipeline.

With the measures announced on Monday, the Americans will reach their Copenhagen reduction target of 17%. With the Conservatives' approach, Canada will not even get halfway to its 2020 goal. If the oil and gas sectors do not make an effort, we will not reach our goal. When will we find out what their target is?

[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, we welcome the move from the United States, and I say it is about time. In Canada, 10% of electricity generation comes from coal; in the United States, it is 37%. More than 60% of electricity generation is renewable in Canada. In the United States, it is just 12%. The statistics speak for themselves.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have gotten ignoring everyone who disagrees with them down to a fine art, because they are not listening to Canadians who want action on climate change and they are turning a deaf ear on our U.S. neighbours, who are taking action on their biggest greenhouse gas emitters.

Instead of regulating emissions from Canada's biggest emitters, the oil and gas sector, the government gives them billions in subsidies. The numbers do not lie, so will Conservatives stop ignoring science, stop ignoring Canadians, and finally introduce rigorous greenhouse gas regulations for the oil and gas sector?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, building on our record, we will continue to work with the United States on reducing greenhouse gas emissions for the oil and gas sector. Our countries should be taking action together, not alone. This is why we welcomed the move from the United States two days ago on greenhouse gas emissions.

Again, this is consistent with what we are already doing by aligning with the United States on greenhouse gas emission regulations. In the transportation sector, for example, 2025 passenger vehicles and light trucks will emit about half as much greenhouse gas in Canada as the 2008 models.

● (1450)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives ignore concerns about climate change just like they ignore concerns from British Columbians about our environment. A new poll shows that two out of every three people in British Columbia are opposed to the northern gateway project. These numbers are even higher than in the January poll. The more people learn about this project, the more they oppose it.

Are the Conservatives really going to flout the wishes of 67% of British Columbians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government will thoroughly review the joint panel report and continue to consult with aboriginal communities prior to making any decision on this project. We are proud of the action that we have taken to ensure Canada has a world-class regulatory framework and a means to the safest forms of transportation for our energy products.

We have been clear: projects will only proceed if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been consulting with British Columbians, and this is what they are telling the government.

On this side, we have the Union of B.C. Municipalities rejecting the Enbridge northern gateway; on that side, we have the oil lobby. On this side, we have virtually every single first nation across Alberta and British Columbia standing together opposing this pipeline; on that side, they have the oil lobby. On this side, we have nearly two-thirds of all British Columbians rejecting the Conservative approach to oil and gas; on that side, we have the oil lobby.

When are Conservatives going to stand with British Columbians and say no to the Enbridge northern gateway project?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the NDP would prefer to reject science and facts and decide which projects should go ahead based on ideology. While the Leader of the Opposition laughs, that is his record, actually. The Leader of the Opposition said, "There are some things that some people would send to the NEB that we would say no to". That is great. It is an independent organization for the benefit of Canadians and energy products.

Canadians deserve better than that. Our government will make decisions based on the independent scientific review performed by the NEB.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite the concerns that have been raised about the new privacy commissioner's background and his potential conflicts of interest, he himself believes that Bill C-13 should be divided.

He also believes that the information telecommunications companies have on their clients should be better protected. This kind of information is not the same as what is found in a phone book. This information is much more sensitive.

Will the Conservatives listen to the person they just appointed?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, based on the way that Bill C-13 is constructed, which would enable the police to act with modern tools not only to enforce the existing law but also to enforce the new

legislation that would criminalize the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, it makes no sense to split the bill. We have to not only protect the public through passing the legislation; we also have to enable the police to have the modern tools necessary to enforce that law.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Conservatives' nominee for privacy commissioner testified that even he is in favour of a parliamentary committee to look at the way that Canada's security intelligence agencies are overseen. This is something that the NDP has long called for.

Now that even the government's own hand-picked privacy commissioner is echoing our call, will the minister reconsider and agree to our proposal for a committee to make recommendations on how it can strengthen parliamentary oversight of the security and intelligence activities of the government while protecting Canadians' privacy?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our country has robust organizations to oversee the agencies that enforce our country's laws, such as the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. Its review committee includes former NDP members of Parliament and members of other political parties. Furthermore, the current Premier of Quebec was formerly a member.

It is important to have external organizations overseeing our agencies, and our country has some very good organizations.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives are refusing to release the results of a public opinion poll on prostitution. The poll was done four months ago, but it is being hidden until July.

Reforming our prostitution laws is a complex issue. Canadians expect their government to work in a transparent and thorough manner, so why is the Minister of Justice refusing to release this poll? What information is he trying to hide?

● (1455)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, cue the scary music. The reality is this is a very serious and complex issue, and that is why we have taken the time and made the effort to consult broadly. We heard from some 31,000 Canadians through an online consultation, one of the most comprehensive polls ever undertaken by the Department of Justice. There is other polling information available that will be released in due course.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable for the government to hide information on a subject as complex and sensitive as this one.

Oral Questions

The Conservatives made public their online consultation on prostitution, which has serious methodology problems. Now the minister is refusing to disclose the results of a scientific opinion poll ordered at a cost of \$175,000, which he has had for four months. As it happens, he was allegedly warned that some responses could contradict his position.

Why does the minister want to wait until the end of July to release this public poll? Will he promise to make it public before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights wraps up its study on prostitution?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government intends to introduce the new bill this morning, this very day. We consulted many groups and many people on this complex and serious subject for our country.

I invite my colleagues to study this bill and to comment on the issue and not the polls.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, StatsCan reported today that in April, Canada posted a worrying \$638 million trade deficit. This follows last week's anemic first quarter GDP figure of 1.2%, well below the budget's 2.3% forecast for 2014.

To reverse this decline in exports and boost our stagnant economy, it is essential to secure Canada's access to global markets, so when will the stalled European trade deal finally get done?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in this House before, we were very pleased to conclude negotiations on an agreement in principle last October. We are now converting that agreement in principle into a legal text. It will comprise somewhere in the order of 1,000 pages, and we want to make sure we get that done in a way that reflects the agreement in principle.

However, it is pretty surprising to hear a question from the Liberal trade critic. I understand that the Liberal trade critic asked her first question in this House five months after she was first appointed to that position. On this side of the House, we know how important trade and investment are to our long-term prosperity.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal trade critic has more expertise on trade policy than the whole Conservative front bench.

Canada's economic growth is now slower than it is in the U.S., the U.K., and Australia, and our job rate has stalled below pre-2008 levels. There is an opportunity, though, to improve growth—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Kings—Hants has the floor. I would ask members who wish to answer the question to wait until the member is finished asking it.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, there is an opportunity, though, to improve growth, create jobs, and strengthen competitiveness. With low interest rates and the strength of Canada's pension funds, we could actually create jobs and growth while fixing Canada's crumbling infrastructure.

Will the Conservatives seize this opportunity, and will they start by reversing their 90% cut to planned infrastructure spending?

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, once again the opposition is misleading the House.

[Translation]

This summer, when there is construction across the country and people will have to wait in their cars because of the work being done everywhere in Canada, they will remember that the Liberals tried to mislead them. There will again be construction all over the country this summer, and billions of dollars will be invested to upgrade our roads and bridges to ensure the safety of Canadians.

• (1500)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has the worst record on economic growth since R.B. Bennett. It is now just 1.2%. Globally, 140 other countries are growing faster. Growth is not coming from consumers, because they are deep in debt; it is not coming from exports, because our trade balance is in deficit; it is not coming from business, because it lacks investor confidence, and in the public sector, the government has slashed its infrastructure fund by 90%, harming jobs, growth, and productivity.

Why do the Conservatives have this anti-growth agenda?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is quite remarkable to hear that come from the Liberal Party.

Our party has a low-tax plan for jobs and growth. We have created over one million jobs. Our economy is doing better than most countries in the G7 and our debt is one-half the average of the G7.

We are working toward a budgetary surplus, which we will convert into lower taxes for hard-working Canadians.

*Oral Questions***ETHICS**

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Michel Fournier, the former chief of staff to Jean Chrétien, was the head of the Federal Bridge Corporation Limited when he gave SNC-Lavalin a \$130-million contract for the Jacques Cartier Bridge, but the RCMP allege that \$1.5 million of that found its way into Mr. Fournier's Swiss bank account as a big fat kickback.

If members are wondering what Liberal prime ministers have in common with Conservative prime ministers, both have chiefs of staff who are under investigation by the RCMP.

Given the stink between SNC-Lavalin and Arthur Porter and SNC-Lavalin and the former Liberal chief of staff, does the government intend to change the way it does business with SNC-Lavalin?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Public Works and Government Services Canada takes the integrity of federal procurements very seriously. That is why we introduced measures to ensure that individuals or companies that have been convicted of illegal activity cannot do business with public works. We put those rules in place.

In all cases where wrongdoing is suspected, we will not hesitate to fully assist the investigation by the RCMP or the Competition Bureau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last February, the NDP called for an investigation into the latest Liberal scandal. We are pleased to see that the Conservatives have followed the NDP's sound advice. They should do so more often.

The RCMP is now investigating the \$1.5-million bribe that was paid to Jean Chrétien's former chief of staff, who was nicknamed Zorro for some reason, when he was head of the bridge corporation. The bribe was related to a contract that was awarded to SNC-Lavalin. Can the minister tell us if the bridge corporation is co-operating fully with the RCMP to get to the bottom of this latest Liberal scandal?

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, yes, the RCMP is investigating. We did not wait for the NDP to tell us about it. The letter Z is associated with rental cars in Quebec, however, so maybe this has something to do with renting satellite offices.

That said, I will not comment on RCMP operations. However, we are taking this matter very seriously.

* * *

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2011, Canada signed the G20 agreement to set up a complaint system for bank customers that is fair, accessible, binding and free from conflict of interest. However, the Conservatives have allowed banks to evade the oversight of the Ombudsman for Banking Services and Investments and set up their own oversight mechanism. Many

complaints have now disappeared into an administrative black hole, and the ombudsman's decisions are not being complied with.

Why has Canada not honoured the G20 agreement? Why has the government once again turned its back on consumers?

[*English*]

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a robust ombudsman for banking and financial services in place. It is objective, it is less costly, it is less contentious, and it works. In fact, it works in the vast majority of cases. It is a system that is the envy of the world, and it protects banking customers and investments.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, then it raises the question of why the government is allowing RBC and TD to walk away from the ombudsman and hire their own practices. It makes no absolute sense. The Conservatives are diminishing the bank ombudsman's powers. Once, though, once upon a time, the head of an investment dealers association told Parliament that the ombudsman should be at arm's length from participating institutions; should be simple, straightforward, and cost-effective; and should be uniform for all institutions to ensure the fair treatment of clients.

Now that CEO has a new job as the Minister of Finance, so does he stand by his own statement or has he forgotten about all of those words and is actually listening to the statements of the Prime Minister?

• (1505)

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I actually didn't expect to be quoted at length by the New Democrats, but I am pleased to hear that they are listening to my words. I wish they would listen to many of the things that I have already said in the House about economic growth and about low taxes.

The fact is the banking system has an ombudsman, an independent ombudsman. The banks themselves have their own ombudsperson as well to protect investors. Then of course there is recourse to the courts. Canadian bank customers, including the seven million who are getting free banking, are going to be well protected.

* * *

WINTER OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today our government was proud to welcome our Olympic and Paralympic heroes into the House of Commons to acknowledge their efforts and to thank them for a job well done during the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

After both Olympic and Paralympic teams placed third in the medal standings, can the Minister of State for Sport please tell the House how our investments helped Canadian athletes own the podium?

Hon. Bal Gosal (Minister of State (Sport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his support for amateur sport.

Our government is the largest single contributor to amateur sport in our country, with funding levels at an all-time high. In fact, the direct support to the Winter Olympians and Paralympians from our athlete assistance program has increased by 120% in the last decade.

Our athletes are a great inspiration and great role model for all Canadians, especially children. I would like to thank them all for coming here today and celebrating.

I call upon all members to celebrate our athletes.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' approach to drug shortages is a dismal failure. The worst part is that the Conservatives voted against my bill, Bill C-523, which sought to implement an emergency response plan to address this problem.

When Health Canada stops drug production for safety reasons, rather than finding another supplier, the government does nothing. Who ultimately pays the price? Canadians.

Why are the Conservatives ignoring this serious problem?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the pan-Canadian strategy for drug shortages that we have put in place to address this issue with the provinces and territories and the drug companies ensures that drug companies not only have to give advance notice of any drug shortages they see coming down the pipeline but also have to make sure that they alert us or physicians as to what drug can be used to replace that to make sure that Canadians are getting the medicine that they need.

As I said to the member yesterday, we are also launching consultations now to see if we do need to move from a voluntary system to a mandatory system.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government does not need to hold an online consultation to find out that the voluntary system is not working. All it needs to do is open a newspaper.

Today we see another story of hospitals in Quebec paying significantly more for the chemo drug Paclitaxel because there is a shortage of it.

The minister has said that if a voluntary system is not working, she will move to mandatory reporting. Will the minister finally acknowledge what we have been saying all along and now introduce mandatory reporting for drug shortages?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the voluntary system is working to a certain extent to ensure that those drugs are posted and that we are aware of what drugs can be used to replace them.

However, the member has to recognize that these consultations are important, because not all drug shortages will be fixed through mandatory reporting. It can be a much more complex issue on a global scale in terms of the kinds of shortages that we have seen.

Oral Questions

We are working very closely with the provinces and the territories and the drug manufacturers to make sure, whether it is voluntary or mandatory, that we are addressing drug shortages.

* * *

• (1510)

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the housing crisis deepens, the Conservative government is turning its back on the most vulnerable Canadians.

The Conservatives are refusing to renew the long-term social housing fund, allowing \$1.7 billion for affordable housing to disappear. Without this funding, 200,000 social housing units will be lost in a country where wait lists are growing longer every month.

Thousands of Canadians now risk losing their homes. How can the Conservatives explain their failure to act?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is our government has acted. We have acted in reasonable ways, working together with the provinces.

What the NDP does not realize is that made-in-Ottawa solutions do not work in places like Estevan or Vancouver, B.C., or Halifax.

What we have done is we have renewed our investment in affordable housing with the provinces. The provinces make the decisions regarding what works best for their housing solutions, working together with their municipalities and cities.

We will continue with that common sense approach, providing real results across the country.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the members of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada who are on Parliament Hill today calling for the government to renew these agreements do not feel reassured by the minister's stock answers. Without these agreements, 52,000 co-operative residents could lose their homes over the next few years. The solution is simple. The government must renew the subsidies and invest in new, affordable social housing.

A roof is a right. Why are the Conservatives insisting on ignoring the needs of so many Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recently met with the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. I met with so many housing groups.

Oral Questions

It was thanking us for some of the common sense changes that our government has made. It was appreciative, first of all, of the changes made in 2013 so that it could refinance in order to do repairs. As well, we are letting it keep its surplus subsidy fund, something that never happened under previous governments.

We are working together; we are meeting regularly. It is pleased with the things our government is doing and our common sense approach.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as co-op housing agreements expire, the rent-g geared-to-income subsidies will as well.

Every time we have raised this question, the government answers that the subsidies do not need to continue because the mortgages will be paid off. That is not the case.

Most housing co-ops will not have the capital reserves to effect needed repairs and renovations, and will likely have to get new mortgages.

Therefore, since 50,000 people could be at risk of losing their homes, will the government do the right thing and renew the rental subsidies?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me tell the House what the executive director of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, Nicholas Gazzard, said with respect to what I just mentioned, allowing it to keep the subsidies:

This additional flexibility allows co-ops to use federal funds to provide rent-g geared-to-income assistance for vulnerable low-income households, even after their funding agreements have expired.

The mortgage is paid off. The agreements have ended. However, we are providing other solutions. Maybe the member could take eye for an answer.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that the government has very little respect for Parliament and that it rarely responds to our questions, and today is no exception.

Could the government actually answer our question for the 50,000 people who are at risk? Are the Conservatives prepared to renew not the agreements—because these people will have to renew their mortgages—but the subsidies? That is what the people who were on Parliament Hill at noon today were calling for, not what the minister said.

Are the Conservatives prepared to renew the subsidies to ensure that these 50,000 people do not lose their co-operative housing?

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is what our government has done for those who are the most vulnerable and those who need housing solutions. We have invested over \$2 billion in previous budgets to fix and renovate. We renewed our investment in affordable housing with the provinces so that if they want to use that funding to provide assistance for these agreements that have ended, they can do that. As

we have said, we support the provinces and want them to have a say in how these solutions are determined.

* * *

● (1515)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg resident Joyce Nakawunde is facing imminent deportation to Uganda. Not only will the deportation separate her from her 11-year-old Canadian-born daughter, but as a lesbian, she will face threats to her personal safety if she is returned to Uganda. This is not only a result of the extreme legal penalties against homosexuality in Uganda but also of specific threats to her safety from the father of her child.

Will the Minister of Immigration take immediate action to stay the deportation of Ms. Nakawunde?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has the most generous immigration and refugee determination system in the world. It has been reformed to focus its effort on those most in need of our protection. When the recourse available to those under the law has been exhausted, we expect them to leave the country.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is time for the Conservatives to walk the talk on LGBTT rights.

Joyce Nakawunde is facing imminent deportation to Uganda, where we know homosexuals are persecuted. She has even received threats. The Conservative government promised not to deport individuals whose lives are at risk.

Will the minister put a stop to this cruel and dangerous deportation?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our fair and equitable immigration laws are enforced very professionally. When a person has exhausted all recourse and avenues for appeal available to everyone under our laws, we expect that person to leave the country.

However, we also have ways to assess the situation in the country to which the person is being deported. That is always taken into account.

[English]

TERRORISM

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is about the government's fight against international terrorism. This month an exhibit that is celebrating terrorism is on display right here in the nation's capital. It honours terrorists like Dalal Mughrabi and portrays her as a victim. The reality is that Mughrabi led a terror squad on a bloody murderous rampage that left 38 Israelis dead. Thirteen of them were children. What is the government's position on this and other aspects of international terrorism?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recently saw the exhibit that celebrates notorious terrorists such as Dalal Mughrabi, Abu Jihad, and Abu Iyad. Together, these terrorists slaughtered dozens of innocent civilians. As a minister for the national capital region and on behalf of the Government of Canada, I condemn this appalling celebration of terrorism in the strongest of terms.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's decision to cut \$16.3 million from Marine Atlantic but still require it to recover 65% of costs has resulted in fares being raised by 11%. As a result, fewer people are making plans to travel to Newfoundland and Labrador this summer, so Marine Atlantic has cut the number of crossings. Tourism will be hurt and jobs will be lost.

Given how important the service is to the province's economy, will the Minister of Transport provide Marine Atlantic the resources it needs to reverse this harmful decision?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is unprecedented in its support of Marine Atlantic, totalling \$1 billion in the past six years in its costs, both in terms of capital and its operating costs.

We encourage Marine Atlantic to continue the great work it does of transiting people across to Newfoundland and, of course, making sure it does so in a responsible way, managing the taxpayers' dollars.

* * *

[Translation]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Fisheries and Oceans Canada scientists told us that as of April 30, TransCanada had to stop its seismic surveys in Cacouna. It was too dangerous for belugas, an endangered species.

Now the minister is refusing to ask these scientists to assess the impact of the next step, drilling, on this species.

Why does the minister want to allow drilling without checking with the scientists?

• (1520)

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, DFO takes its mandate to protect marine life and habitat

Oral Questions

seriously. This work was reviewed by expert DFO officials, and it was determined that it would not result in any serious harm to protected marine life, including belugas.

Nonetheless, TransCanada is required to adopt several mitigation measures, including an exclusion zone. I understand that TransCanada has also decided to suspend work until provincial authorization is delivered.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Clean Air Day. Canadians should be able to breathe clean, fresh, and healthy air today, tomorrow, and beyond.

We need to take action to avoid hospitalizations and emergency room visits, asthma episodes, and missed work and school days. Could the Minister of the Environment please tell the House what our government is doing to clean up air pollution in Canada?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga for that great question.

Yesterday we introduced new multi-sector air pollutants regulations. These proposed regulations will establish, for the first time ever, mandatory national emissions standards for major industries across the country. These regulations will help to lower smog levels and improve air quality for all Canadians.

This announcement builds on the promises we made two years ago to put in place a new air quality management system. Canadians can count on our government to follow through with its promises.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week, the major derailment of grain cars on the rail line up to Churchill forced VIA Rail to cancel service. The company that operates the line also wants to ship crude oil on that line and through sensitive ecosystems.

First nations and northern Manitobans are concerned that not enough is being done to protect their communities. How is the minister planning to protect the environment and ensure rail safety, given the plan to ship crude through Churchill?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for the question. Indeed, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada is looking into this derailment. We will wait for the authorities to determine what the cause was in this case of the derailment of the grain.

Government Orders

With respect to any future plans of any railway, we do expect that any operator is going to abide by the Railway Safety Act and the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act. This government has acted since 2006 to strengthen both of those acts, increase the number of inspections, and increase the number of inspectors to ensure that these goods can move safely.

We believe in preventing derailments. We want to respond to them quickly, and we want to make sure the polluter pays at the end of the day.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, women's groups across the country are urging the government to introduce a bill that will make it illegal to purchase sexual services. They are also worried that this government is not doing anything to help prostitutes.

Can the government reassure these women's groups and announce that it will invest money, in collaboration with the provinces, to help prostitutes get out of prostitution?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Indeed, we have a substantive and comprehensive plan. It is absolutely necessary to work with the provinces and territories to give the necessary support to the most vulnerable—the women concerned by this issue—in each region of the country. I invite my colleague to work with my colleagues on this.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA-HONDURAS ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed from June 3 consideration of Bill C-20, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions on the motions at report stage of Bill C-20.

Call in the members.

● (1545)

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

(Division No. 163)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Aubin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Caron
Chisholm
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dewar
Donnelly
Dubé
Fortin
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Hassainia
Jacob
Kellway
Latendresse
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Marston
Masse
May
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Nantel
Nicholls
Papillon
Pécelet
Plamondon
Rafferty
Ravignat
Rousseau
Sandhu
Sellah
Sitsabaiesan
Sullivan
Toone
Turmel — 87

Ashton
Benskin
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brousseau
Chicoine
Choquette
Cleary
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dusseau
Freeman
Genest
Giguère
Gravelle
Hyer
Julian
Larose
Laverdière
Leslie
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Petry
Pilon
Quach
Rankin
Raynault
Saganash
Scott
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Stewart
Thibeault
Tremblay

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
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Anderson
Armstrong
Aspin
Bélanger
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Bernier
Blaney
Braid
Brisson
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Byrne
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Daniel
Dechert
Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Easter
Fast

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Andrews
Ashfield
Bateman
Bennett
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calandra
Cannan
Casey
Chong
Clement
Cuzner
Davidson
Dion
Dubourg
Dykstra
Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)

Government Orders

Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Footé
Freeland	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
James	Jones
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komaricki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureux
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	Leef
Leitch	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murray	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	Pacetti
Paradis	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Smith	Sorenson
Sopuck	St-Denis
Stanton	Strahl
Storseth	Tilson
Sweet	Trost
Toet	Trudeau
Trottier	Uppal
Truppe	Van Kesteren
Valcourt	Wallace
Van Loan	Warkentin
Warawa	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Watson	Wilks
Sky Country)	Wong
Weston (Saint John)	Yelich
Williamson	Young (Vancouver South)
Woodworth	
Young (Oakville)	
Zimmer— 171	

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I declare Motion No. 1 defeated. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 2 to 53 defeated as well.

Hon. Steven Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, members may not have noticed, but I came in a tad late and, therefore, my vote should not be counted.

• (1550)

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we were entertained by the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia's double pirouette on the floor of the House of Commons, but I would like to point out that the deputy whip, the whip, and the member for Ottawa Centre were not in their seats when you rose, Mr. Speaker. If one vote can be discarded over there, at least three votes can be discarded over there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is the hon. opposition House leader rising on the same point of order?

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The government whip raced in here kind of breaking precedence. Obviously, a few things were off on both sides. The member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam of course was not in his seat either, which I think raises the point that it is much better to wait for proper parliamentary process. That is what we believe, on this side of the House. We really have to wait for proper voting procedures.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The clock for the vote had expired and it is not a requirement that the two whips enter at the same time, even though it is common practice.

At this point, we will proceed to concurrence at report stage of Bill C-20.

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

• (1555)

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

(Division No. 164)

YEAS

Members

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

Routine Proceedings

Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Cuzner
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Dion
Dreeshen	Dubourg
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Easter	Falk
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Foote	Freeland
Galipeau	Gallant
Garneau	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Hsu	James
Jones	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lamoureux	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Menegakis	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murray
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Pacetti	Paradis
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Raït
Rajotte	Regan
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Smith	Sorenson
Sopuck	St-Denis
Stanton	Strahl
Storseth	Tilson
Sweet	Trost
Toet	Trudeau
Trottier	Uppal
Truppe	Van Kesteren
Valcourt	Wallace
Van Loan	Warkentin
Warawa	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Watson	
Sky Country)	Wilks
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Williamson	Yelich
Woodworth	Young (Vancouver South)
Young (Oakville)	
Zimmer— 173	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Ashton
Aubin	Benskin
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brousseau
Caron	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen

Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Dusseau	Fortin
Freeman	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Gravelle	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Kellway	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scott
Sellah	Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan	Stewart
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Turmel— 89	

PAIRED

Nil

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

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. You started reading out the first vote just as I was sitting down. I would like my vote to be cancelled so that it is more fair for the other members.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1600)

[*English*]**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 33 petitions.

* * *

PROTECTION OF COMMUNITIES AND EXPLOITED PERSONS ACT

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Criminal Code in response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in Attorney General of Canada v. Bedford and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Health in relation to Bill C-442, An Act respecting a National Lyme Disease Strategy. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics in relation to the certificate of nomination of Daniel Therrien to the position of Privacy Commissioner.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in relation to Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendments.

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

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

• (1640)

[Translation]

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

Routine Proceedings

(Division No. 165)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayer
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	Paradis
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Raith
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	Williamson
Weston (Saint John)	Woodworth
Wilks	Young (Oakville)
Wong	Zimmer— 142
Yelich	
Young (Vancouver South)	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
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Government Orders

Ashton	Aubin
Bélanger	Bennett
Benskin	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Dubourg
Easter	Foote
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Gravelle	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Jones
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Péclet
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turnel
Valeriote — 113	

PAIRED

Nil

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

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, National Defence; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, International Trade; and the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskas-ing, Aboriginal Affairs.

* * *

[English]

TIANANMEN SQUARE

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you would find

unanimous consent for the following motion, which was seconded by the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington and the member for Ottawa Centre. I move:

That the House remember the violent crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square on its 25th anniversary, express its deepest condolences to those who lost friends and family members in the massacre, call upon China to account for those who remain missing, call for the release of those who continue to be imprisoned, and urge the Government of China to abide by international human rights standards and to engage in ongoing and open dialogue with its people about the tragic events of 25 years ago.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Does the hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie have the unanimous consent of the House to present the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

AGRICULTURAL GROWTH ACT

BILL C-18—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, in relation to Bill C-18, An Act to amend certain Acts relating to agriculture and agri-food, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the bill; and

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

• (1645)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. Pursuant to Standing Order 67(1), there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places so that the Chair has some idea of the number of members who may want to participate in the debate.

Seeing many, I will ask members to keep their questions to about one minute.

The hon. opposition House leader.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has moved another time allocation motion. This is the 69th one.

Government Orders

The Conservatives are proud of that, but it was different when they were the opposition. They said that the Liberals were corrupt and that the Conservatives would run things differently and allow debate in the House of Commons. However, they have now matched the corrupt Liberals' sorry record with their 69th time allocation motion. They are as bad as the Liberals. It is appalling. Canadians deserve better.

Equally appalling is the fact that the Conservatives do not even show up for debate. They move a time allocation motion because they say they are in a hurry. However, since last Tuesday, they have missed 49 shifts in the House of Commons. That is appalling.

Nurses, doctors, construction workers and everyone else shows up for their shift. Could it get any better for the Conservatives? They have missed 49 shifts in just seven days. That is appalling.

Canadians deserve better than Conservative MPs who do not show up for work.

[*English*]

My question is very simple. We are talking about a bill that has some aspects we support, of course, and some aspects that have provoked some real controversy. There is no doubt that there are concerns about this bill. It has had only a few hours of debate. The government has simply been refusing to table it for debate so we can actually have the discussion on the floor of the House of Commons.

My question is simply this: Is the government moving time allocation, another one, which is now 69 times, because it is afraid of the controversy this bill has had in certain aspects and does not want to have Canadians learning about some of the aspects of the bill people find problematic?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the input from the House leader on the other side. He should recognize that there have been 22 years of debate on this issue. This is UPOV '91. It is based on 1991 and moving forward. Right now Canada operates under UPOV '78, which is certainly antiquated and outdated from today's standpoint in agriculture. We have been 22 years getting to this point. A lot of the opinions are exactly the same as they were 22 years ago. There is only one small splinter farm group that is against moving forward on this. Other than that, hearings the agricultural committees had when I sat in opposition, when I sat as chair of the committee, moving toward this day, all talked about the innovation required to move forward in Canada's agricultural sector to get under that umbrella of UPOV '91.

We are only one of two developed countries in the world that have not embraced this. The other one is Norway. Of course, its seed system is quite a bit different from ours.

It is time Canada got up to speed. It is time we moved this forward in an expeditious way.

The member opposite said that we are not standing up to take our fair share. What we are doing is allotting the opposition all the time, because its members constantly complain that they do not have enough time to speak, so here we go.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at times I find that the opposition House leader is challenged to stick to

the facts and be honest inside the Chamber when he makes reference to 69 times. That is in fact a record. It is a record the government has established. The NDP needs to realize that its slight exaggeration of something that is just not true in regard to the Liberal Party is most unfortunate.

The Conservatives have now used in excess of 70 hours, whether it is debating a motion of process or the bells ringing. That does not include the amount of time it takes to conduct the vote itself. It is a massive waste of time. Not all of this legislation is even controversial. There have been time allocation motions on legislation that is not controversial and should not have had closure.

My question is for the government House leader. Why has the government determined that using time allocation is part of the normal process here in the House of Commons? We have seen this since it became a majority Conservative government. Why is the government using this tool of closure as a normal daily House process? That is wrong.

• (1650)

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have campaigned for years on certain aspects of moving the agenda forward for the Canadian people. We make no apologies for using the tools available to us in this House and in the Senate to make sure that Canadians have that in the most expeditious way we can.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hear the minister saying that this has been discussed since the 1990s. This is something that seems to have been on the table for a long time. He talks about the fact that we are one of only two developed countries that have not yet adopted such regulations. Now it is 2014 and suddenly this is urgent. Suddenly, Parliament has to be choked with a time allocation motion.

I would like the minister to explain to me why, once again, we are in a situation where another bill dealing with another issue has been dragging on for decades. After almost a decade in power, suddenly, in 2014, a year away from an election and a month away from the summer, the Conservative government feels obliged to shut down debate and adopt time allocation motions. This seems inconsistent and illogical. Can the minister enlighten me?

[*English*]

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, we make no apologies for moving forward on our agenda. Canadians are asking us to do that on a number of fronts. One of them, of course, the third-largest driver of the Canadian economy, is agriculture. The processing sector for that primary production is the largest manufacturing sector in Canada.

They need new tools. They need tools of the 21st century, not of 1978. That is exactly what this piece of legislation does.

Government Orders

There have been a number of tries. I remember that the Liberal government, back in the 1990s, brought this forward. The NDP at the time, under the full moon, said that it could not do that, and it backed away.

During our time with a minority government, we brought it forward and tried to move it. Again, the NDP stood up and said that it was not going to allow it to happen. It is the NDP ideology that has led us to this point.

Having said that, this was tabled in December or so. We have had a tremendous amount of input at the agriculture committee around other hearings on moving agriculture forward. A lot of the people, even the Partners in Innovation, were very much onside, when we talked about innovation, that this is the key to moving forward in the seed sector. We intend to do just that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is truly a sorry situation. The NDP is not at all afraid to carry the burden of all the work on our shoulders. On the contrary, this is good preparation for when we take power in 2015.

That being said, let us not forget to put what is happening right now into context. The Liberals, with the complicity of the government, defined the rules for the last four weeks of work in the House.

What we are seeing now is a joke. In fact, it makes a mockery of the public interest and all Canadians. I want to know what has the minister so afraid that he is cutting off debate on this rather important bill. The bill makes changes that would have a considerable impact.

● (1655)

[*English*]

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, we are not afraid of any debate on this bill, because I have pages and pages of positive comments, from pretty much every farm group right across this great nation, from horticulture, grains, and oilseeds, about how important this is. It is pivotal and is a real paradigm shift in investing in new seeds and new varieties that are demanded by our customers around the world.

This is what is required to bring us into the 21st century and to make use of the other changes we have made in marketing freedom so that farmers out there have the best and the brightest working for them in science and research around the world. We will be able to bring that to Canada. We will also be able to export that from Canada.

We are well known for the quality and consistency of our agricultural products. It is just unfortunate that the NDP and its allies in that one farm splinter group have been baying at the moon for years and have not allowed this to move forward. That is what is comedy. It is shameful.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was here last night when we heard many Conservatives, wanting to shut down debate at that time, saying that they had heard enough. Today we are hearing again from the minister that we have already heard enough.

I am a bit confused about whether the government is getting tired of being the government. My offer to the Conservatives would be

that they could step out of the way, and we could take over. We would present things Canadians really want to debate, and I am sure that they would find lots to say about what we are putting forward as initiatives.

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, it is a great time to be in government. The Canadian economy is the envy of the world. I lead a lot of trade delegations around the world, and I am here to tell members that they look with envy at what we have been able to do.

I was here last night listening to the NDP's filibuster against free trade with Honduras. Just for the heck of it, I went back to its filibuster against trade with Colombia. It was amazing how a lot of those speeches were identical, word for word. All that the members changed was "Honduras" from "Colombia".

If we are talking about wasting the House's time and filibustering, I am happy to take our agenda out to the Canadian public at any time, whether it is the next campaign or tomorrow.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my understanding of this bill is that it is strongly supported by the agricultural sector, except for the splinter group the minister spoke about, and that the agricultural sector wants us to move ahead quickly so that it can gain the competitive advantage this bill would bring it.

I wonder if the minister could comment on the support he has heard from the agricultural sector regarding this bill and why it needs to move forward quickly.

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, I have been actively involved in agricultural politics for some 30 years. In that time we have had a lot of discussion about these types of bills and legislative fixes that are required to bring Canada into the 21st century. We have made good strides, and I welcome the intervention from the parliamentary secretary in this regard.

This goes from coast to coast, right from horticulture through to the grains and oilseeds sector. New and better varieties would give us new feed varieties to go into the pork, beef, sheep, and lamb sectors, which are very important. This would let us connect the dots across the spectrum of agriculture, getting the new feed varieties and seed varieties farmers of all stripes have been asking for decades, since UPOV '78.

The biggest difference in UPOV '91 is the ability of farmers to save seed. That is a huge change from UPOV '78, where it does not even exist. That is a tremendous step forward.

There is a lot of misinformation by one or two groups out there that is completely wrong in this respect. That is why all of the mainstream agricultural groups are fully supportive of this and want to see us get it done as soon as possible.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to listen to the minister's answers.

Government Orders

First of all, the government has the right to set the agenda in the House. The government introduced this bill some time ago and then chose to wait until the dying days of June to bring it back for debate.

Second, the minister accuses us of holding up bills. Let me tell the minister that part of the reason we put up speakers on bills is that we know for a fact that the government will entertain virtually no amendments either in the House or at committee. We have a responsibility as parliamentarians to stand here and make sure that we highlight the concerns that are being raised by our constituents.

I need to tell the minister that I have hundreds of people in my riding who do not belong to some splinter group who are raising some serious concerns about this bill. We have a right to present their concerns in this place. That is our job.

I wonder why the minister is so afraid of hearing the concerns being raised by our constituents.

• (1700)

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, I am not concerned about hearing those concerns at all, but I would like them to come from farmers, people who are actually vested in this particular bill. I am not interested in hearing from people from downtown Vancouver or downtown Montreal. I want to actually talk to farmers whom the bill would impact.

Having said that, I am not concerned to make these arguments with anybody at any time, but I do want them based on sound science. I want them based on evidence that is quantified, that actually shows that this is a very important piece to move our agricultural sector forward in this country.

I am not scared to have that debate with anybody.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to let the minister know that my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan is actually from Vancouver Island, from an area that has a very rich agricultural history. When I was raising my children, we certainly visited many of the farms in her riding and got vegetables and all kinds of other produce, and cheese.

Today, the question I have for the minister is, why is the government so scared of debate? First, the Conservatives leave a bill until the last few weeks of Parliament, then they bring it before the House and say we can only have five hours of debate, and then, lo and behold, they do not actually debate the bill with the opposition.

The opposition is left to raise concerns without ever hearing any counter-arguments from the other side.

What does the government have to hide?

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, I would challenge any Canadian, if they wanted to, to check the speeches that the NDP give on any on any particular issue, and they would find a carbon copy over and over again. New Democrats will have one or two issues and they overplay them. That is fine. That is their job. That is their role.

However, when we talk about agriculture across Canada, and agriculture on Vancouver Island, which is very important and I absolutely get that, we are talking about grains and oilseed varieties. I have a quote from Keith Kuhl, president of the Canadian Horticultural Council:

As farms work to match production with the growing global population it becomes increasingly important that they have the tools needed to continue to increase production. New varieties are an important segment of this growth. Ensuring that our plant breeders' rights are aligned with our global trading partners is imperative.

That is from the horticulture industry. There is a tremendous amount of horticulture on Vancouver Island and a tremendous amount of livestock too, which would also benefit from new, improved varieties of feed that will bring the price down so that meat across the counter stays reasonable, so that Canadians continue to enjoy the cheapest food basket against their disposable income in the world, and the quality is unsurpassed.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is getting a little carried away. He is attacking our credibility.

I do not live in a skyscraper. I live in a rural area, and to get home I drive an hour through dairy farms. That is all in my riding, and these are the people who pay my salary. They sent me here to debate and study bills and to represent their concerns.

There may not be extraordinary orators on the other side, and I am no master myself, but we have the right to stand up for the people we represent, and we have the right to point out a bill's flaws. I think that is simple.

He says that he is letting us speak, but since his buddies are not even showing up to work, I think that is a bit of a stretch.

[English]

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, I would be the first to argue that democracy pivots around the ability to speak one's mind, put forward one's ideas and have them debated, but democracy is also underscored by the fact that we can have our say, but not necessarily our way.

At the end, I continue to work with farm groups across this great country. I probably met with a number of farmers from the riding of the member opposite on a number of issues. Certainly, we work together through our provincial counterparts, directly with industry, to make sure we put our best agricultural foot forward.

A lot of this innovation that we are talking about under UPOV '91 actually allows Canadian agriculture to have a lighter environmental footprint, which is extremely important, moving forward: less pesticides, less chemicals, less fertilizers, all very important to the member opposite, I know.

To get on with 21st century farming, we have to actually have 21st century guidelines.

Government Orders

• (1705)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to just acknowledge the minister's consistent support for farmers across Canada. Once again I am reminded of the NDP's complete disconnect from agriculture when I hear its members' questions here today. Once again, they have been influenced by a small group of people who, typically, a couple times a year, take these issues and fearmonger among the farm community in order to fundraise for their organization.

Farmers have told us since we have gotten in that they want change. We have provided that. I was happy to see yesterday that the last suit regarding marketing change has finally been thrown out of court, because we have made good changes for farmers in western Canada.

I would like the minister to talk a bit about what has happened with marketing change. How has that improved the situation in western Canada in particular, and how would he see the changes that we are talking about here today in the bill further improve that situation for grains and oilseeds producers in western Canada?

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question because it actually laid the foundation to be able to move forward with UPOV '91. When the old single desk monopoly at the Canadian Wheat Board was in place, there was absolutely no demand or desire to move forward with new varieties. The old single desk was so fixated on high protein number one red that it was starting to lose market share around the world and we were hemorrhaging acres of wheat, durum, and barley, simply because of the constrictive, restrictive nature that it operated within. Once we made that change in 2012, and farmers have never looked back, they started to talk about how they could look forward to this new foundational piece with UPOV '91 to move them into the 21st century with the varieties that are required by our customers.

The Wheat Board always used to hold up Warburton's flour mills in Great Britain. I have had the opportunity to be in the mill and talk to the buyers and the owners there. They were to the point where they were actually going to drop away from Canadian content and move to Australia, Argentina, and other suppliers, some in the U.S. and so forth. We actually recaptured that. I am proud to say that Warburton's is actually buying 50% more now, on an annual basis, than it did in its best year under the old single desk. It is contracting acres directly with farmers in western Canada to get the variety and the types of grains it requires for the new mixes it is doing.

We have done a tremendous amount of work blending pea flour into noodles in the Pacific Rim area to get the protein in those noodles, which is a major part of their diet. A lot of good things are happening and it is simply because our farmers are innovative and they need the backstop. They need the tools that UPOV '91 will give them to continue that important work.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is always a difficult time when time allocation is raised in this place. It is very frequent, we now know. It is up to 69 times now. This used to be a measure that was taken only very rarely. When we have a debate on time allocation we end up in the substance of the bill. The Minister of Agriculture is a very honourable man and I find it very difficult because I do not know that it was his idea that we

have to be rushed through without adequate time. With time allocation, what inevitably happens is members in my position who represent a small party, and I agree that the Green Party with two MPs is a very small party, and others in this place do not have an opportunity. The discussion on the debate will not come around to allow a speaking opportunity.

I have been deluged by concerns from farmers who are concerned about losing plant breeders' rights. We need adequate time for study. I do not think it is this minister's idea that we are denied adequate time for study. Sixty-nine times does not look like ministers of the Crown making independent decisions. It looks like a PMO bulldozer. Therefore, would the hon. minister consider changing course on the bill so that we have adequate time for debate and all MPs can be heard?

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, I listened to what the Green Party leader said, but the unfortunate part is, if she looked at all those interventions she got, they would be a form letter from the same type of people who are actually operating under misinformation, or myth-information, done willingly by a small splinter group of agricultural producers.

At the end of the day, this actually backstops our organic industry. It makes sure they have the ability to get the new varieties they need to move forward, to get the yields that they need to make that operation a viable operation. Therefore, whether we spend five hours or fifty hours, the ultimate end is, the vast majority of farmers in this democracy we call Canada are demanding this sooner rather than later. Let us just get it done and deliver what they are asking for.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not every day that I participate in a time allocation debate, but the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food really hit a nerve.

I come from the Montreal area. I live in Laval, a suburb of Montreal with the most beautiful farmland on the St. Lawrence, close to a metropolis. I represent the only riding in Canada where you can find a subway station and cows. I am very proud of that.

I am also very proud to have grown up among farmers and to know many who live in downtown Montreal and own land outside Montreal.

Why did the minister denigrate the farmers who live in Montreal in his speech? He said that he was not interested in hearing from people who live in Montreal. Why is he afraid to hear from farmers who live in Montreal?

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, as usual, the member is twisting the words a bit. This also makes me wonder why NDP members were so vociferous in the boundary changes of ridings so that they could differentiate between what was rural and what was urban. If the member is proud of the fact that her cows are standing at the subway stop, then so am I. That makes a stronger MP who actually understands better what is going on across this country.

How can the member say it is so important to listen to farmers who live in Montreal and farm out in the country, which is great because we have a lot of them, and say having cows and subways in a riding is important to her, while at the same time her party is fighting to separate rural and urban? It makes no sense, very similar to all of that party's agriculture policy.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you can see that I am somewhat surprised. The minister, like 68 other members before him, is playing the same game. When debating a time allocation motion, he talks about his bill. It might be nice one day to have a debate on a time allocation motion and not on the bill that the minister wants to highlight.

Furthermore, I hear him disparaging the speeches by those on this side of the House and saying that he has heard them often enough. If he is hearing them so often, it may be because he has forgotten that this side of the House represents 61% of Canadians and, apparently, 61% of Canadians do not always agree with what the government wants to put in place.

Could this minister rise in the House and tell us at least that he is the minister of 100% of Canadians and that he will respect everyone's right to be heard?

[English]

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, the gentleman opposite is actually making my point. Democracy is about having one's say, not necessarily having one's way, regardless of what percentage is represented.

At the end of the day, the vast majority of farmers, 99.9% of them, want this now, and we are delivering exactly that for them.

The NDP members get a supply day. That is when those members control the debate. If they want to debate closure, then they should bring it up next Tuesday. We will talk about it all day, right until midnight if that is what they desire.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a little insulting to hear comments such as those the hon. minister just made to the effect that we have small lobby groups while they have big lobby groups such as Cargill and Monsanto and we have to listen to his lobby groups.

Well, our little groups represent people who sometimes work night and day to save their land, and their land is important to them. It is important to Quebeckers to eat healthy food. Bill C-18 ignores everything that is happening in agriculture in Quebec and Ontario. However, in terms of debate, we can talk a long time about what

these time allocation motions mean to democracy. This is the 69th such motion, which makes no sense.

Could the minister rise and finally say that he will listen to everyone across Canada?

● (1715)

[English]

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, we have done just that. We did not wait for Bill C-18 to be put together. A tremendous amount of consultation went into putting Bill C-18 together. We worked with agricultural groups and the provinces across this great land.

I agree with the member that farmers are the salt of the earth and they work hard to save their land, but the one thing the member opposite has missed is if farmers want to save their land, the best way to do that is to make sure they have the most innovative tools at their disposal so they have the ability to make a bottom line profit so they can continue to grow that enterprise. I agree with the member on that.

To the best of my knowledge, I have never dealt with or met with anyone from Monsanto.

[Translation]

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

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

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

● (1755)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 166)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)

Private Members' Business

Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinoooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leef
Lemieux	Leung
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 145	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Ashton	Aubin
Bélangier	Bennett
Benskin	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron

Casey	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Dubourg	Dusseault
Easter	Foote
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Gravelle	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Jones	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Masse
Mathysen	May
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Nantel
Nash	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Péclet	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Turnel	Valeriote — 104

PAIRED

Nil

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

It being 5:52 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

AN ACT TO BRING FAIRNESS FOR THE VICTIMS OF VIOLENT OFFENDERS

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC) moved that Bill C-479, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (fairness for victims), be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I say this every time, but it is indeed an honour to stand here at third reading stage of Bill C-479 to make these important and necessary amendments to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

Private Members' Business

In the time since the chamber debated the bill at second reading, the Prime Minister launched the first ever Canadian victims bill of rights in early April. I am proud that Bill C-479 works in concert with this historic piece of federal legislation to better protect victims of crime and give them a much stronger voice in our criminal justice system.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge the ongoing and dedicated leadership of the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness when it comes to victims' rights. The Canadian victims bill of rights is just one of many initiatives on which they and their ministries are working.

I extend special thanks to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, the member for Scarborough Centre, for all of her support at the committee process and in readings of Bill C-479 in the House.

I also thank the members who sit on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security for all their comments, questions, and interest. I appreciate every one of them.

I would especially like to thank the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, Sue O'Sullivan, for her frank advice before and during the crafting of Bill C-479. We are fortunate to have such an experienced, dedicated, and caring Canadian leading this office as our ombudsman. It has been a pleasure to get to know her better over the past couple of years through the process of this bill. I salute the good work she does, and I know the provisions of Bill C-479 will help in the work she and her office do on a daily basis. I would also encourage all of my colleagues to go to the office's website and watch the videos of the victims and their stories. It is very educational about what victims have to endure presently in the process they go through in regard to parole hearings.

As we consider Bill C-479 for third and final reading in the House before it moves to the other place, please allow me to recap what this bill would do. Bill C-479, an act to bring fairness for the victims of violent offenders, would make nine changes to modernize the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, so it can better protect and support victims of violent offenders. Let me please summarize this.

The bill would extend mandatory review periods for parole. This means that if an offender convicted of a more serious violent offence is denied parole, the Parole Board would have to review the case within five years rather than the current two years.

It would increase the period to within four years in which the Parole Board must review parole in cases of cancellation or termination of parole for an offender who is serving at least two years for an offence involving violence.

It would require that the Parole Board take into consideration the need for victims and victim's families to attend a hearing and observe the proceedings.

It would require that the Parole Board consider any victim impact statement presented by victims.

It would require the Parole Board, if requested, to provide victims with information about the offender's release on parole, statutory release, or temporary absence, as well as provide victims with

information about the offender's correctional plan, including progress toward meeting its objectives.

It is important to remember Constable Michael Sweet, and again I remind the House that he is no relation to me. It is important to remember that case because he was brutally murdered by two brothers and they were sentenced for this terrible, heinous crime. There was only one thing Michael Sweet's family asked for. Their plea was simple. They said that the offenders committed the crime in public—in other words, they killed the father and husband of the family in public—they were tried in public, and the family simply said the Corrections and Conditional Release Act should be changed so that it would be known publicly that offenders were making some effort to be rehabilitated and become contributing citizens.

I do not think that is too big a request.

It also matters a lot to victims and families who have gone through a tremendous ordeal only to be re-victimized by the process. We have discussed many examples during the course of debate on the bill, so let me make three points as we embark on this hour of debate.

In the cross-country public consultations held by the government that led to the introduction of the Canadian victims bill of rights, which I have previously mentioned, the overwhelming and clear message was that victims of crime want increased participation in the criminal justice system. I would submit that Bill C-479 would do exactly this.

● (1800)

We know we must pay particular attention to instances of violent crime, crimes that are heinous, repugnant, calculated, and senseless. I would also submit to members in this House that Bill C-479 would do exactly this.

It is victims of violent offenders who we are looking to help and support with this bill.

The statistics on violent offences in this country that I cited at the bill's second reading are alarming. These are contained in the Sampson report of December 2007.

Nearly 60% of all people serving sentences of less than three years, at the time this report was done, had histories of violence, and one in six had known gang or organized crime affiliations.

To make real and meaningful change for victims and families of victims whose lives have been turned upside down by these violent offences, we must do two things well: strengthen the voice of victims of violent crime by providing additional support to victims in the parole process; and give the Parole Board of Canada the tools it needs with regard to review of detention periods with the option of increasing the time between parole hearings for violent offenders.

Private Members' Business

I would repeat to my colleagues in the House that we want to give the option, discretion, and tools to the Parole Board so that, case by case, it will know when to engage those tools we would give it through this bill.

Once again, I would submit to members in the House that Bill C-479 would do exactly this.

As I have acknowledged before, in developing a well-researched and well-thought-out bill, my office and I spoke numerous times with the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, Ms. Sue O'Sullivan, and her office. Her testimony before the standing committee was certainly compelling.

I am pleased that some of the recommendations of her 2013 report, "Meeting the needs of victims of crime in Canada", have been acted upon in Bill C-479—in particular, the rights of victims to good communication throughout the system, the use of technology in victims' statements presented at Parole Board hearings, and ensuring the parole process is more accommodating to victims' needs.

However, I also believe this bill has a sound basis when I look at other jurisdictions that are doing similar things.

As I noted before the standing committee, the Victims' Rights Act of New Zealand, instituted in 2002, has been a model for the world. Under the corresponding provisions of the New Zealand Parole Act of 2002, rights of victims are also enshrined, much as is being proposed in Bill C-479. Similarly, the basis is support and respect for victims.

In 2009, the New Zealand Ministry of Justice launched an extensive public consultation to further enhance victim support within its justice system. One of the areas it looked at, which is echoed in Bill C-479, is the modernizations I propose to reflect with the use of technology through video conference and links to oral statements delivered in regional offices via telecommunication.

This is expressly addressed to ensure victims have a strong voice in the process, but also to mitigate the re-victimization of victims and their families. The Victims of Crime Reform Bill, introduced to the Parliament of New Zealand, includes this provision.

The New Zealand victims of crime reform bill also included improvements to the victim notification system, again similar to the bill we have before us today. It would allow Canadian victims increased access to information about how offenders are progressing with their correctional plans and pertinent documents.

Aside from New Zealand, our friends in other great western democracies are also looking at these issues. The report by Ms. O'Sullivan and the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime looked at U.S. legislation, both at the federal and state level. Also, the United Kingdom's code of practice and the 2012 European directives on victim support and protection were also studied.

Once again, this underscores that Bill C-479 is both timely and appropriate.

Before closing, I would again like to acknowledge the hard work and many long hours of my staff in bringing this bill through each

stage of the House of Commons process. I dearly appreciate their work.

In closing, I would like to conclude where I began when I first introduced Bill C-479.

As the House knows, I have attended Parole Board of Canada hearings with my constituents who are victims of a very violent offender. I have attended them on three such occasions now.

This is the case of Jon Rallo, who to this day still denies the triple murder he committed, the gruesome triple murder of my constituent's sister, niece, and nephew. The body of her nephew has never been found. It is believed to have been disposed of in waterways around the Hamilton area.

The most compelling moment each time has been when my constituent asks Mr. Rallo the same question in her victim impact statement at each hearing:

● (1805)

Why did you kill our family? What did you do with your son?

She never gets a response. The offender sits stone-faced. He feels no remorse. This is something the Parole Board noted carefully in its last decision before denying him full parole in 2013.

However, since he may reapply for parole again next year, we may go through the same reading of a similar impact statement, and the tears and emotion from the family that inevitably accompany them will happen again.

I think I need to mention just once more that because of the duty these families feel to their loved ones who have been murdered, part of the re-victimization is something that they shoulder, but we should do everything we can legislatively and by regulation to make that re-victimization as minimal as possible.

Watching it in person, I can say it is as dramatic an example of re-victimization as there ever could be. This is what motivates me to see Bill C-479 through to fruition. Let us get on with the job.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by expressing my thanks to the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale for the work he has done in bringing this bill in front of us.

He has certainly been very dedicated to this issue, very dedicated to his constituents, and has gotten this bill to this stage in the House of Commons to make some significant improvements in the rights of victims in our system. I congratulate him for that.

I also congratulate the member for being willing to listen in committee, willing to listen and make improvements to the bill. The bill we have has been slightly amended to the point where we on this side of the House are very comfortable in supporting the bill.

My question for the member is around how we let victims know about the rights they now have in the system and the changes we are making. That is one of the things I have heard, that lots of victims do not realize the rights they have now, and now we are making some changes.

Private Members' Business

I wonder if the member has given any thought to how we can make sure victims realize they have some new rights and new possibilities within the legal system.

• (1810)

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very kind words and for his very constructive question.

I would hope that part of the informing process would be our collective efforts in the 308 ridings across the country. When I first launched the initiative, I did not know that the timing would be the way it was or the magnitude of the victims bill of rights, but since it complements the victims bill of rights quite well, I believe that part of the government's initiative will be to communicate that, and aspects of this bill will go along with it, hand-in-glove.

Since my colleague has raised it, I will be communicating on this specific question with the federal victims ombudsman's office to see exactly what tools it has. I am certain it will make sure victims know about this, as part of its mandate. Certainly, I will make sure I deliver any information it needs, so that it can push this information out and that victims will know all about it and can access their new rights that the bill provides.

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale for bringing this very important legislation forward to improve victims rights throughout the parole process.

The member talked about victims feeling re-victimized. Being a member of that committee and the parliamentary secretary, I can say we heard from a number of victims. They brought stories forward of having to appear before parole hearing after parole hearing, sometimes less than two years apart. One witness said it was almost six months in between each hearing. It actually brought me to tears in that particular committee meeting.

I want to thank the member for bringing this legislation forward. It is important that the member mentioned that, by putting forward this legislation, we are not actually mandating that the period of review is now five years in between. It is actually an extension and an option for the Parole Board of Canada to hear these particular cases.

I just wonder if the member could comment on that and reiterate how important this legislation is for victims, to ensure that we are not re-victimizing them again and again.

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's great question affords me the opportunity, in case there is ever any misunderstanding in this regard, to say that we thoroughly agree and understand that the parole process is part of the rehabilitative process for offenders to go through to be integrated into society. The best thing that can happen to people who are convicted of crimes and institutionalized is they come out rehabilitated and become contributing Canadian citizens. I want that to be clear.

The premise of the provisions in the bill is to give the Parole Board of Canada the tools so it can make judgments when offenders apply for parole. If offenders have been working diligently through their correction plans and want to make amends, want to be contributing Canadians, and want to ensure there is a large space between them and those who were victimized so they feel safe, then

I think the Parole Board is professional enough that it will make the right decision and conduct the reviews early. For those who want to continue their victimization and behaviour, the bill would give the Parole Board the tools to decide not to conduct reviews until five years later.

That is the purpose and intention of the bill. I sincerely trust that the professionals with Parole Board of Canada will follow the spirit, as well as the letter, of the law.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in favour of Bill C-479 at third reading. As I said just a few minutes ago, we believe Bill C-479, as amended, contains important improvements in victims' rights.

Once again, I would like to thank the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale for his efforts to bring this improvement to victims rights before the House and to third reading, where it now seems assured to pass.

There are many provisions in the bill which would be of clear benefit to victims. Indeed, some of these have already become a normal part of the practice in the corrections and parole system. However, we agree that it is a good idea to entrench these rights for victims by placing them in legislation.

These rights include: the right of victims or members of their family to be present at parole hearings; the right of victims to have their statements considered by the Parole Board of Canada in its decisions regarding offender release; expanding the manner in which victims' statements can be presented at parole hearings through the use of technology, among other things; and requiring that the communication of victims' information be considered by the board. In other words, the victims would have a right to see what the board has looked at, so they can understand how that decision has been made.

Also, they include making it obligatory to provide transcripts of parole hearings to victims and their families, and making it mandatory to inform victims when an offender is granted a temporary absence, or parole or is released at the end of their sentence.

These are all good things, but there is one area in which we remain disappointed. That is the unwillingness of the government to go further in a very important area. We were surprised to see the government reject an amendment from our side, which would have expanded victims' rights in a proposal that would have allowed victims to choose other means of observing parole hearings than appearing in person.

We believe victims have the right to observe parole hearings by video or teleconferencing if they so choose. Strangely, with the way things work right now, victims only have the right to observe those hearings by video or teleconference if Correctional Service of Canada has banned them from appearing in person.

It is a strange quirk in the rules. If victims have made threats or been disruptive and Correctional Service of Canada says that they cannot attend the parole hearings, they are then allowed to attend by videoconference or teleconference. We believe this right should be extended to all victims.

Private Members' Business

There are many good reasons why any victim might not want to make use of the right to observe in person. Some victims would prefer not to be in the same room as the offender, whether out of fear or revulsion.

It would also allow those victims who would otherwise have to travel to attend a hearing. Perhaps an offender has been transferred across the country and a hearing is in British Columbia and the victims live in Ontario. If they could attend by video or teleconference, they would not incur travel costs and they would not have to take time off from work.

Hearings far from home have become a problem for many victims. Again, we believe that if we extended them the right to choose to attend by videoconference or teleconference, it would be an important improvement.

We remain concerned about one aspect of the bill, which is the provision that was just mentioned by the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale in his answer to the question from the parliamentary secretary. This is the provision that would give the Parole Board the discretion to extend the interval between parole hearings for those convicted of very serious crimes.

We have no problem with this provision when it is applied to those serving life sentences. In fact, we proposed to amend the bill to do just that. However, there is a risk that lengthening the discretionary period between reviews for those serving shorter sentences may inadvertently remove incentives for offenders to participate in rehabilitation programs.

In other words, if offenders are told that their hearings have been put off for four years, what would their incentive be, when they are in the corrections institute, to enter into those rehabilitation programs?

Again, for those serving shorter sentences, it may inadvertently increase the number of people who leave custody without supervision upon their warrant expiry. In other words, if they are told that their hearings have been put off for three years and their warrants expire in three years and six months, they would have no incentive. They would not participate and they would get out without any of that very necessary rehabilitation.

How do we avoid that happening? Obviously, we support the bill, because we believe we could avoid that if there were a well-funded Parole Board. The Parole Board would be able to avoid these unintended consequences.

• (1815)

However, we have a Parole Board which is now suffering from restricted funding and so there will be the tendency for the Parole Board to be forced to extend the interval between paroles simply as a question of resources. It will have other things it has to do by law and therefore if the interval allowed, and we call it discretion, is longer, then it will inevitably become longer if it does not have adequate funding. As we have seen with the Conservatives in power, quite often we have underfunding of very important public services, and the Parole Board is one of those.

Finally, we remain concerned with process, and that is the process of making extensive changes to the Criminal Code of Canada and

the Corrections and Conditional Release Act through multiple bills proceeding through different paths through Parliament on different timetables. The sheer volume of the changes that have been made by different bills often considered in different committees risk legal errors and omissions as well as unintended consequences. Some bills go to the justice committee, some go to the public safety committee where I sit.

For instance, in the case of Bill C-479, the public safety committee did not have the advantage of seeing the text of the government's victims bill of rights, Bill C-32, and now it will go to the justice committee where the members of the justice committee will not have the benefit of having heard the witnesses and the testimony that we had in the public safety committee on very closely related issues. Again, we think there is a potential problem by having multiple private members' bills as well as a government bill on victims' rights all going through the House of Commons with different paths and different timetables.

This piecemeal approach also means that sometimes important issues never end up in front of the House. What readily comes to mind is the question of how we address other needs of victims other than their needs in conjunction with the legal system.

Therefore, improving victims' rights with regard to the legal system is important. As I said, for that reason we have supported bills like Bill C-42 and the bill in front of us now. However, victims have other important needs like compensation for losses they may have suffered, financial help with time off work, counselling or help with other expenses necessary to get their lives back on track. Neither Bill C-479 nor Bill C-482 have tackled this question and Bill C-32, the victims bill of rights, suggests the answer can be found in simply expanding the rights of victims to restitution.

The problem that we on this side of the House see is that unfortunately very few victims will ever be able to recover anything through the restitution process because of the obvious fact that most offenders have few resources. This was a point that I tried to raise last night in the late night debate on the victims bill of rights. When I tried to put forward the need to discuss a better alternative, which has the potential to treat all victims fairly and equally, I was nearly shouted down in the House. It may have been the late hour that caused some of the rambunctious responses on the other side of the House, but it again illustrates the problem of doing these things piecemeal through the House of Commons.

What I wanted to put forward briefly was the idea that what we really needed was federal leadership on an adequate compensation plan for victims through criminal injuries compensation funds. The Conservatives try to slough this off, saying that it is a matter of provincial jurisdiction, yet one province, Newfoundland and Labrador, and all three territories, have no such program and in the other nine provinces the criminal injury compensation funds have very low caps on the amount of compensation available to individual victims. In some cases, this is as low as \$5,000. If we think about it, \$5,000 will not go very far in trying to cover things even like lost wages.

Private Members' Business

As I said before, no party in the House has a monopoly on a concern for victims, but we sometimes have different approaches to the problem. We have been supportive of these attempts to expand victims' rights through the legal system, but we believe there are other needs of victims that also need equal consideration. As well, we have argued all along that one of the most important things we in the House can do is adopt programs and ensure that corrections programs do not contribute to further victims in the future. A well-funded corrections system is an important part of not having further victims in the future.

Therefore, we are looking for a balance in our approach to public safety, where we can build safer communities through having punishment in place but also having adequate rehabilitation.

As my time draws to a close, let me conclude, once again, by stating the support of the New Democrats for strengthening victims' rights in the legal system. However, I would urge all members to consider the other important issue, the thing that victims also need, which is well-supported programs in order to help them put their lives back in order.

● (1825)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too congratulate the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale on bringing forward this legislation and getting it to this stage. I do expect it to pass in the House. The Liberal Party will be supporting the bill at this stage.

I want to draw on a couple of points that were mentioned by the NDP member who just spoke. He indicated there were amendments by opposition members—and very good amendments, I believe—that did not get the consideration that they should have at committee.

I agree with the member that video conferencing for victims was a sensible request. It would reduce cost and reduce stress on victims from having to appear in the same room with an offender. Turning down that amendment was a mistake.

The other point the member raised, which I will also not elaborate on, is that at the end of the day, public safety is key. If offenders, because of the longer time between hearings, find themselves unable to enter a rehabilitation program, that is a dilemma in terms of public safety. It could increase the risk of those offenders reoffending when they get back into society.

Given that the key element of the legislation, namely that the discretion of the Parole Board to conduct its tasks would not be infringed, it is our intention to support the bill.

The intent by the mover to ensure that victims of crime are considered remains. This was the cornerstone of previous Liberal initiatives and came into strong focus with the 2003 Canadian Statement of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime that was negotiated between federal and provincial governments at that time.

The problem with this legislation, as with many private members' bills coming forward from government members relating to public safety, is the extent to which the government, through Department of Justice lawyers, has had to intervene to amend the legislation to bring it into line both legally and constitutionally.

The trouble begins in part with the statements at the beginning, when the legislation is brought into the House. I see it this way. This legislation was brought in and went to committee. Witnesses came before committee based on the original bill. They were supportive of the original bill because it proposed to do a, b, c, and d in terms of victims rights. After the hearings were over and the witnesses left town—and I have said this with previous bills—legal counsel with either the Department of Justice or Public Safety Canada came in and made a number of government amendments that, in my view, substantially changed the legislation. As a result, the bill has ended up not being the same as it was when the mover of the bill talked about it at the beginning.

Even at report stage, the government is still trying to clean up the bill in an effort to bring it more in line with what is legally acceptable. By my count, the government introduced and passed nine amendments to what was originally a seven-clause bill. This ensured that the legislation would be in conformance with the legal requirements of any legislation.

● (1830)

It should be noted, for example, that the legislation now before the House does reinforce the idea that the requirements for Correctional Service of Canada, or in this case the Parole Board, to disclose certain information to victims related to offenders are not requirements without limitations. The power of the Parole Board to use its discretion has remained with the provisions of the act and within Bill C-479.

One of the concerns that has arisen is the contradictory nature of private members' legislation that is related to the government's tough on crime agenda and that comes from government members. I have raised this issue in the House and at committee. It relates to government members having a somewhat confused agenda. I cannot understand it. My colleague as well previously mentioned that there needs to be more coordination with the government itself in terms of legislation coming forward.

Why does the Minister of Justice not coordinate all these interests and private members' bills in a substantive way? That way, they would perhaps not be in conflict with one another, and the government would also be less likely to see legislation turned back by a superior court.

The principle behind Bill C-479 was to reduce the number of Parole Board hearings to which victims would be subjected. During the course of testimony before the public safety committee, it was emphasized that this legislation was necessary to minimize the re-victimization of victims.

The House needs to understand, and rightly so, that we heard some pretty sad stories from victims before the committee. When they have to prepare victim impact statements, go to a Parole Board hearing—sometimes practically without any notice—and then have to do it again in two years, it is the re-victimization of victims.

However, as members will find out later in my remarks, it appeared that the intent of the bill was to change that period to five years. That did not really happen at all. There is the possibility it could go to five years, but it could also remain at two. It is at the discretion of the Parole Board.

Private Members' Business

My concern, as I stated earlier in my remarks, is that victims who came before the committee actually believed that it would be five years. It is not so now. It could be two or it could be five or it could be four. It is at the discretion of the Appeal Board. The intent and the stated fact of what the bill would do did not really happen.

However, we then have the contradiction that I also want to mention. The principle of Bill C-483 was to increase the number of Parole Board hearings related to escorted temporary absences, thus creating further hearings to which victims would be subjected.

On the one hand we have a bill that is trying to reduce the number of Parole Board hearings, and on the other hand we have another bill in contradiction to that, trying to stretch them out.

The question victims and victims' organizations should ask themselves is straightforward: since government members speak to each other, why do they not coordinate this in a substantive way so that we have an overall strategy that works in harmony rather than in conflict?

Let me close by saying that my concern with this process is that when the bill is presented, it states one thing, but then, after the witnesses leave town, justice lawyers come in and amend it. We then have a substantively different bill, one that does not do what backbench Conservatives claimed in the first instance it would do. We have seen this on several bills now.

• (1835)

However, there are some good points in the bill. It is a step forward, and at the end of the day we will support it. However, I want to tell victims that it is not all they were told it would be in the beginning.

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure today to speak about our government's unyielding determination and commitment to support victims of crime in our country.

As members of the House know, we recently took a big step forward in this regard with the introduction of Bill C-32, the victims bill of rights act. This particular legislation, developed and designed to respond to the long-standing concerns of victims of crime would, for the first time, enshrine in law four important rights: the right to information, the right to participation, the right to protection, and the right to restitution.

In fact, many of the concerns expressed earlier by the opposition parties are actually addressed in this particular bill. It is also historic in that it would transform the way in which the criminal justice system interacts with victims of crime. Quite simply, but also quite profoundly, the victims bill of rights act would ensure victims have a greater voice in the criminal justice system. We are grateful for the support we have seen for that legislation and we look forward to further debate about its many merits.

However, today we are here to discuss Bill C-479, the fairness for victims act. It is yet another example of our government's strong commitment to standing up for the victims of crime. It would build on the significant action we have already taken in this regard,

including the victims bill of rights act and many other initiatives put forward since we came to power in 2006.

Not only have we instituted and permanently funded the federal victims strategy, but we have also passed several legislative measures to strengthen the parole process and give a greater voice to victims. Indeed, with the passage of the Safe Streets and Communities Act in 2012, we enshrined in law a victim's right to present a statement at parole hearings and ensured a victim's access to timely information from the Correctional Service of Canada about offenders' transfers.

Additionally, we have put in place measures so that the Parole Board can proceed, with some exceptions, to a decision even if an offender withdraws a parole application within 14 days of the scheduled hearing. Before our changes, a victim would have been inconvenienced travelling to a hearing that did not even take place.

Bill C-479 is also in line with the promise our government made to keep Canadians and their families safe. As ever, we remain focused on tackling crime and creating a fair and efficient justice system. Our government has continually placed the interests of victims ahead of those of criminals, and I would hope that the members opposite will start to support these important measures. I am pleased to hear today in the House that both parties will be supporting it.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again commend the hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale for his tireless work for victims and for bringing this important legislation forward.

As members know, there were some amendments adopted at report stage. We are confident that we now have before us the best legislation possible for the good of all victims. We thank members for their support in getting this legislation to where it is today.

Let us discuss the ways in which it would modernize the Corrections and Conditional Release Act as well as how it would help victims.

First I would like to speak to the changes we have proposed in regard to mandatory review periods for parole for offenders convicted of violent offences, including murder. When such offenders are denied parole, the Parole Board is currently required by law to review their case every two years. This legislation would now extend this period of review from two to five years.

We have also proposed to lengthen the mandatory parole review periods when parole is cancelled or terminated for offenders serving at least two years for an offence involving violence. It would increase this mandatory period to within four years in which the Parole Board must review parole, and for later cancellations the mandatory period would be increased to five years.

Private Members' Business

Why is this so important to victims? Let us not forget that many of them participate in hearings. If we pause and reflect for a moment and try to imagine the anxiety and distress that victims might feel leading up to the process of a Parole Board hearing, it becomes clear why a longer period of time between these hearings is desirable. Indeed, giving victims a longer period of time in which to rebuild their lives and heal from their ordeals is a reasonable, measured change that we can offer them. When we studied the bill at committee and heard from victims who chose to attend hearings as a duty to honour the lives of the loved ones they had lost, this was one of the most critical changes in their minds.

The bill would also require the Parole Board to take a number of further steps to better accommodate victims and respond to their needs.

● (1840)

For example, it would require the Parole Board to provide victims and their families another means to observe hearings remotely if they have not been permitted to observe in person. Similarly, it would obligate the Parole Board to take into account any victim statements presented, especially when considering what conditions may be appropriate to ensure the safety of the victim. We know, because this government has listened to victims, that many wish to lend their voices in a more significant way during this process. These changes would allow this to happen.

Finally, it would obligate the Parole Board to provide more information to victims. This is important, because here again, we have heard from many victims that they want and need to be more informed about a number of issues that relate to the offender. With this bill, we would have an opportunity to allow for some of this information to be provided where it made sense to do so. For example, if a transcript of the parole hearing were available, it would be provided to the victim, barring third-party information and any portion of the hearing that was not open to observers. Similarly, upon the victim's request, it would also provide information within 14 days of the offender's release, where practical, about the date, location, and conditions of an offender's release on parole, statutory release, or temporary absence, but only when it was clear that there would be no negative effect on public safety.

Simply put, this bill would improve the parole process for the sake of victims, making it more compassionate and responsive. I am proud of our government's track record in supporting victims and their families as they navigate the criminal justice system. We are getting closer to where we need to be. We are a government of action. We have listened to victims and their families and to advocates. We have consulted directly with them and have made sure that their concerns are reflected in the legislation and measures we have introduced. We have listened, and we have acted through the federal victims strategy, through the Safe Streets and Communities Act, through the victims bill of rights act, and now through the fairness for victims act. This bill would help us continue on this path and take one more step toward a system that helps victims heal and rebuild.

I once again would like to thank the members opposite for their support, and I urge all other members in the House to support this important piece of legislation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have another chance to speak to Bill C-479. I think this is a very important bill, and I am glad we had a chance to talk about it in committee. I would like to thank the Conservative member who introduced this bill.

The witnesses who appeared before the committee were very interesting. We heard from some victims who, sadly, have been affected by what is going on with the Parole Board and the way parole hearings work. Many of them shared their very personal stories, and there were certainly some touching moments in committee. We also heard from Sue O'Sullivan, the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, who appeared once again to provide her enlightening perspective. We really appreciated that.

The only other witness we should have heard from was a representative of the Parole Board, but unfortunately, the board was unable to testify. That is really too bad because the Parole Board people are the ones who will have to implement Bill C-479 and comply with the new requirements in the Criminal Code. We really missed the Parole Board's testimony in this debate. The committee meetings went well except for the fact that we were unable to get testimony from the Parole Board.

As the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca mentioned, we proposed an amendment, but the Conservatives rejected it. I was quite surprised by that. We proposed an amendment so that victims could observe parole hearings through means other than attending in person. There are various reasons for that. Victims sometimes do not want to be in the same room as a perpetrator or inmate, or they would have to travel to be there. They may have to travel from one end of the country to the other. For example, if the offender is a francophone woman, she could be being held in Joliette because there are not a lot of prisons for women. Meanwhile, the victims might live in Vancouver or New Brunswick. The victims could have to do a lot of travelling.

We therefore tried to present a completely reasonable amendment to resolve this issue. We proposed that victims be able to attend these hearings by videoconference or teleconference. The Conservatives rejected the amendment.

I was surprised by that, particularly since Sue O'Sullivan, the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime and one of our witnesses, had this to say in committee:

Our recommendation is that every victim or family member who wants to attend a parole hearing should have a choice and an option about how they wish to attend. That can be in person, or they may choose to attend by video conference or by another use of technology.

Other witnesses said much the same thing, but I do not want to spend too much time on that. We decided to follow the advice of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime and other witnesses who appeared before the committee. Unfortunately, the Conservatives opposed our amendment. This is a flaw in Bill C-479 that we could have addressed earlier in the debate.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-479 also responds to certain recommendations made by the former ombudsman for victims of crime and many of the recommendations made by Ms. O'Sullivan regarding the right of victims to attend parole hearings. We are happy to see that.

The NDP supports enhancing victims' rights. We think that is very important. These rights can be enhanced through various channels.

The NDP supports greater victim involvement in the parole process. That is extremely important.

• (1845)

We support a number of the recommendations made by the former ombudsman and the new one, and we are working to make our communities safer. One way to do so is to develop a parole process that enables offenders to safely reintegrate into society, in order to reduce victimization.

That brings me to my next argument. Everything we have here today is good. It is also good that the government has introduced a Canadian victims bill of rights. However, every witness we heard from in committee told us that if we want to reduce victimization, we need to focus on rehabilitation, programs and investments in our prisons. We need to ensure that there are good programs in place and that offenders are not released unless they are rehabilitated and prepared to reintegrate into society.

Reducing victimization also means developing good public safety policies. For example, Public Safety Canada is focusing its efforts on reaching out to kids between the ages of 5 to 18 to prevent them from getting caught in the vicious cycle of crime and street gangs.

The government needs to step up and adopt public safety measures. It should not be cutting essential services, such as rehabilitation services for offenders. It must invest in our youth to ensure that kids do not get caught in the vicious cycle of crime.

One of the witnesses we heard in committee was Arlène Gaudreault of the Association québécoise Plaidoyer-Victimes, who does incredible work in Quebec. She condemned the fact that we did not have enough time to study a whole aspect of victims' rights as important as attending parole hearings. She made a lot of recommendations during her testimony. She thinks we unfortunately did not have enough time to propose amendments or implement them. I wanted Ms. Gaudreault to be heard today in this debate.

Bill C-479 looks good on paper, but money will be needed in order to implement it. People will have to travel in order to attend parole hearings. Unfortunately, the Conservatives voted against our amendment to allow people to attend by means of videoconferencing or other technologies. In addition, because this is a change in the process, additional funds will be needed.

I hope that the Conservative government will follow these recommendations. The parliamentary secretary was very much in favour of this bill, but frankly, the Conservative government has to put up the money.

Massive budget cuts have been made at the Department of Public Safety and in all the departments. I understand that. However, if we want to set up a process for victims, then we must put words into action and invest the necessary money to ensure that victims get the

good service they deserve. They have suffered enough. The least we can do is provide them with suitable service.

Again, I am pleased to support the bill of my colleague across the way. I am also very pleased to say that the NDP is in favour of a fair and equitable process for victims.

It is very important to use rehabilitation and reintegration to ensure that there are fewer victims and that our communities are safer for everyone.

• (1850)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale will now have his five minutes of reply.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great gratitude and emotion that we come to the final minutes of debate on this bill in the chamber. For me to bring forward these right and necessary changes on behalf of all victims, including, not least, my constituents, has been a great privilege and honour.

As all members of this House know, the process for private members' bills is a long journey. There are many steps and it can take years. This one has been no different.

I am proud that the bill builds upon the good work of ministers and the government since 2006.

I am grateful that the bill builds on the Canadian victims bill of rights that the Prime Minister announced in April, which would provide for victims the tools that a couple of my opposition colleagues said Bill C-479 was deficient of.

I am gratified that the bill would strengthen the voice of victims, provide additional support to victims, and give the Parole Board of Canada the tools it needs to ensure re-victimization is reduced and, in some cases, even mitigated.

I strongly believe all these things are worth fighting for.

I will not belabour the point. I thank all members for their support and interest. Once again, I reiterate three key points. One is that this is about the worst kind of offenders: violent offenders. This is about giving victims a stronger voice and role in the process, something we have heard time and again in public consultations, in letters and emails, and calls. This is about giving the Parole Board of Canada tools.

Please allow me to close, as I have before, with the words of *The Hamilton Spectator* editorial from March 2, 2012. It sums up the decision before us now, the decision that the victims of Jon Rallo, the victims of Clifford Olson, and the family of Constable Sweet have been calling for, for years.

...the PBC also has a responsibility to victims of crime. For those victims, the parole board is virtually the only source of information about the status of the person who committed the crime against them... some local victims of crime don't feel well-served by the board. That must change.

Indeed, that must change. With the vote of this House on Bill C-479 we will be a good part of the way saying it will change.

Government Orders

•(1855)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 1

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-31, Economic Action Plan 2014 Act, No. 1, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There are 272 motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-31.

[*Translation*]

Motions Nos. 162 to 165 will not be selected by the Chair, as they were defeated in committee.

[*English*]

All remaining motions have been examined and the Chair is satisfied they meet the guidelines expressed in the note of Standing Order 76.1(5) regarding the selection of motions in amendment at the report stage.

The motions will be grouped for debate as follows.

[*Translation*]

Group No. 1 includes Motions Nos. 1 to 12.

[*English*]

Group No. 2: Motions Nos. 13 to 160 and 166 to 272.

[*Translation*]

The voting patterns for the motions within each group are available at the table. The Chair will remind the House of each pattern at the time of voting.

[*English*]

I shall now propose Motions Nos. 1 to 12 in Group No. 1 to the House.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting the short title.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 24.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 25.

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 27.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 28.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 35.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP) moved:

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 42.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Murray Rankin moved:

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 50.

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 75.

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 99.

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 100.

Motion No. 12

That Bill C-31 be amended by deleting Clause 101.

[*English*]

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak at report stage to Bill C-31, which is entitled an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures. New Democrats oppose this initiative both on the basis of content, as I will describe, and perhaps equally on the basis of the process that has led us to this stage this evening.

This process includes an anti-democratic effort by the government to push through yet another omnibus budget bill. By my count it is the fifth or sixth, I cannot remember, in Parliament since it achieved a majority in 2011.

These omnibus budget bills, as Canadians know so well, have included measures that have absolutely nothing to do with fiscal or budgetary measures, making enormous changes to our society and to our environment through matters that the government puts in an omnibus budget bill so that it has its way. The opposition, who may oppose or like some of the initiatives, is put in a position deliberately so we have to oppose all initiatives, even those with which we agree. That is the process that has led us to here.

I can also, of course, talk about time allocation, otherwise known as closure, which has also led us to this situation.

By way of introduction on content, the bill fails to take action to create jobs in Canada, using an austerity approach that is so obviously unsuccessful in our country, and would do nothing to reverse the Conservatives' cuts to infrastructure and health care funding, which are having such a devastating effect on so many of our communities.

It also fails Canada when it comes to protecting the privacy of Canadians, an issue that has been in the news so much this week as a hand-picked privacy commissioner was introduced to the Canadian public and to the privacy community with whom he has absolutely no connection.

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Members may ask when I say privacy what that has to do with a budget bill. Once again, it is an omnibus budget bill and so our government decided to accept almost holus-bolus things such as the decision to allow the IRS to have some of the most sensitive information Canadians hold namely, their personal financial information, under an American initiative called FATCA.

This is a budget that most tellingly would do little or nothing to address the almost 300,000 Canadians who are unemployed, 300,000 more than after the recession of 2008. Those people are not back to work. Nor would it help to replace the 400,000 manufacturing jobs that have been lost under the watch of the Prime Minister.

Let me begin by talking about the process that has led us to this report stage. After barely 20 minutes of debate at second reading, the Conservatives moved to impose time allocation on debate in the House. Let me repeat that, 20 minutes of debate at second reading for a budget bill consisting of hundreds of clauses covering myriad legislation.

Furthermore, let me outline the motion for the process of the study of Bill C-31 at committee. At 11 o'clock at night on May 29 at finance committee it was deemed that all clauses that had not yet been voted on would be deemed adopted and that all amendments not yet voted upon would be deemed rejected. Once the magic hour appeared, that was it for any kind of debate. Finance committee, of which I am proud to be a member, had to address this. At 11 o'clock at night we all turned into pumpkins, all the amendments were rejected, and it was over. That was the end of it. As I said, 20 minutes of debate and then closure, or time allocation as it is known, occurred. This is democracy I understand.

At committee stage, New Democrats put forward several amendments to insert judicial oversight into dubious information-sharing schemes found in the budget, like the provision that would allow, believe it or not, any CRA official to give information to police without a warrant or any kind of judicial oversight. That will be one of the amendments that will be before us this evening. This is in a budget bill.

● (1900)

In our judgment, the Conservatives voted against all reasonable amendments, with no real consideration of the content. Unless the idea was theirs, it could not have been good enough and would have to be rejected. That is the way business is done at the committee.

We also put forward several amendments to the very controversial FATCA, the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, implementation aspect of Bill C-31, which was an attempt to make it a little better, this deeply flawed initiative that the Conservatives put forward, which has no business being in a budget bill in the first place, but there it is.

Serious issues were raised at the committee stage regarding the implementation of this statute. I had hoped that the Conservatives would carefully consider and support the NDP amendments, which had been the subject of evidence from very notable experts, such as Professor Christians, the Stikeman Chair in Tax at McGill University, Professor Cockfield at Queen's, who cautioned us that it was not necessary to proceed and jam this through, as they did,

with no amendments whatsoever. Nevertheless, that is what is before us tonight.

We say rushing this through in an omnibus budget bill without proper study is not only reckless but is entirely unnecessary. Why? Because the United States had recently delayed the application of FATCA sanctions until January 2015. We were told that Canada was already deemed in compliance with U.S. law, and legal experts told the committee that there was ample time to properly study and amend the agreement.

More than one million Canadians will be affected by this draconian legislation. The Conservatives demonstrated they did not understand that dual Canadians were just as much Canadians as those of us born in this country. They did not understand the case of an individual in Calgary born of two U.S. persons who came to Canada decades ago, but were deemed to be U.S. persons by our American friends and therefore subject to this draconian statute. They did not understand that, and the evidence was shocking in that regard.

Yet again, we are at report stage asking the Conservatives to slow down and remove FATCA from the budget so it can be properly scrutinized, so we can ensure the privacy and, indeed, the constitutional rights of those dual Canadians, our fellow Canadians, are protected. I assume we will find another negative answer to that question.

As a result of a lack of willingness on the government side to make any amendments to the omnibus legislation, the New Democratic Party has moved to delete 266 clauses at report stage, and that is what is before us.

I do not want to sound like there is nothing in this vast bill that we do not support. We support the fact that in the bill the Conservatives decided to rectify errors in the last budget. Finally, they listened and caught up. The example of that I like the best is their previous attempt to levy GST or HST on hospital parking rights. This is an insensitive and unfair section included in budget 2013. We fought against it and they actually changed their mind, something which is so rare, but there it is. Therefore, I do support that belated attempt to do the right thing on that issue.

In a major blow to small business, such as in my community, I have heard from many small business people about the fact that the bill fails to renew the small business job creation tax credit that was first proposed by the NDP in 2011. The hiring credit for small business is gone. Changes to the labour-sponsored venture capital corporation were proposed. Believe it or not, there were hazardous materials issues in this legislation, rail safety powers, and the like.

Canadians deserve better. They deserve investment, innovation, economic development and high-quality middle-class jobs. They deserve support for infrastructure in communities in a realistic way. Canadians deserve help to save and invest for their retirement and make life just a little more affordable through measures that would reduce household debt, and for the government to provide those services they rely upon.

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Unfortunately, this budget bill does none of those things. That is why the New Democrats will not be supporting it.

• (1905)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, the member of Parliament for Victoria, my neighbour, for delivering a clear and concise address to yet again, as he pointed out, another omnibus budget bill that combines many pieces of legislation into one. Unfortunately, that means something as egregious as the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, known as FATCA, as well as changes to the trademark regime, which will hurt Canadian business, as well as changes to the Hazardous Products Act and the WHMIS system are all wrapped up into one piece of legislation.

Does hon. friend from Victoria not agree with me that it is entirely likely that once again the House is passing legislation that will find its way to the Supreme Court of Canada, where FATCA will be ruled to violate Canadian charter rights?

• (1910)

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to salute and thank my neighbour and friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her intervention and her wisdom in pointing out the FATCA provisions in the bill. We already know those provisions will go to the Supreme Court of Canada. We already know the Conservatives have received legal advice and are moving in that direction. It was Peter Hogg who the government relied on for its ill-fated attempt in yet another omnibus budget bill to deal with Mr. Justice Nadon and that debacle. He was its expert, he prepared a written legal opinion to the effect that it was unconstitutional, so it will go to the Supreme Court of Canada.

We made many amendments that are before us tonight which we will ask the government to vote on. They would clarify that it need not occur. They would clarify that FATCA would not override other sections, such as the human rights legislation or, indeed, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. At committee stage, those were voted down. They will be before us again at report stage.

There is no doubt that this is headed to the courts for yet another useless waste of taxpayer money as the Supreme Court will tell us once again that the government initiative is ill-considered.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing that the same legal expert who the government relies on and lauds, Mr. Hogg, is the same expert who has warned it about this tax treaty that is buried within this 360-page omnibus bill. This one bill will affect more than 60 laws in Canada. Maybe later on in my speech, I will read out all the quotes of the Conservative members, including the Prime Minister and a whole bunch of folks who are now in cabinet, who hated this kind of process when Conservatives were in opposition. They said that it was undemocratic. They said that omnibus bills designed this way were unfair. They have taken what the Liberals were doing when they were in government and have put it on steroids. They actually ram even more into their omnibus legislation than the Liberals did, who were abusing the process.

To the specific piece of this one bill that my friend raises around FATCA, witnesses at committee reported that up to one million Canadians might be exposed to this agreement. What it would do

very explicitly, with no notice whatsoever, is affect people suspected of having some sort of relation or experience with the U.S. Maybe they were U.S. citizens at one point or maybe children were born in Canada to U.S. parents. The definition of a who a U.S. person is will not be made by the Canadian government; it will be made by Washington. Rest his soul, Mr. Flaherty spoke up against FATCA and this process, worried about the very thing that I am addressing now, which the Conservatives are choosing to heckle me on. He was worried that accidental Americans, which is what Mr. Flaherty said, would get swept up into this process.

People's private banking information will be collected by their banks, passed on to the CRA, and then on to the IRS without being notified at all. Personal banking information, as we know, can reveal a lot.

Could my friend speak to the effort we are making as New Democrats right now to simply pull this piece of the bill out so we can understand what its implications are before the Conservatives impose this on up to a million Canadians?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, my friend is absolutely right. Mr. Flaherty spoke up compassionately against these accidental Americans who would be caught in what I call the FATCA web. There are a million of them and the government is standing by and waiting for an inevitable lawsuit because it did not stand up for our sovereignty when this was before us initially. It is shocking.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak to Bill C-31, yet another omnibus budget bill.

The bill has many provisions which are non-controversial and would not excite concerns from myself or very many members of Parliament. There are technical changes to the tax code that are certainly acceptable.

However, we are now being told that the process, once again, of including things in omnibus bills is a tradition. There is a spring omnibus budget bill and a fall omnibus budget bill, which means that since 2012, each federal budget has had approximately 800 pages of ancillary legislation, described as an omnibus budget bill, but which in point of fact often has provisions that have absolutely nothing to do with the budgetary process.

Again, I know it is popular on some sides of the House to say that what is happening now is just like what the Liberals used to do. The longest Liberal omnibus bill, which was the one that was brought in 2005 under Paul Martin's administration, was about 100 pages.

By 2009, we were seeing 800-page omnibus bills from the Conservative minority. Another one in 2010 was closer to 900 pages. Now they are split between spring and fall and the combined legislative package is over 800 pages.

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It is certainly anti-democratic. It certainly defies the meaning of a proper omnibus bill, which is many different parts of the bill, all meeting the same purpose, serving the same theme and delivering a policy instrument through the changes in numerous pieces of legislation.

I also appeared before the finance committee to speak to the bill. Under the new rules developed by the Conservatives ensure that at report stage members of Parliament in my position are no longer allowed to submit substantive amendments. They have actually changed the legislative process. For the first time in the history of our country, a majority party has found it so inconvenient to allow smaller parties to put forward views at report stage and has changed the legislative process to deny me my rights.

I have a simple amendment at this point. It is deletions. However, let me speak to Bill C-31 in terms of the pieces that disturb me the most.

Report stage should not go by without it being noted that the Canadian Bar Association, among others, has identified that the trademark changes in the bill will hurt Canadian business. This is found in part 6, division 25. These are completely new changes. As far as anyone can find, the most knowledgeable experts in trademark law were not consulted.

The changes will, on the advice of expert witnesses before the committee, hurt Canadian business. In their view, the change has probably been driven by the internal inefficiency of the trademarks office. It does not meet a public policy purpose. In fact, after some time, we will have to go back to try to fix the mistakes that are being made by ramming through changes in trademark legislation.

We also have changes in hazardous products and materials. Most of those are non-controversial, but they were pushed through and the committee did not even have a chance to hear witnesses on those sections.

The Conservatives were in such a rush that when I brought forward amendments to this, even the experts from the department dealing with that policy area were unable to answer questions. It was because there had been no study and no witnesses. When we got to clause by clause, suggestions for changes to the hazardous products aspect of the bill left members of the committee, as well as technical experts from departments, unable to answer simple questions.

When things are rushed through in an omnibus bill, mistakes are made and things are passed without study. In the case of this legislation, everything in here on hazardous products had no study and no witnesses. That needs to be underscored.

The piece my hon. friend from Victoria mentioned is the most controversial. It will certainly be the piece that will cause the greatest grief to this administration. It could cause real grief and hardship for about a million Canadians who may find themselves swept up, not as U.S. citizens, but described as U.S. persons.

I refer again to the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act. This is unusual in a lot of ways. My friend from Victoria and I are both lawyers. I no longer practise in a way which anyone would notice. I am not a practising lawyer. I am not insured to practise law, but I know my legal principles.

●(1915)

It is certainly remarkable that U.S. legislation has been accepted in Canada as having extraterritorial application. Canada is prepared to say okay. I do not know if this would be allowed if, say, Iran decided to pass legislation to say that anyone with an Iranian connection in Canada had to be treated differently than other Canadians.

In the case of the United States and this piece of legislation, it is based on the implementation of something called the Intergovernmental Agreement, or IGA. Obviously, the United States is our greatest trading partner and closest friend. This is nothing against the United States, but as a matter in principle of law, one nation's laws do not apply extraterritorially to citizens of other countries. In this case, we have agreed, as though it were a treaty, to implement the IGA.

What is fascinating about this is that the United States does not treat it as a treaty at all. It has not been sent to the U.S. Senate for ratification. In other words, the U.S. does not treat it as a treaty. The U.S. treats it as sort of a clarification of previous agreements. However, it contains substantive new obligations for foreign countries, and somehow Canada feels that we are obligated to enforce it.

Not all experts in tax law accept that. There was a particularly useful submission to Finance Canada prepared by Allison Christians, who is the H. Heward Stikeman Chair in Tax Law at McGill University, and Professor Arthur Cockfield of Queen's University. Together they have looked at this and have urged Finance Canada to slow down. They say that the steps we have already taken completely vouchsafe Canadian business and protect Canadian banks. We do not need to push FATCA through, and we certainly should not be pushing it through in an omnibus budget bill.

Their recommendation I think is worth reading into the record this evening:

...we recommend that the government delay passage of the Implementation Act until: (a) the issues surrounding Charter protections, other taxpayer protections, and global cooperative efforts have been thoroughly studied and addressed; and (b) the U.S. government agrees to reciprocal treatment with respect to the tax information reporting system that has been unilaterally imposed on Canada.

We are looking at a piece of legislation that imposes on Canada requirements that the U.S. does not have to reciprocate without a treaty having been ratified in the United States.

What are the implications for Canadians? Well, as I just mentioned, Professors Christians and Cockfield talked about charter implications. My office some time ago filed an access to information request. That is how Professor Peter Hogg's constitutional advice to Finance Canada became public.

Professor Hogg's letter, dated December 12, 2012, was advice to Finance Canada that what he saw in FATCA definitely violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically section 15 of the charter, which says:

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Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination...

This is clearly discrimination, and Professor Hogg went on in his letter to point out the following:

There is no mechanism in the Model IGA whereby individuals who are suspected to be U.S. citizens would even know that their personal information was provided to the IRS.

Further on in his letter, he puts it very strongly and clearly:

In my opinion, the procedures mandated by this Model IGA [FATCA] are discriminatory in a way that would not withstand Charter scrutiny. These procedures effectively treat individuals differently, and adversely, based on immutable personal characteristics, specifically citizenship (whether or not acknowledged or desired by the individual) or place of birth. If Parliament were to enact legislation authorizing and permitting this type of differential and adverse treatment, the legislation would contravene the equality protections in section 15 of the Charter.

That is not a tentative conclusion. It is an authoritative conclusion from the most respected constitutional law expert in the land. He wrote the book on constitutional law that I studied when I was in law school. He taught constitutional law to our dear late friend, Jim Flaherty. Jim claimed that he gave him an *A*, but we cannot verify that.

• (1920)

However, we know that this piece of legislation, I say without qualification, clearly is unconstitutional, and it brings shame to this place to knowingly pass an unconstitutional act.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that the speech by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has left me scratching my head. I do not know why, but at the beginning she seemed to be trying to absolve Liberal governments or indicating that, when they were in power, introducing omnibus bills was less serious than it is today.

We should not ignore the fact that the Conservative government is going much further compared to what we have seen in the past. It is a complete abuse of our institutions. The government is doing away with our right to defend the opinions of our constituents. It is holding that right hostage.

However, I would like to understand what motivated the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands to downplay the Liberals' actions when they were in power.

• (1925)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague.

My motivation is that I like the truth. I think it is important that we tell the truth in this place. It is not true that former Liberal governments have the same record as the Conservatives when it comes to introducing omnibus bills.

When Mr. Martin was prime minister, he introduced a 100-page omnibus bill. It was the biggest in Canada's history. I believe that the current government's abusive practice truly threatens real democracy.

I believe that it is important to tell the truth. In recent years under this Conservative government, we have had bigger and more egregious omnibus bills, which are unparalleled in Canada's history.

[*English*]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for raising the issue of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, because we in the Liberal Party are also concerned, based on what we have seen from constitutional experts, that there may be violations of the charter.

Let me get to my question, which deals with FATCA. As we know, under FATCA, Canadian banks must report to the IRS the accounts held by clients who happen to have U.S. citizenship. In Canada there are about a million of them. Otherwise they face the prospect of a 30% withholding tax on their U.S. income.

The government seems to have been very motivated to protect the banks from this. It has come up with some alternate arrangements and changes. As it turns out, the banks would report to the CRA, which would then report to the IRS.

However, there does not seem to be the same concern for the citizens themselves. In fact, it seems that the government has folded its tent here, and it seems quite happy to do the work of the IRS insofar as citizens are concerned.

I would like to hear more from my hon. colleague on why she thinks the banks would be protected but not Canadian citizens with dual nationality.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, you have one minute.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I will try to use less than that in case there are other questions.

I think what has happened here is that there have been threats made by the U.S. administration to sanction Canadian banks. The expert legal advice we have is that the best approach would be to push back on that internationally and to say that there is no right on the part of the U.S. government to penalize banks operating within the United States on the basis of this treaty, which the U.S. has not even ratified itself.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend was there at the committee stage. Why does she think the government would not accept an amendment that would say, for greater certainty, that the provisions would comply with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Privacy Act, and it would not accept the need for notice of Canadians before their information was released?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, there were some concessions the Canadians officials gained, such as making sure that RRSPs and other pension and tax savings funds would not be caught under this web. They felt so good about those that they felt they did not dare do anything to protect Canadians and that they got the best deal they could get. They should be listening to legal advice, particularly constitutional law.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on behalf of my constituents in Newmarket—Aurora to talk about some of the excellent measures contained in Bill C-31, the first implementation bill for budget 2014.

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Last January I held extensive pre-budget consultations with Newmarket and Aurora residents to find out what their priorities for the budget would be. The top three requests were these: one, reduce government spending; two, reduce business red tape to stimulate job creation; and three, make government operations run more efficiently.

Economic action plan 2014 delivers on all three. It focuses on returning to budget balance in 2015, promoting jobs and economic growth, and supporting families and communities.

The bill before us today would implement several measures important to Newmarket—Aurora, and I will highlight some of these in my remarks.

Economic action plan 2014 proposes a number of investments and legislative measures to honour the sacrifices made by veterans and their families, facilitate their successful transition to civilian life, and provide them with better access to services.

There are many active veterans and seniors organizations in my riding, including the Royal Canadian Legion Colonel Fred Tilston VC Branch 385 in Aurora, the Royal Canadian Legion Milton Wesley Branch 426 in Newmarket, of which I am a member, and the Newmarket Veterans Association.

In addition to assisting veterans, they do a wonderful job organizing important remembrance events. These events help the community to learn about the sacrifices veterans past and present have made so that we today are able to live in a free and democratic society. Indeed, I am looking forward to attending this Saturday's 40th anniversary celebration of the Aurora Legion, which will also commemorate the 70th anniversary of D-Day.

One such measure in Bill C-31 that would support veterans is a compensatory payment for eligible veterans, survivors, or dependants. This payment relates to a May 29, 2012 announcement by Veterans Affairs Canada that VAC would change the way it calculates its earnings loss benefit, Canadian Forces income support, and war veterans Allowance by stopping the practice of offsetting disability pension benefits.

The offsetting practice ceased on October 1, 2012 for the earnings loss benefit and Canadian Forces income support recipients and on October 1, 2013 for war veterans allowance recipients. Eligible recipients of these three benefit streams, who were impacted by disability pension offsetting between the May 29, 2012 announcement and the day before the offsetting practice ceased for each benefit, will receive compensation. Over 5,000 eligible individuals are expected to benefit. It is a well-deserved payment, and Bill C-31 would ensure that veterans, their survivors, or dependants would receive this additional support.

Our government has also taken significant action to support and protect Canadians consumers since 2006, and economic action plan 2014 is no exception. Bill C-31 would amend the Telecommunications Act to prohibit Canadian carriers from charging their Canadian competitors roaming rates that are higher than what they charge their own customers. Upon coming into force, this cap would apply to all inter-carrier roaming charges.

Capping domestic roaming rates will help Canadian consumers benefit from more competition in the wireless market by removing disincentives for new entrants. This action would continue our commitment announced in the 2013 Speech from the Throne to protect Canadians and their families by encouraging healthy competition and lower consumer prices in the telecommunications industry. Residents in Newmarket—Aurora wholeheartedly support this action to broaden competition in the wireless sector, and I look forward to its implementation.

Students participating in Canada's education system are the largest source of new labour market supplies. Providing them with the skills they will need to be successful is essential to furthering our economic growth.

● (1930)

Canada has one of the highest youth employment rates among its OECD peers. However, more can be done to ensure young Canadians receive the training they need to realize their full potential. Economic action plan 2014 would make over \$100 million available to apprentices registered in Red Seal trades in the form of interest-free loans of up to \$4,000 per period of technical training. A new Canada apprentice loan would assist more apprentices in completing their training and encourage more youth to consider a career in skilled trades.

Bill C-31 would support this initiative by introducing measures that would ensure that eligible apprentices were treated the same as other student loan borrowers. A lack of skilled help is one of the most common complaints I hear from business owners in Newmarket and Aurora in the manufacturing sector. Some of these businesses offer excellent programs for qualified graduates, but they still have difficulty in attracting good candidates to fill available jobs. The new Canada apprentice loan would assist them in hiring the help they need.

Our government understands that time spent navigating unnecessary bureaucratic red tape is time small business owners could otherwise use to grow their businesses and create jobs. Reducing the administrative burden on small and medium-sized businesses is a key priority of this government. Economic action plan 2014 continues this focus, and Bill C-31 contains several measures to help, including to reduce the frequency of source deduction remittances. These can be onerous, particularly for small businesses. This proposed change would mean the elimination of more than 800,000 payments, helping small businesses in Newmarket—Aurora and across Canada.

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Another measure in this bill that perhaps has not received much attention but helps many low-income earners and seniors on fixed incomes in Newmarket and Aurora is the GST-HST credit administration amendment. Currently, individuals may apply for the goods and services tax or harmonized sales tax credit by checking the appropriate application box on their annual income tax returns. The amendment would eliminate the need for individuals to apply for the GST-HST credit and would allow the Canada Revenue Agency to automatically determine if an individual is eligible to receive it. A number of my constituents have been to my office who have missed out on this credit simply because they were not aware of the need to apply every year. I look forward to this particular measure being passed in time for the 2014 taxation year, as I know it would help thousands of Canadians, including those in Newmarket—Aurora.

There are many other improvements for Canadians contained in this bill. For example, it would better recognize the costs unique to adopting a child by increasing the maximum amount of eligible expenses for the adoption expense tax credit to \$15,000 per child for 2014. This maximum amount would be indexed to inflation for taxation years after 2014. A number of people have come into my office, particularly those who are doing overseas adoptions, who are very interested in seeing this implemented.

It would expand the list of expenses eligible for the medical expense tax credit to include the cost of the design of individualized therapy plans. This would include plans for applied behaviour analysis therapy for children with autism. It would also include, if certain conditions were met, the costs associated with service animals for people with severe disabilities. GST-HST exemptions would also be extended for services rendered to individuals by certain health care practitioners to include those by acupuncturists and naturopathic doctors.

Our government has never strayed from our commitment to strengthen the economy for all Canadians and to put money back into their pockets. Bill C-31 marks the next chapter in keeping that commitment. I urge all members in the House to support its swift passage, so that Canadians may begin to reap the benefits.

• (1935)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a large bill that has many component parts. Obviously, from her position in government and her speech, she will be voting for it.

I wonder if she could comment on the aspects of the bill about trademark policy. It is a major component. The chambers of commerce of Canada have opposed this section of the bill, as has every intellectual property agency that testified and wrote to the committee. I wonder if she could comment on what she suspects the likely impacts would be to the Canadian intellectual property regime and Canadian businesses.

• (1940)

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to work on all aspects of intellectual property. We know that needs to be protected in order to keep innovation in Canada.

Let me talk a bit about supporting entrepreneurship and innovation, because that is what is going to make our economy

grow, make our economy boom, and provide jobs and opportunity for young people who are coming into the economy.

Let us look at making a landmark investment in post-secondary education by creating the Canada first research excellence fund, with \$1.5 billion over the next decade. This investment would secure Canada's international leadership in science and innovation. We would support leading-edge research by investing \$46 million a year, ongoing, to granting councils across Canada in support of advanced research and scientific discovery. That is where the intellectual property is going to be housed. We are going to be sure we secure that.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Conservative member's remarks with a great deal of interest, and to her comments about the role veterans have played in the kind of country we enjoy today, the freedom and the respect, and I share those sentiments.

Therefore I was very surprised to hear the member talking about the section in this bill, clauses 102 to 107, which are about the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act, the War Veterans Allowance Act, and the Civilian War-related Benefits Act, as though that were an adequate and proper measure to reflect the importance of veterans in Canada.

What, in fact, this bill would do is end an unfair clawback that has been happening since 2006 under the current Conservative government. However, instead of making those payments retroactive to the time when the clawback first started, which would be April 1, 2006, this bill would only make those payments retroactive for a few months, so it is a government that has essentially been forcing veterans to take it to court to get the due benefits to which they are entitled. Now they would be gypped out of years of past—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would ask all members to keep their questions short.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, there is no government in the history of Canada that has done more to help our veterans for—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. There is a point of order from the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it is not in relation to my friend's answer; it was more in relation to the question.

An unfortunate term was used by my friend. It is a term that has some history in this country. The term “gypped” is not an expression that is in common usage anymore. I am sure my friend did not mean it with any mal-intent, but particularly with the Roma and other communities, it is a derogatory term that is connected to a group of people who are considered miserly and whatnot. I would seek my hon. friend to retract the use of that particular term.

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Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I retract the term and I certainly meant no offence. I was not aware that the word is taken that way, but I appreciate that being pointed out and I retract the word.

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, as I said, there is no government in the history of Canada that has recognized and done more for our veterans. We thank them for their service.

In fact, my father-in-law was 34 years in the Canadian Armed Forces. He was one of the soldiers who were responsible for all of the goods and services going in and out of Italy. He was at Monte Cassino during that terrible battle. He was the youngest soldier in the Canadian Armed Forces who was credited for transport by land, air, and sea. Therefore, there is nobody in this House who would stand up more for our veterans than I would.

Our government has done an immense amount for our veterans. When I look back at the things we have done since 2006, I see that this document we are talking about tonight just continues to build on our strong record of support for veterans: \$2 billion to enhance the new veterans charter programs in support of seriously injured veterans, \$65 million to enhance the funeral and burial program, and \$52.5 million in additional support for seriously injured Canadian Armed Forces personnel.

I could go on with that list. We respect our veterans. We are going to continue to help them in every way we can.

● (1945)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too am speaking tonight to Bill C-31.

We see a pattern in these massive omnibus bills from the Conservative government. First of all, the Conservatives stuff these bills with measures that have no business whatsoever being part of a budget implementation act. In the legislation before us, in fact, there are rule changes around administrative tribunals, trademarks, hazardous products, and even rail safety, and these are just a few examples.

The Conservatives have introduced these changes without any public consultation, in most cases. Then they wait and hope that nobody notices the problems in the fine print. However, the problems and the mistakes in the Conservative omnibus legislation always come out in the end. Sometimes they are so blatantly obvious that they are identified in committee. Sometimes it just takes a little time.

The reality is the Justice Nadon fiasco resulted from changes to the Supreme Court Act made in a previous budget implementation act. Had those changes been subjected to more thorough scrutiny at the justice committee, and had the justice committee had the opportunity to actually propose and move amendments and vote on them, we might have actually avoided some of the embarrassment around the failed appointment of Justice Nadon.

There are measures put forward by the government in each of these omnibus budget bills that are there, in fact, to correct errors in previous omnibus bills. It is a deeply flawed process. It creates bad laws that create uncertainty. Ultimately, that is bad for business. It is bad for the Canadian economy. These bad laws hurt the ability of Canadians to grow their businesses, create jobs, and build more prosperous lives.

I would like to identify a few examples of mistakes in this deeply flawed bill. On trademarks, two weeks ago the Canadian Chamber of Commerce took the important step of issuing a call to action to its members in response to the trademark provisions of Bill C-31. It is worried that Bill C-31 would remove the requirement to use a trademark before it can be registered.

As a result to this call to action, we have heard from countless chambers across the country, from Surrey, B.C., to Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador, to the Northwest Territories. Each and every one of these chambers is warning us that these provisions would increase the cost of doing business in Canada.

They are worried that this would lead to greater levels of litigation and to trademark trolling. They also complain that they were not consulted or engaged by the government. They are asking that these trademark provisions of the bill be removed.

Now, these types of changes ought to have been considered more thoroughly by the industry committee, as an example. We are worried upon hearing these concerns from the chambers.

We are also worried about what we are hearing from individual employers. We have heard from Canadian retailer Giant Tiger. We have heard from food manufacturer PepsiCo Canada, which is a significant employer in my riding. Its Frito Lay plant in the Annapolis Valley provides good jobs to the people in my riding. We take these important employers' concerns very seriously.

The government is not listening and is, in fact, heaping scorn on these Canadian businesses for actually having the audacity—or, I would say, courage—to speak truth to power and express concerns about this bill.

These local chambers represent the business leaders in our communities. We have a responsibility to listen to them.

At the finance committee, the Conservatives attacked the credibility of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and its members. They dismissed the concerns of these prominent employers in our communities by suggesting that they were just self-interested lawyers who want to maximize their fees.

I would like to speak about some regional issues, as well. It is not a stretch to say that some of the flaws in this bill would actually threaten jobs in Canada. However, some of the flaws in this bill would actually protect jobs for some specific Conservatives.

● (1950)

Last week the public sector integrity commissioner published his report into wrongdoing by the CEO of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, John Lynn. The investigation found that:

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Mr. Lynn committed a serious breach of ECBC's Employment Conduct and Discipline Policy, which was ECBC's own code of conduct at the time. This finding is as a result of the appointment of four individuals with ties to the Conservative Party of Canada...into executive positions at ECBC with little or no documented justifications and without demonstrating that the appointments were merit-based.... There was an element of deliberateness to Mr. Lynn's actions...Mr. Lynn's actions were incompatible with the trust that the Government of Canada and the public has placed in him as Chief Executive Officer.

That is a scathing condemnation of the over-the-top pork barrel patronage engaged in by the government with Enterprise Cape Breton.

Under Bill C-31, the individuals who were improperly hired by Mr. Lynn and who are still at ECBC would now become permanent employees of the public service. Furthermore, Bill C-31 singles out the CEO as the only member of the board eligible for termination pay. That is actually part of this legislation.

In light of the commissioner's findings of wrongdoing, the Liberals moved two important amendments to the bill at committee. These amendments would remove the special deal for the CEO to be eligible to receive termination pay and they would also ensure that the employees who were hired as part of the CEO's wrongdoing would not automatically become permanent members of the public service. This cronyism should have been overturned, not entrenched. However, the Conservatives have put their own interests ahead of Canadians' and they voted these amendments down.

There are some other mistakes in the bill. For instance, correcting previous omnibus bill mistakes, in Bill C-4, the government forgot to include the provincial nominee program as a category when it used a budget bill to establish the immigration department's expression of interest program. That is actually corrected in this bill.

During the committee study, we saw something new on the OAS side. The government showed up to clause-by-clause study and actually introduced amendments to correct mistakes in the current omnibus budget bill, not the last one. It showed up at clause-by-clause study to introduce amendments of its own to fix problems created in its own legislation. It is not thinking this through.

It seems the government has made a fairly basic error in the division concerning OAS. The first reading version of the bill would have resulted in the government actually taking GIS away from some of Canada's poorest seniors who had legitimately qualified for it. In this deeply flawed process, the government gave us zero notice of these amendments. Instead, they were introduced as the committee was about to vote on the measures during clause-by-clause study. The government could not tell us when or how the mistake was discovered. It forgot to bring copies of the OAS Act, so we could not actually see how the amendments to the act would change it. We must remember, this act is one of over 40 laws that are being changed by Bill C-31. The government did not even bring enough copies of its amendments for everyone to see. To think this is how we are asking parliamentarians to make important decisions and to change laws in Canada.

It is not just the Conservatives who have looked like the Keystone Cops during the consideration of the bill. The NDP is actually voting against measures to fast-track the new Champlain bridge. Part 6, division 28 of the bill is dedicated to a new Champlain bridge. It would streamline the development and construction process of the

bridge so it would be operational by 2018. It is true that this division would also include measures to implement tolls on the bridge, which Liberals oppose. We introduced amendments to remove all of the toll provisions from the bill, but when our amendments were defeated by the Conservatives, we still voted to go ahead with the bridge because building a bridge with a toll is better than no bridge at all and a new government could cancel the toll before it went into effect. It is illogical for the NDP to try to halt plans toward the new bridge because of a toll provision that is four years away. That is exactly what would happen if the NDP motion to remove division 28 actually passes.

● (1955)

The bill continues to ignore the challenges faced by veterans in Canada, continues to show contempt for veterans. The bill, through the FATCA provisions, makes the CRA effectively the tax collector for the IRS, and continues to demonstrate disrespect for Parliament and democracy by putting all of these poorly thought out provisions in a budget implementation act as opposed to free-standing legislation, dealt with by committees with the expertise to make the best possible legislative decisions.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to read a quote to my friend from Kings—Hants, and I wonder if he could tell us who first said this:

When the bill was rammed through the House with closure, it really did not present a lot of opportunity for meaningful public debate. We had begun to hear... from provincial and territorial governments, from many academics and experts and from many individual Canadians.... The interests of all of Canadians must be served, not the interests of politicians, not partisan interests or political self-interest.

I will give the hon. member a hint. He is the current Prime Minister. He very much disliked this process when, I hate to say it because I know my friend was not a part of that at the time, Liberal governments used omnibus legislation to ram through a whole bunch of measures, thereby depriving members of Parliament and the public their democratic right to debate a bill, and even to understand it.

My friend raised the trademark issues about which the Canadian chambers of commerce wrote to the committee, and many dozens of chambers from across the country. I asked my Conservative colleague to explain that. She had no idea. I am sure she will vote for it happily without even understanding it.

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I want my friend to expand a bit on not just the process, but on the issue of FATCA, this agreement with the U.S., and how little information has gone forward to Canadians, how there is no legislative rush that the government has put on this, that it is ramming something through that would affect up to a million Canadians and their private banking information, sending it on to the IRS.

Could my friend expand both on the process and those two substantive pieces that right now exist in this behemoth of a bill?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, first, if we look at the omnibus bills, budget bills, or budget implementation bills of previous Liberal governments, they were minute, they were tiny compared to these ones, both in terms of volume, but also in terms of the number of pieces of related legislation. There is even no comparison.

My colleague from Prince Edward Island is reminding me of balanced budgets and paid-down debt and cut taxes. Those were the good old days.

In terms of FATCA, I can say absolutely that when the minister appeared before the committee he did not even know how many Canadians would be affected by this. In fact, the government has said at various points that no Canadians would be affected, because they are exempt. They negotiated an exemption.

The exemption is for the banks. It does not protect individual citizens. The most offensive part of this is the registered savings plans, like RRSPs, RESPs, and TFSAs into which Canadians contribute for their families and into which the Canadian government contributes matching grants. That money from the Canadian government would be funnelled toward the U.S. treasury as a result of this government's failure to negotiate a better deal in Washington.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question relates to part 5 of Bill C-31. The government says it is doing a lot for Canadians. There is a significant number of Canadians who happen to be dual nationals who are not getting very much out of this, in fact, they are being abandoned, because the government is caving in to American pressure and, as my hon. colleague said, it is doing the tax collecting for the IRS. Banks in Canada would have to report to the CRA about client information for those who happen to be dual nationals. That would then be passed on to the IRS.

In finance committee, when officials were asked what kind of information would be passed on to the IRS, they could not answer, which means the government does not know either.

This is an attack on our privacy. I would like to hear my colleague on this.

• (2000)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, the government failed to negotiate effectively to defend Canadian interests. Effectively, the Americans are involved in an act of extraterritoriality in this case.

Beyond that, one of the reasons given by government was that the Americans would effectively shut down Canadian banks operating in the U.S. Canadian banks are very powerful in the United States. Banks like TD, BMO Harris, and Royal Bank are among the most successful banks in the world. Post-global financial crisis, where a

lot of the American banks were sucked into the vortex of the mess caused by deregulation in the 1990s, our Canadian banks have been very powerful.

Some witnesses agreed with us that it was a straw man argument, and that it was ridiculous to say that the American financial system would effectively shut down the operations of Canadian banks if we did not capitulate to the Americans by agreeing to this bad deal. It is another example of the economic cost of bad relationships with Washington under the Conservative government.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-31, an act to implement economic action plan 2014.

Before I begin, I want to first pay tribute to the late Hon. Jim Flaherty, who first tabled the budget back in March. He was referred to as the best finance minister in the world. We all hold him close to our hearts, and I think that the passing of the first budget implementation bill is due in great part to the effort he put in to develop this budget, which was tabled, as I said, earlier this spring.

One thing that happened when Jim Flaherty first became finance minister was that we were soon into the largest global recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Thanks to the leadership of Jim Flaherty as finance minister and thanks to the Prime Minister, Canada has been able to recover from this great recession more strongly and more quickly than any other country in the G7.

One of the reasons we were able to do so was that between 2006 and 2008, we took \$40 billion off the federal debt, giving us the flexibility we needed when the recession hit to engage in stimulus spending, to keep our tradespeople working, to keep the economic engines that make Canada flow churning. Because of the decisions that were made early on in this mandate by that finance minister and the Prime Minister in support of Canada, we were able to go into that recession in a strong enough fiscal position that we could take strong action at the beginning of that recession to limit its damage to the Canadian economy.

As we emerged from the greatest recession since the Great Depression, we made a commitment during the 2011 election to return the federal government to a balanced budget. This is a daunting task. Many people across Canada said it would be impossible in such a short time or that if we took strong steps to do that, we would be destabilizing the economy and hurting the future of Canada if we tried to do it by 2015.

As I see it, there are three ways for a government to balance the budget.

The first is a path that we did not choose, a path that I call the easy path to balance a budget. It is to simply raise taxes. We have seen other governments attempt to balance budgets by raising taxes across Canada. Not only did we not raise taxes on Canadian taxpayers, families, and businesses, but we actually made a decision and a commitment to lower them, and today in Canada, the average family of four is paying over \$3,200 less federal tax than they did when we took office in 2006. That is a testament to the courage and determination of the Prime Minister, finance minister Flaherty, and the current finance minister.

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We also lowered corporate taxes, which encourages investment in Canada and keeps our economic engines running. It gives our small businesses and medium-sized enterprises the ability to pay low taxes so that maybe they can hire one or two more people to help us encourage employment in this country. Low corporate taxes, low personal taxes, and lower taxes on families are the direction we chose to go. We chose this path instead of raising taxes, as we see some of the opposition parties pushing for on a continual basis.

The second direction we could have taken to balance the budget would have been to slash transfers to the provinces. These are the funds provinces need to provide the services that Canadians hold so close to their hearts: health care, education, community services. Provinces across Canada need those valuable transfer dollars so they can deliver on these services that Canadians not only need but expect. These transfer payments are very important for the provinces to do their job as partners with the federal Government of Canada. In fact, we have not lowered those transfer payments, as we saw the former Liberal government do in the 1990s when it tried to balance the budget after an earlier recession and cut billions and billions of dollars from federal transfers to the provinces, particularly in the area of health care.

The billions of dollars that the previous government cut in health care saw nurse layoffs, hospital closures across this country, and doctors fleeing to the United States for better deals because the provinces could not afford, with these federal cuts, to provide adequate health care of a competitive nature in North America.

We believe that was the wrong way to go, and I personally believe that we still have not fully recovered from that the cuts made early on in the previous government's mandate during the 1990s.

● (2005)

Instead of cutting transfers to the province in an attempt to balance the budget, we have made a commitment to the provinces and increased those transfers. In fact, we would increase the transfers envelope to the provinces from \$42 billion in 2005 to \$65 billion in 2014. That would be a \$23-billion increase in these valuable transfers to the provinces.

The health transfer alone would go from \$20 billion in 2005 to \$32 billion in 2014, and it would reach \$40 billion for health care alone by the end of this decade. That is a true commitment by the Prime Minister, from finance minister Flaherty, and from the latest Minister of Finance to health care across the country.

In my home province of Nova Scotia, in 2005 the total transfer envelope for the Province of Nova Scotia was \$2.2 billion. This year, for the first time, the federal government would transfer \$3 billion to the Province of Nova Scotia. Almost a third of the total revenue of the Province of Nova Scotia comes directly from these transfers from the federal government.

Can members imagine how difficult it would be for the provinces to meet their commitments to the people of this country if those transfers were slashed by the government in some sort of random, willy-nilly attempt to balance the budget on the backs of those transfers to the provinces? We chose not to do that. We chose a different path.

The path that we chose under the leadership of finance minister Flaherty and the Prime Minister was to look inside government spending itself first. We made precise and needed cuts and reductions to government departments across the board, making sure that we took the time to make sure that the front-line services for Canadians were protected.

We made good reductions so that Canadian taxpayers could have lower taxes, the provinces could have their transfers protected, and we could balance the budget. That was the decision that we made under the leadership of the finance minister and the Prime Minister.

With the implementation of this budget, we would be facing a balanced budget moving forward. Out of all the countries in the G7, Canada is the one best positioned to seize the next 20 years as decades of growth for this country. We will achieve a leadership position unannounced and unknown to us well before that recession took place. We would emerge stronger and better than we ever expected Canada to be at this point.

I know that I only have a couple of minutes left, but I would like to talk about one more issue contained in this act. It has to do with a challenge we face as we move forward and engage in this positive future for the country. It is the paradox of having too many Canadians still unemployed in this country, despite our recovery from the recession, while at the same time having many jobs across Canada for which employers cannot find skilled people to fill them.

That is why, in this budget implementation act, we would implement the youth apprenticeship loan. This would be a \$100 million program that for the first time would enable young people across Canada who are engaged in the trades to count on the federal government to help support them, to the tune of a \$4,000 interest-free loan for each year of their training. This is so that they could engage in a trade that would lead to a job so that they could get married, raise their own families, and be confident that they could provide a solid basis for family life and provide for their families as they raise their children.

This is a commitment that we made in this budget. We think it is the proper route to take.

As Canada now emerges from the largest recession since the Great Depression in a strong fiscal position, we now have confidence that we can engage in a robust recovery, create jobs, and have the skilled Canadians to fill those jobs.

This is the challenge we face, and we are up to the job. We look forward to the opposition's support for this bill. I encourage them to support it. Help us make Canada the strong, proud nation we know it can be.

● (2010)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his speech. The credit I will give him is that he is one of the few Conservatives over there who, while he has some notes, will speak extemporaneously from time to time. It is great. It is a tradition in the House that we have sometimes lost. Certainly from the government benches, we see page after page of prepared notes from the Prime Minister's Office. They read them off faithfully, and that is very nice.

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With respect to this budget bill, because that is what we are dealing with, while I am tempted to get into the larger economic issues that the hon. member talked about, what we have in front of us tonight is a bill of over 360 pages that affects more than 60 laws currently on the books. One of the aspects buried within this bill is a tax treaty with the United States. The U.S. is our largest trading partner, and it is the most significant tax treaty that we could see.

I wonder if the member has any misgivings at all about the implications for the up to one million Canadians who would be impacted and have their personal tax information sent on to the IRS without their even knowing.

We asked for a notification in the bill to simply say that the bank should notify those people who have their information passed to the IRS.

I wonder if the member would be in support of that amendment to this very bad deal, an amendment to at least allow Canadians the knowledge that their information is being passed on to the IRS.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member refers to is a conversation I had with the former finance minister, as I had several constituents in my riding come to my office and inquire about the FATCA situation and how it was going to affect them.

I was told at that time by the finance minister that we were in heavy negotiations with the United States of America to make sure that we negotiated a deal that would protect the rights and privacy of Canadians who could be affected by this legislation enacted in the U.S.A.

I can remember the finance minister standing in the House announcing the deal that had been made with the United States in order to protect Canadians. We hear the fearmongering by the opposition side, but we know that RESPs and RRSPs are protected. We know they were excluded from any deal. We are making a continued strong effort to negotiate with the United States to make sure all Canadians are protected from these measures.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard my Conservative colleague congratulate his government for having paid down the debt in the early years of government, when the Conservatives were left with a \$13-billion surplus by the previous Liberal government and proceeded to quickly get into a deficit that has lasted seven years.

With regard to those funds that were saved, he was congratulating the government for having money to spend in this budget, but how does he feel about the fact that veterans have had their disability payments, which are payments for pain and suffering, clawed back since 2006 under his government's watch? Some of these clawbacks are being replaced, but only between May 29 and September 30 of 2012. That is it. It is just several months' worth, when it was years—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the hon. member talked about the surplus the Liberals apparently left our government with. However, back in those days, around 2004-2005 and before our government took over, there was a huge issue in this country that was called the fiscal imbalance between the provinces and the federal government. We had provinces across the country complain-

ing about the federal government's cuts in transfers and the way it had treated the provinces and caused this fiscal imbalance.

We do not hear the provinces complaining about the fiscal imbalance anymore, because when this government took over, the finance minister and the Prime Minister made changes to the equalization formula and fixed that problem.

When the member talks about the \$13-billion surplus, that was done on the backs of the provinces. We did something different. We have done it in a different way.

On the member's second issue, veterans, we are investing more than \$700 million per year, which more in support of our veterans than that party did when it was in office. No party has invested more in support of the health and welfare and future of our veterans than the Conservative Party of Canada. I stand firmly behind the supports we are putting forward to veterans.

• (2015)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, given that the FATCA buried in Bill C-31 requires that the bank search every single customer record with a fine-tooth comb, does the government have any estimates for what that is going to cost and how much of those costs will be passed on to every bank customer across Canada?

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I can remember the finance minister standing in the House and addressing opposition questions similar to this one on this deal. This government conducted a tough negotiation with the United States of America, and we made sure that we put a negotiation in place to protect the privacy and the economic concerns of people who might be affected by this legislation that was put forward in the United States.

As for the actual financial costs, those will have to be determined as we move forward, because we cannot predict what is going to happen in the future. However, I can say that we will invest whatever money it takes to protect the finances and privacy of all Canadians who could be affected by this legislation.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always take great pleasure in being able to rise and speak in Canada's Parliament, in our House of Commons.

It is an incredible privilege and honour, certainly to do so on behalf of the people of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, in the northwest of British Columbia. This is a region of the country that is incredibly proud, with its diverse and important history. Also, it has struggled, particularly with regard to creating jobs, and it has watched many of the major sectors suffer.

One of the great abuses that has been heaped on that challenge by successive governments is the inattentiveness to what actual Canadians are concerned about, the proper way to create jobs and wealth in this country.

We have struggled, particularly when we watch governments that grow so arrogant over time that they choose a form of governing that is disrespectful and disregarding of some of our most primary and fundamental democratic instincts.

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I have some quotations, because it is not just me saying this about the process we are engaged in here today on this particular bill. Let me quote from somebody sitting in cabinet right now.

Mr. Speaker, here we go again. This is a very important public policy question that is very complex and we have the arrogance of the government in invoking closure again. When we look at the Liberal Party on arrogance it is like looking at the Grand Canyon. It is this big fact of nature that we cannot help but stare at.

That is what the Minister of Industry said when the previous Liberal government used an omnibus bill, this technique of ramming all sorts of pieces of legislation into one. That omnibus bill was one-third the size of the one the Conservatives have just introduced. This must be three times the size of the Grand Canyon with respect to arrogance.

This happens to governments, especially ones that age badly over time, as the government has done. We can look at the list of omnibus legislation over the last number of years. Bill C-13 was 644 pages; Bill C-38, which was often called the pipelines enabling act, gutting environmental and safeguards we have within the Fisheries Act, was 425 pages; Bill C-45, further gutting protections for Canadians, was 400 pages. There was Bill C-4, Bill C-60, and now this one, Bill C-31, at almost 300 pages affecting 60 pieces of law.

I have a stack of quotes from Conservatives, from the Prime Minister to many ministers in his cabinet, decrying the abuse of Parliament that had been done under Liberal majority governments. It seems that they paid too close attention, but took all of the wrong lessons from the previous government. In fact, they took that and somehow tried to normalize it.

We do not think it is normal. We do not think it is proper and good for a government to try to ram these pieces of legislation through, invoking what is called time allocation or closure, shutting down the debate at every stage. In this case, the government shut it down after 20 minutes of debate. It brought in time allocation and said, "That is enough of this whole debate thing, this whole democracy thing. Let us allocate the time and shut down opportunities".

I remember the Prime Minister, when he was in opposition, decrying the fact that he might only get 10 minutes and that many members of Parliament would not get any time at all. That is exactly what the same Prime Minister is now doing.

That is on the process. It is an absolute farce when the government pretends that any sort of proper oversight was given to this bill. I have sat on the committee, and my Conservative colleagues know full well that as the shutting down of witnesses and debate at committee happens, the government starts racing through pages and pages of legislation. In fact, it had to amend its own bill before it even left the committee stage, because it had made so many fundamental errors. It was going to deprive seniors of some of their pensions, inadvertently.

Constitutional experts that the Conservatives say are the best, like Mr. Hogg, who the Conservatives rely on for advice, have come forward and said there are whole sections of this bill that will not only be challenged in our courts for charter infringement, but those challenges will succeed.

The government is going to introduce legislation that it knows full well is likely to fail a charter challenge, which is going to cost

Canadians millions through our tax dollars for all the lawyers that it takes to go through all the series of courts up to the Supreme Court, but it will also cause all the pain and aggravation for those who suffer under a law that is not constitutional in the first place.

This is a movie we have seen before from the government. Time and time again, when we get references for bills that are unconstitutional from all the advice we can gather, the government chooses playing politics over good policy and brings them in anyway.

Let us look at aspects of this 360-page monster.

•(2020)

Let me start with something that is not in here, which the small businesses in Canada were calling for. It was a proposal first put forward by New Democrats in the last election: a small-business hiring tax credit.

Here is the fundamental idea in this very good idea. This was a small-business initiative that Jack Layton and the NDP proposed that said, "Let us help out small businesses in hiring those people, but in giving that tax credit we want to connect it to an actual job being created". I know this is radical economics over here, where we suggest that if we give a tax credit to the private sector from the public, there should be something in return, like a job created.

The tax credits and the tax breaks that the Conservatives prefer and, to be fair, so did the Liberals before them, in the order of tens of billions of dollars, had no strings attached. I remember Mr. Flaherty, our dear friend, criticizing the private sector for sitting on half a trillion dollars of what is called "dead money". This is money that had been accumulating in the private sector in the private enterprises in Canada that they were not reinvesting. It was just a hope from the Conservatives: here are the tax breaks to the banks and the oil sector; here is a hope that they will actually do something with the money rather than sit on it or just do stock dividends. They hope that they are going to reinvest it back into research and development, reinvest it back into hiring more Canadians and expanding their business, but there are no strings attached to that deal. The Conservatives were very happy to let that go.

Also, many of those tax breaks were done when the government was running a deficit, so it was borrowed money. As all Canadians know, because they have borrowed money at some point, borrowed money always costs more. It was borrowed money that was then sent to the private sector in Canada with no strings attached.

This was one good idea that over half a million Canadian small business owners applied for and used, this small-business hiring tax credit. We would think that, somewhere in the 360 pages, the Conservatives would have found a way to include that one measure in this budget implementation act. It is one measure that worked, that was being applied for, that Canadian business owners enjoyed, and that had helped create more than half a million jobs in small and medium-sized businesses. However, it is not here.

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What is in the bill is interesting. There is the Hazardous Products Act. There are all sorts of changes to how we would handle hazardous products. There are changes to the Supreme Court. There are changes to our privacy rights in this bill.

Mr. Peter Julian: These are in a budget bill?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, we would ask what that has to do with the economy. Why would the Conservatives use a budget bill to infringe on the privacy and the rights of Canadians? The Privacy Commissioner herself stepped forward and said she had grave concerns about what is being presented and how it is being presented because it is not getting the proper scrutiny and is likely in contravention of the Privacy Act. The government and its officials said that if there were parts of this bill that would override the Privacy Act, then that was okay; that was how they saw it.

However, there is this one small problem, which is that the Privacy Act is a quasi-constitutional act, and they cannot just simply override it because they want to. That is a very good idea, to have in our laws that we see privacy as so important that we include it at the level of importance of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that we have instituted in this country. We New Democrats think that is a fantastic, very good piece of legislation, yet here the government is proposing that we simply override it, never mind it; and there will be yet another court challenge.

We talked about injured vets. I heard my Liberal colleagues talking about this. The Conservatives talk about vets and how much they care about our heroes. Theirs is a government that was clawing back from veterans who had been injured while serving Canadians. These are people suffering physical ailments and also those suffering from things like PTSD. They had some of their benefits clawed back by the government since 2006. The Conservatives said they would redress this in this budget bill, and they went back three months, ignoring the six years prior, and said that was good enough and the vets should be happy. In fact, they came before the committee and said that the vets should be grateful for what they have done. They cannot imagine why Canadian veterans and their spouses have to chase this Minister of Veterans Affairs down the hall just to be shown a modicum of respect.

Regarding FATCA, I could do an entire speech on this agreement. The Conservatives said they wrestled hard with those Americans and they really brought them to their knees, and they got basically nothing. According to StatsCan, up to a million Canadians could be impacted by this. This is how it would work under this bill that these Conservatives are voting for and passing. The private banking information of Canadians, if judged by their banking institution to have some connection to the United States, as ephemeral as it wants, will be passed on to the IRS by the CRA, which will play some kind of middle-man, enabling role.

• (2025)

Why would the private banking information of Canadians be passed on to the IRS? It is because the Conservatives could not get a deal, and they were more interested in protecting their friends on Bay Street and making sure the banks did not have any trouble, but they did not protect the privacy rights of Canadians.

That is why we are voting against this bad legislation. That is why Canadians can count on New Democrats to stand up for their rights here in Parliament and across the country.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I asked this question recently of my friend on the Conservative side, and I wonder if my hon. colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley could share his view with the House.

I do not think we have had any estimates put forward of what it would cost the Canadian banks, which we know they would not absorb but pass on to consumers.

Not only is FATCA discriminatory towards approximately one million Canadians, not only is it likely to waste government resources in fighting off a Supreme Court challenge on its constitutionality, which the federal government is undoubtedly going to lose, but what will it cost Canadians?

I know that the official opposition has been involved on the banking charges and fees. Has the hon. member seen any estimate anywhere of the cost to Canadian banking customers?

Imagine the cost of every single account of every single customer having to be examined by the banking institutions and, for those who have any U.S. connection, having to be turned over to the CRA to turn over to the IRS.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, we have seen some estimates. When FATCA was first introduced, Scotiabank estimated that it had to set aside \$100 million to gather all of this information, and that was just for Scotiabank alone.

It is an incredibly expensive thing to do. There are 17 million Canadians who have accounts that may potentially be exposed, and just one chartered bank alone is setting aside \$100 million.

We asked the government what its estimates were on the cost of implementing FATCA for the Government of Canada. What was the answer? This Conservative government that claims to have respect for taxpayers' dollars had not done an estimate. It had not bothered. The Conservatives negotiated and signed a deal that we know is going to cost tens of millions of dollars, but they never bothered to ask. They just signed the deal and said they would worry about the costs when they came.

If this is Conservative economics, then I do not want any part of it, and neither should Canadians.

• (2030)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member speak a lot about the small business tax credit that was removed, or not included in this budget. It created a lot of jobs, especially in places like Nickel Belt and small communities. It kind of reminded me of the ecoENERGY program that was cut back in the previous budget. That also created a lot of jobs and helped many Canadians remodel their homes, so they could save a lot of energy.

I wonder if the hon. member could comment on those two issues that have been removed in this budget and previous budgets.

Government Orders

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it is almost as if the Conservatives have an allergy to good ideas when they are working and helping Canadians, if they do not actually fit the Conservative ideology at the time. The ecoENERGY retrofit program was a great example.

The Conservatives started up a program, which was supported broadly by the building trades community in Canada and by Canadians who wanted to do something about climate change and reduce the cost of home heating. The Conservatives started the program up and then killed it. Then they realized it was working really well, because their own analysis said it was, and they started it up again, and then they killed it again.

They cannot imagine why the building sector in Canada has no faith in the Conservative government. It is because they cannot keep a straight thought consistent for more than two times in a row.

We have also seen this with the Conservatives getting rid of the small business hiring tax credit, which is a program that was obviously well applied.

This reminds me of a conversation I had with a Conservative minister about the ecoENERGY program, but in this case it was specifically about a program to help Canadians get into more efficient automobiles. When we were on the plane, he said it was unbelievable that the program was oversubscribed and there were so many people coming into it. My first intuition was that if it was working for the Canadian auto sector building cars here, and it was working for Canadians by lowering the cost of filling up at the pump, and it was helping out the environment, then an over-subscribed program is a wonderful problem to have. His response was so indicative of how Conservatives think about these things, because he said, “No, no; we’re cancelling it”, and they did. Two weeks later they cancelled the program outright.

At some point one has to say that Conservatives never let the facts get in the way of a good argument.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: They are Kijiji facts.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Oh, yes, Mr. Speaker, Kijiji is a wonderful example of how the Conservatives set out the temporary foreign worker program. Kijiji told them that there were so many job needs, and they believed what they read online, so they brought in a bunch of temporary foreign workers and completely distorted the Canadian economy. It is one of the most interventionist governments in Canadian history.

We say let the free market do what it will, and if we need to raise wages in this country, then Canadians deserve that raise for the hard work they do each and every day.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure to rise tonight and debate Bill C-31, the economic action plan 2014, act no. 1.

I will not go into a huge amount of detail on all the various parts of the budget. There is a lot in the budget that is good for Canadians. I will zero in on a couple of points. I want to explain those points so Canadians thoroughly understand them. Anyone listening to the debate tonight would have a very difficult job separating fact from

fiction on the opposition side. Those members make outlandish and wild accusations with absolutely no proof or credibility to back it up.

Year after year, budget after budget, our government has created the fiscal and policy conditions that help Canadian businesses prosper. Canadian citizens benefit from a high standard of living. That is a sentiment shared by many. Globally recognized authorities, from the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development to the International Monetary Fund, have ranked Canada as one of the best countries in the world in which to do business. In fact, they expect Canada to be among the fastest growing and strongest economies in the G7 over this year and next.

I bring that up for a very simple reason. If anyone is listening to the rhetoric in this place tonight, that is fact. That is not fiction. That is not made up. That is reality. If we stick to reality, we could actually have a good, solid discussion about the budget, but if the opposition members only want to engage in fiction, then we cannot have a proper debate over the budget. The reason is simple: facts speak for themselves. Over one million more Canadians are working today than during the worst part of the recession. That is the best job creation record of any G7 country during this period.

Of course, there is ongoing uncertainty in the global economic environment. That is why we must continue to encourage job creation and economic growth, the twin pillars of our economic action plan since its inception in 2009. It is also the reason why we must keep our sights firmly set on the goal of balancing the federal budget by 2015.

In economic action plan 2014, our government renewed its commitment to returning to balanced budgets, fostering jobs and economic growth, and supporting families and communities across Canada. Economic action plan 2014 act, no. 1 contains important measures that build on these three key priorities.

Today, I would like to highlight two measures in particular: the search and rescue volunteers tax credit and important amendments to the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act.

Since 2006, our government has put in place a number of tax relief measures to support hard-working Canadians and their families: the first-time home buyers' tax credit, registered disability savings plan, the family caregiver tax credit, pension income splitting and many more.

In Economic action plan 2014, we announced a new tax credit for ground, air and marine search and rescue volunteers. We are proud to publicly recognize the important role these brave men and women play and the difference they make in their communities. The non-refundable search and rescue volunteers tax credit is similar to the volunteer firefighters tax credit, which our government proudly introduced in 2011. Eligible search and rescue volunteers could claim it for 2014 and subsequent tax years.

Government Orders

Search and rescue volunteers are an integral part of Canada's emergency response network, supporting the Canadian Coast Guard, police, and other such agencies. Often working in dangerous conditions, they put their own welfare at risk time and again to ensure the safety and security of their fellow citizens.

To qualify for the new tax credit, an individual must perform at least 200 hours of volunteer search and rescue services in a tax year, for one or more eligible search and rescue organizations. Eligible search and rescue organizations include those that are members of the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada, the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association, the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, and search and rescue organizations whose status as such is recognized by a provincial, municipal or public authority.

● (2035)

Search and rescue volunteers who perform at least 200 hours of eligible service during a year can begin to claim the new non-refundable credit on their personal income tax and benefit returns starting next year, on their 2014 tax return. Eligible service includes responding to and being on call for search and rescue and related emergency calls, attending meetings, and participating in required training related to search and rescue services, all of these activities taking place on a volunteer basis, of course. The credit will be calculated by multiplying the lowest personal income tax rate for the year by \$3,000. For 2014, the credit will be 15% of \$3,000, or \$450.

It should be noted that the hours volunteered for eligible search and rescue along with firefighter services can be combined. However, only one credit for the year can be claimed, either the volunteer firefighters tax credit or the search and rescue volunteers tax credit. Volunteers with at least 200 hours of combined eligible search and rescue and volunteer firefighting services in a year will be able to choose between the two tax credits. Individuals who receive honoraria for their duties as emergency service volunteers will also be able to choose between the new search and rescue volunteers tax credit and the existing tax exemption of up to \$1,000 for honoraria.

Our government is proud to add the search and rescue tax credit to the long list of tax relief measures we have already introduced for Canadians.

With my remaining time, I want to discuss our government's plan to modernize legislation left over from the prohibition days. The Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act is a federal statute governing the interprovincial transportation and international importation of intoxicating liquors. It was enacted in 1928 at the request of the provinces after the repeal of their liquor prohibition laws. This legislation controls and restricts the movement of liquor from one province to another, as well as its importation into Canada.

Currently, the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act prohibits Canadians from taking beer or spirits across provincial boundaries. In Bill C-311, which was sponsored by my colleague from Okanagan-Coquihalla and received royal assent in June 2012, we updated some of the archaic provisions of the act by removing the federal barrier on transporting wine from one province to another for personal use. Bill C-31, the legislation we are debating two years later, contains the next logical step in the process of modernization.

The amendment we have proposed removes the federal barrier that prohibits individuals from moving spirits and beer from one province to another when it is for their personal use.

Our government is taking action within its jurisdiction to strengthen internal trade by removing barriers to the movement of goods within Canada. It is important to note that there is no change to the province's authority to set limits on personal importations of spirits and beer and that change to provincial liquor laws may also be required to allow the interprovincial movement.

I am proud of our government's record of achievement and our sound fiscal policies. We have invested in job creation and training, supported trade and innovation, and improved the quality of life for families and communities from coast to coast to coast. At the same time, we brought the overall tax burden to its lowest level of tax in 50 years. We have introduced measures that will keep us on track to a balanced budget in 2015-16.

I will conclude by simply saying that I am honoured to do my part to advance economic action plan 2014. I sincerely hope all members will join me in giving Bill C-31 their full support.

● (2040)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we go to questions and comments, I see there is a lot of interest in questions and comments this evening. I would ask all hon. members to keep their interventions brief, no more than one minute, so we can move on to the next participant.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Victoria.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the finance committee, of which we are both members, an official from the Department of Finance confirmed that one million people in Canada, so-called dual citizens, would be affected by FATCA and the government's implementation of that.

At the finance committee, the New Democrats moved two important amendments, one that would confirm that this bill would not override the Privacy Act and the charter and another requiring notice before personal financial information would be sent to the U. S. IRS.

Would my colleague comment on those amendments and would he be in a position to support them?

Government Orders

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question from my colleague who is absolutely correct. He sits with the opposition members on the finance committee. I thought we had a very conclusive and thorough debate on the implications of FATCA to American citizens living in Canada and their tax obligation, which they have always had. However, now it will be legislated through the United States.

We believe FATCA is charter-proof and the Privacy Act will not be impinged upon by FATCA. Also the reality is that any American citizen or dual citizen has always had an obligation to file income tax in the United States.

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the comments from the member from Nova Scotia with interest. He talked about the tax credit for search and rescue and tried to explain that if people were search and rescue volunteers or firefighter volunteers, they could combine their hours. Why would we not give two separate tax credits, one for the volunteer firefighter who spends 200 hours in his community with the fire department and then also spends 200 hours with search and rescue? Why would we not give both tax credits to that individual for over 400 hours of community service?

• (2045)

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member would know that the reason this volunteer tax credit was brought in for search and rescue, and the reason we allowed those hours to be combined with volunteer firefighter hours was so many of volunteers would have enough hours to qualify for the tax break. He certainly would have some volunteers in his communities. I know I have many in my communities. Volunteers in some of the smaller departments, such as the volunteer fire departments, and some of the smaller search and rescue groups would not get enough hours to qualify for a tax break. Therefore, we allowed the combination of both search and rescue volunteer hours and volunteer firefighter hours so people would be eligible for a tax break. It is not a matter of being eligible for both; it is a matter of hopefully being eligible for one.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up that question with my hon. colleague. He lives in the Maritimes and I am sure there are a lot of search and rescue activities that go on in the area in which he lives. Could he comment on what this means to the people in his riding?

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, this is a great tax credit for the volunteer search and rescue personnel, the auxiliary coast guard, the volunteer firefighters, especially in smaller communities.

I live in rural Nova Scotia. The largest community in the riding that I represent has only 8,000 people in it. Most of the communities have 1,000, 1,200, 600, 300 people or smaller. In many places there are not a lot of centres. In the community I live the centre is New Ross where 36 people live. We are talking small rural communities with a lot of volunteers, and a lot of volunteerism throughout Atlantic Canada. This tax credit is a great boost to those organizations.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoulu, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to begin, I would like to make a fairly critical comment to the hon.

member for South Shore—St. Margaret's. His complaints about the opposition are quite pathetic, given that the government holds a majority in both the House and committees.

If the government wants to earn the respect of Canadians and the opposition parties, it needs to show some courage and admit that all of the MPs who sit in the House are presenting sensible ideas—which may even be constructive—and that it is possible to discuss them. In the three years since I was elected, I have seen how this government operates. In this case, with this particular 360-page omnibus bill, all of the amendments proposed by the New Democratic Party were systematically rejected, even the ones that dealt with details that have limited scope and would not have affected the substance of certain measures included in Bill C-31.

My speech will have two parts. First, I will talk about this government's approach, about how it refuses to listen to anyone who disagrees with it and about how it simply imposes its will. The government's lack of courage is incredible. Moreover, this all started with the help of the Liberals, when we returned to the House for the last four weeks. They forced longer sitting hours on us and restrictions on procedural rules, which is surprising for the Liberals.

It is as though having a majority and the power to repeatedly shut down debate was not enough for the government. We saw it again today, when it invoked closure for the 69th time. It is absolutely unbelievable. I do not know how some of my colleagues can look at themselves in the mirror every morning or how they can sleep at night. When I see them with their eyes glued to their desks, it strikes me that wilful ignorance is the only way they can live with themselves.

I would like to reiterate that this bill is 368 pages long and contains a variety of measures. It is a hodgepodge of legislative measures that affect dozens of different laws. It is absolutely vital that the government consider the fact that the official opposition did not disagree with everything in the omnibus bill. Anyone can see that if they look at the work that has been done recently by the Standing Committee on Finance. Had some of the measures proposed by the government in this omnibus bill been examined separately, the NDP would have either fully supported them or supported them on the condition that discussions be held so that we could propose amendments to correct certain specific flaws.

Unfortunately, rather than having an open debate with all of the stakeholders, the government is imposing its will. It is particularly ridiculous to see the Prime Minister lecturing people left and right in Europe when his track record over the past 10 years is so poor that he could not even lecture someone as extreme as Vladimir Putin.

In January 2015, it will have been 10 years since this government began using all the procedural tools it could to try to impose its will, while defying traditions, legislation, and the operations and legitimacy of some of our institutions.

Government Orders

• (2050)

The government really has a very poor track record. Had this government implemented some measures to renew the CF-18 fleet, for example, we could have said that at least the Conservatives had managed to do something. Instead, by trying to find an aircraft to replace the CF-18 after over nine years in office, the government has left the skies empty of any new, safe and effective aircraft that would allow our air force to defend the country and finally do its job. It is absolutely unbelievable.

It is really shameful that the government is patting itself on the back when it has proposed very few practical measures to the public and has denied the legitimacy and the very basis of our work here in the House of Commons.

The second thing I would like to talk about affects me personally as the member of Parliament for Beauport—Limoilou. A major railway line passes right through the downtown core of Beauport—Limoilou, not far from the Port of Québec, where many of the riding's industrial plants are located. The trains travelling on that railway line transport a large variety of products, including solid and liquid bulk commodities. A number of those liquid bulk products are hazardous, volatile and explosive materials, such as jet fuel.

All of these products are moving through the downtown core of Limoilou, just a few metres from four schools that are located along the railroad track. There is an elementary school, a high school, a vocational school and the Limoilou CEGEP.

This is obviously a legacy of the past. I am absolutely not denying the importance of port activities or transit activities that require this means of transport. However, a few months ago, I met with a group of concerned parents, led by Xavier Robidas and Sébastien Bouchard, who were calling for more transparency and rigour with respect to rail safety.

There are some clauses in this bill that pertain to rail safety. However, it is very disappointing. Instead of correcting the problems of transparency, reassuring parents and addressing their very legitimate requests, Bill C-31 will impose a code of silence on all cabinet decisions. That is absolutely intolerable.

As far as I know, cabinet members are elected members and they are accountable. Why impose secrecy for something as vital as rail safety?

The same thing will happen every time regulatory changes are made or certain regulations are rescinded. Heaven knows that many problems with rail safety inspections were brought to light after the terrible Lac-Mégantic disaster. These problems resulted from a lack of resources and very lax compliance with regulations. This is contrary to the recommendations of the Transportation Safety Board.

This bill does not promote transparency and public information. The public will not be notified of these changes. When you play the game of democracy, you have to go all the way.

• (2055)

This government has shown a lack of transparency for more than nine years, especially since it gained a majority and has systematically refused to account to Canadians for its legitimacy.

I will end there. I no longer have much hope of making this government listen to reason. It is not complicated: in 2015, the government will be booted out and we will be there to take its place.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the last 10 minutes, I have listened to the hon. member make some disparaging comments and complain about his inability to comment on the bill before us, Bill C-31. For 90% of the time, he complained about the process instead of commenting on the bill.

However, I did hear him make one comment about the bill. He said that there were some good things in the bill that the NDP actually liked. If he cannot find anything to complain about in the bill, I would like him to use his time to tell us what is good about it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I must say at the outset that I agree with what my colleague just said. I did spend a lot of time talking about the process, which is deeply flawed.

I want to help my colleague understand that there has been a fundamental shift in the legislative process. Bills can be introduced in radically different ways, but if the government truly wants to earn respect, then it should not impose such ridiculous working conditions on all the representatives in the House. If we look at the number of hours we have compared to the number of clauses to be studied, that leaves just a few minutes per clause. That is absolutely unacceptable.

• (2100)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member would be aware, Canada's health care accord expired this year, and Canadians are very much concerned about health care and the future of health care. They want to see assurance from the government in the form of another accord, an agreement between Ottawa and the provinces, that would ensure ongoing support of health care into the future.

These are things that could have been part of the budget implementation bill. Maybe the member could provide some comment on that being one of the major shortcomings of this particular budget.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments. That is an important aspect to consider, especially when we put it into perspective over the past 20 years.

Let us not forget that in the 1990s, the Liberals made things extremely tough for the provinces by unilaterally reducing general transfer payments and health transfers in order to balance the budget and make themselves look good. I know that my colleague has already made the argument that he was not in the House at the time. Nonetheless, he does carry the Liberal banner. At some point he is going to have to accept that legacy, including the reckless cuts that had major consequences. I know all about it. In Quebec we saw massive retirements and it was disastrous.

Government Orders

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for his speech. He talked about people's concern about dangerous goods transported on our railways. It is the same in my riding. People are worried and they talk to me about it when I go door to door.

With respect to tax measures, what are his thoughts on the fact that the government did not renew the job creation tax credit for small businesses, considering that small businesses create so many jobs?

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Joliette for her question. Had I wanted to look at every item in this omnibus bill, it would have taken me at least five hours, and that would have been just my speaking time.

My colleague from Joliette made a very good point about a very simple, direct measure that was very popular with small businesses. The government never gave us a reason for unilaterally getting rid of that measure. It did not explain why it decided to cut such a popular, direct and active form of support for small businesses. We are still waiting for answers from the government.

[*English*]

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud and pleased to be able to speak on behalf of the residents of Calgary Centre tonight on this budget implementation bill. I can assure the members opposite that these words are mine and mine alone, so any errors or omissions are attributable to me.

Before coming to speak to the House tonight, I looked up the word “responsible” in the dictionary. This is what I found: “Based on or characterized by good judgment and sound thinking”. Nothing could describe this budget better than those words.

With the leadership of the Prime Minister, Canadians can be assured that this budget, and their tax dollars, are being managed with sound thinking and good judgment. Of course, this is completely in contrast to what the New Democrats have shown us they are capable of.

I do not mean to sound like I am giving an English course here, but I also went and looked up the word “irresponsible”. Here is what I found: “Lacking a sense of responsibility; unreliable or untrustworthy”.

An example of that would be someone who thinks, for example, that budgets just balance themselves. It is clear that the Liberal leader has no idea what it actually takes to balance a budget. That is missing a pretty essential attribute for someone who would like to be the prime minister.

Can members imagine, just for a moment, what would happen if they ran a small business and did not take the operating budget seriously and if they did not take into account revenue versus expenditures and the cost of running the business and just spent whenever, whatever? I guess if people grew up with everything handed to them on a silver platter, they might think that way. They might think budgets just balance themselves, but I can assure the House that it is not the case for the rest of us. Average Canadians, like the amazingly resourceful people in my riding of Calgary Centre, remind me of this every day. They know that balancing the

budget takes a lot of hard work. It takes a lot of tough choices, and yes, it does take leadership, but the rewards are many.

When I go door knocking in Calgary Centre, people tell me the same thing every time. Their number one priority is seeing a balanced budget, and they are exceptionally happy to know that economic action plan 2014, along with this implementation bill, would return us to a balanced budget in 2015. That is a promise delivered.

An interesting thing happens when we balance a budget. Suddenly we have more money, money that would have gone to the banks to pay interest. We have that money to put toward program spending and also to pay down our debt so that we are not leaving that debt for our children. We do not believe, on this side of the House, that we should be spending our kids' money.

As I said already, this did not happen by accident. For example, since budget 2010, we have done very broad based reviews in every single department that have focused on achieving savings without compromising service to Canadians. In fact, direct program spending has declined for three consecutive years. That is a trend Canada has not seen in decades.

Canadians have told us what is important to them. It is things like old age security and major transfers to other levels of government for health care and social programs. Therefore, health and social programs would continue to grow through transfers through 2018-19.

We have heard from some of the other members this evening about how important those transfers are to the rest of Canada. Our Conservative government knows that, and it continues to increase them. It is amazing that we have done all this while reducing spending on federal programs for three consecutive years while increasing the federal transfer payments to the provinces.

This has been important, too, for my province of Alberta, because we have rectified an old wrong that was perpetrated by the Liberals that previously gave Alberta less money per capita for health care than all other provinces. This budget, this year, would rectify that with \$1 billion owed to Alberta coming back to it.

There is much more in this budget that deserves highlighting. For instance, last year Calgary was hit with a devastating flood. I have talked about that in the House before. It was one of the worst natural disasters in Canadian history, and I saw first-hand how people's lives were turned completely upside down.

Hundreds of my constituents asked for a national disaster mitigation program. This budget would deliver that. Once passed, it would provide \$200 million over five years to establish a national disaster mitigation program.

• (2105)

We will work with provinces like Alberta and the territories and municipalities to build safer communities and to minimize the risk of repeating what happened last year in Calgary.

Economic action plan 2014 would also initiate a very important element, which is consultations with the insurance industry to explore a new approach to residential flood insurance.

Government Orders

I was amazed when I heard that Canada is the only G8 country that does not have residential flood insurance coverage. People can get flood insurance for their businesses, but not for their residences, generally. This leaves a lot of homeowners without adequate protection in the event of loss from overland flooding. We want to start that dialogue and will have it with insurance companies, along with the provinces and territories, to solve this problem.

We are not paying lip service here. These are concrete moves that are helping my constituents of Calgary Centre and all Canadians.

Even in the toughest economic times, our government has worked hard to reduce taxes for Canadian families and businesses, and these again are things from which we all benefit, even the members of the opposition. The federal tax burden is now the lowest it has been in 50 years. That is quite incredible.

Since taking office, our Conservative government has cut taxes 160 times. We have lowered the GST from 7% to 5%. We have introduced pension splitting for seniors, which leaves more money in their pockets. Did members know that now a single senior can earn \$20,054 without paying any tax? A senior couple can have income of \$40,108 and pay no income tax. Three hundred and eighty thousand seniors have been removed from the income tax rolls. That is real progress.

We have created the working income tax benefit to help ensure that low-income workers are now better off by taking a job than by not working.

Now an average family of four pays \$3,400 a year less in tax. That is money in their pockets they can use or spend as they see fit.

However, we all know that taxes also help fund programs and services that Canadians rely on, so we are doing things like helping the sandwich generation. That is all of us who are looking after our moms and dads and our kids at the same time and are feeling stressed because we have jobs as well. The Canadian employers for caregivers action plan would work with employers to help people stay in the workforce while they are looking after that very important loved one.

We are going to keep closing tax loopholes so that all Canadians pay their fair share.

Quality of life is also important to us, so I want to spend a minute talking about quality of life initiatives for all Canadians.

Did members know that arts and culture contribute \$8 billion every year to Canada's economy? That is not to mention the thousands of amazing rock performances and piano concertos and everything we love to go see. In my riding alone, this budget would help fund non-profit arts and culture events like Expo Latino, GlobalFest, the International Children's Festival and the Calgary Stampede. I look forward, as do my constituents of Calgary Centre, to attending a lot of those this summer.

Last, I want to talk about my second favourite colour, next to blue, and that is green, and that is because our government is making Canada greener every day. This Conservative government has added an area the size of Greece to our national parkland, and that is a legacy for us to enjoy now and for our kids to enjoy in the future. It is a real game-changer. The former U.S. energy secretary, Steven

Chu, says that it is one of our country's most amazing accomplishments, and he does not know why we are not touting it elsewhere. I want Canadians to know that we are protecting our parkland.

This budget would also invest \$391.5 million over the next five years for Parks Canada to make improvements to highways, bridges, and dams that are located in our national parks and along historic canals. This would build on our commitment to preserve Canada's natural heritage. We have continually allocated money to do this in iconic places like Sable Island, the Nahanni, and Waterton National Park. These are for future generations to share.

I am proud of this budget. This budget is a rock-solid example of balance, good judgment, and sound thinking.

I would be remiss if I did not add my thanks and those of my constituents to the late Jim Flaherty, on whose foundation our current finance minister is building.

This is a responsible budget that will continue to build on the Flaherty record and will continue to build on the Conservative strength of job growth and long-term prosperity.

Finally, I am also proud of what is not in this budget. There is no reckless spending, no NDP carbon tax, and no pie in the sky Liberal thinking.

● (2110)

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, what is in this budget and what I would like to ask the hon. member opposite about is the lack of transparency when it comes to railway safety. This particular omnibus budget bill, for some reason, includes railway safety provisions, except that what it would do is weaken and undermine railway safety. It would allow the government to change and repeal a wide range of safety regulations in the railway sector without informing the public. This would include standards for engineering, worker training, hours of work, maintenance, and performance. I know that in my community, constituents are very concerned about railway safety and the transport of hazardous goods.

Can the member tell us why the government would undermine railway safety with secretive measures that are going to negatively impact Canadians?

● (2115)

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this, and I thank the hon. member opposite, because the hon. member knows that the Minister of Transport has been working very hard to improve rail safety. A number of measures have already been announced, which I am sure she is well aware of.

There is another thing the NDP could be doing. New Democrats know that the safest way to transport many of the goods that are going by rail now is through pipelines, yet the party opposite continues to oppose pipelines and even goes so far as to undermine efforts by Canadians to build pipelines in other countries by going down to the States and working against our industry. If they want us to use the absolute safest method to transport things like oil and gas, for example, they should get on the pipeline bandwagon.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Calgary Centre said the number one concern in her riding was having balanced budgets. If we put that into perspective, the Conservative government has not had a balanced budget, not one balanced budget.

The government it replaced had numerous balanced budgets. Given that her number one priority for her constituents is a balanced budget, I would ask her if she does not think she might be in the wrong political party.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, I love the hyperbole coming from the other side.

The member opposite is well aware that the world went through the worst recession since the 1930s in 2008, and this country emerged with the strongest economy of the G7. That was an incredible accomplishment. We did it without cutting transfer payments to the provinces, like the Liberals did, without cutting transfer payments to Alberta, like the Liberals did, and we have restored those injustices and have increased transfer payments while moving to a balanced budget next year, which the residents of Calgary Centre heartily applaud.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend from Calgary Centre seems to think we are debating the budget. In fact, we are debating an omnibus budget bill, Bill C-31, which makes no reference whatsoever to national parks.

However, since she did, I would like to point out that while it is commendable that we have extended the boundaries of national parks and have added new ones, it is lamentable that the fundamental purpose of national parks, the highest possible category of protection for ecological integrity, is being systematically undermined by decisions of the government, such as privatizing the hot springs in Banff, creating a privatized ice walk in Jasper, privatizing golf courses in Nova Scotia, and worst of all offences, creating a national park on Sable Island where the primary regulator will be the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board, to allow seismic testing and drilling in that park. The national park system is being undermined as they expand its boundaries.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, the government consistently hears from the opposition how X, Y, and Z are not being done to protect the environment, when it is actually this government that is doing the most to protect Canada's environment that we have seen.

We are reducing greenhouse gas levels. That is something that went up 30% under the Liberals. We are making sure that our parkland is protected, and this budget implementation bill would go further to help us do that in the budget, which is supported by the implementation bill. We would see an increase in money going to our national parks, and we would be supporting conservation and encouraging donations to ecologically sensitive land by providing tax relief for people who give donations. We have seen a large amount of ecologically sensitive land that has been donated because of these kinds of tax measures. Those are real things that are happening to improve Canada's environment.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think it goes without saying that I have no intention of supporting this shoddy budget, not only because of its content,

which I will talk about later, but also because of the fact that the government frequently resorts to an undemocratic process.

Omnibus bills have almost become a tradition in the House. This one is 360 pages long and has 500 clauses. It amends more than 60 acts, and the official opposition is not allowed to divide the bill to study it properly in committee. Furthermore, as usual, we do not have enough time to properly study the bill and propose amendments to improve it. There is no way to properly study this budget, which I find particularly disgraceful.

I am sick of the government introducing such measures and playing games with our laws without consulting the public. I think it is disgraceful and undemocratic. I am not the only one who feels this way, since my colleagues are in the same situation as I am. We need a change, and it will come soon, since 2015 is not far off.

I also find it particularly disgraceful that there is absolutely nothing in this budget to help the 300,000 additional Canadians who have become unemployed since the recession. The government has not come up with anything to help these people or deal with the loss of 400,000 manufacturing jobs during this government's reign.

There are many measures I disagree with in this bill. However, since I do not have unlimited time to talk about them, I chose to concentrate on the measures that affect my riding and my constituents.

We have been hearing a lot about rail safety for almost a year now, since the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic. This tragedy affected many people, and my constituents are particularly worried. There are many railways, and dangerous goods are transported in close proximity to homes in many of the 25 municipalities in my riding.

When I was reading the budget, I was very disappointed to learn that decisions about the standards related to the transportation of dangerous goods will now be kept secret. Canadians will no longer be informed of those decisions. I do not understand. It would be nice to have some sort of explanation about that. These decisions need to be transparent. The government should be consulting Canadians, the official opposition and experts. That would be helpful.

As for the temporary foreign workers program, it has many flaws. The minister tried to fix them, which is great. However, penalties are not being imposed on employers who break the rules. Can we really believe the Conservatives when they say that they will enforce the rules? I have my doubts.

I would like to be wrong though, because the temporary foreign workers program is very useful and helps many employers. However, we have to prevent abuses, and we first have to make sure that people here have work.

• (2120)

I am somewhat skeptical about that, so I am looking forward to seeing what will happen.

I would also like to talk about the Champlain Bridge. It is not in my riding, but many people from my riding, Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, work in Montreal and have to cross the bridge every day.

Government Orders

The NDP proposed four amendments at committee stage to find other solutions that would not involve a toll on the Champlain Bridge. All of those amendments were rejected and the government is imposing its unilateral decision. The Champlain Bridge will be built, but it will have a toll. I do not know how much the toll will be, between \$1 and \$3, perhaps. It does not seem like much, so some people might not think it is a big deal. Going to Montreal once in a while and paying \$2 is not a problem. However, middle-class families use the Champlain Bridge every day. Let us do the math: \$2 per trip equals \$4 a day, \$20 a week, or more than \$100 a month. That is a lot of money for a middle-class family. A family can buy a lot of groceries for \$100.

I am therefore wondering why it is necessary to make people pay for this bridge when Canada has the money needed to provide this sort of thing without making them pay. The government does not need to apply the user-pay principle to every new piece of infrastructure.

In that regard, the government announced \$5.8 billion in cuts to local infrastructure. I cannot believe that the government is letting our infrastructure deteriorate so much. I do not understand it. Right now, I am touring the 25 municipalities in my riding. I am meeting with all the mayors and administrators to talk to them and see how things are going. Everyone is telling me that our infrastructure is aging. They all need money from the federal government. They cannot keep endlessly taxing residents and increasing municipal taxes. They have needs. They have to repair roads, sewers and many other things. However, the federal government is announcing \$5.8 billion in cuts to local infrastructure. I do not understand the logic behind that. Is the government going to abandon our country like this? Is it going to let everything fall apart until we can no longer travel on our roads, until our sewers no longer work and until our municipalities are crushed by debt? I do not think that makes any sense.

What my party and I expect from a responsible government is for it to reverse the cuts to employment insurance, for example. We do not want people to have to travel 100 km from their home to work for 70% of their previous salary. That does not make sense. We want the age of eligibility for old age security to go back down to 65.

We also need to fight against tax havens. Rather than making billions of dollars in cuts to key areas such as infrastructure, the government could recover a lot of money by fighting against tax havens. What is more, \$36 billion in cuts were made to health transfers to the provinces. It makes no sense. I am also going to promote my own cause. The bill that I introduced a year ago on a national housing strategy would help a lot of people.

I would like to send a message to the government. It would be great if it would soon realize that investing in social programs pays off.

● (2125)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been wanting to speak since the evening began. I very much appreciate my colleague's speech and comments.

She knows what kind of impact a budget like this has on affordable housing in her riding. It does not really help people, especially not seniors.

I sent a questionnaire about seniors to my constituents. Ms. Lebrun, who is from Moonbeam, replied saying that we need support for family caregivers, more home care for people who want to remain in their homes, and an end to the billion-dollar gifts the Prime Minister is wasting.

Does my colleague agree with Ms. Lebrun's comments? The government often says that Canadians are not interested in what we do here. I think that what we do in the House is very important. We really need help for our seniors and our veterans. We cannot forget our veterans.

● (2130)

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very good question.

I too get lots and lots of comments from people in my riding who need help. These people are veterans and folks who have worked hard all their lives and do not really want to work two more years before they can retire. That is totally legitimate.

I agree with my colleague. I think that a responsible government should invest in social programs to make sure that people are okay and can live good lives.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about rail safety earlier. I wonder what this is doing in a budget bill. Does my colleague know why it is in the bill?

Since this is a budget bill, I wonder what my colleague thinks of the fact that municipalities will not find out until three months after a train has passed whether it was carrying dangerous goods and what those dangerous goods were. Does she think that makes sense?

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, this really does not make sense. I find it interesting that my colleague raises the fact that rail safety does not really belong in a budget. I was not concerned about that. However, the government seems to be in the habit of bundling together everything it wants to pass. It puts all kinds of things in the same bill, in this case the budget bill.

This comes back to what I was saying about the undemocratic process related to this bill and the fact that we do not have enough time to properly review each clause or each law that is amended in this bill.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the comments by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. It is clear that she works very hard for her constituents.

Earlier this evening we saw that no costing had been done for certain aspects of this budget.

What does the member think, and what do the people of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot think, about a government that does not even cost its budget?

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very pertinent question.

As I was saying earlier in response to another colleague, I hear from constituents every day, because they send me emails and letters, or drop by my office to complain about this government's schemes. They think this is particularly appalling.

Government Orders

People do not like this government's current approach to passing its budget and many of its bills, not to mention all the closure motions imposed this year.

● (2135)

[*English*]

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand and speak tonight in support of this bill.

Before I start, I want to take a moment to mention that there is a dangerous situation unfolding as we speak here tonight in the city of Moncton in New Brunswick, my home province. I just want to let the people of Moncton know that they are definitely in our thoughts and prayers this evening. I ask that they listen to the authorities and stay inside and stay safe until the situation is over. Thank you for the opportunity to say that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to echo the words of my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley when he paid homage to our good friend and former colleague, the Hon. Jim Flaherty, because what we are talking about tonight are the fruits of the former minister's labour.

He worked very hard over his time as Minister of Finance to bring us back to balance. This budget, this economic action plan 2014, puts us squarely on track for returning to balance. It does exactly what the minister set out to do. I am very pleased to be able to stand here tonight to speak to this bill, because it speaks very firmly to what is so important to my riding.

I truly believe that all politics are local. That is why, when I speak about this bill this evening, I want to speak to how it impacts my riding and my province and what it will do to enable our province to take advantage of the opportunities that are there in front of us today. I say this because the Province of New Brunswick, not unlike a lot of other provinces, has been having a rough time, to be frank. Our fiscal situation and fiscal outlook have not been very rosy.

This budget does exactly what it should be doing: it respects the provinces, it does not cut transfers, and it does not try to bring the budget back to balance in the same way that previous governments did. It does not do that. It does not balance the budget on the backs of the provinces. It respects the provinces for what they have to do. It respects the taxpayer. It respects Canadians. That is what is important. It is important that we do that.

It is not just words that I am echoing here tonight. Our government has been solid on respect for the provinces and on growing the transfers to the provinces. To a province like New Brunswick, those transfers are very important. In this fiscal year, those transfers will total \$2.6 billion for the Province of New Brunswick. Of that \$2.6 billion, \$1.7 billion will be through equalization. There will be \$682 million under the Canada health transfer and \$267 million will be through the Canada social transfer. Those dollars are extremely important, and those dollars have been increasing over the life of our government.

Since 2006, our government has increased those numbers. In equalization alone, those numbers have increased by 24%. In health, they have increased by 37%, and for the Canada social transfer, they have increased by 26% since 2006. That is important.

I talk about these numbers and about how important they are because I have a background with the Province of New Brunswick, which many members in this House have heard me speak about different times. I was a provincial member of the legislative assembly. I know how important these transfers are and I know what they do for the work that the province does on an ongoing basis.

The fact that we have been able to bring our budget back to balance without doing it on the backs of the provinces is laudable. We have done it by providing tax relief to Canadians and we have done it by providing new investments to provinces such as New Brunswick. Those new investments are very important, and that tax relief is so important to a province like New Brunswick.

As I said, our fiscal outlook is not very good. Our fiscal situation is rough, although there are some good signs on the horizon. There are some good things happening in New Brunswick. There are some real opportunities, and this budget allows us to take advantage of those opportunities. There are opportunities out there, such as our resource sector, which remains undeveloped for the most part. We talk about a resource sector that is just waiting for us to develop it.

● (2140)

I talk about shale gas development. I talk about potash. I talk about some of the things we have within my own city. I talk about the port and the opportunities that lie with the pipeline from western Canada. That energy east pipeline will come to Saint John, New Brunswick. Something that puts us in an enviable position is our deepwater ice-free port. Not only do we have a deepwater ice-free port, but we have the largest refinery in North America, and we are anxious to see the pipeline come to Saint John, New Brunswick, so that we can support and grow our industry and take advantage of some of those opportunities.

I talk about having the largest refinery in North America. I talk about our ice-free deepwater port, but we also have an LNG terminal that is anxious to transform itself from an import LNG terminal to an export terminal. Those opportunities come from the fact that we have this port.

The market is craving energy, and the people of New Brunswick have been waiting for some time to see their economy transformed. We have been waiting to see this happen. Unlike most New Brunswickers, I was born there, I was raised there, and I have watched a lot of my friends and relatives have to leave there for the opportunities that are sitting on our doorstep. They have to leave our province. Many of them go to western Canada. Many of them go to Newfoundland on a weekly basis.

I travel here to take my seat in the House of Commons to represent the people of my riding. I sit on airplanes with many people leaving my city and province to go to Newfoundland or western Canada as they look for opportunities. Those opportunities are right there at home for those people; we just need to take advantage of them.

Government Orders

The economic action plan gives us the tools to be able to take advantage of those opportunities. It invests in job creation. It gives us the opportunity to develop the skills and develop the workforce. Through the Canada job grant, we will be able to work with the provinces to develop our workforce so that when these opportunities come forward, people will be able to take full advantage of them.

We talk a lot in the House about temporary foreign workers. We have to bring temporary foreign workers into New Brunswick, and one might wonder why. It is because a lot of our trained workforce has left the province and there are situations that need temporary foreign workers, but we want to see our people come back home. We want to work with the province to bring our citizens back to New Brunswick to take advantage of these opportunities. They want to come back to do the same thing they are travelling west to do, the same thing they are travelling to Newfoundland to do: they want to develop our natural resources, and they want to do it at home. They want to contribute to the economy. They want to see their families, and there is nothing wrong with that.

We want to give them the opportunity. We want to give them the ability to do that. It is so important for this budget to move forward so that we will be able to do those things. We have to have a strong economy in the province. We have to have the tools in place to do it, and this government has done that through economic action plan 2014.

We provided funding of \$28 million over the next two years to ensure that the National Energy Board review process goes smoothly. It is important that we put our money where these opportunities lie. There are many opportunities out there. We have supported these things and we want to see them move forward.

I could talk for quite some time on the budget and what it means to the people of New Brunswick and to the people of Saint John. Most of all it means that we will have the opportunity and the ability and the tools to take advantage of what lies in front of us, and that is all we are asking for.

We are asking for the chance to do that. We want members of the House to help support us and give us the ability to do that.

• (2145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech. I think that he does not grasp the real scope of this budget bill. It contains everything but the kitchen sink. I know this because I sit on the Standing Committee on Finance, which studied the bill.

If he has read the bill, I would like him to talk about the impact of the provision pertaining to the Champlain Bridge, which is actually in this budget implementation bill. We know that 19% of Quebec's GDP crosses the Champlain Bridge, which needs to be replaced immediately. However, the bill is proposing a toll and does not mention the impact this will have on the other entry routes to Montreal.

I would like to know whether he thinks it is okay to study such a bill as quickly as we did at the Standing Committee on Finance. We had very little time to study a measure that is so vital to the Quebec economy. I would like to know whether he believes it is appropriate

to impose a toll without consultation—in fact, the bill prohibits it—about the new Champlain Bridge, given how this will disrupt other entry routes and the Quebec economy.

[*English*]

Mr. Rodney Weston: Mr. Speaker, the member asked if I have read the bill. Of course I have looked at the bill. I have read through the bill.

As I said in my comments tonight, I want to talk about how the bill would impact my local area and the benefits that would come to my local area through this bill. I am very pleased about the opportunities that would be there for us to take advantage of in Saint John and in New Brunswick as a whole, because we need those opportunities and we look forward to them.

I have been very clear that the situation in New Brunswick has not been the best in the last few years. However, the outlook is very positive, and that is what we are looking for. We are looking for the opportunity to take advantage of that rosy outlook.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke a great deal about the issues in New Brunswick, where he is from, and he commented briefly about the \$28 million that would go to the National Energy Board for the review of TransCanada's energy east project.

I wonder if he could talk about how that, combined with the money that we would be putting into apprenticeship programs to help young people get skills training, would affect the economy in New Brunswick.

Mr. Rodney Weston: Mr. Speaker, yes, I did mention the \$28 million that would go the National Energy Board to review the energy east pipeline project. One of the things that I am excited about in that regard is that our government has ensured that there would be a firm timeline attached to this review process.

When I talk about these projects or a project of this nature, we want to ensure that we can get to it and have a definitive answer very quickly. We also want to ensure that the review process is done thoroughly. That is what this bill would do. It would enable that review process to be done thoroughly and within a definitive timeline. That would work well for my constituents, because they are anxious to see this process move forward so that they would be able to take advantage of the opportunities in this pipeline project.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my friend has claimed to have read the bill. I wonder if he can comment on the changes to the trademark provisions that are contained within the bill and on the effect they may have on the Canadian economy.

Mr. Rodney Weston: Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague across the way comment earlier to one of my colleagues here in the House about how my colleague spoke without notes. The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley said my colleague talked about the budget implementation act without using talking points or notes from the Prime Minister's Office.

Government Orders

I laughed when I heard him say it, because I can tell members the Prime Minister's Office did not write my comments. The Prime Minister did not write my notes. Well, he might have. They are handwritten notes.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: What was the question?

Mr. Rodney Weston: Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way can stand and talk all he wants, but I am talking about what is important to my riding. I am talking about what is important to New Brunswick. If the member does not want to hear it, that is too bad.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House this evening to debate Bill C-31, the 2014 budget implementation bill.

With this bill, the Prime Minister is handing us another deficit budget and further proof of the Conservative government's mismanagement. This government is completely out of touch with Canadians.

The Liberal Party and our leader have repeatedly asked the Prime Minister to listen to the needs of the middle class. We have asked for specific actions. This budget does not give the middle class the help it needs even though that should be a priority for the Prime Minister.

The only thing this government cares about is balancing the budget in an election year because it wants to change its disastrous reputation on the economy. The only thing this government cares about is its political interests. It is ignoring Canadians' pressing needs.

Every year, the Prime Minister promises to balance the budget, but he never succeeds. Ever since day one of their mandate, the Conservatives have been announcing supposed improvements in the economy, but we are actually going backward. All this budget has to offer is temporary, vague measures that will not improve people's quality of life.

The government has given us a discouraging budget. Canadians need investments that will stimulate economic growth. This budget is no better than the ones that came before, yet as we all know, the needs are many.

The Liberal Party knows that the middle class needs to be heard. The budget should always be in line with the middle class's interests, not the Prime Minister's election interests.

I would also like to emphasize the government's incredible lack of respect for Canadian democracy. I oppose this budget implementation bill because it is rife with changes and amendments that should not be in this financial document.

For example, there are amendments to rail transportation regulations, food safety, the number of federal judges and the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act. This is a catch-all bill that amends a vast number of bills that we should have been able to debate separately in the House.

As we all know, the government is perfectly aware that it can use this technique to avoid a lot of debates. We also know that it is not right for a government to do this. This is the Conservatives' way of avoiding debate in the House.

In terms of budget measures for post-secondary education, the government needs to co-operate with the provinces instead of getting in their way. All of the education measures announced in this budget had already been promised before. The government is serving up old promises that it never fulfilled. The budget does not offer any solutions to student debt, nor does it improve access to education.

What we really needed in terms of education was a much more focused plan to work with the provinces, so that measures would be successful. We need skilled workers and we want the majority of people to have access to post-secondary education. I think the best way to stimulate our economy is to focus on education and innovation. We cannot improve our education outcomes when the government acts as though it has power over the provinces.

As for employment, the government needs to work with the provinces to find solutions that work for Canadians. The provinces were largely critical of this budget. It does not offer them much in terms of education or employment. The employment action plan should not involve putting massive amounts of pressure on the provinces.

For example, negotiations should not in any way undermine or result in cuts to professional training programs for the most vulnerable workers. Furthermore, since the government's proposed Canada job grants were a failure, I think it is up to this government to find alternatives, to offer real support to workers and to help the unemployed find work. These are the kinds of things that middle-class Canadians worry about on a daily basis.

• (2150)

The Conservatives are demonstrating, yet again, that we cannot trust their promises about employment assistance. The government must do more to help create jobs and increase the number of skilled labourers. These are the things that Canadians worry about on a daily basis: the economy, debt, retirement, education, access to employment and so on. How is it possible that the Conservative government is not listening to what Canadians are saying? What right does it have to refuse to listen and think only about its own self-interest?

Economic growth requires significant investment if we want to see surpluses in the long term. The government cannot expect that repeatedly slashing spending in order to balance the budget will have a positive effect in the future. The government needs to work to increase employment opportunities, offer better opportunities for the middle class and young families and implement the many announcements made in the previous budget, including creating a code of conduct for the financial sector and eliminating fees for paper bills.

I urge the Prime Minister to honour his previous commitments. We need a far more ambitious and flexible economic plan for the middle class and Canadian families.

Government Orders

In addition to not thinking about the need to invest in order to stimulate the economy, the government is making improper cuts. For example, cuts to the defence budget are just an inappropriate way of maintaining a balanced or surplus budget. The government is simply putting off buying military equipment. By eliminating those expenses from the 2014 budget, the Conservatives are showing Canadians that they are neither responsible nor honest. They are just putting off that spending, which they had already committed to. Next year, \$3.1 billion will have to be found somewhere so that the Conservatives can deliver on their promises.

Is that a responsible, honest way of balancing the budget? I do not think so. How can we legitimize those types of cuts? The Canadian Forces require certain equipment to ensure that each mission is successful. Be it major equipment, basic trucks or supplies, our troops must not face equipment shortages. It is irresponsible of the government to cut the defence budget in order to balance the budget.

It comes as no surprise, but the government broke an election promise it made in 2011. When income splitting did not garner the support he hoped to get for the next election, the Prime Minister cut his promise from this budget. We all knew this program would not last because it is far too expensive and it does not really benefit the middle class.

The Conservative Party campaigned on this economic promise, but now it is dropping it because it did nothing for the party. Again, the government is starting to lose people's trust, and no wonder. This is not the first time the Conservatives have made these types of mistakes. True to form, they are concealing information to hide their mistakes from the public. This example shows that the government is unable to ensure that its promises are feasible.

One of the most important aspects of this bill for my region is the confirmation that there will be a toll on the Champlain Bridge. I will not get into that just yet because I have some questions about that. The public is calling for clear and tangible benefits for families and members of the middle class who are concerned about their future and their children's future. The measures introduced by the minister in his latest budget do not put the public in a better position.

Is it not the role of the Prime Minister to find effective ways to help families and improve their living conditions? I believe he has a responsibility to provide a budget centred on Canadians who are concerned. They are concerned because the budget does not offer them anything meaningful in terms of education, employment and infrastructure. Families, the middle class, public servants and soldiers are losing out. It is high time that the government realized that taxpayers are sick of seeing their interests and demands left out of the federal budget.

• (2155)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the honourable member talked about a lot of things, but I would like to ask him a question about one in particular.

He said that the Canada job grant, proposed by the government in the 2013 budget, was a failure. Does he not know that 13 provinces and territories signed an agreement in principle for the Canada job grant, that we concluded final agreements with 12 provinces and territories to provide the grant to those jurisdictions and that the

Canada job grant was endorsed by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, Polytechnics Canada and the National Association of Career Colleges?

• (2200)

[*English*]

That is almost all of the business organizations in our country, such as the building trades council of the AFL-CIO and many other labour unions. Is the member saying that all the major business organizations, many of the major unions and all of the provinces and territories are wrong about the Canada job grant?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I must acknowledge the presence of the minister in the House at this hour. I commend him.

That is a very good question. That is odd. Last year, by the time the program was announced, there were already ads saying that jobs had been created. Now, the minister just admitted that the program did not exist and that it still does not exist. The only thing that has happened is that an agreement has been made. However, the agreement was forced on the provinces because this government threatened them and forced them to accept the money or lose it.

Has the program created a single job? Is there a single student who has registered for these educational programs? I do not know of any.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many of the things in this omnibus bill have nothing to do with a budget. This bill amends over 60 laws.

However, one very important thing, a very important tax measure for small businesses, was left out of this bill: the job creation tax credit, which was first proposed by the NDP in 2011. This hiring credit helped small businesses hire people. It created lots of jobs, but it has been left out of this omnibus budget bill, forgotten.

What is my Liberal Party colleague's opinion on this? Does he have any idea why the government has turned its back on unemployed people and small businesses?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question and I thank the member from the Toronto region.

Once again, we are different from the New Democrats. Yes, the program was a success, but it did not create a single job. It gave employers a tax credit because their insurance premiums had gone up. There was no evidence. As an accountant, I know the program.

Government Orders

Yes, it was a success, but the previous government, the Liberal government, did the same thing. It was not an NDP idea. The program helped small businesses. I think it would have been possible to maintain the program, to help small businesses because it was easy for them to access the program and the money. There was no more paperwork to fill out. However, there is no evidence that a single job was created because of the program.

Once again, our opinion differs from the NDP's.

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be able to rise in the House and participate in this debate tonight on Bill C-31, the budget implementation act.

I would like to start with a bit of a tribute. I have had the opportunity, in the three years that I have had the honour and privilege of representing the people of Mississauga—Streetsville in the House of Commons, to work with a phenomenal individual who, unfortunately as we all know, is no longer with us. Of course, that is the Hon. Jim Flaherty, who was the architect of the budget that we are talking about tonight. I have not yet had the opportunity since his very untimely and sudden passing to pay tribute to Jim Flaherty, to his wife Christine Elliott, and his three sons, and to just let the entire family know how much we miss Jim, how much Canada has lost in this great public servant of our country. He was a man who led Canada through the most difficult economic recession since the Great Depression, who was recognized as probably the world's best finance minister during that very difficult time, and certainly who is revered and respected on both sides of this House. I wanted to start off tonight by saying that and ensuring that all members of this House, and I am sure they all do, remember Jim very fondly and thank him for his tremendous contribution to this great country of Canada.

We are here tonight to talk about Bill C-31, the budget implementation act. This is a very important budget that sets Canada forward for next year, having us return to balance. We look at where our country was and where we, like most countries around the world if not all during that very difficult economic recession, had to go into deficit financing and spending to ensure economies did not collapse, ensure we kept people working, and ensure that we invested in infrastructure. We certainly did. There is no doubt that at that time we ran deficits that would have been larger than anyone would have thought, but it was done in a responsible and prudent way. I might note that it was actually done, and budgets like those were actually passed, during minority Parliaments so we had support of other parties in this House for the kind of investment and spending that we did and the levels of deficits that we accumulated as the Government of Canada at that time. However, times improved and, just like families in Mississauga—Streetsville would do if they have to spend a bit more today and then save up in the future and pay back that money that they have borrowed, we do that. It is a prudent and responsible thing to do.

I am delighted and the constituents in my great riding of Mississauga—Streetsville would agree that they are delighted and proud to see where Canada has come and that in the next fiscal year we will achieve a balanced budget. Hopefully there will be a surplus and we will begin to pay down debt and we will continue to offer tax relief for Canadians.

Tonight I just want to highlight a few things that are in Bill C-31. It is important that we remind people of the very positive measures that are in this bill. One of the main focuses of our budgets since I have been a member of Parliament here has been on jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity. This is another budget that focuses exactly on those core areas.

Bill C-31 would invest \$11 million over two years and \$3.5 million per year ongoing to strengthen the labour market opinion process to ensure Canadians are given the first chance at available jobs.

● (2205)

It provides \$14 million over two years and \$4.7 million per year ongoing toward the successful implementation of an expression of interest economic immigration system to support Canada's labour market needs. It provides apprentices registered in the Red Seal trades with access to interest-free loans of up to \$4,000 per period of technical training. As a member of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and Status of Persons With Disabilities, our committee held the hearings and listened to witnesses, who were very excited about the prospect of this new apprentice loan that I am so proud to talk about in this budget tonight.

We are cutting red tape on more than 50,000 employers by reducing the maximum number of required payments on account of source deductions.

We are continuing our focus on more jobs and better jobs for all Canadians.

The budget also continues our support for families and communities. We are encouraging competition and lower prices in the telecommunications market by capping wholesale domestic wireless roaming rates to prevent wireless providers from charging other companies, that may be their competitors, more than they charge their own customers for mobile voice, data, and text services.

We are introducing a search and rescue volunteers tax credit for our search and rescue volunteers who perform at least 200 hours of service in a year.

We are increasing the maximum amount of the adoption expense tax credit to \$15,000 to help make adoption more affordable for Canadian families. That one is particularly important to me because I served for six years, two 3-year terms as a member of the board of the Peel Children's Aid Society. One of our major challenges was how we could get our kids in care adopted by families. Adopting children out of the children's aid system is challenging enough. These are very vulnerable children who are in the care of our local children's aid societies. I have to say, if we can improve the financial ability of families to adopt those children, and other children, but certainly those most vulnerable children, into a loving and welcoming new family home, that is one of the most important things we as a government could ever possibly do. I am very proud about that initiative in this budget.

Government Orders

• (2210)

We are exempting acupuncturists and naturopathic doctors' professional fees from the goods and services tax and harmonized sales tax. The budget would expand the list of eligible expenses under the medical expense tax credit to include costs associated with service animals that are specially trained to assist individuals with severe diabetes, such as our diabetes alert dogs, as well as amounts paid for the design of an eligible individualized therapy plan.

We are enhancing access to employment insurance sickness benefits for claimants who receive benefits for critically ill children and compassionate care benefits.

The budget sets forth a renewed investment in infrastructure. I want to say how proud I am of our government for renewing the build Canada fund for 10 years. I come from the city of Mississauga. We know infrastructure is important and investing in our urban areas is crucial. Our government has made the largest commitment to infrastructure in the history of our country. We have a true partnership with provinces and municipalities, treating them as equal orders of government in the important work of investing in our communities and in our cities. The budget does that.

The last item I will talk about, because it is one of my passions from my previous life, is housing. The budget commits to the five-year renewal of the affordable housing initiative and the homelessness partnering strategy. Adding those two together, that is almost \$2 billion over the next five years.

This is a good budget. This is an excellent bill. I encourage all members of the House to support it.

• (2215)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it a bit rich that the member talks about everything that the Conservatives have done and yet in this budget there is very little for veterans.

There was a rally today. Some veterans were on the Hill rallying against cuts to benefits for veterans.

Hon. Jason Kenney: There are none.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives may say there are none, but there are lots of cuts. At the end of the day, we have to recognize how much veterans have given to our country.

What looks like good news in the budget is actually bad news in another way for many across Canada. Again, let me talk about the veterans for now and the fact that the government has cut the number of offices. We need to remember that the Conservatives were able to find \$36 million to fight veterans in court on this particular matter with respect to the clawback, just to be proven wrong. They also found \$28 million for the War of 1812 and another \$103,000 for Twitter.

How can they justify wasting all of this money as opposed to improving the services for veterans? Why did they not also include money to provide support and tools for the families of veterans?

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Speaker, of course, as usual, on that side members' facts are completely wrong.

First, the Veterans Affairs Canada budget is \$700 million more this year than it has been in previous years. The budget has been increased by over \$5 billion since 2006. I am very fortunate that my riding of Mississauga—Streetsville has one of the best Legions in all of the country, Branch 139, Streetsville Overseas Veterans Club.

I have spent a fair bit of time there and I talk to real people on the ground, veterans who live in my community and are involved in the Legion movement. Let me tell the House what they say. They say the best country in the world to be a veteran is Canada, because Canada takes care of them, Canada looks out for them, Canada supports them. Veterans know this government is behind them.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to infrastructure dollars. We need to look at what the Conservative government is actually doing. It is putting its own self-serving political interests ahead of the needs of our communities across Canada. The reality is that there is an 80% cut in actual expenditures this year compared to last year in infrastructure dollars. It is a cut and yet the government says it is giving an increase. It is talking about into the future. Over the next five years, yes, there is an increase, but this year there is actually a cut, and it is a substantial cut.

My question for the member is this. Why did his government decrease the actual spending this year in infrastructure dollars?

Mr. Brad Butt: Again, Mr. Speaker, only from the party that believes budgets balance themselves can we get a question like that.

We have something called the gas tax. The gas tax is permanent and indexed every single year. How can it be a cut if we increase the gas tax funding to municipalities every year, which is indexed to inflation? Only Liberals think that is a cut.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is too bad that I only have 10 minutes, but I will resume my speech when this bill is at third reading. We are at report stage now, and I have 10 minutes to summarize my thoughts on this budget bill and on the budget as a whole.

I listened to a number of speeches tonight. Unfortunately, it seemed obvious that many of my Conservative colleagues had not even read the bill. They were asked questions about very specific parts of the bill and they gave us the runaround.

We ask these questions to try to illustrate, once again, that we have a budget bill that is more than 380 pages long and that amends, eliminates or adds some 60 acts in a single bill. At third reading, we will ultimately have to decide, with a single vote, whether we agree with a bill that contains a wide variety of measures.

Government Orders

Let us take a look at that variety. This bill contains clauses that will increase the number of federal judges in Alberta and Quebec courts. The bill amends the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency Act and the Museums Act, it makes changes to demutualization, makes changes related to the Champlain Bridge and makes changes related to measures for veterans, in response to a Supreme court ruling. All that in just one bill. Many of these elements should have been studied separately.

During his speech, my colleague from Victoria said that the most complex aspect of the bill was probably the one pertaining to the House ratifying an intergovernmental agreement with the United States. This is an agreement with the United States, which wants to tax Americans who live in Canada. We are not talking about citizenship. This measure contains elements that could well jeopardize the privacy of our citizens.

To add to what my colleague from Victoria said in his eloquent speech, this will obviously affect Canadians who have dual citizenship, Canadians who have not been to the United States in 20, 25 or 30 years, who no longer consider themselves to be American and who have always paid their taxes in Canada. In the end, they may be forced to pay back-taxes to the United States for the entire period during which they lived full time in Canada.

What is more, their own banks could send their banking information to the Canada Revenue Agency, which will act as an intermediary and relay that information to the American revenue agency, the IRS. These elements are extremely complex. Our constituents talk to us about them regularly, and I am certain that the constituents of Conservative members, the government members, talk to them about it too. These are major concerns. I would like to add that, after the testimony we heard before the Standing Committee on Finance, it is clear that this provision will be challenged in court. Did the government listen to the comments and criticisms about these aspects of the bill? No, it did not. It is going ahead with them.

There is another aspect of this agreement that is very relevant to my riding. Many Canadians have never been American, but they live near the border. That is the case in my riding, which shares a border with Maine. Many people in Témiscouata who do not live close to a Canadian hospital gave birth to their babies in American hospitals. They then returned to Canada. There was a time when that happened quite frequently. Because these individuals were technically born in the United States, they could be considered American, have their file referred to the IRS and eventually be forced to pay taxes in the United States, a country that they have never lived in.

I am not the only one. One of my Conservative colleagues on the Standing Committee on Finance, the member for Tobique—Mactaquac, is in the same situation because his riding also shares a border with Maine. These are extremely complex situations that should have been carefully examined in a separate bill. The government refused to do that.

Now, the government is saying that we have had plenty of time to examine this bill in the House and in the Standing Committee on Finance. This bill is 380 pages long and it amends 60 laws. We did not even have the opportunity to call witnesses to speak about certain parts of the bill because we did not have enough time.

● (2220)

The NDP does its homework. We tried, within the framework imposed on us by the government, to bring in witnesses to talk about as many issues as possible and cover as much material as possible. Despite those efforts, we were not able to properly examine some important parts of the bill.

This is not the first time this has happened. This is the fourth omnibus bill I have seen since I became deputy finance critic. The government would have us believe that it respects the opinion of the House and particularly the opinions of opposition members. We often provide constructive criticism because the opposition's role is not just to oppose, but to point out weaknesses in the bills that the government introduces. One would think that we would be right about something every so often.

After examining four omnibus bills in the Standing Committee on Finance, we still have not managed to get a single amendment passed. It was not until we examined this budget bill that we finally managed to get an amendment through, and even then a Conservative subamendment had to be made to it.

This government is not doing its duty when it comes to the parliamentary work we are responsible for doing as representatives of our ridings, our own little corners of Canada. The government is not demonstrating good governance and is not evaluating every aspect of its bills on the basis of merit. Bill C-31 and what is happening at the Standing Committee on Finance is not an isolated case. It is the general rule.

The Standing Committee on Finance addressed other specific and complex aspects of the bill, and I know that members of the Standing Committee on Transport did the same, just as quickly. The matter of the intergovernmental agreement between Canada and the United States on taxation is complex, but other aspects of the bill are also worth examining.

The matter of the Champlain Bridge, which I just spoke about with one of my Conservative colleagues, is one example. The Conservatives want to impose a toll on the new Champlain Bridge without having conducted appropriate studies on the impact that this would have on access to Montreal or on the other points of entry, such as the Victoria Bridge, the Jacques-Cartier Bridge and the Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine Bridge-Tunnel. How will these points of entry be affected?

The Champlain Bridge is a major gateway not only for Montreal, but also for Quebec. What would a member from Toronto think if the government decided to patch up the Don Valley Parkway and impose a toll? What impact would that have on Toronto's economy? That is the same situation Montreal is facing.

Once again, the government is not listening, even though it was unable to provide a single witness who supported its proposed toll. The government is not being responsible; it should be working for the common good. I would like to talk about so many elements, but my time is limited. I will talk about demutualization, another complex issue.

Government Orders

Last year there was a case of demutualization, and the Standing Committee on Finance studied this issue. We know about mutual insurance companies in general. However, some of these companies want to demutualize and become share capital companies. One case was reported to the committee at the time.

The mutual company in question had 943 mutual policyholders or subscribers. However, these 943 policyholders were not the only ones who were insured by the mutual company. There were one million insured people. The 943 policyholders in question saw a good opportunity: if the mutual company was privatized and transformed into a share capital company, it could eventually be sold, amalgamated and bought by another company. They would make a tidy profit because the company's capital was assessed at more than \$1.3 billion. Thus, every one of the mutual policyholders could make up to \$1.3 million. That was clearly an incentive to demutualize, to the detriment of those who had an insurance policy. We tried to clarify this complex situation.

I want to talk about so many other aspects of the bill, including the issue of labour-sponsored funds and the elimination of the tax credit that the government is still planning, which will have adverse effects on job creation. In fact, this could lead to job losses in Quebec, and the government continues to turn a deaf ear.

I have no lessons to learn from this government when it comes to job creation. They are all talk and no action. That is why I will have no problem voting in favour of our amendments and against Bill C-31.

• (2225)

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and friend from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for his excellent intervention.

As he indicated, there are so many elements to this omnibus budget bill. I would like the member's views on one that he talked about in passing. Canada's venture capital industry has warned that the changes to the labour-sponsored venture capital corporations could have dire consequences for the rejuvenation of our venture investment sector in Canada, critical to high-tech and bio-tech, the jobs of the future.

However, without any reason, it appears that the government is phasing out the federal tax credit for these labour-sponsored venture capital corporations.

I would like the member to elaborate, if he would, on why he thinks that has occurred and what the consequences might be.

• (2230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his very good question. It allows me to elaborate on the subject.

This decision will be extremely detrimental. The government has not proven that the tax credit should be eliminated. On the contrary, the witnesses we heard from in committee criticized this government measure, especially the witnesses from Canada's Venture Capital and Private Equity Association, which represents private venture capital and labour-sponsored venture capital funds.

Canada is at the back of the pack when it comes to venture capital. It is very hard to raise venture capital in Canada. Quebec accounts for 90% of the tax credits for labour-sponsored funds, which shows how important labour-sponsored funds are to Quebecers. Quebec is at the top of the list after the United States and Israel, when we look at OECD countries.

Some 45% of the venture capital invested by private venture capital organizations comes from labour-sponsored funds. A symbiotic relationship between private funds and labour-sponsored funds is what makes the Quebec model work.

Currently, 169,000 jobs are being maintained or were created by labour-sponsored funds in Quebec. Again, 169,000 jobs. In the past 10 years, more than 500,000 jobs have been maintained or created by labour-sponsored funds.

The last thing I want to say about this is that the testimony in committee showed us that getting rid of the tax credit might lead to the loss of 20,000 jobs in Quebec. Is that what the government calls job creation?

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his excellent speech on this bill.

He made a very important point, not only for Quebec, but also for all of Canada, about the Jacques-Cartier Bridge. The Conservatives want to put a toll on this bridge without consulting Quebecers or Canadians. That tells me that the Conservatives are not really interested in hearing what Quebecers want or what they have to say.

Would my colleague care to comment on that?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, that question is very relevant to this debate, and it is far more relevant than much of what I have been hearing from the government benches.

My colleague spoke about the Jacques-Cartier Bridge, but I believe he meant to say the Champlain Bridge. However, this decision will also affect the Jacques-Cartier Bridge.

In general, tolls are used as a traffic control measure. The decision to place a toll on this specific piece of infrastructure will clearly have an impact on the other entry and exit routes.

If a toll is specifically imposed on the Champlain Bridge, many motorists and truck drivers will choose to use other routes, such as the Jacques-Cartier Bridge, the Victoria Bridge or the Louis-Hippolyte-LaFontaine tunnel. That tunnel will also likely need some work done.

In that context, this one decision will have a major impact on the city and on the provincial economy. As I said, nearly one-fifth of Quebec's GDP now crosses the Champlain Bridge.

We cannot call it ignorance, since the Conservative government has five Quebec MPs. However, we can say that the government is showing its contempt for the vision that the Quebec government and the Montreal authorities have for Montreal and the new Champlain Bridge.

Government Orders

The Champlain Bridge needs to be replaced because it is falling apart. The federal government failed to meet its responsibility to take good care of the bridge and now wants to make commuters pay the bill, even though the bridge serves Quebec's entire economic community.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-31, an act that will implement important measures contained in economic action plan 2014.

It is a pleasure to speak to the budget this evening, since the provisions it contains would bring us to our long-term goal of balancing the budget.

Our Conservative government is focused on what matters to Canadians: growing the economy and helping create jobs. Canada has now created over one million net new jobs since the depth of the global recession in July 2009. Since coming to office, our government has had one of the best job creation records in the G7, and we are leading overall in economic growth.

While Canada is doing a better job than our international allies, we are not immune to economic challenges beyond our borders, and indeed, our finance ministers have warned us that the economies are still very fragile. That is why our Conservative government is continuing to work hard at home to ensure our economy stays strong.

Most of the over one million net new jobs that have been created since the recovery began in July 2009 are high-wage, full-time, private-sector jobs. That said, our government acknowledges that imbalances between unemployment and job vacancies persist.

It was highlighted in the Department of Finance's "Jobs Report: The State of the Canadian Labour Market", that too many Canadians are still out of work or underutilized at a time when skills and labour shortages are re-emerging in certain sectors and regions. A shortage of skilled labour is an impediment to growth, and that is why our government constructed a strategy to address this and to develop a skilled, mobile and productive workforce.

Our government acknowledges how important apprenticeship programs are for those in skills training. Employer surveys have indicated that skilled trades are among the most difficult jobs to fill. Our budget has included measures to encourage the take-up and completion of apprenticeships by providing support to apprentices and the employers that hire them.

In particular, the Red Seal apprentices would be able to apply for interest-free loans of up to \$4,000 per period of technical training. Canada's Red Seal program allows qualified tradespeople to practice their trade anywhere in Canada where that trade is designated, without having to write further examinations.

It is expected that at least 26,000 apprentices will apply for the \$100 million in loans. This is critical, when we consider the significant costs apprentices can face in the periods of technical training required by their programs. Aiding our apprentices to the completion of their training would directly contribute to the supply of skilled labour across Canada.

Our role does not end there. Even with the appropriate qualifications, it may take time for job seekers to connect with employers. Our government will help Canadians connect to jobs that match their skills.

The economic action plan proposes to launch an enhanced job-matching service to ensure that Canadians are given the first chance at available jobs in their local area. Through this program, job seekers will be provided with modern and reliable tools to find jobs that match their skills, and provide employers with better tools to look for qualified candidates. We want to ensure that Canadians acquire the skills they need for the workforce, and that employers are matched with the skilled labourers that they need.

With that said, our government also acknowledges that immigration plays a significant role in the continued success of our economy. Economic action plan 2014 outlines a plan to launch a new recruitment system, the expression of interest system, to be implemented in January 2015. Fourteen million dollars will be provided over two years, and \$4.7 million per year ongoing to Citizenship and Immigration Canada to support the successful implementation of the system.

Under the expression of interest system, candidates would make an online submission to express their interest in coming to Canada and to provide information about their skills and experience. The information would be ranked, sorted and allow the Government of Canada, provinces and territories and employers to actively target highly skilled immigrants. The government would invite only the most highly ranked candidates to apply for permanent residence.

It is a privilege to address Canadians and my constituents with practical measures that would, without a doubt, continue job growth in our country. I am also pleased that our government continues to support and invest in job markets that are, and always have been, major economic drivers in our country.

As Canadians, we are blessed with an abundance of diverse natural resources. Major natural resource projects are an important source of development and job creation in all regions of Canada. We, as Canadians, must be responsible stewards of the land, while utilizing the resources given to us. Our government has done both. Mining, forestry and agriculture represent important contributions to the Canadian economy and create jobs, particularly in many rural areas. In fact, Canada's natural resource sector represents 18% of the economy, over half of our exports, and supports 1.8 million jobs directly and indirectly.

Government Orders

● (2235)

I understand the importance of the government's support in Canada's natural resource sector, and that is why I am glad to see continued incentives in this area. One of the measures in this bill would permanently eliminate the tariffs on mobile offshore drilling units used on offshore oil and gas exploration and development. This would continue to improve the global competitiveness of Canadian energy projects, while increasing the potential for valuable resource discoveries.

Our government is also pleased to support mining and exploration in this budget. Canada is one of the world's leading mining nations. According to the Mining Association of Canada, over 90,000 Canadians are employed in the mineral extraction in mining support activities across the country. That is why we are proposing to extend the 15% mineral exploration tax credit to junior mineral exploration companies for an additional year. Since 2006, the mining exploration tax credit has helped junior mining companies raise over \$5 billion for exploration. It is not difficult to see why extending this credit will continue to create jobs and development across the country.

I am also encouraged to see our government's support of the agriculture industry in the economic action plan 2014. The agriculture and agri-food sector plays a significant role in the Canadian economy, accounting for over \$100 billion in economic activity and providing employment to over 2.1 million Canadians in 2011.

Agriculture plays a vital role in Canada as a whole, but it also plays a vital role in my riding of Provencher. I spend lots of time listening to my constituents to understand how we can continue to improve the lives of farmers. I know all too well that sudden drops in market prices are a major source of risk for livestock producers. Starting this spring, a new pilot price insurance program will be available to cattle and hog producers in western Canada, offering insurance against unanticipated price declines. This will directly impact the lives of hard-working farmers in my community.

It is with great regret that in this time allotted to me I can only share with members a few important measures that would positively impact my constituents and all Canadians. It is measures such as the ones I have detailed that deliver results for all Canadians.

In fact, according to a recent study, Canada's middle class, after tax income, is the highest in the world. Canadian families in all income groups have seen increases in their take-home pay since we have come into office. There are now 1.4 million fewer Canadians living in poverty than under the previous Liberal government.

Not only that, the Parliamentary Budget Officer recently found that federal tax cuts since 2005, mostly by our government, are saving Canadians roughly \$30 billion per year. The Parliamentary Budget Officer also determined that the most significant share of tax savings went to low and middle-income earners, thanks, in part, to our government's 2% cut of the GST.

These results reaffirm our Conservative government's focus on jobs and growth and that it is making a real difference in supporting prosperity for all Canadians.

In our home, my wife Irene and I know the importance of keeping a balanced budget. It is something we take seriously, always bearing in mind that it is not a good practice to spend more than we make. We have seen the consequences of overspending and the rewards of sound budgeting. We make cuts when we need to and we make investments when we can. Budgets are important and I am well aware that budgets do not simply balance themselves.

Likewise, my fellow Canadians value fiscal responsibility. That is why I am proud to represent a government that practices values at the highest level and to speak on the measures tonight.

● (2240)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government often talks about creating jobs. It told us that it has created a million jobs. That is great, but the Conservatives have yet to put forward a strategy to help the 1.3 million Canadians who are without work. There are 6.3 unemployed workers for each available job; in the Atlantic provinces, that figure rises to 10 for each available job.

How will the government get these six unemployed workers back to work, since there are six unemployed workers for every job? They will have to drive an hour from home to take a job at 70% less pay. What is the government doing to encourage them to go back to work?

● (2245)

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for asking that question because it is something I did address in my speech.

Our government has created an enhanced program for matching employers with employees. That will be useful for matching up the skills out there that are being underutilized with employers that require services of employees in areas where labour is hard to get.

I am proud our government has taken action on the issue that the member has raised.

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue on the theme of employment insurance. One thing this budget does not get and does not understand is seasonal employment, seasonal unemployment and employment insurance for seasonal workers. The Conservative government does not get that people cannot just pick up and travel for work from a community that is hours away from where employment is needed, and it will try to cut back on their employment insurance benefits.

What is in this budget for seasonal workers?

Government Orders

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, seasonal workers are all kinds of workers. I have a business myself that employs many seasonal workers in heavy construction and mining. Many of these people are Red Seal apprentice type people. They qualify for \$4,000 per period of training. If they get that training in the off season, they can better utilize it in the on season. That money will be useful for them and will help them bridge the gap between those employment seasons.

Our government is committed to looking after all workers, including seasonal workers.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, throughout the night we have heard speeches. I do not think I have heard anybody speak about the First Nations Inuit people. The government is saying that it is the best government and the best manager. However, we recently saw the government cut 50% from the first nations national child benefit reinvestment initiative. This program deals with accessible and affordable daycare, which allows parents to hold down jobs, and we talk about jobs here, or even something as simple as a child nutrition program that helps send kids to school with a full belly. That is what the dollars are used for. This can help turn lives around and ensure our young first nations people of today can get back to work.

We did not hear the Conservatives talk about any investments with respect to policing on first nations, which is in dire need of funding, yet the government turns its back on first nations.

Could the member tell me how the government will turn that around? Will it ensure that it provides funding for policing and increase the first nations national child benefit reinvestment initiative?

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to supporting families, whether they be first nations families or otherwise. We have enhanced the flexibility and access to employment insurance and sickness benefits. We have increased the adoption expense tax credit. We have removed the GST on more health care products and services. We have expanded the tax relief under the medical expense tax credit. We are standing up for victims of crime and we are bringing closure to families of missing person. This does not apply only to first nations people, it applies to all Canadian citizens.

These measures have been brought in by our government and they are very good measures.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues in the House for that enthusiastic and warm welcome this evening at this advanced hour. I really appreciate the encouragement.

We are here this evening examining Bill C-31, another one of the omnibus budget implementation acts of the Conservative government, and yet again we find ourselves presented with a massive bill. The bill is over 360 pages long, and it changes a number of pieces of legislation, more than 60 acts in all.

I want to begin my remarks by pointing out again the fundamentally undemocratic nature of the government throwing into one omnibus bill much of its legislative agenda, including many measures that have nothing to do with the budget and including whole bills that should be separate pieces of legislation that come

before the House and are voted on at separate committees by the members. Instead everything is thrown into one budget bill.

Because there are so many areas that the bill touches on, I am only going to be able to mention three or four this evening, unfortunately, but I want to speak first of all about the changes to FATCA. This is the foreign account tax compliance act, and Bill C-31 moves to implement a Canada-U.S. intergovernmental agreement about FATCA.

What is FATCA? The bill means that Canadian-U.S. dual citizens would find that they would have their financial information scrutinized by the American government, even though they perhaps have not lived or worked in the United States for many years, and this would include people who happen to be born in the U.S. but have not lived there perhaps most of their lives.

What the agreement would do is facilitate the transfer of sensitive Canadian financial information, individuals' financial information, to the United States. There are serious concerns that this would violate the privacy of a number of Canadians. In fact, it could adversely affect up to one million Canadians who could be affected by the bill, people who happen to be here but also hold American citizenship; so this is a great concern. In my constituency, many people have written to me or visited me, very concerned about what this means.

It appears that the agreement was negotiated with the protection of the banks in mind, as opposed to the individual protection of individual Canadian citizens. This entire agreement is included in this omnibus budget bill, as opposed to having something that is so fundamental and so important and affects so many Canadians carved out as a separate bill that could be debated and given due consideration. That is very troubling.

One of the key problems with the FATCA provisions in the bill is that there is nothing in this that would inform Canadians that their privacy is being violated, that their information is being turned over to the IRS. We proposed some reasonable amendments to these provisions, but as usual, they were all rejected by the Conservatives.

● (2250)

Next, I want to talk about the rail safety provisions, or lack of rail safety provisions, in the bill.

The bill would allow the government to change and repeal a wide variety of railway safety regulations, including standards for engineering worker training, hours of work, and maintenance and performance, all without informing the public. There would be no public debate on these changes. These could be done in secret, by cabinet, and could affect the transport of dangerous goods.

Government Orders

Now, I do want to say that, in my riding of Parkdale—High Park, in Toronto, we have three different rail lines that traverse our riding. Community members there have been very concerned about the transport of dangerous goods. Certainly, they have seen what happened in Lac-Mégantic and other parts of the country and in the U.S. and have expressed serious concerns. They have signed petitions. They have been trying to have a meeting with Department of Transport officials. I am hoping the minister will approve that, at some point, and allow the officials to come. They are very concerned about this, and to have a situation where changes could be made that could affect community safety when the public may not even be aware of it is the opposite of transparency and a cause for great concern. I do want to flag that.

Third, I want to flag the issue of trademarks and copyright.

I sit on the industry committee—I am the industry critic—and parts of the bill did come to the industry committee. Although we did not get to vote on anything, because it all goes back to finance, one thing we did hear was testimony about trademarks.

I want to quote the Intellectual Property Institute of Canada because, while the government says that the changes it has made on trademarks are to have compliance with international agreements, in fact, the Intellectual Property Institute of Canada says that the proposed elimination of the need to use trademarks prior to their registration presents a serious concern. These are the experts saying this. It goes beyond what is required by accession to the three international treaties and may disadvantage Canadian trademark owners.

What we heard in testimony reinforces that and amplifies that because, going against all past practice and previous legislation, trademarks could now be registered without ever using them and so we could have trademark trolls, who register all of these trademarks and then a legitimate business that wants to get that trademark for its legitimate business concerns would have to get into expensive litigation and take on these trademark trolls just in order to brand their small business. This is the opposite, again, of transparency and of even logic. We have heard no good rationale from officials, from the minister, or anyone as to why this is taking place.

Therefore, there are serious concerns. Again, these trademark changes are something that should be in a separate piece of legislation and be made available for adequate study at the industry committee. Instead, they are rushed through the finance committee with this omnibus budget bill.

Last, I have to talk about the lack of commitment to infrastructure.

We already have a \$300 billion infrastructure deficit in the GTA, in Toronto, where I am from. We finished last out of 19 global cities, when it comes to commute times, yet we have a government that, in the previous budget, cut \$5.8 billion in infrastructure funding. There are future commitments to infrastructure, but they are way down the road, and our city and, indeed, the country are in urgent need of quick action. We need to see spending, now, by the government. We should be doubling the gas tax, so we can invest in our communities across the country. The budget would do nothing to help redress the infrastructure deficit.

I look forward to the questions from my colleagues in the House.

• (2255)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today there were representatives of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada on the Hill. They were there to ask the government to renew social housing agreements. I know that there are co-operative housing units in my colleague's riding and that social housing is an important issue for her.

I would like to know what she thinks of the fact that there is money for social housing in the budget, but there is absolutely nothing about the renewal of long-term agreements between CMHC and social housing groups such as co-operatives.

• (2300)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I would like to begin by thanking my colleague opposite. I would like to correct what I said earlier. When I talked about doubling the gas tax, I meant doubling the transfer of an existing tax. I want to clarify what I said about that.

I would like to thank my NDP colleague for her question about affordable housing and co-operatives.

It is just disgusting. The Liberal government cut funding for the national affordable housing strategy. Now agreements on affordable housing and co-operatives are about to expire. The people who live in these units are really worried because of the lack of funds and the lack of a government plan for the future of their housing. The government needs to invest in affordable housing and co-operatives to protect the housing that hundreds of thousands of Canadians depend on.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member about the gas tax, which she talked about in her speech.

What I hear from a lot of municipalities is that they are finding it difficult to use the gas tax money because it is so restrictive in terms of what they can use it on. A lot of smaller municipalities that could really use the gas tax money are finding it very restrictive.

The government has made some changes but not a lot of changes. I wonder if the member could comment a little bit further on that.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, so much of our infrastructure across the country is the responsibility of the federal government, yet there is a real lack of strategy and clear commitment about how this infrastructure will be maintained and future infrastructure invested in.

Government Orders

I will say that the new Building Canada plan would not correct these deficiencies, because the problem is that under this new funding scheme, only a maximum of one-third of the cost of any given project would be funded. Many cities and municipalities across the country are already cash-strapped. They do not have the means to be able to raise funds. They cannot just go out and raise taxes. They do not have the wherewithal, yet to get the federal money, they have to put in a third of the money themselves or find it from some other source. We are finding that much of this money cannot be accessed by municipalities.

The other thing is that the requirement of public-private partnerships delays projects. It means there are other hurdles that have to be faced, and it is not always clear that it is going to provide a better, more cost effective access to public infrastructure. That is what is needed across country.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the federal member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I am pleased to represent the interests and concerns of my constituents as their representative in the Government of Canada.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of my Conservative caucus colleagues on the finance committee as we debate Bill C-31 as reported from their committee. A line-by-line review of any legislation is a tedious yet very necessary process. This is how we make good legislation better.

As I reviewed the committee testimony as well as the previous debates surrounding the budget implementation bill, there seemed to be a considerable lack of understanding on the part of the opposition in the complexity of running a G7 economy and the measures necessary to keep an advanced industrialized economy running efficiently.

More important, the type of interventions promoted by the Liberal Party in finance committee demonstrate how far the party has shifted to the left under the influence of the disgraced former Ontario Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty's adviser, Gerald Butts.

Residents of Ontario, who are suffering from paying the highest electricity rates in North America, will recognize the name Gerald Butts as one of the authors of the so-called Green Energy Act—

• (2305)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hate to interrupt my hon. colleague, but I wonder if the Speaker has any views as to relevance. I do not see Mr. Butt's name in Bill C-31 anywhere.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. Certainly the relevancy issue, it seems to me, is quite clear on the point that the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is making.

Continue, please.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I mention the name of the individual, who the Ottawa media have labelled “the puppeteer” because of his Rasputin-like control over the Liberal leader, to give a sense of the type of ruinous policies that would be implemented in Ottawa if Liberal Party insiders like Gerald Butts or Mike Crawley ever had their way.

The only green in that Ontario Liberal policy is the green that it put in the pockets of Liberal Party insiders like party president Mike Crawley, who received a \$475-million contract to build industrial wind turbines nobody wants at prices nobody can afford. Worst of all, electricity from these wind turbines is then dumped, at a loss, to our economic competitors, costing Ontario taxpayers over \$1 billion last year and countless lost jobs. Ontario's poor economic performance is dragging down Canada's economy.

Those are the findings in a recent study co-authored by economics professor Livio Di Matteo of Lakehead University. The study, “Can Canada Prosper Without a Prosperous Ontario?”, examines Ontario's shift from the economic engine of Canada to a have-not province that received \$3.2 billion in equalization payments—handouts—from Canadian taxpayers in 2013-14. “Ontario's poor record on GDP growth, employment and business investment reflects a damaged provincial economy that's dragging down the national economy...”, Professor Di Matteo comments.

If Ontario adopts smarter policies focused on competitiveness and economic growth rather than interventionist government, it could unleash its private sector and improve Ontario's economy for the benefit of taxpayers in Ontario and across Canada. In other words, follow the lead of the federal government.

He goes on to say that Ontario's economic struggles over the last decade, which led to becoming a have-not province, receiving federal transfers instead of serving as a foundation for the national economy, has implications beyond its borders. Ontario is facing an \$11.7 billion deficit in the current fiscal year as well as a manufacturing industry hobbled by high electricity rates.

Professor Di Matteo blames an incomplete transition to a more competitive world economy aggravated by high energy costs and interventionist government policies.

Ontario's failure to come to grips with its economic productivity and growth issues has serious implications for itself as well as the future growth of the Canadian economy.

“Ontario is a vast pool of human, physical and financial capital that is not living up to its potential”, Professor Di Matteo wrote.

As I have noted on previous occasions in this chamber, it is important for Canadians to take note of who is providing economic leadership in Canada. Only a Conservative government led by our current Prime Minister can be trusted with our nation's finances.

In Ontario, thanks to interventionist policies, seniors and others on fixed incomes are now faced with energy poverty, a new term in what was Canada's most prosperous province. Only a strong, steady hand on the finances of Canada by our Conservative government has prevented the Ontario economy from becoming something even worse.

The high level of youth unemployment in Ontario is a direct result of the Liberal electricity rate policy. It does not matter who—

Government Orders

• (2310)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I apologize on a personal level to the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, because I am very fond of her, but with all due respect, where on earth is there anything in Bill C-31 relevant to this speech? Perhaps the hon. member could direct us to something in Bill C-31 that has any relevance to this speech.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is using a very common strategy of debate in the House. We see it all the time. What she is saying is this is not the way to do it. Do it this way. That is what she is doing. It happens in the House all the time by members on all sides of the House. One may question the tactic, but it is still relevant to the debate that is before us this evening.

The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke can continue.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, it does matter who is in control of Canada's national finances. Bill C-31 proposes to legislate key elements of economic action plan 2014, which commits to a return to a balanced budget in 2015. It is clear from the many consultations I have had with my constituents that the main issues for them are jobs, taxes, and the economy.

In my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, one of the largest employers is Atomic Energy of Canada. With close to 3,000 employees, it has been recognized by groups like the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, which said that without the presence of AECL, the economic malaise brought on by the disastrous electricity rate policy of the Ontario Liberals would be much worse in this part of rural small-town eastern Ontario.

The economic action plan provides \$117 million over two years to provide for the continued safe operation of Canada's world renowned nuclear research facility. It was extremely disappointing to the tens of thousands of nuclear workers in Ontario and Quebec's nuclear supply chains to listen to the ill-informed remarks of the opposition regarding Canada's success story, CANDU, following the last time I spoke in the chamber on this issue. It is clear that the opponents of the Canadian success story have done a job spreading misinformation, robotically repeated by the opposition, using events in other parts of the world, which are not the Canadian experience.

The money for AECL is money well spent, and here are a few reasons why. Number one is its groundbreaking research. AECL is one of Canada's scientific leaders. A patent is an exclusive right granted by a government to an inventor to manufacture, use, or sell an invention for a certain number of years. Patents are granted on a country-by-country basis and can only be granted in countries where formal applications have been filed. AECL submitted 18 applications during the 2012-13 fiscal year, achieving 13 patent approvals. That is more than one a month.

Among the many other AECL patents included the invention of a valve lantern ring packing cutter used in the maintenance of reactor components, an ingenious fuel bundle design to help improve reactor safety, and a novel core design allowing for a thorium fuel cycle in a heavy water moderated reactor.

For more than 60 years, AECL has served as Canada's premium nuclear science and technology organization. AECL and its laboratories are a strategic element of Canada's national S and T infrastructure as well as a national innovation system.

AECL is one of the reasons our Prime Minister can proudly refer to Canada as a clean energy superpower. AECL is science at work for Canada. The breadth and depth of the work in the nuclear science and technology carried out at AECL is obviously a surprise to anyone who does not take the time to learn the facts. AECL's mandate is to deliver energy, health, environmental, and economic benefits to Canadians. This is founded on the principle of customer focus and collaboration.

AECL has a wall and curtain system, among many other things, and these are just a few of the recent examples of the scientific, groundbreaking research that is taking place in the Ottawa Valley in Chalk River, just miles down the Trans-Canada Highway from Ottawa. I am honoured to have AECL in my riding and proud to stand in support of a budget that recognizes its contributions in Canada.

If I am allowed in questions and answers, I will go on to describe the many other technologies AECL is patenting for the good of Canada and the good of the world.

• (2315)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it very ironic that my colleague talked about electricity rates and tried to blame it on the Liberals. The Liberals had something to do with it, but let us be very clear. Under the Conservatives, most of them on the front bench there, we started to see the hydro rates go up. This only proves that there is no difference between the Tories and the Liberals, for heaven sakes.

If people really want change, they are going to vote for Andrea Horwath in this provincial election, and that is coming up very quickly.

The Conservatives are quick to talk about how good they are trying to make the economy, but, all in all, we see the job situation in Canada. Under the Conservatives, almost 300,000 more people are unemployed, and there will be another 100,000 less jobs if Hudak gets in.

What do the Conservatives have against workers in our country? Why do they not ensure there are proper training and proper safeguards for people who lose their jobs? Why are they not creating the jobs they should be, as opposed to low-paying jobs and part-time jobs?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, since that was blatant propaganda, I will let Canadians know about another such invention in the area of three-dimensional gel dosimetry:

Canadians fight cancer with radiotherapy every day. Prior to treatment, each patient's dose must be accurately calculated - not too much and not too little. And the dose must be targeted for an exact location in the body. AECL scientists set out to devise a system that allows faster and more economic dose assessment for physicians. The more accurate this dose determination, the more precise the treatment, and the lower the overall radiation dose to the patient.

AECL's 3-D Gel Dosimeter uses a gelled scintillator, a material which glows when struck by high-energy particles such as radiation. When viewed by a digital imaging system, this scintillator provides accurate, real-time 3-D dose distributions.

Government Orders

This is saving lives.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague started her speech by saying she represented the people of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and was bringing their concerns to the table.

This is a list of the people, and I am sure there are many in her riding, who would be affected by FATCA. It is far more than U.S. citizens. According to a legal expert, it would apply to Canadian citizens who are also U.S. citizens; Canadian citizens born in the U.S. who thought they lost their citizenship; Canadian citizens born in the U.S. who have lived their whole lives in Canada, having come here at maybe six months old; Canadian citizens with green cards; Canadian citizens who physically spend a certain amount of time in the U.S.; or, Canadian citizens sharing financial accounts with U.S. persons, for example one who is married to or shares a business venture with a U.S. person.

This is why it is estimated that approximately one million Canadians will be affected by FATCA.

Does the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke have some concerns for those constituents within her riding?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the residents of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke who pay their taxes, who are not hiding money, do not have to worry. They are in touch with my office and we are helping them through this.

However, let me tell some more facts. AECL is a key player in the global non-proliferation and de-proliferation efforts by doing the following:

—increasing the need for alternatives to highly-enriched uranium. As part of the Global Threat Reduction Initiative's goal to reduce and protect vulnerable nuclear and radiological material located at civilian sites worldwide, AECL leads the development of a uranium molybdenum dispersion fuel...U-Mo is a high density fuel which allows the use of low enriched uranium to achieve the same fuel equivalent as some highly enriched fuels.

And the spent fuel is much cleaner as well.

Therefore, not only are we doing great things in medicine and producing economical, sustainable, clean energy for electricity, but we are helping to keep the world a safer place.

• (2320)

BILL C-31—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must advise an agreement has not been reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) concerning the proceedings at report stage and third reading of Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures.

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

REPORT STAGE

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed with the government right now, moving a time allocation motion on this particular bill. This is an important bill that

needs to be discussed in this House. When this bill was introduced, I was hoping, since it is 360-odd pages, that we could look at this bill and see some things that would help my community of Surrey North. As always, it is an honour to speak in this House on behalf of my constituents in Surrey North. When I looked at the bill, I was hoping that here be something there for jobs. Jobs are needed in my community, well-paying jobs. What did I find? There are no initiatives in this bill that would address that issue.

We have asked for a hiring tax credit for small businesses, because small businesses generate jobs in our communities across this country, hundreds and thousands of jobs. What do we find in this particular bill? Nothing to help the small businesses that actually generate well-paying jobs. I am very disappointed that this bill did not address any of the issues in regard to generating new jobs in my communities.

Let us take a look at another issue in my community. There are long wait times for surgery. What did I find in this bill? Nothing to help provinces bring down the wait times for surgeries. People have to wait for months and months before they are able to get the elective surgery that is much needed.

The member across the way is saying that it is a provincial issue. Yes, it is, but we can transfer money. Federal transfer payments do go to provinces. What has the government done? It has actually cut \$36 billion of transfer payments for health care in the provinces.

There was an opportunity for government to help reduce the wait times for elective surgeries. What did it do? Nothing.

Another issue in my community is crime. Again, the House leader of the soon-to-be opposition is interrupting me.

I looked at the bill, and what is in there in regard to crime prevention initiatives? Nothing. There is nothing in there to increase the RCMP numbers in my communities so that we could have more RCMP patrol our streets. There is nothing that will address the crime issues in my communities.

There are other issues in my communities. Affordable housing. When I look at Bill C-31, there is nothing in there to help provide affordable housing in my communities.

I could go on. I looked at infrastructure. I have a bridge in my community that is 75 years old. The life of the Pattullo Bridge was supposed to be 50 years. It is supposed to be torn down. When I looked to see if the government was looking at increasing the infrastructure funding for our municipalities, there was nothing in there.

Summer is coming. When I go back home to Surrey and look at the gas prices, they are ballooning. Our wages are not going anywhere. There is nothing in this bill that will actually put money into people's pockets.

I could go on. There are seniors in my communities. Seniors could use an increase in CPP payments. There is nothing in this bill to help our seniors.

Government Orders

I could go on and on in regard to this. Here is something I said on October 29, 2013. I spoke on Bill C-4, another budget implementation bill, and here is what I said:

Bill C-4 is yet another omnibus bill proposed by the Conservatives. It comprises 300-odd pages and addresses over 70 different laws.

• (2325)

Here we go again. Bill C-31 is 360 pages long, amends 60 acts, and has almost 500 clauses. What is more, the bill includes a variety of measures that were never mentioned in the budget speech. As is typical of this government, the Conservatives are trying to force the bill through the House and the committee as fast as possible.

I know that the Conservatives have given notice of time allocation to cut down debate on the bill. I have seen that picture over and over on many different bills. I know I sound like a broken record, but no matter how many times this is talked about, the Conservatives just do not seem to get it. Time and time again, Conservatives demonstrate their inability to learn from their past mistakes. This will be their fifth straight omnibus bill. This is astounding to me. Canadians are not fooled by the government's tricks. They know the Conservatives are ramming through unfair legislation buried in hundreds of pages of this bill that is disguised as a budget.

How are we supposed to evaluate which bills MPs support or oppose, when the only choice they are given is to vote for this overarching legislation that contains all of them? There is nothing that ties these bills together. It makes absolutely no sense that they are lumped together, but here we are, being forced to vote on a mishmash of legislation. Not only that, but the speed at which the government is trying to push the bill through, and we saw the time allocation notice served today, means that entire sections of the bill have yet to be discussed in the House. They will not be discussed because of the time allocation that will be moved.

How are we supposed to present the views of our constituents when the Conservatives move time allocation and we cannot even speak? I am fortunate that I can speak, but many other colleagues in my caucus will not be able to speak to the bill, because the Conservatives are trying to shut down the debate on the bill.

It is crystal clear to me that the Conservatives remain committed to their omnibus bills and time allocation rather than to following due democratic process. However, it is not only the process that is being followed to ram the bill through the House that is objectionable. There are huge problems and omissions from the bill itself, as I have highlighted.

I talked about the needs in my community: the need for creating well-paying jobs, the need for reducing wait times and elective surgeries, the need for housing, and the need for crime prevention programs that would help make our communities safe. None of that stuff is here.

I could spend all night here talking about the issues with Bill C-31, but I want to start by talking about the economic situation in Canada right now. To be frank, the facts and figures do not paint a very cheery picture of Canada's economic situation. I am disappointed to say that the budget is not doing anything to address these problems.

The Canadian economy continues to underperform under this Conservative government. The Conservatives are offering no strategy to help unemployed Canadians. There are 1.3 million Canadians out of work, and there are 6.3 unemployed workers for every job available. I am not even sure if the jobs available are actually jobs that are available, because we know where the Conservatives get their facts. The Conservatives get their facts from Kijiji. We have seen that. They make up facts. If they cannot make up facts, they will go to Kijiji. Kijiji, for those people at home, is a website that one can buy a used tie on. One does not look for facts on jobs to validate what the Conservatives are saying.

• (2330)

Bill C-31 is basically inadequate. There are many flaws and omissions in it, and I have barely scraped the tip of the iceberg with my speech.

The Conservatives are again demonstrating that they are out of touch with the views of real Canadians. They are focusing their efforts instead on producing a do-nothing budget that ignores what Canadians need right now, and are in pursuit of a balanced budget during an election year. This is unacceptable, and Canadians deserve better.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for participating in the debate at this late hour. I would, however, take exception to many of his assertions, which are counter-factual.

One assertion in particular that I would like to rebut—and I know it is a popular and fun talking point that is always good for a chuckle—is the notion that the government's labour force information comes from one particular online job-posting service. That is ridiculous. In fact, the government primarily gets its labour market information from the labour force survey conducted by Statistics Canada.

I think the member was referring to a Conference Board of Canada study. It was conducted by that independent and highly regarded think tank and used 138 separate datasets, one of which was job postings on, yes, Kijiji. The Department of Finance then made reference to that Conference Board study. When it became clear to the Conference Board that some of the postings were double-posted on that one website, it removed the dataset from its study, so we are talking about one of 138 datasets in a Conference Board study to which the Department of Finance made reference.

While there is no general labour shortage in Canada, would the member not agree that we are facing gaps in some regions and industries and that we all need to work together to address those gaps?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Employment and Social Development. It is good to see him this late at night, and I know he is hard-working.

My question for the minister is this: is the temporary foreign worker program fixed?

Government Orders

We know that it is broken. We know there have been many issues with the program over the last number of months and years. We have actually been pointing that out to him, so my questions to the Minister of Employment and Social Development are these: is the program fixed? When is it going to be fixed? Canadians want the answers.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one part of the non-answer that we might have gotten is that within these 60 different pieces of legislation that would be changed by these 360 pages of the omnibus bill, there is something that deals with the temporary foreign worker program. I do not know if Conservatives actually know that.

The Conservatives went in and started to make amendments to the temporary foreign worker program, so there was an opportunity to make some of the changes that we hear small businesses and industries like the restaurant industry requesting, but they gave that opportunity up.

The Conservatives did not actually fix the temporary foreign worker program in this bill while the opportunity was there. Since they are moving an omnibus bill, one would have thought they would want to do something positive.

However, I have a very specific question for my friend.

One of the changes and amendments we have moved here tonight is with regard to the deal the Conservatives have signed with the U. S. government. This deal would deliver the personal banking information of up to a million Canadians. One of the provisions we have asked for, as a minimum, is that the banks be required to notify those Canadians when their personal private information is being relinquished to the IRS. This is one of the ideas we had at committee.

The Privacy Commissioner raised serious privacy concerns for Canadians whose personal information would be divulged to a foreign government. According to Statistics Canada, it would affect up to a million Canadians.

I wonder what my colleague thinks about that. Perhaps he can comment as well on the missed opportunity to actually fix the badly broken temporary foreign worker program.

● (2335)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, yes, there was an opportunity to fix the temporary foreign worker program, and yes, the Minister of Employment and Social Development and the Conservative government have missed that opportunity. We have been asking for that for a number of years, trying to convince the government that there is a problem with the temporary foreign worker program. Unfortunately, they have not addressed it.

To answer the question on FATCA, yes, it is a huge issue in my community of Surrey North. There are many Canadian citizens who will be affected by it. This would affect their privacy, and I hope the government will take seriously some of the amendments we are offering in order to correct some of the problems with the bill.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to be here at this late hour on a Wednesday night. I congratulate all my colleagues from all sides of the House for still being here at 11:40 p.m. I will try to make it as lively as possible to keep them going.

I want to do a slight review of what we are doing here tonight. I know the viewing public at home is very interested. We are dealing with an implementation bill. There are two a year, one in the spring and one in the fall. The budget that gets passed is really a policy document, and then the implementation bills actually take that information and turn it into actions, and those are done through those two implementation bills. That is what we are doing here today.

I have been here all day and all evening for the discussion and I have listened to some of the discussion about an omnibus bill. My colleague across the aisle just mentioned that the bill is 360 pages long. I happen to have it here with me, and he is absolutely right; it is 360 pages, in English and in French. Really, it is 200 pages in English. Then when we look at how it is printed in Canada, how bills are printed, we see it is in columns and there are two columns on a page. The columns have maybe 10 words across. It is really not that thick. I am very confident that the members opposite are smart enough and good enough readers to be able to read a couple of hundred pages of a bill.

The other really great thing about the way the system works is that, just in case members are busy and they cannot read the whole thing, all couple of hundred pages—if members are able to read it in both languages, I congratulate them, because I do not have that skill, unfortunately—at the beginning of all legislation, there is a legislative summary. The legislative summary for the bill is four pages long. I have the four pages here in front of me. We can go through and see the sections. We may read a section and say to ourselves that it makes sense. If we are on the opposition bench, we may not agree with it or, as we have heard today, there are certain sections that the opposition actually agrees with. They would not have to read over that section any more or study it further; they could just do it.

The other thing that happened with this implementation bill, which has been a practice of this government—I am not sure if it was a practice of previous governments—is that, when the implementation bill passes second reading, it gets split up into different committees to study. It is not all at finance.

For example, there was some discussion about the trademark clauses. I believe they went to the industry committee. That is where they were discussed. Witnesses came before the committee and there was a discussion.

Tonight we are at report stage. Amendments have been moved. I do believe there were no government amendments; I believe they were all amendments from the opposition benches, which is fair. There were a couple of hundred of them, I believe. When you first took the chair earlier this evening, Mr. Speaker—it seems like a long time ago, but it was earlier this evening—they were grouped. I think there are approximately 19 or 20 votes based on the groupings of the amendments, so as a House, once we have finished the discussion, we will come to vote on those amendments that are put forward by the opposition. I think it is only fair to say that I will be voting against those amendments, and I think most members on this side of the House will be voting against those amendments.

Government Orders

This is a confidence vote. This is not something members of Parliament can take lightly, and we are not. From listening to the speeches tonight, I think people are taking this implementation bill seriously and looking at the different issues.

One thing I do find a little bit ironic is that members will say that this omnibus bill is way too long, has too much stuff in it, and would change too many things. Then in the question and answer period, when they are asking a question of another individual who was speaking, they say, "There is nothing in here for this individual, or this group, or this organization". We could imagine how big the budget bill would be if we put everything they have asked for in it. It would be as tall as I am. I am not that tall, but it would be a big bill if it were as tall as I.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, it is nice to have some levity at 11:45 p.m.

● (2340)

There are a number of things in it that are important to me. The basic fact that with the budget implementation bill is that we have made a commitment to Canadians that we will have a balanced budget and balanced books. There is not a lot of new spending in the bill. There are some changes to HST.

An example that is close to my heart is this. I have Type II diabetes, but fortunately I can manage it through diet and exercise. That is not the case for many Canadians and diabetes has a tremendous effect on the health and well-being of many Canadians. We have recognized that issue and I have a motion on obesity that was unanimously supported by the House. We recognize there are some medical needs in terms of guide dogs and assistance dogs for those with diabetes. There are a number of small items in the bill.

The core piece to the bill is that we want to get back to balanced books. I am asked all the time what I am hearing the most about. I do not hear a whole lot about trademark. I do not hear a lot about a number of very specific issues. I go to at least five events a weekend in my riding. I am fortunate to live in an urban area where it is relatively simple to get from one event to another. I am asked over and over again, why do we have a deficit? What is causing the deficit?

We talked about the recession and the work we have done in terms of investing to make sure Canada gets back to work so we have growth and employment in this country. I cannot run my business by spending more than I take in. In a business, it can be done for a short term, but eventually it has to make more money than is being spent. People cannot continue to borrow and borrow and never pay it back. They would be bankrupt. This country cannot afford to be bankrupt. We have an opportunity to get people back to work, which we have done. We have an opportunity through these budget processes to get back to balanced budgets and balanced books so that we can invest in other infrastructure projects and social services.

When I look at the pages in the legislative summary of the bill and the small changes in the HST, these are small changes. I am not running out on the street saying we are going to make big changes in the budget implementation bill. The big change we are making is that we have made a commitment to Canadians to get back to a

balance so that we can afford the services that Canadians are asking the federal government to provide.

I know there are a number of issues that people may ask me about. I am happy to answer, but it is time to get on with the work of this place, to finish this debate, to vote on it, and to move on to other issues. We have a number of legislative items the House needs to deal with that have very significant importance including the new prostitution laws that were introduced today by the Minister of Justice. There are a number of things to deal with. Let us get this budget implementation bill passed and move on to the next item.

● (2345)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great intent, and even some amusement. I appreciate that my friend brings some levity to something as scintillating as a budget implementation act today at 11:45 p.m.

I have a very specific and important question for him on what is in this bill, because it covers a lot. It goes across a whole spectrum of different issues that would affect 60 different laws.

As my Conservative colleagues used to believe when they were in opposition, it can at times be an abuse of power by a government to ram so much into a single vote and to then demand that members speak in just a 10-minute slot and then vote once. I have quote after quote from the Prime Minister and from various cabinet ministers, Conservatives all, who, when in opposition, decried this very same technique used by the Liberals.

Let me be specific about the effect on veterans from what exists in this bill. There has been much concern coming from us, as the official opposition, having listened to the families of veterans and the veterans themselves, particularly those who have suffered through some injury or another incurred while in the service of this country.

Whether those injuries were physical in nature or otherwise, such as PTSD, one of the grievous mistakes the government made was a clawback of veterans' benefits for those who had been injured. It is a very specific clawback that affected veterans like Sean Bruyey.

Veterans like Sean Bruyey, who very bravely came forward, even though his mental health records were scandalously exposed by the government, came before the committee and said that the clawback started in 2006, which it did. The government says that the clawback was wrong but has only turned the clock back three months for those veterans rather than all the way back to 2006, when the clawback actually started.

Government Orders

This is going to court again. The government spent \$20 million going to court the first time. Why make veterans go to court again just to seek justice on the rewards they so justly deserve on behalf of the Canadian people?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I have been very proactive with the veterans groups in my riding. For example, prior to Christmas, I met with the Legion management and the legionnaires to talk about the changes that were needed in the new veterans charter. They gave me some feedback, and I provided it to the committee.

First of all, I would like to congratulate all members of that committee on all sides of the House for bringing a unanimous report forward on recommendations for changes to the new veterans charter.

Recently I had a meeting with veterans in my riding with almost 100 veterans. It was not last weekend, when I ran a marathon in Calgary, but the weekend before that. Some of them were from the United States. We have some U.S. veterans in a Legion in my riding. Not one veteran came to see me and said that the federal government is not doing the right thing by veterans. We got support for everything we were doing to continue to work on that.

I rely on my constituents to tell me what we are doing right and wrong, and that is the feedback I got from the veterans in my riding.

• (2350)

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to bite on that last comment about veterans, because I want to carry on in the same spirit in which the member spoke.

I would like to ask him about JDRC and juvenile diabetes. Being a type 2 diabetic himself, he might be able to give us some information. This weekend we are all going on walks in support of JDRC in our communities. It is trying to do research on type 1 juvenile diabetes.

My question for the member is something that he may know about. What is the government going to do to help support research and development on juvenile diabetes in Canada?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I have been very honoured to be part of a juvenile diabetes caucus on the Hill. Part of that was to convince the minister and the government to provide money for research, which they did, for an artificial pancreas. We are getting very close in Canada to being able to develop that. We will be the first ones in the world to develop an artificial pancreas with help from research funding from the government to make that happen.

I am very proud of the government's support of juvenile diabetes and the research that needs to be done to make better lives for those who are suffering from that disease.

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to add my voice to the budget debate this evening.

First, let me reflect upon the government touting how we are now coming out of deficit and running into surplus.

It was the Conservative government that was handed several surplus budgets in a row and for a Conservative government, it has run a number of deficits over the last number of years. Finally it is getting back to a balanced approach, and it is about time.

With respect to veterans, I have to disagree with the last member who spoke. One thing I hear more often about veterans and their issues is that they are getting very agitated with the treatment they receive. Usually a lot of our veterans have gone about their work over the years, asking for nothing in return but a pat on the back and a "Thank you for your service".

However, in the last 10 months, there has been a noticeable difference in our veterans becoming more vocal because of the way they are treated.

I am glad to hear that the committee has come up with unanimous recommendations because there are veterans, even today, outside this building, protesting that the government does not care and that all things are not as rosy as the government wants us to believe.

I would like to focus some of my thoughts on my province of Newfoundland and Labrador and, in particular, the cuts to Marine Atlantic.

Over the last number of years, we have seen tens of millions of dollars cut from the Marine Atlantic budget and, thus, it has to increase its fees. Over the last number of years, the fees have increased almost 15% to the average user.

What has happened is that the ferry service between Nova Scotia and the island of Newfoundland has become more unaffordable for many people to travel across the gulf, and this is a direct result of the cuts to Marine Atlantic and the increase in fees.

This year, as we are getting ready for the summer travel season, Marine Atlantic has announced that it has increased its fees, its budget has been cut, and it will now cut crossings. It has cut a number of crossings just as people are starting to make their plans or have already made their plans to cross on Marine Atlantic over the course of the summer. Now the service is being cut back again.

It not only impacts our tourist industry, but businesses in general. I have had a few calls this week from individuals who have said that the cuts to Marine Atlantic are hurting their businesses and the economy. They have things on the other side of the gulf that they are trying to get, but the suppliers cannot get the products into the province so they can work.

It is an economic driver of the economy in Newfoundland. It is also our link to the rest of Canada, our link to many grocery products. People probably do not realize how fresh the produce or fruit is. A lot of the produce that comes into Newfoundland and Labrador comes through North Sydney. Many times it is trucked from Montreal to North Sydney and then waits there, on the dock. Cutting crossings will impact the ability for residents of the province to get fresh produce.

I have heard from many truckers. We need to have a look at Marine Atlantic and get back to the basis of what it is there to do, which is to provide a service to our province.

Getting into Bill C-31, we were talking a bit earlier about search and rescue. One of the things that keeps coming up is the volunteer tax credit for search and rescue.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (2355)

It is a good and noble idea, but it did come with a few strings attached. If someone is a volunteer firefighter and a search and rescue volunteer, his or her tax credits are combined, instead of getting one for the work as a volunteer firefighter and one as a search and rescue volunteer. They should be two separate tax credits because they are two separate and distinct jobs, even though in some communities they are rolled into one. This should be made a refundable tax credit so that low-income volunteers can also benefit from this initiative. In a lot of these communities the volunteers in these organizations have low incomes. They do it to make their community a better place and for personal fulfillment, but they do not get any benefit from it, whereas the person who is working alongside them gets the benefit, so it is not equal for all.

Before I go on, the member for Saint John mentioned the three RCMP officers who were killed this evening. I would like to echo my sympathy to the families of those RCMP officers. All of us have friends who have been involved with or are members of the force. This is a sad time for them as well. I just remembered that and wanted to make that point.

Another favourite topic of ours in Newfoundland and Labrador is ACOA and what it is doing in our province. This budget makes vague references to the programs and improvements that will be made to ACOA, but what we have seen over the last number of years is that the ACOA budget has been slashed and cut by almost \$30-odd million. When we look to the estimate programs we see that the Conservatives have cut budgets to ACOA but then it is not getting money out the door.

One of the most common complaints I hear from different community groups is that it is not easy to apply. The process through ACOA is a long one. Its first initial reaction is to say no to applicants and it takes a very long time to get money out the door with ACOA. It needs to go back to what it originally had done, which is to help regional development and get back to the basics of providing regional activities and regional benefits, and for smaller projects. If we look at a lot of our communities in rural Canada, where is the presence of the federal government? It is a product over the years that right now in Newfoundland the presence of the federal government is the post office, and we have seen what has happened to that. The other presence of the federal government is the small craft harbours program, which does great work, but that is it. Often people are looking for help to improve their communities. ACOA is a good agency to deliver that, but we are not seeing that. We need to get back to the basics when it comes to ACOA and regional development.

• (2400)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member will have five minutes of questions and comments when we resume debate on Bill C-31.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to pursue a question that I asked in the House last week, punctuated by two events. Tomorrow we experience the 25th anniversary of the devastating assault, the organized crackdown by the People's Republic of China Communist Party. I can remember watching on television as the Statue of Liberty was built in Tiananmen Square. We felt that perhaps the Communist government in China was on the verge of a Chinese version of what we had just seen sweep through the former USSR, glasnost and perestroika. There was a hope that China was on the verge of a breakthrough in democracy. Instead we witnessed one of the most brutal crackdowns and saw innocents slaughtered in Tiananmen Square.

It struck me with some irony that we were five days away, at the time of Tiananmen Square, from a really brave effort for democracy by a Vancouver Island first nation, the Hupacasath First Nation of 300 souls. They are located not far from Port Alberni, and they have chosen to go to the Court of Appeal to oppose a very dangerous—and I use the word “dangerous” advisedly—investment agreement with the People's Republic of China. It is a FIPA, a foreign investment protection agreement, that will give the People's Republic of China rights to challenge Canadian law superior to those rights held by Canadian domestic corporations.

The agreement will apply to the state-owned enterprises of the People's Republic of China, whether they be Sino-Paper or Sinopec or CNOOC or PetroChina or any other, and not just the oil and gas sector. Any investors from the People's Republic of China in Canada represent tentacles of the government in Beijing, with boards of directors appointed by the Communist Party and the Politburo of the People's Republic of China.

This is not merely a statement about the unique characteristics of the People's Republic of China. The Green Party is the only party that actually opposes the concept of investor state agreements. We do so because, for the first time, trade agreements are being used as a way of diminishing democracy. One of the best trade lawyers in Canada, Steve Schreiber, describes these agreements as “fundamentally corrosive of democracy” and says that they give foreign corporations the right to oppose and to seek arbitrations around any decision, whether at the municipal level, the provincial level, or the federal level, that is seen by these corporations as imperilling their expectation of profit.

In that sense, it is particularly egregious to allow an antidemocratic government to challenge the decisions of a democratic government. The Canada-China investment treaty is different in quality from, say, NAFTA's chapter 11 in that its enterprises are completely part and parcel of a much larger economy and a government that itself is antidemocratic.

The other very egregious thing about this agreement is that the lock-in, if it were ever ratified, would apply for 31 years, and no future government could get out of it without the permission of the People's Republic of China.

Adjournment Proceedings

I ask my hon. colleague if it is not time to agree that this agreement should be scrapped.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, deepening Canada's trade and investment ties with the largest, most dynamic, and fastest growing markets in the world, such as China, is a central feature of the government's pro-trade plan for creating jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity.

By improving access to foreign markets for Canadian businesses, this government is supporting economic growth and creating new opportunities for Canadian companies and investors.

The Canada-China foreign investment promotion and protection agreement is a high-standard agreement and a tangible demonstration of our commitment to help Canadian businesses compete on a level playing field in markets abroad.

In terms of its commitments, this agreement includes reciprocal obligations related to non-discrimination, a minimum standard of treatment under international law, expropriation, free movement of capital, and performance requirements, among others.

This agreement with China is very similar to the 27 FIPAs Canada currently has in force.

This reciprocal agreement establishes a clear set of rules under which investments are made and under which investment disputes are resolved.

Here are some highlights of this agreement.

For Canadian businesses looking to set up in China, they cannot be treated less favourably than any other foreign company looking to do the same. Once an investment is made, a Canadian business cannot be treated less favourably than any other business, including Chinese businesses.

The agreement also protects investors against government expropriation except under strict conditions, and then only with fair compensation.

The foreign investment promotion and protection agreement also ensures that all investment disputes arising from breaches of the agreed rules are resolved under international arbitration, ensuring that adjudications are independent and fair.

Finally, ours is the first bilateral investment agreement that China has signed that expressly includes language on transparency of dispute settlement proceedings. It is Canada's long-standing policy that all dispute resolutions should be open to the public and that the submissions made by the parties be available to the public.

This agreement does not impair Canada's ability to regulate and legislate in areas such as the environment, culture, safety, health, and conservation.

Furthermore, restrictions in the agreement will preserve Canada's current ability to review foreign investments under the Investment Canada Act to ensure they provide a net benefit to Canadians and that our national security is not compromised.

It is also important to note that, under this treaty, Chinese investors in Canada must obey all of the laws and regulations of Canada, just as any Canadian must.

In short, the Canada-China foreign investment promotion and protection agreement is similar to the 27 other investment treaties Canada has implemented with key trade and investment partners.

We join countries such as New Zealand, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Japan, who have all signed investment treaties with China on terms that are similar to and in some cases less favourable than the terms we have negotiated with China.

Furthermore, our government has brought greater transparency to the treaty review process. For example, in 2008, we introduced a formal tabling policy that requires international treaties to be tabled in the House before their ratification or coming into force.

The tabling period is 21 days, during which MPs and the public have an opportunity to review the treaty. In line with this policy, MPs had an opportunity to carefully review the treaty when the Canada-China FIPA was tabled in the House of Commons on September 26, 2012.

We have been very clear with the Chinese government that Canada wants to continue to expand its commercial relationship with China, but only in a way that produces clear benefits for both sides.

By establishing a clear set of investment rules that provide greater protection against discriminatory and arbitrary practices, this agreement will give Canadians greater confidence as they consider whether or not to invest in China.

● (2405)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, these are the pieces, in the short time I have, that I will pull out of her remarks.

It is really important that people understand the difference between being against investment with China, trade with China and opposition to this treaty.

It is very important to stress that the Government of Australia, for example, with a volume of trade with China more than 10 times that that Canada currently has, has made a deliberate decision not to enter into an investorstate agreement with the People's Republic of China. It is important to understand, therefore, that this kind of an agreement is not a sine qua non. The government cannot insist that we must have trade with China and therefore we need an investment treaty. That is not the case.

That is why it is critical that we say no to ratifying a treaty. We had 21 sitting days in this place, but we never had a single day of a committee hearing. We did not investigate it. We absolutely must not ratify it.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (2410)

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, on October 18, 2012, the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade received a presentation from trade policy officials on the Canada-China FIPA. The FIPA was also discussed and voted on in Parliament during the proceedings of an opposition day motion of April 18, 2013.

The Canada-China foreign investment promotion and protection agreement will contribute to jobs and growth by facilitating investment flows between Canada and China, and by providing a more stable and secure environment for investors on both sides of the Pacific. The reciprocal rules that form the basis of these agreements establish a framework providing investors with a predictable rules-based investment climate and access to international arbitration provides an effective binding and impartial method for the resolution of investment disputes.

As is Canada's practice, the provisions and procedures for investor-to-state dispute settlement are clearly laid out and emphasize transparency through elements such as public access to hearings and documents.

This agreement with China, the world's second-largest economy, will provide a stronger protection for Canadians investing in China.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I start, I just want to mention that Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing certainly is grieving with the families, friends, communities, and colleagues of the three RCMP officers who lost their lives tonight in Moncton, New Brunswick.

I rise today on a question I asked in the House with respect to the national child benefit reinvestment program.

Among the issues faced by first nations in Ontario, the most common challenges relate to employment, poverty, and appropriate social support systems to address them.

Despite that, the current government has focused on issues related to administrative responsibilities, while largely overlooking the need to assist communities overcome obstacles like poverty, unemployment, underemployment, and the social challenges that relate to those issues.

Despite the will to do the hard work themselves, first nations looking to put a dent in tough employment statistics and persistent poverty do require some assistance with social programs that are proven beneficial for that—programs like accessible and affordable daycare, which allows parents to hold down jobs, or even something as simple as a child nutrition program that helps send kids to school with a full belly. These can help turn around lives and change circumstances.

Unfortunately, for first nations in Ontario, the Conservative government has chosen to reduce the federal commitment to programs like those by cutting the national child benefit reinvestment by over 50%. I repeat, 50%.

First nations learned of the cut in a letter from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada in April of this year, leaving

many to wonder how they will cover the gaps in their budgets that will result from this sudden and sharp drop in funding.

The cut is scheduled to take effect in the current cycle of 2014-15. The federal government is claiming that the “growing cost of elementary-secondary education, Ontario Works, and other supports” are the reason this benefit is being slashed.

While the government claims the programs and supports that will receive the redirected money are mandatory, it is unwilling to acknowledge that the real cost of cutting the NCBR will be in front-line services that supported the development and poverty reduction of young people in first nations, whether those are children receiving nourishment from food banks or young parents able to work thanks to daycare that receives help from the NCBR.

First nations indicate the tone of the letter informing them of the massive cuts suggests that they should be happy they are getting anything at all: “As poverty reduction remains an important goal..., the department continues to support First Nation NCBR projects to the extent regional budgetary resources permit”.

To be clear, the funding being cut supports programs in first nation communities that help first nation children living in poverty. School nutrition programs, daycare spaces, food banks, support for parents, and cultural enrichment programs will be affected.

How can the Conservative government say it is doing anything more than making poverty an even bigger obstacle for young people in first nations? Will the government realize its mistake and reverse the mean-hearted cut to the national child benefit reinvestment in Ontario?

As I said, this is about cutbacks to school nutrition programs, daycare spaces, food banks, support for parents, and cultural enrichment programs, which will be affected. I would hope that the government will see fit to revisit this and reinvest in this important program.

• (2415)

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the question from the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, a pretty part of Ontario.

Our government remains committed to working with first nations, provincial governments, and other partners to help reduce child poverty and to improve the quality of life for children and families living on reserve. The national child benefit reinvestment initiative is not a statutory program, and this is not a cut of resources to first nations in Ontario. The initiative remains a contribution to reaching the goal of poverty reduction.

Adjournment Proceedings

The national child benefit reinvestment program in Ontario is allocating \$6 million to eligible first nations in the 2014-15 fiscal year to support low-income families and children living on reserve communities. Eligible first nations can apply for this funding through project proposals that address specific initiatives to alleviate child poverty. The community programs that qualify for funding will focus on child care, child nutrition, support for parents, home-to-work transition, and cultural enrichment.

The national child benefit reinvestment program is part of the larger national child benefit initiative, or NCB, and is one of many Government of Canada initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty. For example, direct income support is provided through the Canada child tax benefit, the national child benefit supplement, and the income assistance program. These are programs that are available to all eligible Canadians, aboriginal and non-aboriginal alike, and place resources and responsibilities in the hands of parents.

Over and above the national child benefit reinvestment program, the Government of Canada continues to invest in programs that address the health, welfare, and opportunities for first nations children and youth in Ontario, including more than \$114 million annually to the Government of Ontario for child and family services programs on reserve, which include, first, culturally appropriate programs, such as aboriginal customary care and first-nations specific family support programs, to help families provide healthy environments to prevent children from needing care outside the parental home.

Second is more than \$127 million annually to the Government of Ontario and first nations for the Ontario works program, which provides income and employment assistance to help low-income first nations families gain employment skills and become financially independent.

Third is more than \$5.6 million to support family-violence-prevention program activities. Of this amount, approximately \$4.3 million is allocated to support the operations of nine on-reserve women's shelters, and \$1.3 million is for family-violence-prevention projects in first nations communities.

Fourth is more than \$14.5 million annually for provincially licensed daycares in 52 first nations.

Finally, there is more than \$1.1 million in 2014-2015 for the first nations jobs fund to provide employment opportunities for youth aged 18 to 24 on reserve who are also Ontario works recipients.

Reducing child poverty is critical to the future well-being and success of first nations children. Through the national child benefit reinvestment program and other initiatives, our government will continue to work with and for first nations children and families on reserve in Ontario and across Canada.

● (2420)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, the member said that the government works with first nations. What the current government has been doing is actually picking a fight with first nations. Whether it is the NCBR, whether it is education, whether it is housing, or whether it is water, certainly first nations are not getting the support from the government, which is really shirking its fiduciary

responsibility. It is not respecting the commitment it made through the residential school apology.

What first nations children need is more help, not less, and the current government has been giving them less. Children on first nations in Ontario have a poverty rate of 40% compared to 15% for children in the rest of the population. Two out of five first nations children in Ontario are living in poverty, which is no rallying cry to cut services aimed specifically at doing something about that. The programs being cut do not cost a lot of money, but they make a real difference to the children they serve. School food programs, daycare programs, parenting programs, food banks and other supports are the last safety net for families with little to go on.

The drastic cut to the NCBR guarantees that some programs will not survive. Those that do will be severely scaled back. A direct line can be drawn from budget cuts to this outcome, since money is being moved to other programs with actual budget increases. The department has taken money away from poor children to pay those costs. In fact, we are paying for years of capped education costs that the Liberals enacted and that the Conservative government continued.

When will the government stand up for first nations children suffering under an unacceptable rate of poverty? Why not begin by reinstating full funding for the national child benefit reinvestment?

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, our government is actively working to improve the quality of life for first nations children on reserve. The economic development and improvement of first nations members on reserve requires increased investments in skills training and job readiness activities and that is what we are doing.

The employment assistance services that support first nations members to develop skills and access the labour market have been increased by 68% over the last five years.

Canada, first nations communities, leaders, and young adults all agree that first nations youth should have the same opportunities as all Canadians to find, keep, and enjoy the benefits of a good job.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra not being present to raise during the adjournment proceedings the matter for which notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to order made Tuesday, May 27, 2014, the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until later today at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:22 a.m.)

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