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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, March 31, 2015

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 31, 2015

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS TRIBUNAL

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 61(4) of the Canadian Human Rights Act, the 2014 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal annual report.

[*Translation*]

This report is permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

* * *

[*English*]

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada on the administration of the Fort McMurray—Athabasca, Macleod, Scarborough—Agincourt, and Trinity—Spadina byelections held on June 30, 2014, and Whitby—Oshawa and Yellowhead byelections held on November 17, 2014.

[*Translation*]

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

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[*English*]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 39(1) of the Access to Information Act, a special report to Parliament entitled “Striking the Right Balance for Transparency”.

[*Translation*]

This report is permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage respecting the request for an extension of 30 days to consider Bill C-597, An Act to amend the Holidays Act (Remembrance Day).

[*English*]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1 (3)(a), a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put, and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred to Wednesday, April 1, 2015, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

* * *

NAVIGATION PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-662, An Act to amend the Navigation Protection Act (Burrard Inlet, Brunette River and Coquitlam River).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a private member's bill that would amend the Navigation Protection Act. It specifically focuses on three bodies of water, the Burrard Inlet, Brunette River and Coquitlam River. It would bring much needed protection back to these bodies of water that have been excluded from protection.

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

* * *

INSTRUCTION TO COMMITTEE ON BILL C-51

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved:

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security that, during its consideration of Bill C-51, An Act to enact the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act and the Secure Air Travel Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, the Committee be granted the power to expand the scope of the Bill in order to: (a) ensure that the government works with Canadian communities to counter radicalization; and (b) enhance oversight of Canadian security and intelligence agencies.

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the proposed motion of instruction by the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster is actually out of order, I would submit, because it should be accompanied by a recommendation from His Excellency the Governor General.

Standing Order 79(1) instructs:

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

I will put to you, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this proposed motion seeks to do in its instruction.

The purpose of Standing Order 79(1) is to incorporate into our Standing Orders and thus put within the jurisdiction of the chair the requirements of section 54 of the Constitution Act, 1867, which was known as the British North America Act back when I was growing up, and section 54 reads very similarly to Standing Order 79(1):

It shall not be lawful for the House of Commons to adopt or pass any Vote, Resolution, Address, or Bill for the Appropriation of any Part of the Public Revenue, or of any Tax or Impost, to any Purpose that has not been first recommended to that House by Message of the Governor General in the Session in which such Vote, Resolution, Address, or Bill is proposed.

This requirement extends to motions of instruction in respect to bills. It is quite clear, as it says there, that it is not limited to simply bills. It says “any Vote, Resolution, Address, or Bill for the Appropriation of any Part of the Public Revenue”.

Page 754 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, is actually quite authoritative and quite definitive on this. It refers to a motion of instruction, which is what we are dealing with here:

A motion of instruction will also be ruled out of order...if it extends the financial prerogatives of the Crown without a royal recommendation for that purpose.

At this point it is already quite definitive that it is the case in fact that the member cannot move that absent a royal recommendation, and there is, of course, no royal recommendation forthcoming for the purposes he is asking the committee to amend the bill on instruction from the House.

Following this citation offered for that authority, one can trace this proposition back to a ruling of Mr. Speaker Fitzroy of the United Kingdom House of Commons given on February 4, 1930, and recorded at column 1721 of the Official Report.

Coming back to Canada, let me quote citation 596 of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, 6th edition, with respect to how legislative amendments intersect with the requirement for a royal recommendation:

The guiding principle in determining the effect of an amendment upon the financial initiative of the Crown is that the communication, to which the Royal Recommendation is attached, must be treated as laying down once for all (unless withdrawn and replaced) not only the amount of the charge, but also its objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications. In relation to the standard thereby fixed, an amendment infringes the financial initiative of the Crown not only if it increases the amount but also if it extends the objects and purposes, or relaxes the conditions and qualifications expressed in the communication by which the crown has demanded or recommended a charge.

In this particular motion for instruction, both elements of it would contemplate an additional charge. Setting up an additional oversight agency would obviously create additional expenses for the government, an additional charge on the public purse. Similarly, new programs of the type that are contemplated, above and beyond those which already exist for counter-radicalization, would also involve new charges, so in that sense, both aspects of the motion of instruction would require a royal recommendation. The committee would not be in a position to be able to amend it to create these powers without a royal recommendation. There is no such recommendation, and I think it is quite clear that none will be forthcoming.

I would submit that as a result, it is quite clear that both elements proposed are beyond the objects and purposes contemplated by the Governor General in His Excellency's recommendation as it exists on Bill C-51. There is a royal recommendation there, but not for these additional powers that the motion for instruction seeks to establish.

● (1010)

A former principal clerk of the House, Michael Lukyniuk, wrote the article “Spending Proposals: When is a Royal Recommendation Needed?” which appeared in the Spring 2010 edition of *Canadian Parliamentary Review*. This passage from page 30 speaks to the situation we face with the motion of the NDP House leader:

To apply a consistent and objective approach to each case, the Speaker is guided by two basic principles: that the terms and conditions of the royal recommendation cannot be expanded upon, and that a new and distinct request for expenditure must be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

It continues:

Terms and conditions: The royal recommendation states that an appropriation of public funds must be made “under the circumstances, in the manner and for the purposes set out” in the bill to which it is attached. The terms and conditions of the royal recommendation are a specific expression of the financial initiative of the Crown and amendments may not propose measures which go beyond these qualifications.

That is what I see is happening here. The article continues:

New and distinct requests for expenditure: This refers to measures which propose spending and are not supported by any existing statute. When considering a bill or amendment, the Speaker reflects on whether some entirely new activity or function is being proposed that radically diverges from those already authorized. The simplest examples are bills which propose the establishment of new offices, agencies or departments. Speakers have consistently ruled that such measures require a royal recommendation.

In this case, the committee is being asked to go in the direction of establishing an entirely new agency of oversight. That would require a royal recommendation. The member comes to the House with the motion absent such a royal recommendation.

Later in the article, Mr. Lukyniuk writes at pages 32 and 33:

When a legislative proposal envisages a new role or function for an existing organization or program, a royal recommendation is required because the terms and conditions of the original royal recommendation which created that organization or program are being altered.

It continues:

In the first situation, the terms and conditions that established an organization or program are being altered so that a new and distinct authorization for spending is being permanently created. This initiative must be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

Routine Proceedings

Paragraph (a) of the NDP House leader's motion speaks to amendments which would "ensure that the government works with Canadian communities to counter radicalization". Though ill defined as to who and how, it certainly speaks to a new and distinct element to be added to the statute book through Bill C-51. In any event, my hon. friend the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and his officials within the public safety portfolio, one which I also had the privilege of leading at one time, have been working and continue to work hard on developing and seeing through strategies to prevent Canadians from being radicalized by violent ideologies.

Meanwhile, paragraph (b) contemplates amendments which "enhance oversight of Canadian security and intelligence agencies". Again, this sounds like a new purpose for Bill C-51, either as a new or enlarged purpose for either an existing or new government entity, which was not contemplated in His Excellency's recommendation. Of course, as the House well knows by now, the key new powers in the anti-terrorism act, 2015, are subject to judicial review and to prior judicial authorization. In other words, this will be the role of judges and our courts, and there is no better authority to review these matters.

Legislative provisions similar to what is proposed in paragraph (b) of the motion have previously been seen as turning on the financial initiative of the crown. For example, earlier this session, the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra proposed Bill C-622, an act to amend the National Defence Act (transparency and accountability), to enact the intelligence and security committee of Parliament act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, which is almost identical to what is being sought here. Certainly, if we are to discern or divine from the repeated public statements of the opposition, that is exactly what it is seeking to do in this case.

On October 8, 2014, the Assistant Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole made the following statement at page 8414 of the *Debates*:

As members know, after the order of precedence is replenished, the Chair reviews the new items so as to alert the House to bills that at first glance appear to impinge on the financial prerogative of the crown.

He continues:

Accordingly, following the September 23, 2014, replenishment of the order of precedence with 15 new items, I wish to inform the House that there is a bill that gives the Chair some concern as to the spending provisions it contemplates.

It is Bill C-622...standing in the name of the member for Vancouver Quadra.

● (1015)

I would add that neither that hon. member, nor any other member, rose in the House on a point of order to make submissions rebutting the presumption established by the Chair at that time. Therefore, here we have a clear case in this Parliament in which the ruling has come from the Chair in which you sit, Mr. Speaker, that an effort to achieve something, like this motion seeks to achieve by way of a private member's bill, could not proceed without a royal recommendation. The same would apply to this motion for instruction.

Similar legislation was introduced by the previous Liberal government, when Bill C-81, the national security committee of parliamentarians act, was introduced in 2005. I will note that when the Liberals sought to establish a parliamentary committee with oversight, they never carried through with it, but it was proposed. It

was not a bill they saw worthy of finally passing, but it was proposed.

However, they did, with that bill, have a royal recommendation. There was a recognition, certainly by the Liberal government of the day, to take the step that this motion for instruction seeks to take. Even if it is to be a committee of parliamentarians, that step would be a new initiative that would require a royal recommendation, again, one that is absent in this motion. Clearly, the Liberals think that this sort of step is properly accompanied by a royal recommendation.

The financial initiative of the Crown in its constitutional standing, which I cited at the opening of my argument, has even been considered by our highest court. For example, in the unanimous 1991 judgement of the Supreme Court of Canada in Reference Re Canada Assistance Plan, Mr. Justice Sopinka wrote:

Under s. 54 of the Constitution Act, 1867, a money bill, including an amendment to a money bill like the Plan, can only be introduced on the initiative of the government.

The renowned constitutional expert, Peter Hogg, is unequivocal that the NDP leader cannot sidestep the Constitution with this cynical motion. On page 314 of the *Constitutional Law of Canada*, fourth edition, Professor Hogg writes:

There is of course no doubt as to the binding character of the rules in the Constitution that define the composition of the legislative bodies and the steps required in the legislative process.

In closing, what the NDP leader is attempting to propose here is not just out of order, it is in fact unconstitutional. Though we normally say that constitutional questions are beyond the purview of the Chair, this is an important exception. Indeed, it falls to you, Mr. Speaker, to find that this motion is out of order.

Page 837 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, O'Brien and Bosc, addresses the Speaker's role on this type of unique matter of constitutional legitimacy:

The Speaker has the duty and responsibility to ensure that the Standing Orders pertaining to the royal recommendation, as well as the constitutional requirements, are upheld. There is no provision under the rules of financial procedure that would permit the Speaker to leave it up to the House to decide or to allow the House to do so by unanimous consent. These imponderables apply regardless of the composition of the House.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the authorities are quite clear that the motion before you is out of order and cannot be put to the House.

I understand that we are at a point where your decision on this is fairly significant and important because of timing, because the committee is already at the point of contemplating amendments in moving forward on that. As such, although this motion was put on the order paper some time ago, by delaying moving it, you are a little bit wedged, if I can put it that way, by the timing selected by the opposition House leader.

Therefore, I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that under the circumstances, if you do feel it necessary to suspend proceedings for a brief period of time in order to contemplate this issue in order to render your decision before allowing debate on this motion to proceed, we would understand and recognize that you have been put in a very difficult spot in terms of timing and that such a step may be necessary.

Routine Proceedings

● (1020)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of sympathy for the government House leader. He would have seen the motion of instruction, and it is important to cite at this point a motion of instruction. The bible that governs us, O'Brien and Bosc, not always followed by the Conservative side of the House but followed very exactly on this side of the House by the official opposition, says the following:

Once a bill has been referred to a committee, the House may instruct the committee by way of a motion authorizing what would otherwise be beyond its powers, such as, for example, examining a portion of the bill and reporting it separately, examining certain items in particular, dividing a bill into more than one bill, consolidating two or more bills into a single bill, or expanding or narrowing the scope or application of a bill.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, being no stranger to a motion of instruction, a motion of instruction may be moved in the House even after a committee has begun its deliberations on a bill. The government House leader sees this, knowing full well that this motion of instruction is perfectly in order, and he has to construct an argument. I have a lot of sympathy for him, which is why he, basically, created the massive paper tiger out on the front lawn of the Centre Block.

He tried to say that the motion of instruction says things that it does not. He referred to an agency and government spending. As you know, Mr. Speaker, what it says is very simple, that the committee be granted the power and that the scope be enlarged on this particular bill:

...to expand the scope of the Bill in order to: (a) ensure that the government works with Canadian communities to counter radicalization; and (b) enhance oversight of Canadian security and intelligence agencies.

It is a permissive motion of instruction, it is not obligatory. That is, unfortunately, the word that the government House leader neglected to mention that makes the difference between this being in order or not. Very clearly, this motion of instruction is in order.

One has to ask why the government House leader just took 20 minutes of House time to try to stop a debate that would have taken perhaps half an hour or 45 minutes. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, as you know, there are two elements that the government House leader is acutely aware of, and that is why he wants to try to shut down this debate.

The first element is public opinion. When Bill C-51 was initially proposed by the public safety minister, public support was in the range of 80%. That has dramatically fallen as debate has continued in committee. Now a minority of Canadians support the bill and a majority of Canadians disapprove of the bill. One of the key elements to that, of course, is the lack of oversight.

The other element that the government House leader is acutely aware of is the fact that 45 out of the 48 witnesses who appeared in committee said there needed to be enhanced oversight. This includes 25 of the 28 Conservative witnesses, where the Conservatives said they were their witnesses and would hopefully reflect the Conservatives' point of view on Bill C-51.

This is what was discussed in committee. This motion of instruction ensures that the committee, in a permissive way, can look at enlarging the scope of the bill. This motion of instruction is

absolutely in order and I think we can disregard the paper tiger that was constructed by the government House leader. He tried to imagine a motion of instruction that would be out of order and he has very effectively argued against that motion of instruction that he imagined in his mind. What he imagined in his mind is quite different from what we have put forward on paper. I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you simply do what is the right thing in this case, which is to rule the motion of instruction in order so we can get on with the debate that Canadians are looking for.

● (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was not that long ago when the government attempted to change a different bill in terms of its scope, when it was brought before the House. The government needs to realize that it cannot have it both ways.

Back then, the government argued that it could use a private member's bill to take Canadian citizenship away from people who have dual citizenship. It had to deal with terrorism and other issues. The government then brought that issue to the floor of the House and argued why it felt it was important to change the scope. That was the intent of the private member's bill.

Now, the shoe is on the other foot. There is a huge demand out there that the government be sympathetic and act upon some serious amendments in regard to Bill C-51. Now members of the committee are looking at the scope and whether or not some of those changes might be able to be made.

For example, the leader of the Liberal Party and members of the Liberal Party have been very clear that we want to ensure that there is oversight. That is of critical importance. We want to institute mandatory legislative reviews. Again, this is something that is very important to Canadians and the Liberal Party.

We want to narrow the overly broad definitions that are being put forward in Bill C-51. Again, this is an issue that is very important to all Canadians. It is something that we in the Liberal Party have been advocating at the committee stage and during the debates inside the House.

What we do not want is for the government to use the issue of scope at the committee stage. We do believe there is merit to the motion here today, so we can express some of the concerns I just put on the record. I do not do that lightly. The leader of the Liberal Party and my caucus colleagues, particularly our critic, have been sitting through committee, listening to the presentations at committee, where we are hearing that there is a real need for change and amendments at the committee stage. The concern is that the government is not going to tolerate a number of those changes by indicating that they are beyond the scope of the legislation.

At the end of the day, we do believe that there is some merit to having the debate today on the NDP motion that has been put before the House. We would encourage you, as the Speaker, to allow that debate to occur so that Canadians can be better served in regard to the many concerns that have been addressed with respect to Bill C-51. A number of the amendments are not only being brought forward by the Liberal Party, but I understand they are also being brought forward by the New Democratic Party.

Routine Proceedings

We do not want these amendments to be ruled out because of the scope of the legislation. This is a very important issue for the Liberals at the very least and, I would suggest, other opposition members and all Canadians.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments from the House Leader of the Official Opposition and from the member for Winnipeg North. While the comments were very interesting, neither of them actually addressed the point of order I raised. Both of them spoke to the question of whether this motion was out of order because of expansion of the scope of the bill. This is not the issue that I have raised. I have not spoken to the question of scope of the legislation whatsoever.

What I have spoken to is the absence of a royal recommendation. It is a fundamental principle in our system of legislative government in the Westminster system that the question of establishing any new spending, any new obligation upon the government that would require the expenditure of funds such as expanded oversight, which is proposed by this, or new programs for counter-radicalization above and different from those that already exist, would require a royal recommendation. Both of these would be new. That is the reason they are in this amendment. As such, they are not things that are currently contemplated in legislation and, as such, to establish them, since they would place a charge upon the Crown, would require a royal recommendation. This is the point and the issue I am making, not one with regard to scope.

The citation from the big green book from the House Leader of the Official Opposition is all very good, were I to be standing up here and saying that the motion for instruction was out of order because it sought to expand the scope of the bill. That is not what I am standing here saying. I am saying it is out of order because it lacks the necessary royal recommendation to carry into effect that which it seeks to have the committee do for the expanded oversight and the additional new programming that it seeks regarding radicalization. I have also said that I am aware of no such intention on the part of the government to bring forward such a royal recommendation.

Therefore, without any response from them to the royal recommendation argument, it is quite clear that I have laid before you, Mr. Speaker, what I think is quite a black-and-white case as to jurisdiction and as to constitutionality, and the motion is simply out of order. It is seeking to have the committee establish new charges upon the Crown, new expenditures that it does not currently have the authority to do and for which there is no royal recommendation.

• (1030)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have always believed that a royal recommendation is required when it is a private member's bill that introduces legislation that would incur Crown expenditures. However, if a government presents a bill, which is what we are talking about with Bill C-51, is not the royal accord to spend money implicit in that? I am rather baffled here that we would have that kind of an argument to oppose a motion such as the one that is before us today.

The Speaker: I will go first to the opposition House leader; he was standing first. If the government House leader wants to argue some of these points, I will give him the floor again.

The hon. opposition House leader.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, this is very clearly a delaying tactic on the part of the government. Why are the Conservatives so concerned about having a debate around oversight in this House of Commons and having a motion of instruction? Why are they so concerned about that? Canadians who are watching on television right now should be asking the question as to why they are so concerned with oversight when so many of their own witnesses before the Bill C-51 public safety committee actually said we need more oversight.

I just wanted to counter what is the paper tiger that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has created. He has created this massive paper tiger that has nothing to do with the motion of instruction. He talks about programs. He talks about agencies. This is all a figment of his own imagination.

The royal recommendation argument, for a number of reasons including the argument that the member for Ottawa—Vanier has just raised, is absolutely irrelevant. The idea that there are agencies and programs in this motion of instruction simply does not hold water. It is easy to refute the government House leader because he has created a motion of instruction that does not exist.

What is before us now is perfectly in order, and I hope the government will stop its delaying tactics and allow us to have the debate on oversight on Bill C-51.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, first, with regard to the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, I will remind him that royal recommendations on government legislation are not implicit; they are actually explicit. The Crown has to decide to provide a royal recommendation, which applies to what is proposed in the bill.

With regard to the opposition House leader, it is he who said that the reason he is seeking the royal recommendation is that the current bill does not do these things. It is his own words that make the case for the fact that it is a new charge. He is seeking to have things done that he said are not done now. If his case is that the government already does provide enhanced oversight and has all the funding for it, and that the government already does the counter-radicalization program and the funding is there for it, then he need present no amendments. There is no need for this motion for instruction. That is not his case. He has said in his own words that these are things the bill does not do. That is why he is bringing them forward. These are new charges that are being created. These are not things that, if they are new, can be done without the expenditure of funds. In both cases that is what they require.

Routine Proceedings

He may say that the government, in trying to defend the integrity of our system of controlling finances, is merely trying to delay. It is not surprising that an NDP member would make the case that expenditures should be allowed to happen in any way anyone wants, at any time, without paying any attention to the rules that have been in place for decades—nay, centuries—to protect the prerogative of those expenditures and protect the taxpayers. They are at the level of constitutional protections. I know the NDP members would love to be able to run roughshod over the Constitution, over the prerogatives, over the royal recommendation, over all these conventions. They would love to be able to run roughshod over them to increase spending at any time. The fact is that these are very important institutions, conventions, and requirements of a constitutional nature. They are well beyond conventions; they are of a much higher order than that. They are, in fact, constitutional.

This is a matter of great seriousness, and I have heard absolutely nothing from the opposition other than arguments that in fact support the case that what they are asking for is not covered by any royal recommendation and therefore that this motion seeking to give instructions to the committee is out of order.

•(1035)

The Speaker: I will very quickly hear the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier and the opposition House leader, and then likely at that point I will have heard enough.

The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, would it not be accurate to believe that the bill, which is a Crown bill—a government bill is a crown bill—ipso facto has the royal support for expenditures?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, what we are considering here is that the committee be granted the power to expand the scope of the bill in order to ensure that the government works with Canadian communities to counter radicalization and enhance oversight of Canadian security and intelligence agencies.

The government House leader has basically invented a fictional new motion of instruction and has brought forward arguments to counter that fictional motion of instruction. That is not what is before the House and that is not what you are being asked to rule on.

The Speaker: I thank all hon. members for their interventions on this point. I thank the hon. government House leader for raising it.

As I read the motion of instruction, it does seem to me to be a permissive instruction; it is not a prescriptive instruction—that is, telling the committee exactly how to accomplish the aims of it. Were the motion to be adopted, it would be up to the committee to decide if it wished to exercise the powers given to it by the House and how it would do so.

What is clear to me is that, in widening the scope of the bill, the committee would still be limited by the other rules of admissibility in relation to amendments, including Standing Order 79. Clearly in that regard, the committee cannot adopt an amendment that violates the financial prerogatives of the Crown. However, it may well be that the committee may find a way to accomplish the goals stated in the motion of instruction without infringing on the royal recommendation.

I do not believe the Chair should prejudice what steps the committee may take. Even though the government House leader was making arguments about what public statements may have been made, I do not know that that would put the Chair in a position to rule this out of order just based on those statements alone. As I said, it may well be that the committee would find other ways to accomplish what is set out in the motion without infringing on the royal recommendation.

For that reason, I believe the motion is in order, and I will allow it to proceed.

Debate, the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, we just had a 40-minute debate for a government that wants to prevent us from having these discussions in the House of Commons. Canadians will judge this government on its bid to prevent the debate we are now undertaking. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your patience considering all of the points of order that the government has raised over the past 40 minutes in an effort to prevent this debate from happening.

I think it would be a good idea to reread the motion before us.

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security that, during its consideration of Bill C-51, An Act to enact the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act and the Secure Air Travel Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, the committee be granted the power to expand the scope of the bill in order to: (a) ensure that the government works with Canadian communities to counter radicalization; and (b) enhance oversight of Canadian security and intelligence agencies.

As we all know, once a bill has been referred to the committee, the House of Commons has the right to instruct the committee by way of a motion authorizing what would otherwise be beyond its powers, such as, for example, examining a portion of a bill and reporting it separately, examining certain items in particular, dividing a bill into more than one bill, consolidating two or more bills into a single bill, or expanding or narrowing the scope or application of a bill.

It is very clear that what we are talking about is indeed a proper motion, and it is in order. However, most importantly, it is about something that we absolutely have to talk about in the House of Commons.

•(1040)

[*English*]

I am going to start off by talking about why expanding the scope of Bill C-51 considerations is important. As members know, last October, we lived through a couple of tragedies in Canada, which resulted in the deaths of Corporal Nathan Cirillo and Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent. All Canadians should be concerned about public safety. There is no doubt about that.

Routine Proceedings

Bill C-51 is purportedly a response from the government to issues of public safety. I will start off by saying that I am very skeptical about the Conservative government's aims and objectives. When we look at its actual safety record, we see cause for some real concern about whether or not the government actually takes the safety of Canadians seriously. We just have to look at the cutbacks in food safety, the tragedy of Lac-Mégantic because of lax rail safety standards, and the ongoing tragedy of 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women in this country, about which the government has refused to do anything. That underscores for so many Canadians across the country some real skepticism about the government's concern about the safety of Canadians.

Second, Bill C-51, in many people's eyes, is seen as a highly partisan reaction. In a sense, Bill C-51 is being brought forward by the government, but not because it is really concerned about the safety issues and the number of times it has fallen far short of guaranteeing the safety of Canadians in the areas I have just mentioned, namely the missing and murdered indigenous women, food safety, and rail safety. This makes people skeptical about the real aims of Bill C-51. Many people believe it is a highly partisan reaction from a highly partisan Prime Minister, and what the Conservatives are trying to do is change the channel from what has been, according to the chief of the Bank of Canada, an atrocious economic performance on the part of the government.

That is not for consideration today, but it is something that, to many Canadians' minds, underscores why Bill C-51 is so problematic.

It is well documented. It has not just been the NDP that has opposed this, even though the Liberal Party is, tragically, supporting Bill C-51. It is also the fact that, across the country, we have seen an unprecedented outpouring of concern.

Over 100 of Canada's leading law professors, 100 of the most skilled law professors in the country, those legal minds that in a very real sense train the future generations of legal scholars, have all come out in opposition to Bill C-51. The Canadian Bar Association, tens of thousands of Canadian lawyers, has come out in opposition. Many human rights groups have come out in opposition. They have all raised similar concerns.

It is important to note that the bill was rammed through the House of Commons. We can recall that the government introduced closure after only a couple of hours of debate. The Conservatives wanted to ram it through as quickly as possible. Then it was brought to the public safety committee, where the committee used what can only be considered completely unparliamentary tactics to throw out the rule book, to throw out *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, under which we are governed, the bible under which we are supposed to govern our actions. They threw that out and basically imposed a very shortened witness list that did not even include people such as the Privacy Commissioner, who obviously has a real stake in bringing forward recommendations around how a bill might be treated.

After all of that, the government only permitted a short list of 48 witnesses. That was perhaps a quarter of the number of witnesses who wanted to come before the committee. Of those 48 witnesses,

45 actually stated that oversight was a major problem with this bill. The lack of oversight was a fundamental flaw.

Of those I mentioned a little bit earlier, 25 of the 28 Conservative witnesses said the same thing. These were witnesses brought forward by the Conservatives. The Conservative side of the House recommended these witnesses. We know how narrow the scope is for Conservative witnesses at committee. The Conservatives only hear witnesses they believe are going to enhance their particular ideological world view.

We had 90% of Conservative witnesses, 95% of witnesses overall, all saying the same thing, which was that oversight needed to be enhanced. Many of those witnesses raised as well the concern around having the Canadian government actively working to counter radicalization.

Even with that smaller group of witnesses permitted by the government, one-quarter of the witnesses that should have been brought forward to committee, they virtually all said the same thing, which was that we needed to enhance oversight and ensure that the government works with Canadian communities to counter radicalization.

That is why the NDP, as the official opposition, is bringing forward this motion of instruction today. What we are saying is that the committee, which has had a Conservative majority up until now, is almost certainly a rogue committee. It has thrown out the rule book. I have come before you before, Mr. Speaker, to raise concerns about how the rule book has not been followed. They threw out the rule book, and I believe, and the NDP official opposition believes, that we, as a House, have to give very clear direction that permits the committee to look at expanding the scope of the bill to bring forward those two components: ensuring that the government works with Canadian communities to counter radicalization and enhancing oversight of Canadian security and intelligence agencies.

These are straightforward, common sense recommendations. I would expect that members of the Conservative government would actually vote in favour of this motion of instruction, because it would actually say to the 25 of 28 Conservative witnesses who came forward that we listened to them, that Conservative government members brought them forward to committee, where they talked about enhancing oversight, and they actually listened.

●(1045)

The real test will be, when we vote on this motion of instruction, whether the government actually listens and walks the talk and votes to ensure that the committee takes into consideration, or can take into consideration, enhancing oversight.

There is a reason, as I mentioned earlier, there has been such a fall in public support. In fact, this has probably been, certainly since you and I have been in Parliament, Mr. Speaker, one of the most dramatic falls in public opinion I have ever seen on any bill, whether for a government or a private member's bill.

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I think it is fair to say, in light of October 22 and how all Canadians were feeling at that time about wanting to enhance public safety, that the government has not moved in all those areas I mentioned. It has not moved on food safety, rail safety, or dealing with the tragic loss of 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women. However, we thought there was some consensus about working on public safety. Instead, what we saw was what the government actually brought forward: a highly partisan reaction.

Initially, I think, Canadians, being very sincere and honest, right across the country, in how we interact every day, took the government at its word and said that the government must be sincerely looking at enhancing public safety. Therefore, initially, the level of public support was very high.

Then the debate started in this House. As I mentioned earlier, within two hours, all of a sudden, the government said, “No, we are going to shut this down”, because we had very impassioned and learned members of the official opposition, the NDP, speaking against this bill. Even though the Liberal Party is in favour and supports the Conservatives in this regard, the NDP spoke out on what we actually saw in the bill, what measures were there, what measures were not there, and what concerns we had, and we were joined by a growing number of Canadians from coast to coast to coast: 100 leading law professors, the Canadian Bar Association, human rights organizations, aboriginal organizations, and environmental organizations. They were all speaking about the same concerns.

Subsequent to that, we started to see support for the bill erode in a rapid manner. From 80% it went to 70%, from 70% to 60%, 60% to 50%, 50% to 40%, and the level of support is now below 40%. Most Canadians, and I am not saying that all of them are necessarily even Conservative, Liberal, or NDP supporters, have been following the debate over the past month or so and have said, “Hold on here. These are major concerns that are being raised by people who have a lot of credibility”.

What we saw subsequently was the fall in public support, and perhaps that is why we saw such opposition by the government House leader, who was trying to pull every procedural tool out of the toolbox and trying to accuse us of unconstitutional actions. I am surprised he did not accuse us of violating international law. Government members just seem to have a level of exaggeration and hyperbole that I have never seen brought for a simple motion of instruction that obviously was in order, but for 40 minutes they waged this procedural battle to try to shut down this debate.

We can understand why. It is because the Conservatives understand that not only is the public not with them any more but that they have lost that initial level of public support, when people accepted them at their word and initially said that this legislation must be necessary. Public opinion plummeted, because the government's own words and own actions raised real concerns in the minds of the public. Very learned, respected people stepped forward and said that this is absolutely not the approach the government should take.

in the public mind and in the minds of those who have been raising these legitimate concerns, repeatedly two areas have been brought forward that are the subject of this motion of instruction

today: ensuring that the government works with Canadian communities to counter radicalization and enhancing oversight of Canadian security and intelligence agencies.

● (1050)

I just wanted to raise, on both the oversight and the radicalization sides, some quotes that are very germane to the debate we are having this morning, despite the government's attempt to stop the debate. First, I would like to quote the current Minister of Justice, who, in 2005, obviously agreed with the NDP today. His 2005 comment was:

...when you talk about a credible oversight body, I would suggest...that a parliamentary body is going to have more credibility because of its independence and because of the fact that there is also parliamentary accountability that will be brought to bear. To that end, I suggest that it would also cause a little bit more diligence on the part of the security agents themselves, just knowing that this oversight body was in place.

That is the current Minister of Justice back in 2005, I guess when he could think outside the box and actually raise the kinds of concerns the NDP is raising today in 2015. In 2005, the Minister of Justice would have been agreeing with the NDP.

Second, we have the Privacy Commissioner, who was denied the ability to go before the public safety committee to testify on Bill C-51, which is absolutely shameful. He said:

...the proposed changes to information sharing authorities are not accompanied by measures to fill gaps in the national security oversight regime... This Act would seemingly allow departments and agencies to share the personal information of all individuals, including ordinary Canadians who may not be suspected of terrorist activities....

On radicalization, I know intimately what the lack of any real attempt to work with Canadian communities to counteract radicalization has meant. The mosque that is in my riding in Burnaby—New Westminster was the mosque the man who murdered Cpl. Nathan Cirillo attended. I travelled to that mosque within a couple of days of what happened on October 22 here on the Hill. What the mosque members told me was quite stark. They said that they knew he had profound mental illness. They knew that he had a drug addiction. They tried to seek help, and there was nothing available. This is something we have heard from communities right across the country.

It is just a common sense measure that the committee should be taking into consideration, and can take into consideration if we pass this motion, that would allow some ability to counter radicalization. The committee should be working to ensure that.

There are two quotes I would like to cite. The first is from a national security law expert from the University of Ottawa, Craig Forcese. He said:

The literature suggests that when it comes to...radicalization, the best tool might actually be what are known as...programs designed to steer persons away from taking that one last step from radicalized worldviews to actual violence.

That is something the committee should, of course, be taking into consideration.

We have also heard from the White House. President Obama has stepped forward to look to counter radicalization. He said:

Routine Proceedings

We have seen attacks over the last several years in which consumption of propaganda over, and communication through, the Internet played a role in the radicalization of the attacker. The Federal Government will work to make communities more resilient to these messages of hate by raising awareness and providing tools. Informed and resilient communities are our Nation's first and best line of defence....

That is what the NDP has brought forward today. We have said that we should be enlarging the scope and that we should grant the power to the committee to expand the scope of the bill to ensure that the government works with Canadian communities to counter radicalization and to enhance oversight of Canadian security and intelligence agencies.

The polls tell us that about 60% of Canadians support those measures and do not believe that Bill C-51 passes those tests at all.

I would ask our Conservative members opposite, and the Liberal members that are supporting Bill C-51 as well, to take into consideration what the witnesses said before committee. Ninety per cent of Conservative witnesses and 95% of all witnesses said that we need to enhance oversight. Many of them also said that we need to have the government working with communities to counter radicalization.

These are common sense measures. I hope all members of the House will support this motion of instruction.

• (1055)

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the official opposition House leader, as well as the debate on whether the motion was in order.

I first want to point out for Canadians that what the NDP is trying to do, essentially, is change the Westminster processes for studying bills at committee. What the NDP is trying to suggest on Bill C-51 right now is beyond what we call the principle and scope of the bill.

I would refer all members to chapter 16 of O'Brien and Bosc, page 766.

• (1100)

Mr. Peter Julian: The Speaker has already ruled.

Mr. James Bezan: I am talking about the issue the member brought before the House. I am talking to the Speaker. I would point out for everyone in the House, that on page 766 of O'Brien and Bosc it says—

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The ruling has already been made. It is very clear in O'Brien and Bosc that comments on a motion of instruction have to carry on the motion of instruction itself. The Speaker has ruled. It is very clear in O'Brien and Bosc what the member should ask in his question, and I hope he will actually stick to the parliamentary rule book and follow the rules.

The Deputy Speaker: I think I understand where the member is going, and he is not out of order. If he is going to moving toward the argument that was made by the government House leader, then, of course, he would be out of order since that has already been ruled on. I think I understand where he is going with it. It may be a bit of a stretch, but it is still relevant to the motion before us for debate.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I am not challenging the ruling at all. That would be inappropriate.

I am pointing out for everybody that the motion we are debating right now is trying to change the normal process at committee. Just so everybody understands, when a standing committee is studying a bill, it has to follow a process, which is called principle of scope. An amendment to a bill that is referred to committee after second reading is out of order if it is beyond the scope and principle of the bill at committee. The NDP essentially is trying to go to a further process and provide the instruction from the House to committee, which the NDP was ineffective and unable to do at committee. It is trying to change the process.

We have brought forward Bill C-51 that is about protecting Canadians at home. I know the New Democrats are struggling with that. They do not want to put the safety and security of Canadians first and foremost.

I would again tell my colleagues across the way that we have a duty and responsibility to ensure that Canadians' safety is paramount to everything that we do in our country. We need the ability to share information among departments to ensure we can enhance the no-fly list. There are so many good things in Bill C-51 that those members refuse to support, as most other members in the House are.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, "safety is paramount" for the government, which is what the member just said, yet it has made cutbacks in food safety programs that have put the safety of Canadians at risk. We saw the appalling lack of oversight on rail safety that led to Lac-Mégantic. What an incredibly appalling and irresponsible series of actions by the government. There are 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women and the government has said that it will not take any actions, that it does not care, that there will be no public inquiry.

Anyone on the government side of the House who says that safety is paramount to the government opens himself or herself up to the very simple series of facts that shows the government has not seemed to care at all about the safety of Canadians, and seems to prove it each and every day. That is tragic for Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the issue of Bill C-51, no one should be surprised by the types of issues being raised at the committee level. In fact, when the leader of the Liberal Party addressed the House on Bill C-51, he raised a number of concerns. What we are witnessing in committee is that time and again those concerns, along with others, continue to surface. We want the government to recognize the need to amend the legislation. That is why we support the motion put forward by the NDP. We do not want the Conservatives to use the issue of scope for not making the legislation better.

I know the member has already made reference to some of these. First, there has to be parliamentary oversight. Second, we have to institute mandatory legislative review. Third, the narrow, overly broad definitions must be addressed. We hear that from stakeholders from all sides.

Would the member not agree that the three items I listed are absolute musts in terms of the amendments? I believe there are literally dozens of others that in fact would make the legislation that much better and more acceptable to Canadians as a whole.

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•(1105)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, of course we agree. That is why the NDP has brought forward a very comprehensive series of amendments that we would hope the government would look to adopt, if the government were being responsible. That is why we are bringing forward the motion of instruction today as well.

However, there must be some sort of reflection on the part of the Liberal members. The Liberal members have heard the same witnesses who the NDP members have heard. They have seen the same outpouring from across the country of people opposing this bad legislation. Yet, the Liberal members are saying that it is bad but they are going to vote for it. That simply belies any common sense approach to the legislation.

As the Leader of the Opposition has said a number of times, principle has to count for something. The Liberals should be voting against the legislation. Until they say that they are going to fight for changes but if those changes do not come, they are going to vote against the legislation, they will have no credibility in their discussions around the bill.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yes, terrorists do pose a potential threat. However, there is another, even more serious threat. How many jobs have been lost at Future Shop? How many families in Alberta and British Columbia know that they are going to suffer job losses? I think Canadian families are also terrified because they do not know whether the head of the household, the mother or father, will be able to pay the mortgage and continue supporting the family.

My question for my colleague is this: does he think the government is trying to divert Canadians' attention away from their real problems? The government has not even delivered a budget. It is using terrorism to divert attention away from the unemployment problems and the lack of jobs in Canada.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the member for Honoré-Mercier is quite right. I applaud her work in the House. She does outstanding work on behalf of her constituents and she is very active on the ground in her riding.

Even the Governor of the Bank of Canada has described Canada's economic situation as "atrocious". We have a government that has refused to deliver a budget for weeks now, even though some of the provinces have already done so. The Minister of Finance is missing in action; he will not answer any questions in the House and he is not delivering the budget.

Canadians are judging the government on this matter. The government is introducing bills and doing everything in a partisan way, but it is not ready to govern.

We on this side of the House are ready to govern. On October 19, we will have the opportunity to form a responsible government that really puts the interests of Canadians first.

[*English*]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the debate and I have a question for

the hon. member. Bill C-51 is the most important national security legislation since the 9/11 era. It is designated for the post-9/11 era.

We are seeing a resurgence of terrorist activities and radicalization similar to those seen in the mid-1970s by the Red Brigades in Italy and the Baader-Meinhof army faction in Germany.

What does the hon. member fear about better protecting Canadians against insurgent terrorist activities? How is the motion in any way relevant to the immediate security and safety of Canadians?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, 25 out of 28 witnesses who were brought forward to the public safety committee by the Conservatives said that the member was absolutely wrong. They said that enhancing oversight was of fundamental importance. They raised the issue of ensuring that the government worked with Canadian communities to counter radicalization.

I am beginning to see what a vast disconnect there is between members of Parliament from the Conservative Party and the witnesses they invited to the public safety committee. They are not even listening to their own witnesses, let alone the public. They are listening to no one, and that has to change.

That is why the Conservatives should be supporting the motion of instruction from the NDP. We have been listening to the public and we have even been listening to Conservative witnesses. We have been doing their job for them.

•(1110)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to this important issue and to stand in opposition to the motion before us. Let us be very clear. Jihadi terrorists have declared war on us. They have specifically targeted Canada. They have urged supporters to attack what they call disbelieving Canadians in any manner, and they have vowed that we should not feel secure, even in our homes.

As the government, we know that our ultimate responsibility is to protect Canadians from those who would do harm to us and do harm to our families. That is why Canada is not sitting on the sidelines, as the Liberals and the NDP would have us do, and is instead a proud member of the international coalition fighting ISIL.

The first duty of any government is to protect the safety of its citizens. That is why we introduced the anti-terrorism act, 2015, to ensure that our national security agencies have the tools they need to protect Canadians against the evolving threat presented by jihadi terrorists.

The NDP member for Burnaby—New Westminster has raised concerns regarding oversight and review of our national security agencies. We believe that independent, non-partisan oversight of our national security agencies is a better model than political intervention in this process.

Further, the key powers of the new legislation are subject to judicial review and judicial authorization. This is the role of judges. There is no better authority to review these matters. Judges in Canada already approve or reject applications from police and national security authorities to conduct certain activities to keep Canadians safe. This has been a long-standing practice in Canada.

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CSIS will only be able to undertake this activity if a judge from the Federal Court believes it is necessary to keep Canadians safe and specifically approves it. This provides sufficient oversight and robust review.

We must not lose sight of the fact that it is the jihadi terrorists who seek to take away our rights, and it is our national security agencies that are standing up to protect us. There has been much discussion about the legislation at the public safety committee. Many prominent Canadians have appeared to express their support for this legislation.

Louise Vincent, for example, the sister of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent, who was the victim of a horrific terrorist attack last October, said: “If C-51 had been in place on October 19...Martin Couture-Rouleau would...have been in prison and my brother would not be dead” today.

Marc-André O'Rourke of the National Airlines Council of Canada said, “The NACC and our member airlines understand the need to update Canada's passenger protect program in light of the evolving nature of security threats, and we continue to support the program under” Bill C-51.

Professor Elliot Tepper of Carleton University said: “Bill C-51 is the most important national security legislation since the 9/11 era.” He continued:

[It] is designed for the post-9/11 era. It's a new legislation for a new era in terms of security threats. While it's understandable that various provisions of the legislation attract attention, we need to keep our focus on the fundamental purpose and the fundamental challenge of combatting emerging types of terrorism.

Barry Cooper, another witness, a research fellow at the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute said:

Bill C-51 is aimed at violent Islamic jihadi terrorists, and those are the persons against whom its provisions are to be enforced. The reasons are clear enough provided one makes reference to facts and events of the real world, today. [...] Unlike their critics, the authors of Bill C-51 are sensible enough to have recognized the danger.

• (1115)

Finally, another witness I will refer to, Professor Salim Mansur of the University of Western Ontario, said:

Bill C-51 is directed against Islamist jihadists and to prevent or pre-empt them from their stated goal to carry out terrorist threats against the West, including Canada....

...the measures proposed in Bill C-51 to deal with the nature of threats that Canada faces, I believe, are quite rightly and urgently needed to protect and keep secure the freedom of our citizens.

Therefore, it is clear that there is widespread support among Canadians to give tools to our national security agencies to combat the rapidly evolving threat of terrorism. That is why we will be opposing the motion introduced by the NDP.

As members know, on February 23, the House voted to refer the anti-terrorism act 2015 to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. This vote is an approval in principle of the legislation. There is a process in place for the committee to study the legislation, hearing from expert witnesses, of course. However, there is not an opportunity to expand or change the scope of the legislation.

Had the NDP members expressed a desire to do that, they could have moved a motion to refer the legislation to committee before

second reading. They did not do so. Therefore, I think the motion before us is a purely procedural tactic to continue their opposition to a bill that will keep Canadians safe.

We reject the argument that, every time we talk about security, our freedoms are threatened. Canadians understand that their freedom and security go hand in hand. Canadians expect us to protect both, and there are safeguards in this legislation to do exactly that.

There have been many misconceptions surrounding this legislation, primarily put forward by members of the NDP. Some have alleged that the Conservative government is not correct in stating that the other allies allow their national security agencies to disrupt threats. Well, that is patently not true.

In the United States, the Central Intelligence Agency can, pursuant to the National Security Act, conduct domestic threat disruption with an executive order. In the United Kingdom, MI5 can, pursuant to section 1 of the Security Service Act, conduct any activity to protect national security. The Norwegian Police Security Service has a mandate to prevent and investigate any crime against the state, including terrorism. The Finnish Security Intelligence Service is mandated to prevent crimes that may endanger the government or political system and internal or external security, pursuant to section 10 of the act on police administration.

We must ensure that CSIS has the same tools to keep Canadians safe. Some have said that this will transform CSIS into a secret police force with no accountability, while also violating our basic freedoms and Charter rights. Everything about this statement is wrong.

Bill C-51 would give no law enforcement powers to CSIS. CSIS cannot arrest any individual. It cannot charge any individual. What is proposed in Bill C-51 is efforts to stop terrorist attacks while they are still in the planning stages.

The NDP has said many times that choosing between liberty and security is a false choice, and we could not agree more. However, at every turn, the NDP chooses to vote against measures that increase our security.

As we have said many times, without security there can be no liberty. That is why we will vote against this motion and continue the good work of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to pass this important legislation.

I now move, seconded by the member for Selkirk—Interlake:

That the debate be now adjourned.

• (1120)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

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Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1200)

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

(Division No. 369)

YEAS

Members

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| Ablonczy | Adler |
| Aglukkaq | Albas |
| Albrecht | Alexander |
| Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac) | Allison |
| Ambler | Ambrose |
| Anders | Anderson |
| Armstrong | Aspin |
| Barlow | Bateman |
| Bergen | Bezan |
| Blaney | Block |
| Boughen | Braid |
| Brown (Leeds—Grenville) | Brown (Newmarket—Aurora) |
| Bruinooge | Butt |
| Calandra | Cannan |
| Carmichael | Carrie |
| Chisu | Chong |
| Clarke | Clement |
| Crockatt | Daniel |
| Davidson | Devolin |
| Dreeshen | Duncan (Vancouver Island North) |
| Dykstra | Egliniski |
| Falk | Fantino |
| Fast | Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) |
| Galipeau | Gallant |
| Gill | Glover |
| Goguen | Goldring |
| Goodyear | Gosal |
| Gourde | Harper |
| Harris (Cariboo—Prince George) | Hawn |
| Hayes | Hiebert |
| Hoback | Holder |
| James | Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission) |
| Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's) | Kenney (Calgary Southeast) |
| Kent | Kerr |
| Komarnicki | Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings) |
| Lake | Lauzon |
| Lebel | Leitch |
| Lemieux | Leung |
| Lizon | Lobb |
| Lukiwski | MacKay (Central Nova) |
| MacKenzie | Maguire |
| Mayes | McColeman |
| McLeod | Menegakis |
| Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam) | |
| Moore (Fundy Royal) | |
| Nicholson | Norlock |
| Oliver | O'Neill Gordon |
| Opitz | O'Toole |
| Paradis | Payne |
| Perkins | Poillievre |
| Raitt | Rajotte |
| Reid | Rempel |
| Ritz | Saxton |
| Schellenberger | Shea |
| Shipley | Shory |
| Smith | Sopuck |
| Sorenson | Stanton |
| Storseth | Sweet |
| Tilson | Toet |

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| Trost | Trottier |
| Truppe | Uppal |
| Valcourt | Van Loan |
| Wallace | Warawa |
| Warkentin | Watson |
| Weston (Saint John) | Wilks |
| Williamson | Wong |
| Woodworth | Yelich |
| Young (Oakville) | Young (Vancouver South) |
| Yurdiga | Zimmer— 136 |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Adams | Allen (Welland) |
| Angus | Aubin |
| Ayala | Bélangier |
| Bellavance | Bennett |
| Benskin | Blanchette |
| Blanchette-Lamothe | Boivin |
| Borg | Brahmi |
| Brisson | Brosseau |
| Byrne | Caron |
| Casey | Cash |
| Charlton | Chicoine |
| Chisholm | Choquette |
| Christopherson | Cleary |
| Comartin | Côté |
| Cotler | Crowder |
| Cullen | Cuzner |
| Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) | Day |
| Dewar | Dion |
| Dionne Labelle | Donnelly |
| Doré Lefebvre | Dubé |
| Dusseau | East |
| Eyking | Foote |
| Freeland | Freeman |
| Fry | Garneau |
| Garrison | Genest-Jourdain |
| Giguère | Godin |
| Goodale | Gravelle |
| Grogulé | Harris (St. John's East) |
| Hsu | Hyer |
| Julian | Kellway |
| Lamoureux | Lapointe |
| Latendresse | Laverdière |
| LeBlanc (Beauséjour) | LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard) |
| Leslie | Liu |
| MacAulay | Mai |
| Marston | Martin |
| Masse | Mathysen |
| May | McCallum |
| McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood) | Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue) |
| Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord) | Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine) |
| Morin (Laurentides—Labelle) | Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot) |
| Mulcair | Murray |
| Nantel | Nash |
| Nicholls | Nunez-Melo |
| Papillon | Paty |
| Péclet | Perreault |
| Pilon | Rafferty |
| Rankin | Regan |
| Rousseau | Saganash |
| Sandhu | Scarpaleggia |
| Scott | Sellah |
| Sgro | Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- |
| sor) | |
| Sims (Newton—North Delta) | St-Denis |
| Stewart | Sullivan |
| Toone | Tremblay |
| Trudeau | Turmel |
| Valeriot | Vaughan— 114 |

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. The House will now resume with the remaining business under routine proceedings.

PETITIONS

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition signed by literally tens of thousands of Canadians.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons and Parliament here assembled to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known and that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial and occupational causes combined.

They therefore call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all of its forms, end all government subsidies of asbestos, and stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

SEAFOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from thousands of people across the country who are concerned about overfishing and destructive fishing practices that are threatening marine life in the ocean.

The petitioners say that over 120 million people are dependent on fish as part of their income but, over the last century, fish populations have dramatically declined. They say that Canadian consumers want sustainable seafood options and that Canadian seafood industries are providing increased opportunities for consumers to make sustainable seafood purchases.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to declare March 18 as national sustainable seafood day.

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have noted that a number of members of Parliament across all party lines and from all parts of the country have been filing petitions with respect to the rights of farmers and their use, reuse, exchange and selling of seeds. I have another of those petitions, signed by various people across Saskatchewan, including a number in White City, Saskatchewan.

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

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on this day, the deadline for Canada to submit its climate action plan in advance of the Conference of the Parties in December of this year, I am pleased to present a petition with respect to the climate change accountability act.

The signatories to this petition are concerned about the inaction of the federal government to address climate change and the impacts of climate change on their day-to-day lives.

They call on the federal government to support the NDP's climate change accountability act, a law that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and hold the government accountable.

Routine Proceedings

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present a petition on behalf of a number of constituents from the Margarees—East Margaree, Margaree Harbour, Margaree Centre—and Belle Cote.

The petitioners have expressed a great deal of concern with multinational seed companies that are gradually replacing the immense diversity of farm seeds by industrial varieties. There was a ratification of UPOV 91, which further advanced the concern on this.

They call for the Government of Canada to adopt international aid policies and support small family farmers, especially women, and recognize their vital role in the struggle against hunger and poverty. They want to advocate that the Canadian government present policies and programs that are developed in consultation with small family farmers to ensure there is a use and free exchange of seeds.

● (1205)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition to the Government of Canada on the proposed Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to immediately act to prevent this new oil pipeline from proceeding through Burnaby. I read this on the same day that six municipalities are calling on the federal government to suspend the National Energy Board process because it is unfair, including to people from Burnaby who are signing the petition.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1047, 1048, 1050 to 1053 and 1057.

[Text]

Question No. 1047—**Mr. Sean Casey:**

With regard to the communications activities of the Prime Minister's office: (a) what is the source or provenance of each individual video clip, segment, or shot which was combined to produce the video entitled "24 SEVEN Exclusive: Canada stands strong and free", which was posted on January 28, 2015; (b) who owns the copyright or any other intellectual property rights in each such video clip, segment, or shot; (c) for each such video clip, segment, or shot, was permission obtained to use the clip, segment, or shot; (d) if the answer to (c) is affirmative, when, how, and from whom was the permission obtained; and (e) if the answer to (c) is affirmative, was the permission obtained in return for payment or other consideration, and what are the details of that payment or consideration?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the response from the Privy Council Office is as follows:

With regard to (a), the sources of each individual video clip, segment or shot used in the "24 SEVEN Exclusive: Canada stands strong and free" are the Canadian Forces Combat Camera, the House of Commons and 24 SEVEN footage.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to part b), the Crown owns the copyright for the Canadian Forces Combat Camera and 24 SEVEN footage. The House of Commons owns the copyright for footage taken from proceedings in the House of Commons.

With regard to parts c) to e), permission to use the material was sought from the House of Commons. The Prime Minister's Office obtained permission to use the footage in March 2014. This permission was not obtained in return for any payment or other consideration. The Crown owns the copyright for Combat Camera, therefore no official permission to use the material was necessary. The audio-visual team of Combat Camera is aware of its use by the Prime Minister's Office.

Question No. 1048—Mr. Ryan Cleary:

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Canadian Coast Guard and the *Manolis L* situation: (a) since March 2013, what advice has the Department received from international experts regarding the situation; (b) will a management plan be put in place; and (c) is the government prepared to access a federal clean-up fund to address the situation?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada and the Canadian Coast Guard remain committed to protecting our oceans from ship-source pollution. The government has made this clear through the ongoing implementation of a world-class tanker safety system.

With regard to (a), since March 2013, the coast guard has received advice from international experts that confirms the effectiveness of ongoing operations. As a response organization, the Canadian Coast Guard continues to look at all options; however, the cofferdam and the coast guard's ongoing response plan for the *Manolis L* continues to be effective. The coast guard is prepared to move swiftly to respond if the current situation changes.

With regard to (a), since March 2013, the coast guard has received advice from international experts that confirms the effectiveness of ongoing operations. As a response organization, the Canadian Coast Guard continues to look at all options; however, the cofferdam and the coast guard's ongoing response plan for the *Manolis L* continues to be effective. The coast guard is prepared to move swiftly to respond if the current situation changes.

With regard to (c), under Canada's existing ship-source oil pollution fund, cost recovery is limited to five years from the date of the original incident, which in this case refers to the vessel's sinking. The government is reviewing long-term options for the management of the *Manolis L*.

Question No. 1050—Mr. Ryan Cleary:

With regard to National Defence and its Cormorant Search and Rescue helicopters: (a) what are the details of a pilot project to be carried out this year regarding a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week uniform search and rescue response time; (b) what is the expected completion date; (c) what is the goal of the pilot project; and (d) will the results be presented to Parliament?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, each year, search and rescue, SAR, crews and coordinators respond to approximately 10,000 marine, aeronautical and humanitarian incidents nation-wide. The three search and rescue regions, SRRs, in Victoria, Trenton and Halifax work together to oversee SAR operations across Canada, which includes over 18 million square kilometres of land and sea.

SAR crews follow a schedule of 40 hours a week of 30-minute SAR response time. Outside of the 40-hour week, SAR crews continue to respond immediately and must be airborne within two hours.

With regard to (a) to (d), the Canadian Armed Forces, CAF, are not currently carrying out a project as described in the question. However, the CAF are in the final year of a project composed of a set of annual trials of SAR response times held over the course of three years. The purpose of this trial project is to adjust response times to better align with the hours and days during which SAR incidents are most likely to occur. While the pre-existing response time will not change, this trial, which will vary for squadrons and aircraft, aims to align the 30-minute response posture with periods of greatest SAR activity based on historical data.

The 2013 trial included the Trenton SRR and in 2014, was refined and expanded to include Victoria. This year's final trial will be further expanded to include Halifax and will run from May 15 through September 7, 2015.

Question No. 1051—Mr. Ryan Cleary:

With regard to International Trade: (a) how did the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development arrive at a figure of \$280 million as compensation to Newfoundland and Labrador for anticipated losses incurred with the elimination of Minimum Processing Requirements as part of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) deal; (b) when did the EU ask for Minimum Processing Requirements to be lifted as part of CETA negotiations; and (c) for what concessions from the EU was the elimination of Minimum Processing Requirements exchanged?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the historic Canada-EU trade agreement will deliver tremendous benefits for businesses, workers and their families in Newfoundland and Labrador and across Canada. The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador raised significant concerns that the removal of minimum processing requirements, MPRs, would have a negative impact on workers in the fisheries sector. Through discussions, the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador agreed to cost-share an MPR fund that would be used to compensate those who can demonstrate losses as a result of the removal of MPRs. The Government of Canada looks forward to receiving the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's specific proposals for this fund, and to moving forward with this historic trade agreement that will present untold economic opportunities for Newfoundland and Labrador.

With regard to (b), in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the principles set out in the Access to Information Act. Information has been withheld on the grounds that the disclosure of negotiating information could be injurious to bilateral relations between Canada and the EU.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (c), in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the principles set out in the Access to Information Act, and information has been withheld on the grounds that the information constitutes cabinet confidences.

Question No. 1052—**Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle:**

With regard to the Offshore Tax Informant Program: (a) since the program was established, (i) how many calls have been received, (ii) how many cases have been opened based on information received from informants, (iii) what is the total amount of the financial awards given to informants, (iv) what is the total amount of money collected by the Canada Revenue Agency; (b) how many current investigations are the result of information received through the program; and (c) how much money is involved in the current investigations?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a)(i), the Canada Revenue Agency, CRA, launched the offshore tax informant program, OTIP, on January 15, 2014. As of January 31, 2015, the OTIP had received 1,712 calls, 478 of them from potential informants.

With regard to (a)(ii), as of January 31, 2015, the OTIP had received 189 written submissions. Of these, 113 cases are being reviewed by the OTIP to determine program eligibility. There have been 76 cases that do not qualify under the OTIP. Those cases have been closed and where appropriate, referred to other areas within the CRA for possible compliance action.

With regard to (a)(iii), once the OTIP receives a submission, it is evaluated on its merits as to whether it warrants issuing a contract for the potential reward. It may take several years from the date of entering into a contract with the CRA until the additional federal tax is assessed, the taxpayer's appeal rights have expired and the amount owing is collected. If the CRA assesses and collects more than \$100,000 in additional federal tax, the reward will be between 5% and 15% of the federal tax collected, not including interest or penalties. The OTIP is currently engaged in the contracting phase with several informants. No rewards have been paid out to date.

With regard to (a)(iv), the CRA will report to Canadians on results of the OTIP, including the amounts recovered and paid out to informants, through the CRA's annual report to Parliament, provided that this information does not have the potential to reveal the identity of confidential informants or disclose taxpayer information.

With regard to (b), the OTIP reviews the information provided by informants about potential international tax non-compliance for eligibility purposes. Only after a file is referred will a CRA compliance action potentially confirm whether a taxpayer has been non-compliant and, if so, the dollar amounts involved. The OTIP takes protecting taxpayer and informant information seriously. Given that the program is still in its early stages, disclosing operational information such as the number of compliance actions that may be under way could jeopardize the identity of an informant or compromise the CRA's compliance actions.

With regard to (c), please see responses provided in (a)(iv) and (b).

Question No. 1053—**Mr. Randall Garrison:**

With regard to the Countering Violent Extremism Program of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police: (a) on what date did the program become operational; (b) how many full-time equivalent staff are assigned to the program; (c) how many RCMP members have received training through the program; (d) in which

municipalities is the program operating; (e) what total budget has been allocated to the program; (f) how many community associations and places of worship have been engaged through the program; (g) which faith communities have been engaged through the program; and (h) what is the planned duration of the program?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the RCMP is currently finalizing the implementation of the countering violent extremism, CVE, program components and anticipating that the program will be fully operational in late 2015. The RCMP has started to provide CVE training to front-line law enforcement across Canada.

With regard to (b) and (e), the CVE mandate is part of the public engagement program that has eight full-time employees operating on a budget of \$1.1 million. Throughout the course of the year, additional resources were pulled from various divisions and national headquarters for an additional \$2 million. As a result, in fiscal year 2014-15, the RCMP is projecting total expenditures of \$3.1 million on its CVE mandate.

With regard to (c), 18 RCMP members have received training through the program. In addition, 12 police officers from outside agencies have received training, from the Toronto Police Service, Vancouver Police Department, Calgary Police Service, Edmonton Police Service, Service de police de la Ville de Montréal, Sûreté du Québec, Service de police de la Ville de Québec, Peel Regional Police, the Ontario Provincial Police and Ottawa Police Service. The RCMP also supported and facilitated the counter terrorism information officer program training for 400 front-line Toronto Police Service officers. The counter terrorism information officer workshop delivery has also been leveraged to provide awareness of radicalization to violence. These workshops, a fixture of the RCMP's counter terrorism training for nearly a decade with over 1,800 individuals trained to date, provide training to law enforcement and first responders to detect signs of radicalization to violence, build overall terrorism awareness and help serve as a basis for future terrorism prevention program training. In 2014-15, over 647 officers were trained through the workshops, significantly increasing the number of RCMP officers trained in how to detect signs of radicalization.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (d), (f) and (g), the RCMP CVE program is not aimed at specific individuals or communities. It is designed to work with individuals who have been identified by law enforcement based on a number of pre-determined, unbiased and objective criteria that are grounded in research, or by the community itself. The RCMP works with all its diverse communities and does not focus on specific communities based on their ethnic background or religious faith. The RCMP is committed to building trust with all of the communities it serves to share mutual concerns and develop collective solutions.

With regard to (h), in keeping with its mandate, the RCMP undertakes comprehensive national security outreach efforts to work directly with individuals, families, communities and as such, the CVE does not have a designated duration timeline.

Question No. 1057—Mr. Mathieu Ravignat:

With regard to a procurement certification agreement between the Treasury Board and the Standards Council of Canada: (a) does such an agreement exist; (b) if the answer in (a) is affirmative, since when; (c) what are the details of the agreement; (d) has the agreement been modified since the date identified in (b), and if so, (i) what are the details of the changes, (ii) when did the changes take effect; and (e) does the text of the agreement refer to training developed and offered by the Canada School of Public Service, and if so, what are the details of this training?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no procurement certification agreement between the Treasury Board and the Standards Council of Canada.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 1032 to 1037, 1039 to 1045 and 1054 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed

[Text]

Question No. 1032—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:

With regard to the International Experience Canada Program (the Program): (a) does the government track data to determine if the Program is impacting the domestic labour market for young Canadians; (b) if the answer in (a) is negative, what are the reasons; (c) if the answer in (a) is affirmative, what are the details of any measurements used by the government to make such determination; (d) how many Canadian employers employ foreign youth in the Program, broken down by (i) total, (ii) industry, (iii) numbers as of each fiscal period ending from March 31, 2005 to March 31, 2014; (e) does the government believe the Program is having any negative effect on the domestic labour market for young Canadians; (f) if the answer in (e) is affirmative, what are the details of any rationale for belief, data, metrics, reference numbers, dates of any documents produced by or for the government to support such a belief; (g) what checks and balance are in place to ensure the Program is not negatively impacting the domestic labour market for Canadian youth; (h) which countries did Canada have reciprocal agreements in place with and what was each agreed quota as of December 31, 2005; (i) since January 1, 2006, how many new reciprocal agreements were signed, broken down by the (i) date of agreement, (ii) initial quota, (iii) policy rationale and objectives for the initial quota agreed upon; (j) since January 1, 2006, which reciprocal agreement quotas were increased from the initial agreement quota, broken down by (i) date of quota increase, (ii) rationale for the increase; (k) since January 1, 2006, what are the details of any analysis done when new reciprocal agreements were signed or agreement quotas expanded to determine impacts on the domestic youth labour market, broken down by (i) report

titles, (ii) dates, (iii) file numbers, (iv) results of any such analysis or study; (l) if no analysis was done in relation to question (k), what are the reasons and what did the government rely on to ensure there would be no significant impact to increasing the number of foreign youth in the country through the Program on the domestic youth labour market; (m) which countries does Canada have reciprocal agreements with, broken down by (i) the quota, (ii) the number of youth in the Program as of each fiscal period ending from March 31, 2002, to March 31, 2014, (iii) the current number of youth; (n) since 2007, what are the instances where the government became aware of potential abuses in the Program, broken down by (i) description of the confirmed or alleged abuse, (ii) date, (iii) titles and file numbers of reports that investigated the confirmed or alleged abuse; (o) what policies or procedures are in place to ensure foreign youth are not open to labour standards or occupational health and safety abuse by employers; (p) are employers of foreign youth in the Program subject to workplace inspections; (q) if the answer in (p) is affirmative, how many inspections occurred in each fiscal period, from 2004-2005 to date; (r) what was the primary policy purpose behind increasing the number of countries and quotas in the Program in each instance since 2006; (s) is the Program associated with any specific policy to address labour and skills shortages in Canada; (t) if the answer in (s) is affirmative, when did that policy come into force and what was the rationale for it; (u) does the government believe the Program is helping address labour shortages; (v) if the answer in (u) is affirmative, which part of the country are concerned and in what way; (w) what were the budgeted and actual expenditures for the Program for fiscal year 2004-2005 to the current fiscal year; (x) what was the cost of promoting the Program from fiscal year 2004-2005 to the current fiscal year, broken down by costs associated with (i) foreign youth, (ii) Canadian youth; (y) what was the cost to promote the Program to Canadian businesses, broken down by fiscal year from 2004-2005 to date; (z) what are the policies or strategies used to promote foreign youth in the Program to Canadian employers; (aa) what are the dates and costs of trips or missions undertaken abroad to promote the Program to foreign youth since 2006, broken down by (i) government officials, (ii) ministers; (bb) did the Department of Foreign Affairs have any concerns about the direction of the Program, the policy associated with it or its objectives since 2008; and (cc) if the answer to (bb) is affirmative, what were the concerns, broken down by (i) date, (ii) title, (iii) file number of the documents that highlighted the concern?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1033—Hon. Gerry Byrne:

With regard to the recognition of landless bands and the recognition of Indian Status of members of such bands under the Indian Act: (a) how many landless bands have been recognized by Canada; (b) what are the recognized names of such bands; (c) by which legal instruments was each band recognized; (d) on what date was each band recognized; (e) what was the number of members of each band at the time of recognition; (f) what is the number of members for each recognized band today; (g) where were the original members of each band generally understood to have resided at the time of recognition; (h) where are the members of each recognized band generally understood to reside today; (i) for each band, did membership in the band result in a direct eligibility for enrollment with the Registrar of Indians for recognition of Status under the Indian Act; (j) what were the original eligibility criteria established for each band at the time the recognition order was proclaimed; and (k) what are the details concerning current eligibility criteria for bands to be recognized?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1034—Hon. Gerry Byrne:**

With regard to the operation of the federal Crown Corporation Marine Atlantic Incorporated (MAI) and the policy and operational oversight provided for MAI by Transport Canada: (a) what is Transport Canada's rationale for its decision to acquire or charter new vessels of approximately 200 metres in length to renew the MAI fleet, in light of the fact that the MAI Board of Directors had previously approved their consultant's recommendation that vessels of 175 metres in length would be best suited to the service; (b) what were the perceived advantages of the longer vessels that outweighed the increased likelihood that their operations would be inhibited by poor weather; (c) what was Transport Canada's rationale for establishing a four-vessel fleet for MAI, given the 2005 Report from the Minister of Transport's Advisory Committee on Marine Atlantic Inc. that had recommended a three-vessel fleet; (d) does MAI track delays that customers experience in order to make new bookings during peak times, (i) if so, what are the details of such delays for June to September 2013, and June to September 2014, (ii) if not, why not; (e) does MAI collect data on the delay between a customer's preferred travel date and the date for which they are actually able to make a reservation for travel, (i) if so, what are the details of such delays for June to September 2013, and June to September 2014, (ii) if not, why not; (f) during times of traffic backlog (e.g., because of excess demand, mechanical failure or poor weather) is it MAI's policy not to take new reservations, or allow vehicles to buy passage and enter the parking lots, until the backlog is cleared and, if so, why; (g) in what ways do the new collective agreements signed between 2011 and 2013 for MAI employees allow additional operational flexibility and potential for labour cost savings to MAI, compared to the previous collective agreements; (h) what measureable benefits has MAI received as a result of the new collective agreements; (i) is the loan for the MV Leif Ericson still being paid out of the operating budget and, if so, why; (j) other than the Canadian Forces Appreciation Fare, has MAI ever introduced any other fare options to give users more choice and increase fare revenue and, if not, why not; (k) is it MAI's current policy to give tractor-trailers loading priority over drop trailers and, if not, why not; (l) did MAI apply to Transport Canada Marine Safety in order to be able to allow more drivers of tractor-trailers onboard restricted sailings and, if not, why not; (m) has an independent ombudsman ever been appointed to receive customer complaints regarding MAI's service and, if not, why not; (n) how has the effectiveness of MAI's maintenance management systems and practices improved since 2009; (o) does MAI track the average time between equipment failures, (i) if so, what trends have been observed in equipment performance measures since 2009, (ii) if not, why not; (p) what objective indicators has MAI established with respect to vessel turnaround time; and (q) what trends have been observed in the indicators mentioned in (p)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1035—Mr. Robert Aubin:

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) tax centre in Shawinigan-Sud: (a) does the government plan to begin renovating this building over the next 24 months; (b) if work is to begin, will it involve life cycle maintenance; (c) if revitalization work is planned, as of what date does the department responsible expect this work to begin; (d) does the CRA plan to move some or all of its activities from Shawinigan-Sud to another city and, if so, what are the details; (e) over the long term, does the CRA intend to maintain in Shawinigan-Sud (i) a processing centre for personal tax returns, (ii) a processing centre for business tax returns; (f) will any jobs be transferred from the Shawinigan-Sud tax centre to other cities in Canada over the next 24 months; (g) has Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) assessed the condition of the building where the Shawinigan-Sud tax centre is located at 4695 12th Avenue, Shawinigan-Sud; (h) is PWGSC aware that the building mentioned in (g) is approaching an advanced state of disrepair; (i) is PWGSC planning a major revitalization of the building mentioned in (g) over the next 24 months; (j) does Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) plan to keep the 200 jobs at its service centre in the building mentioned in (g); and (k) will any ESDC employees currently working in Shawinigan-Sud be transferred to other cities in Canada over the next 24 months?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1036—Mr. Frank Valeriote:

With regard to government funding for each fiscal year from 2008-2009 to present: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the electoral district of Nipissing-Timiskaming, broken down by (i) name of the recipient, (ii) municipality of the recipient, (iii) date, (iv) amount, (v) department or agency providing it, (vi) program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant,

contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1037—Hon. Scott Brison:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Public Works and Government Services Canada since June 4, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1039—Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans since March 28, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1040—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Shared Services Canada since March 31, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1041—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Public Safety Canada since March 31, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1042—Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada since May 30, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1043—Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Natural Resources Canada since May 30, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 1044—Hon. Irwin Cotler:

With regard to the resettlement of refugees under the Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) program: (a) for each of the last ten years, what was the annual admissions target; (b) for each of the last ten years, what was the annual admissions target for GARs referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); (c) what is the breakdown, by source country, of the targets in (a) and (b); (d) for the last ten years, broken down by source country, how many refugees have been resettled in Canada; (e) for each of the last ten years, how many individuals has the UNHCR asked Canada to accept as refugees; (f) what is the breakdown, by source country, of the individuals in (e); (g) for each of the last ten years, broken down by source country, how many of the individuals in (e) have been (i) deemed admissible by Canada, (ii) selected by Canada for resettlement, (iii) resettled in Canada, (iv) deemed inadmissible by Canada; (h) broken down by year and source country, for the individuals in (e) deemed inadmissible by Canada, (i) on what grounds were they deemed inadmissible, (ii) who made the determination that they were inadmissible, (iii) how was that determination communicated to the UNHCR, (iv) how was that determination communicated to the individual; (i) broken down by year and source country, how many of the individuals in (e) were deemed inadmissible by Canada (i) following an in-person interview by a Canadian visa officer, (ii) based on the results of a medical examination, (iii) based on the results of a security screening, (iv) based on the results of a criminal screening, (v) based on a finding that the claimant had been involved in a criminal organization, (vi) based on a finding that the claimant had been involved in human rights violations, (vii) based on a finding that the claimant had been involved in terrorism; (j) based on what factors does Canada evaluate referrals from the UNHCR; (k) who carries out the evaluations in (j); (l) what changes have been made to the factors in (j) over the past ten years; (m) for each change in (l), (i) when was it made, (ii) who made it, (iii) on whose authority was it made, (iv) what was its objective, (v) in what ways was that objective accomplished; (n) for each of the last ten years, broken down by source country and organization, how many individuals were referred to Canada for resettlement as refugees by organizations other than the UNHCR; (o) for each of the last ten years, broken down by source country and government, how many individuals were referred to Canada for resettlement as refugees by foreign governments; (p) for each of the last ten years, broken down by source country and organization, how many of the individuals in (n) have been (i) deemed admissible by Canada, (ii) selected by Canada for resettlement, (iii) resettled in Canada, (iv) deemed inadmissible by Canada, (v) denied entry into Canada; (q) broken down by year and source country, how many of the individuals in (n) have been denied resettlement in Canada (i) based on the results of a security screening, (ii) based on a finding that the claimant had engaged in criminal activity, (iii) based on a finding that the claimant had been involved in a criminal organization, (iv) based on a finding that the claimant had been involved in human rights violations, (v) based on a finding that the claimant had been involved in terrorism; (r) what is the standard of proof for finding a claimant inadmissible for reasons of (i) criminal activity, (ii) involvement in a criminal organization, (iii) involvement in human rights violations, (iv) involvement in terrorism; (s) for each of the last ten years, have there been countries, regions, or refugee camps from which Canada did not accept refugee claimants as a matter of policy; (t) what are the countries, regions, or refugee camps in (s); (u) based on what factors did the government decide not to accept the claimants in (s); (v) who made the decisions in (u); (w) from what countries, regions, or refugee camps does Canada currently not accept refugee claimants as a matter of policy; (x) based on what factors has the government decided not to accept the claimants in (w); (y) who made the decisions in (x); (z) has Canada ever communicated to the UNHCR, formally or informally, that it would not accept claimants from particular countries, regions, or refugee camps; (aa) what are the countries, regions, or refugee camps in (z); (bb) when did Canada make the communications in (z); (cc) what was the response of the UNHCR to the communications in (z); (dd) how many requests has Canada received from the UNHCR to resettle refugees from the Camp Liberty or Camp Ashraf refugee camps in Iraq; (ee) when was each of the requests in (dd) received; (ff) how many of the refugees in (dd) has Canada (i) accepted, (ii) resettled in Canada, (iii) rejected; (gg) based on what factors did Canada reject the claimants in (dd); (hh) for each of the last ten years, what groups has Canada undertaken to resettle via group processing; (ii) for each group in (hh), (i) when did Canada decide to resettle members of the group via group processing, (ii) who made that decision, (iii) on whose authority was the decision made, (iv) based on what factors was that decision made, (v) how many members of the group has the government undertaken to resettle in Canada, (vi) how many members of the group does the government intend to resettle in Canada, (vii) how many members of the group have been resettled in Canada; (jj) since the start of the ongoing conflict in Syria in 2011, how many refugees from Syria has the government committed to resettle in Canada; (kk) when, how, and to whom did the government make the commitment in (jj); (ll) who determined the number of refugees in (jj); (mm) based on what factors was the determination in (jj) made; (nn) what changes have been made to the factors in (mm)

since the start of the ongoing conflict in Syria in 2011; (oo) for each change in (mm), (i) when was it made, (ii) who made it, (iii) on whose authority was it made, (iv) what was its objective, (v) in what ways was that objective accomplished; (pp) since the start of the ongoing conflict in Syria in 2011, broken down by month, how many refugee claimants from Syria have been (i) resettled in Canada, (ii) deemed admissible by Canada, (iii) deemed inadmissible by Canada; (qq) based on what factors were claimants in (pp) deemed inadmissible by Canada; and (rr) what accounts for any discrepancy between the number of claimants in (pp) deemed admissible by Canada and the number of claimants in (pp) resettled in Canada?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1045—Hon. Irwin Cotler:

With regard to the process for appointing individuals to the Security Intelligence Review Committee (SIRC): (a) which individuals have been appointed to SIRC over the last ten years; (b) for each individual in (a), (i) when was he or she appointed, (ii) how long was the term for which he or she was appointed, (iii) when did he or she leave SIRC; (c) for each appointment in (a), (i) when did the government begin the appointment process, (ii) what did the appointment process entail, (iii) when did the appointment process conclude; (d) for each appointment in (a), (i) who was involved in selecting the appointee, (ii) who selected the appointee, (iii) who oversaw the appointment process; (e) for each appointment in (a), what groups, individuals, or governments were consulted as part of the appointment process; (f) for each appointment in (a), how many candidates (i) applied, (ii) were considered, (iii) were contacted by the government; (g) for each appointment in (a), what is the breakdown of the cost of the appointment process; (h) how has the appointment process changed over the last ten years; (i) for each change in (h), (i) when was it made, (ii) who made it, (iii) what was its objective, (iv) in what ways was that objective accomplished; (j) according to what criteria does the government evaluate candidates; (k) how have the criteria in (j) changed in the last ten years; (l) for each change in (k), (i) when was it made, (ii) who made it, (iii) on whose authority was it made, (iv) what was its objective, (v) in what ways was that objective accomplished; (m) what reviews of the appointment process have been conducted or commissioned by the government over the last ten years; (n) what are the results of the reviews in (m); (o) what were the objectives of the reviews in (m); (p) in what ways were the objectives in (o) accomplished; (q) what reviews of the appointment process are (i) underway, (ii) planned; (r) what are the objectives of the reviews in (q); (s) when will the reviews in (q) be completed; (t) when will the results of the reviews in (q) be made public; (u) if an appointment process is currently underway, (i) when did it begin, (ii) who is overseeing or has overseen the process, (iii) who is or has been involved in the process, (iv) what group, individuals, or governments have been consulted, (v) when will the process be completed, (vi) when will the government announce the appointee; (v) how is the process in (u) different from previous appointment processes; (w) what is the breakdown of the cost of the process in (u) thus far; (x) what security or background checks are conducted on candidates; (y) who conducts security or background checks on candidates; and (z) for each appointment in the last ten years, (i) who conducted security or background checks on the candidates, (ii) what was the cost of the security or background checks?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1054—Mr. Randall Garrison:

With regard to the Communities at Risk: Security Infrastructure Program, for each fiscal year since 2005-2006 inclusive: (a) how many applications were received; (b) how many applications were successful; (c) what is the overall budget for the program by year; (d) what was the total amount of grants distributed by year; and (e) which organizations received grants, broken down by (i) communities, (ii) amounts, (iii) year?

(Return tabled)

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SAFE AND ACCOUNTABLE RAIL ACT

The House resumed from March 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-52, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): When this matter was last before the House, the hon. member for Beaches—East York had three minutes remaining in his presentation.

The hon. member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, increasingly, and I mean daily, the railways across the country are operating as virtual pipelines.

From virtually none in 2008, the number of barrels of oil moving across the country, through towns and cities, has grown exponentially. There were 200,000 barrels of oil shipped per day in 2013. This year an estimated 1 million barrels per day and next year an anticipated 1.4 million barrels will move through towns and cities, through farmland, by lakes and across rivers.

When this began, we had one inspector for every fourteen tanker cars of oil. As of last year, there was one inspector for every four thousand tanker cars of oil.

Since the devastation of the Lac-Mégantic derailment, including the deaths of 47 people, Transport Canada has hired just one additional inspector. That is over a period of two years. This is not what concern for public safety looks like. It is quite the opposite. It is a demonstration of profound disregard for what has transpired, for the risks that confront us daily and increasingly, and for the prospects of a more and ever-greater catastrophe as trains full of oil roll through densely populated urban Canada with increasing frequency.

While the bill, by way of establishing minimum insurance levels and a pooled disaster relief fund, and by increasing the authority of rail safety inspectors, is a small step forward, we support the bill because we believe it is essential to immediately improve the liability and accountability regime of Canada's railways. In the aftermath of Lac-Mégantic, the Government of Quebec, and by extension the public of Quebec, has been left with a liability of close to a half a billion dollars.

The bill does not nearly come close to acknowledging the nature of the problem, the urgency posed by the risks, the enormity of the potential disaster, the concerns of Canadians and, most critically, it fails to acknowledge the government's unequivocal responsibility for ensuring the safety of the Canadian public.

● (1210)

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with intent to the member opposite's expressed support on behalf of the New Democrats, the official opposition, for the swift passage of Bill C-52, and I welcome that.

I know the opposition House leader is close at hand. Will the member ask his House leader to let this bill pass as quickly as possible rather than talk the clock out on it? I know it is in the interest of everyone that we move this swiftly, at least to committee for the next stage.

Will the member help secure a swift passage of the bill so we can move on to studying it at committee?

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, most assuredly the NDP is in favour of swift action and response to the frequency of train derailments, the concerns of Canadians for their safety and the safety of others, and the very real potential of looming disasters of derailments in the context of densely populated urban areas across the country.

It is the government that is playing catchup on this issue. The bill comes forward fully two years after the Lac-Mégantic disaster. There is no excuse for the government to have delayed the introduction of a bill like this to deal with the accountability issues for such a long period of time.

I am happy to assure the House and the Canadian public that the NDP will ensure that we move swiftly to get the right bill put through the House and ultimately passed by the House.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, would the member comment on the fact that in the last two years there have been 11 major derailments involving the transportation of oil in this country and in the United States? By some fateful luck, the only one that involved a loss of life was the tragic one at Lac-Mégantic. Clearly that is not a record that any government should be proud of, and I do not think the government should be proud of its actions to date on trying to keep Canada safe.

The bill would raise the amount of insurance, but ought we not protect the public rather than just insure the railroads?

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague is a tremendous advocate in the west end of Toronto for rail safety on behalf of not only his constituents but all Canadians. He raises a critically important point about the frequency of derailments that we are witnessing across this country. I would remind the House that just last month there were three derailments and, thankfully, those derailments took place in relatively remote parts of the country.

However, as we see a million barrels of oil rolling through cities and towns across this country daily, we face the very real and imminent possibility of enormous catastrophes. There are, quite literally, tens of thousands of Canadians who live within a stone's throw of railway tracks in some of the largest cities. It is not, I should say, just about the transportation of oil by rail, it is also about all dangerous goods and the catastrophic effects of those dangerous goods spilling in some very densely populated cities across this country.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, legislation is definitely extremely important. Without legislation, we have no laws to implement. Parliament has to legislate, but the government has a fundamental role to play when it comes to implementing the law. It has to ensure that the law is enforced.

In its last number of budgets, the government allocated far fewer resources to inspection and enforcement at Transport Canada. As my colleague said, since the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, only one extra inspector has been hired. There is a serious problem regarding not only the legislation, but also its implementation.

I would like my colleague to elaborate a bit more on the government's true willingness to ensure rail safety for Canadians.

• (1215)

[English]

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises an excellent point, that laws and regulations are but paper in the absence of their implementation.

We have seen from the government no sense of urgency in responding to derailments across this country. The minister talks in the House about working diligently to deal with these issues and yet we have waited two years beyond the disaster at Lac-Mégantic for this bill, which is only a very partial step in a response to what we are seeing across the country. The most important step is the step that puts rail safety inspectors on the job, implementing the laws of this country, ensuring that the Canadian public is safe, and preventing further disasters and derailments across this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague's speech. I would like his thoughts on what the parliamentary secretary had to say.

He thinks that we should limit our debates in the House in order to speed up a process that has been dragging on for two years already. If there is one thing I have heard myself say a number of times in the House, it is, "We will support this bill at second reading because it is a step in the right direction."

I have a simple question. With this bill, could the government not do more than just take a step in the right direction and actually solve this ongoing problem?

[English]

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, the government is too easily satisfied with its very small steps. What the derailments and the government's lack of action on the issue raise for us is a system of rail safety that has been broken since the Liberals brought in the Rail Safety Act in 1999 where direct federal oversight over public safety with respect to railways was given over to a safety management system allowing the opportunity for railway companies to self-audit and self-manage the safety of Canadians. That is an abdication of the most fundamental responsibility that a government has, which is to protect the safety of Canadians.

The issue of safety has been raised now for years. In 2007 the Canada Safety Council sounded the alarm in a report about the deregulation of Canada's rail system. Here we are now in 2015 and

the government chooses to take a very small step in the right direction on the issue.

The purpose of this debate in the House is to raise for the government and for all Canadians the broader issues about a rail safety system that is fundamentally broken and about the government's fundamental abdication of its most important responsibility, which is the safety of Canadians. There is a lot at risk here as we have seen from the frequency of derailments and in particular the Lac-Mégantic disaster.

The New Democratic Party will continue to talk about these issues in the House until the government changes its views on the deregulation of rail safety in the country, or until we replace the government in the House later this year.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate here today on Bill C-52, the safe and accountable rail act. The tragic July 2013 derailment in Lac-Mégantic was an unprecedented event that I know none of us will forget.

Our government's response to the tragedy has three fundamental components: accident prevention, preparedness and response, and accountability. Under the first two pillars, our government has introduced a number of measures to address issues related to rail safety and the transportation of dangerous goods. Bill C-52 goes further to address these issues.

Today I would like to speak to the third pillar, accountability, and specifically the liability and compensation regime for rail. The Lac-Mégantic tragedy highlighted the need to further strengthen the rail regime to make sure that if an accident does occur, there are sufficient resources to compensate victims, pay for cleanup and protect Canadian taxpayers.

To do this, our government undertook a comprehensive review of the liability and compensation regime for rail. As part of this review, Transport Canada did in-depth research and analysis and consulted subject matter experts. The department also undertook a two-phase consultation process in which a wide range of stakeholders, including railways, shippers, provinces and communities, shared their views and technical information. All of the input and analysis generated during the review has informed the regime changes put forward in the bill.

Today, I would like to outline how Bill C-52 improves upon the current liability and compensation regime for rail and how these changes would benefit Canadians. Liability and compensation for railway accidents is determined through the courts based on fault or negligence. Under the current regime, the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Third Party Liability Insurance Coverage Regulations require that a railway company carry adequate third party liability insurance coverage as a condition of receiving a certificate of fitness allowing it to operate.

Government Orders

The Canadian Transportation Agency determines what constitutes adequate insurance on a case-by-case basis. This is based on an assessment of risks associated with the railway's operation. It also makes a comparison with insurance held by railways with similar operations and with industry practices.

Under the Canada Transportation Act, it is up to the railway company to notify the agency in writing whenever it cancels or alters its third party liability insurance coverage, or whenever a change in operations may mean that its coverage is no longer adequate. If the agency determines that a railway's third party liability insurance is no longer adequate, it may suspend or cancel the railway's certificate of fitness.

The Transportation Safety Board's report on the Lac-Mégantic derailment indicated that the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway did not notify the agency of certain significant operational changes, namely its increased transportation of crude oil.

Following the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, it also became clear that the \$25 million in insurance held by the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway would be insufficient to cover the scope or damage from this unprecedented and catastrophic accident.

In the 2013 Speech from the Throne, our government committed to ensuring that railways carry more insurance. Bill C-52 will implement four levels of mandatory minimum insurance requirements for railways. Under this new regime, the Canadian Transportation Agency will assign railways to a minimum insurance level based on specific criteria focused on the type and volume of dangerous goods hauled.

Railways that carry little or no dangerous goods will be required to hold \$25 million in insurance. For railways carrying higher amounts of dangerous goods, there will be an initial requirement to hold either \$50 million or \$125 million in insurance, depending on the type and volume of dangerous goods carried. One year later, those requirements will double to \$100 million and \$250 million respectively. This phase-in will provide short line railways with sufficient time to adapt to these new requirements.

• (1220)

Finally, railways that carry substantial amounts of specified dangerous goods, namely class 1 railways, CN and CP, will be required to hold \$1 billion in insurance. A railway's third party insurance will have to cover specific risks, including bodily injury or death, property damage and risks associated with pollution.

These new insurance requirements will ensure that the risk associated with a railway's operation is assessed objectively using specific criteria and that a railway's third party liability insurance is aligned with that risk. These requirements will also ensure that there will be sufficient insurance to cover the full cost of the vast majority of potential accidents.

As it stands in the current regime, there are no additional sources of funds to turn to in the event of a catastrophic incident other than the public purse. Often the process for addressing claims in such cases can be lengthy and costly, with delayed and uncertain outcomes for victims.

Bill C-52 ensures that the liability and compensation regime for rail will be able to address a catastrophic incident without burdening the taxpayers. It does so by creating a modernized two-tier regime to cover the cost of accidents involving crude oil, like the one experienced in Lac-Mégantic. This new regime will extend responsibility for compensation beyond railways to include shippers as well. It will also define the liability of railways in order to provide claimants with greater certainty of compensation.

In the case of a rail accident involving crude oil, a federally regulated railway will automatically be held liable without the need to prove fault or negligence. Railways' liability would be capped at their minimum mandatory insurance level and they will have the ability to seek financial redress from at-fault parties through the courts.

Federally regulated railways will also be held liable for crude oil accidents involving any provincially regulated railways operating on their tracks. This will ensure that all railway accidents involving crude oil that occur on federal track are covered through the new regime.

To ensure that liability is shared as designed in the new regime, the bill makes changes to section 137 of the Canada Transportation Act to clarify that railways will not be able to impose their third party liabilities on shippers, for example, through a tariff. Railway insurance will be the payer of first resort, and as I mentioned, would be sufficient to cover the cost of most rail accidents. However, should the damage from a rail accident involving crude oil exceed the railway's insurance level, the new shipper-financed compensation fund would cover remaining costs.

Shippers are part of the polluter pays equation, requiring them to share in the liabilities associated with the transport of their goods, and reflects the fact that the qualities of their product contribute to the risks and costs associated with an accident.

The proposed fund will be financed through a levy on shippers of crude oil. This levy will be set at \$1.65 per tonne of oil in the first year. Following this, it will be adjusted annually for inflation based on the consumer price index.

The levy will be collected by federally regulated railways, remitted to the government and deposited in a special account in the consolidated revenue fund. Railways will be required to keep records on the collection of levies.

Government Orders

The Minister of Transport will have the authority to turn the levy off once it has been capitalized sufficiently. We are targeting an amount of \$250 million, which we expect will be collected in approximately five years. This estimate is based on a reasonable projection of oil-by-rail traffic growth in the coming years. The minister may then turn the levy on again as necessary.

The shipper-financed fund will be managed by an administrator appointed by the Governor in Council. The administrator will be responsible for establishing and paying out claims once the railway's liability limit is reached.

To ensure transparency, the administrator will report to Parliament, through the Minister of Transport, on the fund's management. There must also be a special examination of the fund at least once every five years.

• (1225)

In the unlikely event of damages from a rail accident exceeding both the railway's insurance and the amount being held in the supplementary compensation fund, the federal government's consolidated revenue fund will cover the remaining costs. The government will then be reimbursed through the levy. A special levy could even be imposed on federally regulated railways in order to accelerate repayment of the amount charged to the consolidated revenue fund.

The two-tier regime for crude oil accidents will provide broad coverage of the cost of crude oil accidents. It will cover all actual loss or damage incurred as well as costs incurred by the federal or provincial crown in responding to the accident. The crown may also seek compensation for the impairment of the non-use value of public resources.

Oil is being transported in growing volumes over long distances across our country and we know that accidents involving crude oil can cause significant harm to people, property and the environment. Creating this second tier of compensation for large-scale accidents involving crude oil is another way that we are adapting to this phenomenon, recognizing the valid concerns of Canadians about the movement of oil by rail.

Enhancing compensation for rail accidents involving crude oil will complement efforts we have taken recently to strengthen rail safety and the transportation of dangerous goods, for example, by improving tank car standards. However, recognizing that crude is not the only product that could cause significant damage if involved in a rail accident, there is flexibility in this regime to include by regulation other dangerous goods in the future. The two-tier approach brought forward in Bill C-52 will ensure that enough resources will be available to cover all damages stemming from a rail accident. The increased insurance requirements will hold railways accountable and provide sufficient compensation for the majority of potential accidents. The supplementary fund will provide an additional source of compensation for crude oil accidents and share liability more broadly with shippers.

Robust oversight and enforcement mechanisms are key to ensuring that the strengthened liability and compensation regime functions as intended. The Transportation Safety Board found that the regulatory requirements in place at the time of the Lac-Mégantic

derailment did not ensure that an increase in operational risk was reflected in railways' insurance coverage. Therefore, this bill also establishes more robust oversight and enforcement mechanisms to ensure that railways comply with the requirements of the new regime. Railways will continue to be obligated to notify the agency of any changes to their operation that may affect their insurance coverage. Under the new regime, however, the agency is empowered to make inquiries to determine compliance and must suspend or cancel the certificate of fitness of a railway that fails to maintain the minimum mandatory level of insurance.

We have also introduced administrative monetary penalties, AMPs, as an additional means of ensuring compliance. The agency may apply AMPs up to \$100,000 to a railway that fails to maintain the correct amount of insurance, or fails to notify the agency of a change affecting its insurance coverage. An AMP of up to \$100,000 per violation would also ensure the compliance of railways for collecting and remitting the shipper levies and for keeping records concerning the levies. The Minister of Transport may designate a person to be responsible for assessing compliance and applying these penalties.

Finally, the agency will have clear authority to make regulations concerning the information it needs to verify compliance.

These strong enforcement mechanisms support greater accountability and are critical to ensuring the benefits of the strengthened liability and compensation regime are realized.

Another advantage of the changes brought forward under Bill C-52 is that they bring the liability and compensation regime for rail into step with regimes in other modes and sectors. The polluter pays principle, which is the concept that those responsible for causing damage as a result of their operations should pay for their liabilities, guides the proposed changes to the regime for rail. It is also at the heart of the regimes for marine tankers, the nuclear sector, pipelines, and offshore oil and gas.

• (1230)

There are particularly strong links between the proposed regime for rail and the marine tanker regime, both of which have two tiers: an insurance tier and an industry-financed fund. They share responsibility between different participants in the supply chain. The administration of the rail regime's shipper-financed fund is also modelled on that of the marine regime's ship-source oil pollution fund.

Government Orders

More important, the regime for accidents involving crude oil, including a shipper-financed fund, reflects our government's responsible resource development agenda.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of the measures put forward in Bill C-52. In addition to further improving rail safety and the transportation of dangerous goods in Canada, this legislation addresses gaps in the liability and compensation regime for rail that were brought to light following the Lac-Mégantic tragedy.

The primary goal of the bill's strengthened liability and compensation regime for rail is to make sure that in the future, should a rail accident occur, victims will be fully compensated and the environment will be remediated. It does this by holding railways and shippers accountable, not by burdening the taxpayer.

I therefore hope that all of my colleagues will join me in supporting the safe and accountable rail act, and help pass it quickly.

● (1235)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to ask my colleague a question about railway safety. My riding is actually very close to Lac-Mégantic, or just over an hour from the area that was severely affected by a rail disaster, as all my colleagues know.

I am pleased to see that some measures might reassure residents and allay their fears. What I hear most from the people living in the Eastern Townships and Lac-Mégantic is that they want the companies responsible for the spills or railway accidents to also be responsible for the costs resulting from a disaster. These accidents are unfortunate and there will probably be more of them because the number of cars transporting oil is increasing and the quality of the infrastructure seems to be decreasing. Therefore, these disasters could well happen again, as we have seen in northern Ontario.

Could the government member reassure the people of Lac-Mégantic and the Eastern Townships about corporate responsibility in the event of a spill that causes irreparable damage?

[*English*]

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite who has been working obviously on matters related to the Sherbrooke Airport as well, in co-operation with the government. We appreciate his contributions in this House.

I want to assure the member opposite that with this bill the government not only is addressing the question of the liability of federally regulated railway companies, but it is also ensuring that the liability regime is shared, in the case of accidents involving crude by rail, to include the shippers, by a new fund, a new levy that would establish the supplementary fund such that when railway companies' insurance level has been maxed out, shippers then will participate additionally in any charges that may result. It might be compensation for victims. It might be for remediation of the environment. It might be the costs of municipal forces, such as firefighters who come to fight a fire related to an accident.

There are a number of charges laid out in the bill. I hope that the member will support it.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in incident after incident, particularly in my province of Alberta, the determination by the Transportation Safety Board has been that despite inspections by the government and despite surveillance by the industry saying that the traffic should continue and the rails were safe, time after time, after the fact, after serious incidents, the Transportation Safety Board has determined that the company has replaced rail with defective rail, and it has serious concerns that defective rail simply is not being identified.

Could the member please advise us if he thinks that, given the exponential increase in seriously dangerous rail traffic, maybe it is time to restore ourselves back to a more intensified government surveillance system?

● (1240)

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to address the exponential growth in oil traffic that is being talked about here. We heard at the standing committee on transport, in our recent study, that oil by rail actually went down by a significant amount last year, relative to 2013. There were some 35,000 fewer carloads, I believe, in 2014. That is not to say that with the pickup in the economy oil by rail could not potentially go up again. That is why we want to provide a safe regime, which includes liability and compensation.

The government is obviously sensitive both to the safety management systems functioning properly, with the creation of a safety culture for the federally regulated railway company and how it enforces its own practices, and to oversight. It has increased the number of railway safety inspectors by 10%. The number of transportation of goods inspectors is up by about 85%.

The government has taken the recommendations of both the Auditor General and the Transportation Safety Board very seriously and is acting on them to ensure that we are fulfilling our responsibility.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the parliamentary secretary's speech, he talked about some of the consultations being held as part of the bill, including a process of a couple of stages. I wonder if he could comment on some of the things we heard, as part of that consultation, from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and from the provincial governments about their support for this.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Tobique—Mactaquac for his intervention and for his strong work on this and a number of important matters the government is engaged in.

Government Orders

We conducted some exhaustive consultations. It was the two-step process the member alluded to and that I talked about in my speech. We were not only consulting with railway companies and shippers, which could be affected by a new liability and compensation regime that is jointly shared by both, but were seeking important information, technical information, and input from municipalities and other stakeholders. Those consultations led to the measures contained in this particular bill.

First of all, we are keeping our commitment that the liability regime should be shared. It is not just railway companies that would be required to be liable. The liability would be shared with shippers.

There is also the establishment of a new fund and in how the levy would be done to ensure that the taxpayers would not be burdened by the cost of either the cleanup or charges to victims. I mentioned earlier first responders and firefighters who attend to a fire. The costs they incur in their cleanup would be covered. Those claims would be fully compensated by the shippers and the railway companies.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that troubles me is the limit on liability. The Lac-Mégantic disaster resulted in about \$400 million worth of liability, of which \$25 million was covered by insurance. There is \$375 million, so far, that we know of, of expense to the taxpayer.

Even if this fund were fully implemented, that would still leave \$125 million missing. That is funnily close to the amount the Province of Quebec has been asked to pay, by the Government of Canada, for the failure of a federally regulated system, and of the owners of the vehicles, which is a federally regulated railroad, to contain the vehicles in Lac-Mégantic.

Would the provinces and municipalities be on the hook in the way they are in Lac-Mégantic? Will the government consider reimbursing the Province of Quebec the \$155 million it has already spent on the Lac-Mégantic disaster, and it will spend more, as a federal expense, as it was a federal railroad?

• (1245)

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that the member has read the provisions of Bill C-52, in which the short-line railways would be expected to carry more liability insurance based on the type and volume of the dangerous goods they are carrying. That is one of the very first ways to ensure that railway companies are bearing increased responsibility for the safe operation and transportation of dangerous goods, specifically crude, by rail.

Beyond those increased levels of insurance, there is the supplementary fund. As I have said, we are targeting that fund at \$250 million, but there is obviously flexibility in the way the mechanism of the fund and the implementation of the levy are put to place. That would be done for repayment.

With a review at least every five years, if the risks change, there is flexibility built into the law such that the fund itself and the amounts in the fund could be re-examined and, if necessary, adjusted.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that I will be sharing my time with the member of Parliament for Timmins—James Bay.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-52, an act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act. I would like to say at

the outset that I, along with my colleagues, am pleased to see that the government, at least incrementally, is coming forward with some reforms addressing the concerns of the Canadian public. A good number of the measures in this bill are welcomed, although there may be some significant changes and additions we might want to add at committee.

I recommend that, top of mind, we recognize that the federal government has almost sole responsibility and power to regulate the rail sector, in particular the major lines. This is a mandate, based on my own experience too often in the past, not delivered effectively, both in preventing and responding to rail-related disasters.

Deep and widespread concern continues to be expressed about the risks that exponentially increasing dangerous rail traffic poses to Canadian communities, a concern shared by my constituents, and frankly, by all Albertans. Why the concern? A major percentage of hazardous rail cargo originates in Alberta, is shipped into the province, or is shipped out of the province to markets. Each time I commute from my home to the airport to head to Ottawa, parallel to me along the highway I witness continuous lines of tanker cars. In summer months, my cottage shakes from the heavy-loaded railcars, and I whisper a silent prayer, "Please, no derailment today". I will explain my reaction and my fear momentarily.

I regularly hear complaints from constituents who are distressed that their daily commute is delayed by tanker cars blocking their route to work or school. Massive rail terminals constructed on the eastern edge of my constituency store and shunt loaded tanker cars close by businesses, a university, and commuter traffic. Residents of my riding of Edmonton—Strathcona loudly cheered the decision recently by Canadian Pacific to finally remove some of the rails that, until a few weeks back, shunted tanker cars, unsecured, right into the heart of Edmonton's historic Old Strathcona district into housing, businesses, and significant commuter traffic, mere feet away.

A few years back, the Hardisty town council expressed concern about the construction of a massive American co-owned crude-by-rail terminal that would load 120 tankers per day. In Bruderheim, the largest constructed crude-oil-to-rail terminal automatically loads 180 tanker cars, or 700 barrels, with 13-unit trains of diluted bitumen per day to be shipped south to the United States.

Government Orders

I met with Albertans protesting that a CN Rail siding, once used to load grain for now abandoned grain elevators, located 30 metres from two wildlife conservation areas, less than 200 metres from two homes, and 700 metres from a golf course, was being converted to shunt Imperial Oil tankers. Strathcona County councillor Alan Dunn dubbed the decision to store tankers in the middle of country, residential, and agricultural areas “an abomination”, in his words.

Albertans have experienced 3,421 rail incidents in the past decade, 1,700 of which were derailments, with 122 fatalities and 13 evacuations. This monumentally increased dangerous railcar cargo, coupled with the Lac-Mégantic tragedy and the continuing derailments of similarly dangerous cargo, have caused heightened public concern and increased calls for government action, including by municipal councillors.

To fully understand Albertans' concerns about hazardous rail traffic and their lost confidence in a government response, I wish to share highlights of just three major rail accidents that happened in Alberta over the past three decades.

First, the 1986 Hinton train collision between a CN freight train and a VIA Rail passenger train killed 23 people and seriously injured 95 others. Until the Lac-Mégantic disaster, it was the most lethal Canadian rail disaster since the Dugald accident of 1947. The resulting investigation revealed serious flaws in CN's employee practices. A commission of inquiry investigated the crash. Justice René Foisy, from the Court of Queen's Bench in Alberta, following 26 days of public hearings, condemned what he described as a “railroader culture” that prized loyalty and productivity at the expense of safety.

● (1250)

In August 2005, a derailment dumped over 700,000 litres of bunker C fuel and 88,000 litres of carcinogenic pole oil on the north shore of Lake Wabamun, essentially on top of the summer village of Whitewood Sands. More than 500,000 litres of the chemical entered the lake, with half remaining unrecovered.

Thousands of volunteers walked the shoreline picking up tar balls or rescuing oil-coated birds and wildlife. The shores of the Paul First Nation sacred lands were coated in oil. In the words of the provincial environmental commission struck to assess the government response, the event was a catastrophe for the community and a disaster for the environment. This important recreational lake was closed to swimming, boating, and fishing for a full year.

Who would have thought that in the oil capital of Canada, timely access to either the equipment or expertise to adequately respond to an environmental disaster of this scale, and so close to Edmonton, was completely absent? It was a major wake-up call, but are we fully awakened or ready still?

While the province at least formed a special commission to critique the failed response and recommended improved emergency response efforts, no similar effort was made by the rail regulator, the federal government. The commission identified a complete failed response and a lack of emergency preparedness and made significant calls for reform, including advance resolution of interjurisdictional responsibilities, including over first nation lands and people, and better management of rail transport risk prevention and response.

According to the Transportation Safety Board, the cause of the derailment was rails replaced with faulty second-hand equipment. Despite these findings and recommendations, a decade later, another derailment of petroleum crude oil and liquified petroleum gas happened at Gainford, mere kilometres from Lake Wabamun. According to the report by the Transportation Safety Board, the heat from the explosion and fire was so extreme that flames shot across the highway, damaging a home on the other side. The Trans-Canada Highway had to be closed and around 100 residents evacuated. Similar to the findings by the Transportation Safety Board for Wabamun, the cause was attributed to faulty rail, unidentified by transport inspectors or CN inspections. It must be noted that another derailment occurred just two weeks earlier near this same location.

The Conservatives have promised time and again to rectify shortcomings with safety inspections and rail safety compliance measures. They have yet to fully honour that commitment. As my colleague pointed out, successive Liberal and Conservative governments have, in the majority, let companies self-regulate and self-inspect their equipment and rail lines. This approach is just not adequate. Rail traffic is now a major industrial operation.

Despite the growing volume of dangerous rail traffic and despite the related serious derailments, Transport Canada has apparently hired only one additional rail safety inspector, and the Rail Safety Directorate's budget has been cut by almost 20%. We need stronger regulation of this dangerous rail traffic, and we need intensified inspection and enforcement.

Bill C-52 does offer some important reforms to address compensation after a rail disaster occurs, including minimum insurance levels for railways transporting dangerous goods, a disaster relief fund, and greatly expanded authority by the minister, cabinet, and rail safety inspectors. However, these have more to do with the costs and cleanup after the fact. They do nothing to prevent further accidents. What we need is federal action to prevent rail disasters, including full, open, and public review and assessment of all proposals by the rail sector and its clients to construct new facilities or to substantially increase the volume of hazardous goods shipped.

Government Orders

The rail industry is the only major industrial sector almost totally exempted from the application of federal environmental assessment laws. Currently, federal laws bizarrely also completely exempt the rail sector from advance public scrutiny. Regulations under the federal environmental assessment act currently only narrowly confine the rail industry operations to be reviewed to where certain migratory bird sanctuaries are impacted.

The Minister of Environment is empowered to order that rail traffic that could cause adverse environmental effects or public concerns undergo an EIA. To date, she has failed to exercise that power, despite the growing potential threats to life and environment.

The government could also expand the powers of the National Energy Board to ensure that all exports of hazardous petroleum products by pipeline and rail combined, not just exports by pipeline, are reviewed.

● (1255)

An Alberta first nation, the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, has actually called for the National Energy Board to expand its mandate.

I look forward to questions on my speech and action by the government.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend from Edmonton—Strathcona for her consistent work on rail safety. I certainly remember, really distinctly, the rail derailment that affected the lake and its impact on her home cottage. I am not going to once again stumble through the name of the lake. I apologize to my friend from Edmonton—Strathcona.

Very specifically, does the member agree that we should be doing much more to identify the most volatile types of cargo carried by rail and not have a definition that puts so many of them in the same category? I hope my question is not too vague, but I trust my friend from Edmonton—Strathcona can make sense of it.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the member makes a good suggestion, that we do a better job of identifying volatile cargo.

Frankly, I think we need to go much further. I find it astounding that this major industrial sector of Canada, a highly profitable sector, sadly for the most part now American-owned, is completely exempt from advanced environmental impact assessments to identify potential threats to health or environment.

I think what the member is calling for could be a part of that overall review. Let us remember that we built our rail lines right along our lakes and rivers because we originally needed that water to cool the engines. It is time to look at the potentially impacted communities or potentially impacted waterways. I think it is high time we actually open up the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and take a close look at the possibilities for closely scrutinizing the impacts of this sector in advance, instead of simply trying to compensate after the fact.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the legislation is indeed extremely important. However, the government's main responsibility is to enforce it. My colleague touched on that in her speech and I hope she will elaborate on it.

What we are passing today is fine. However, given that budgets have been reduced considerably and that only one inspector has been hired since the Lac-Mégantic disaster, how exactly does the government intend to ensure Canadians' safety with respect to rail transportation if it does not allocate the resources needed and implement very significant measures to enforce the law?

Providing reassurance is fine, but first and foremost we want to prevent accidents. We do not just want to address the problems caused by accidents. I would like my colleague to speak about this issue.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely critical that we have a much bigger review, not just of the personnel who are available on the government side to be inspecting and issuing orders for the protection of the public, given this increased traffic in hazardous materials. It is absolutely important that the federal government step up to the plate and deliver the kind of review that the Alberta government did, way back in 2004.

We would be well advised, certainly the members of the committee would be when they start looking at this bill, to look at the abject failure by all the federal agencies to respond to that spill, in their obligations to protect the fishery in Lake Wabamun and to respond in a timely way to the first nations, which they absolutely did not do, and also to get a handle on the fact that if even in Alberta, the oil capital of Canada, we were not prepared to respond to a spill of this nature, how on earth are we going to be capable of responding to that kind of spill of hazardous substances in any other place in Canada?

We need a much bigger review, and not one just tied to these narrow pieces of legislation that are tabled. It is time for a thorough review of our readiness to actually respond and prevent these kinds of disasters.

● (1300)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always it is a great honour to rise and speak for the people of Timmins—James Bay. I am very proud to be speaking to Bill C-52, a piece of legislation that is very important for this House. I would like to put in editorial parentheses that it is nice for a change to be debating legislation that has something of value to the Canadian public, as opposed to the so many bizarre hot-button sideshows we have been dealing with. The issue of rail safety is a serious concern. The government needs to respond.

We saw the horrific disaster in Lac-Mégantic, where so many lives were needlessly lost. However, we are also dealing with a huge increase in the transport traffic coming out of Alberta and Saskatchewan in terms of the carrying of unprocessed oil, crude, bitumen. We saw in the Lac-Mégantic spill the oil that was coming out of the Bakken fields that is very combustible. These are issues that have to be taken seriously.

Government Orders

As I say that, it is not just the oil industry that is involved. Many of our industrial sectors have an important role to play in their connections with the railways. I live literally across the street from the Ontario Northland and every day the huge sulphuric acid tanker cars come down from the smelter in Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec. We have had spills, and those are catastrophic spills.

However, the kinds of spills that we have been seeing with increasing regularity as the increase of traffic is coming, particularly in the oil sector, have raised many issues about safety. In my own region, we have had in the last few months three derailments: one at Hornepayne and two at Gogama. One spilled heavy crude into the Mattagami River right at the site that I have been led to understand is fish-spawning grounds. There has been so much work done on that section of Mattagami River to build a better ecosystem for fisheries. To see heavy crude burning in the Mattagami River is a travesty, and it is an economic and environmental tragedy for the people who live along the river and in fact for all the people who live in my part of northern Ontario because the Mattagami is such a large river system.

There is not a lot of comfort from the promises of CN or Transport Canada that they will suddenly make this all better again. The minister said they will restore it 99.99%. I find that rather hard to fathom, how crude spilling into fish-spawning grounds can be remediated that easily. We look at what happened in Kalamazoo, Michigan when the Enbridge pipeline burst. For 18 hours after the alarm started sounding in Edmonton that there was a problem, no action had been taken. That blowout destroyed a large section of the Kalamazoo River. Five years later, the water is still damaged and it has cost over \$1 billion in repairing the environment. These are serious issues.

We have to go back a bit to give people some historical explanation. Before we had this huge increase in tanker traffic, there was a belief, pushed by the Liberal government of the day, that if we allow self-regulation everything will be better. It is a blind belief that capital suddenly somehow had a sense of public duty, that if we pulled out the inspectors, if we pulled out the inspectors from the meat industry, if we pulled out the inspectors assuring health and safety, if we pulled out the inspectors of the railway lines and allowed the companies to self-regulate, people would make more money and somehow that would be a social good.

The Transportation Safety Board has talked about the weak safety culture that has existed both at Transport Canada and within the companies. Serious issues have been raised to the point where, after the latest Gogama spill, the Centre for Biological Diversity said, and I do not think it is that unfair to say, that the oil and railway industries are playing Russian roulette with people's lives and our environment given the fact that the transport of these goods cut through the centre of so many communities in our country.

That being said, we have to ask ourselves what the long-term solution is here. One of the arguments we always hear from the Conservatives is this. If there is a rail derailment, some kind of accident or any issue about the transport of oil, the Conservatives will immediately jump up and say that we need pipelines, that the New Democrats need to stand up and support pipelines. That is a bizarre, false argument but I am not surprised that the Conservatives say it because they are so much the puppets of the large oil interests.

● (1305)

I have been noticing that more and more my colleagues in the Liberal Party use that argument time and time again. I was actually shocked that yesterday when we were talking about rail safety, my colleague from Trinity—Spadina was talking about pipelines. I do not think he understands that we do not have to have either-or, what we have to have is public safety. We are a nation of transporting of resources. However one chooses to transport goods, it has to be done where safety is put ahead of expediency.

For my colleague in Trinity—Spadina who believes that the NDP is wrong on our concern about pipelines, we are saying that the issue of pipelines is the same as the issue with rail transport. What are the public protections that are in place if we are going to be moving raw bitumen through 40-year-old pipelines? That is a question that the public needs to have answered.

Whether they are concerned about Line 9 in the city of Toronto, whether they are concerned about the pipeline planned through the mountains of B.C., the issue is safety. Where are the shut-off valves? What kind of oversight is there going to be? What kinds of remediation measures could be put in place to stop a blowout? If there is a blowout in the B.C. mountain ranges, how are we going to remediate that? We know that would be impossible. If Line 9 blows out in Toronto, how could we assure the safety of the community?

It is a false argument to say the New Democrats have to choose between pipelines or rail. We say that whatever method is going to be used to move the nation's natural resources, the issue of safety to the public has to be part of the discussion from day one. There is a larger long-term issue in terms of safety with Canada's oil industry that needs to be looked at. What kind of nation has a vision for economic development that takes raw resources and ships them thousands of kilometres to put them on ships in the St. Lawrence to ship them to China to be processed? That is a bizarre, short-sighted view of economic development.

We have enormous resources in this country and we have to look at value added because when we do value added we are not only creating jobs, but we are also ensuring that the transport would be safer because we are not dealing with the unstable, unprocessed Bakken oil being transported. We would process it in Alberta or Saskatchewan and then move it.

The issue of transporting bitumen as we have seen from the Kalamazoo River catastrophe is that bitumen is very different for cleaning up than oil. This needs to be balanced and the best way to deal with that would be to have the upgrading and the processing at source. This is a long-term vision issue that needs to be addressed.

Government Orders

With regard to my colleagues in the Conservative Party and the Prime Minister who is going to create this energy superpower, we have seen after eight years of this hyperbolic talk that it has not come to pass because there has not been the necessary equal commitment to environment. We have become more and more of an international outlier on these issues. If we are going to develop non-renewable resources, we have to show that we do actually care about the environment.

President Obama turned down Keystone XL, much to the chagrin of the leader of the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister. We look at what the EPA said about Keystone XL, that it was not in America's interests and that the effect of Keystone XL would be to add another 1.37 billion metric tonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The United States was looking at the Canadian government and saying for all its blunder and bluff on its energy economy, what has it done to ensure that it is balanced with the long-term environmental vision. The government had nothing to offer except more blunder and bluff and that it is not taking no for an answer from Mr. Obama. Well, President Obama and the Democrats' response is "talk to the hand". If we are not going to balance environment and long-term security, they are not going to partner with us.

In our transport of oil and our natural resources, which we have been abundantly blessed with, what we are saying is that we have to balance environment, sustainability and public safety, that we cannot shortchange public safety because we simply cannot tolerate it and the Canadian public will not tolerate another tragedy like Lac-Mégantic.

Therefore, I support the bill. I think it is a first step, but we have a long way to go in addressing this issue.

• (1310)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on some of the member's comments.

One of the issues has to be the percentage increase of rail line traffic over the years. The amount of oil, gas and other cargo that is transported all over Canada concerns a great number of Canadians. An alternative to that is pipelines, which is why I was somewhat intrigued when the member said that the NDP opposed Keystone. The NDP opposes all pipelines, it would seem. However, there is some benefit to pipelines to ease the rail line traffic.

Does the member recognize that if we could get that social contract to build pipelines, we could ease the pressure from our rail lines, and all Canadians would benefit by that? Could the member at the very least acknowledge that there is some value to transport some of this product through pipelines? If so, is there a pipeline that the NDP would support?

Mr. Charlie Angus: There we go, Mr. Speaker. I rest my case.

Whenever the issue of public safety is raised, and should be addressed first, what do the Liberals do? They say that we have to support pipelines, that their leader supports Keystone XL. Well, the Liberal leader got slapped down by Obama because it was not a smart plan.

I do not know what the problem is with the Liberals if they believe we should just support pipelines. We say that pipelines have to be made safe in the same way that we have to make rail traffic safe.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague this. Has the Liberal leader talked about northern gateway with people in British Columbia? Has he talked with Kinder Morgan?

If we talk to anybody from western Canada coming into the east, they will say that if we build a pipeline, we better assure them that it is safe, as opposed to the Liberal Party position that we have had another rail derailment, therefore is that not good news for the pipeline industry. That is a false argument.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague from Timmins—James Bay, whose speeches are always relevant and easy for everyone to understand.

A few days after the tragic events in Lac-Mégantic, I visited the area to get a sense of the scope of the physical damage. I could also see how much the people of Lac-Mégantic were suffering and how resilient they are.

We now know that it will cost around \$400 million to rebuild the area.

Did my colleague see an explanation in the bill? We always hear about taking a step in the right direction. That is never enough.

How does the bill set a \$250 million limit for the disaster relief fund, when the cost of the most compelling example we have is already well over \$250 million?

What mathematical rule did the Conservatives use in deciding to do so little for such a serious problem?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I have a lot of respect for the work he does in the House.

It is clear that this bill is a necessary small step. This government needs to create a plan to protect Canadians. Moreover, we need a long-term vision for the development of natural resources.

This government has refused to discuss our obligation to protect Canadians and communities and to protect the environment. Our economic future will be based on an economy built on security and sustainability.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities.

I am honoured to rise in this debate to outline the measures our government is taking to strengthen rail safety and the transportation of dangerous goods in general and specifically to strengthen the standards of railway tank cars.

Government Orders

It has been said before, and it is worth repeating, that public safety and accident prevention remains this government's priority. It has always been and will continue to be the case. Our government remains committed to the safety of all Canadians and it will take all appropriate actions to ensure their safety during the transportation of flammable liquids, such as crude oil. Incidents, such as the tragedy that occurred in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, to the most recent incidents near Gogama, Ontario, reinforce our resolve to develop an appropriate safety regime that would protect all Canadians.

Our government has taken many actions to strengthen the safety of railway transportation and the transportation of dangerous goods following the tragic events in Lac-Mégantic in July 2013, and to address the recommendations in the fall 2013 report of the Auditor General of Canada. Since the Lac-Mégantic train derailment, we have initiated regulatory measures to strengthen tank car standards.

On April 23, 2014, under the authority of the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, Transport Canada issued a protective direction requiring the immediate phase-out of the least crash-resistant DOT-111 tank cars from dangerous goods service. Roughly 5,000 tank cars in North America can no longer be used for dangerous goods service in Canada, but can be repurposed to transport non-dangerous goods.

On July 2, 2014, Transport Canada published regulations updating the legacy of the DOT-111 tank car standards to require thicker steel, half-head shield protection and top-fitting protection. All newly manufactured tank cars built for dangerous goods service, corrosives and flammable liquids must comply with this minimum standard. The tank car may be a jacketed or unjacketed tank car.

Transport Canada also introduced a requirement for proof of classification of dangerous goods.

On July 18, 2014, a regulatory proposal that would phase out DOT-111 tank cars and mandate an even more robust tank car standard specifically designed for the transfer of flammable liquids to replace the CPC-1232 tank cars was announced. The new class of tank car would include thicker steel and require the tank car to be manufactured as jacketed, thermally insulated tank cars, with a full head shield, top-fitting protection and a new bottom outlet valve. The proposed requirements would also require the CPC-1232 and the DOT-111 tank cars to be retrofitted to improve their features and crash resistance.

Our government has been working in close collaboration with the U.S. to harmonize the tank car standards and retrofit timelines as much as possible. We are in the final stages of developing standards for the next generation of tank cars for the transportation of flammable liquids. This would further reduce the risk of product leaks in the event of a derailment. We have expeditiously developed this new proposed tank car design, which would phase out the current DOT-111 and CPC-1232 tank cars for the transport of flammable liquids by rail.

The new tank car design would be the most robust tank car for the transportation of flammable liquids. In addition, to support the new tank car design, our government will bring forward retrofit requirements to meet the direction on the phase-out or retrofit

schedule for the highest risk legacy DOT-111 tank cars, as announced on April 23, 2014.

● (1320)

The proposed TC-117 tank car, formerly referred to as the TC-140, would be the new standard for tank car manufacturers to use for the transport of flammable liquids in packing group I, II and III, such as crude oil, ethanol, gasoline, diesel and aviation fuel. Following publication of a final regulation, the TC-117 would replace the current tank car standard, which was published in the *Canada Gazette*, part II, on July 2, 2014.

Once published, the TC-117 regulation would provide a prescriptive or performance-based retrofit requirement to which all legacy DOT-111 and CPC-1232/TP 14877 tank cars would be required to meet. The regulation would also provide a risk-based retrofit, timeline schedule, which establishes the type of tank car to be used by certain dates for the transport of certain flammable liquids, either by specific name or by packing group. The TC-117 is part of a holistic risk-based approach to enhancing public safety during the transport of flammable liquids by rail.

Our government has taken a number of other actions on rail safety. We have introduced new train operation requirements, reduced train speeds, proposed new compensation and liability requirements, increased railway inspections, introduced new classification requirements, required the sharing of dangerous goods information with municipalities, expanded emergency response assistance plan program to include flammable liquids, and we have removed the oldest tank cars from dangerous goods service in Canada.

Our government has been open and transparent in our approach to bringing forward a new tank car standard. As evidence of this, anyone can go on Transport Canada's website and find up-to-date information about tank car standard and timelines associated with retrofitting.

Going forward, our government remains committed to working with industry; all levels of government, including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and its national municipal rail safety working group; regulatory officials in the United States; and other key stakeholders, such as the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, to examine means of further improving railway safety and the safe transportation of dangerous goods. Thanks in large part to these positive and productive working relationships, we continue to make progress on this important file.

To conclude, while Canada has a strong safety regime for railways and the transportation of dangerous goods, our government continues to take action to improve the safety and accountability of Canada's railways.

Government Orders

We are confident that the actions we have taken, in collaboration with our partners, will set a stronger standard for the next generation of tank cars used to transport flammable liquids and by doing so, will reduce the chance of leaks in the event of a derailment.

The actions our government has taken go well beyond a mere response to recent rail incidents. Rather, we seek to assure Canadians that we are doing what needs to be done to strengthen the safety of our railways and the transportation of dangerous goods. These actions demonstrate our belief in the continued use of railway shipping and the transportation of dangerous goods, and they demonstrate our commitment to the safety and protection of all Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rail line safety is an important issue to all Canadians. I represent Winnipeg North and we have the CP yards that go along the southern boundary. It is one of our boundary lines, and we know there is all sorts of cargo that is transported through the heart of Winnipeg.

There is the CN Symington Yards at the other side of the city of Winnipeg. The point is, everything goes through Winnipeg before it starts going out west, or through Winnipeg coming from the west, going out east.

There is no doubt that the residents of Manitoba are very much concerned about rail line safety. There is reason to believe, through a number of steps and initiatives, that this will improve, to a certain degree, the whole issue of rail safety.

Legislation is one thing. Another issue is how government chooses to invest in our rail lines. Would the member talk about the importance of government investing financial resources in particular in the infrastructure of our rail lines?

•(1325)

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my speech, rail safety is something that the government is taking very seriously. We have to transport our goods by rail, and rail safety has many components.

To date, we have invested large sums of money in infrastructure, but I would like to speak about some of the components of the safety of our railways. It includes all of the components. It includes equipment. I was speaking about tankers. Some of the members previously spoke about inspectors and a lack thereof

. There are many technological innovations that have been implemented by the industry. I will mention some. Many members probably remember times when the trains stopped and there was an inspector going and checking the wheels. Now, this can be done automatically by electronic devices that look for information on cracked wheels and send it to the locomotive. It is the same with the rails that need to be ground.

There are many elements. I do not think I will have time to speak about all of them, so I look forward to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to ask a government member a question about the disaster relief fund. I still do not understand what formula the government used to come up with the amount of \$250 million.

To be more specific, is it not true that the \$250 million will be recovered and go back into the government's general revenues?

If such is the case, that means that this fund could be used the same way the government used employment insurance contributions, that is, for purposes other than what it is intended for.

[*English*]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, this question was partially answered by the parliamentary secretary during his questions and answers. He did mention that as far as the liability levels go, it is something that can be adjusted going forward. As the hon. member knows very well, this legislation proposes the establishment of a special fund that would be there to cover the costs associated with train derailments.

This is a work in progress. This is the second reading of a bill. I am looking forward to input from each side of the House, in debate and at the committee. This is something we can work on together and make better. Things can always be made better.

Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise today to speak at second reading of Bill C-52, the safe and accountable rail act. As we know, this bill would amend two pieces of legislation that are important to the protection of our communities, the Railway Safety Act and the Canada Transportation Act.

Canada's economy and the livelihood of people in communities across the country depend on the transportation of goods, including dangerous goods, of course, at times. As the economy grows, so too does the transportation of these dangerous goods.

The bill before us takes important steps to improve the overall safety of the rail system by increasing regulatory oversight, but the reality remains: no matter what actions we take to reduce risks—and we want to take every action we can—we must also be prepared to respond to a catastrophic accident, and this includes being able to pay the costs and compensate for the liabilities that result. This bill would address this element by strengthening accountability.

Municipalities across Canada bear much of the brunt of rail accidents. The bill before us would help respond to those risks. The amendments to the Railway Safety Act contained in this bill would enable municipalities to obtain information to help prepare for effective emergency response. Where there is a serious incident that results in costs for cleanup and repair, the amendments to the Canada Transportation Act contained in this bill would ensure that communities would not bear financial responsibility for such disasters.

Let me first address the matter of emergency response and then move on to the subject of liability and compensation.

Government Orders

Our government has undertaken important measures to improve the ability of first responders and communities to deal with rail emergencies. We need to keep this important dialogue going among shippers, railways, communities, and first responders. Together they can improve planning and operational communications. They can identify best practices for accident protocols in both urban and rural situations.

I commend Transport Canada for establishing an emergency response task force that brings together industry and community stakeholders to examine national needs for emergency response to accidents involving dangerous goods. In this way, we will strengthen the links between communities and industry and identify ways to improve emergency response.

In the consultations on the need for more co-operation and coordination in emergency response, Transport Canada heard from, among others, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, and the Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada. Each of these organizations expressed concerns about the capacity of our communities to deal with rail incidents involving dangerous goods. Each has called for more effective sharing of information to support first responders.

This bill contains provisions to make that happen. It would authorize regulations to require a railway to provide information to municipalities when significant railway operational changes are occurring at that particular location. The bill would also amend the Railway Safety Act to provide new regulation-making powers with respect to a railway safety management system, or SMS. An SMS includes a risk assessment, a list of mitigation measures, and a plan to monitor the effectiveness of these measures. Regulations under the bill before us can require railways to share summaries of these risk assessments with municipalities. These two measures would help establish better communication between railways and the municipalities and would provide first responders with information they require to be fully prepared for emergencies.

I have been talking about the impact on communities of large catastrophic events, but I would also like to observe that the bill before us would remove from provincial and municipal taxpayers the cost of fighting smaller fires that may result from a company's railway operations.

• (1330)

These incidents sometimes happen as a result of railway activities, but because a train moves on before the fire is apparent, it can be difficult to ascribe cause and effect, and hence liability. As a result, the province or the municipality and their taxpayers are sometimes on the hook for the cost of putting out the fire.

This bill would amend the Railway Safety Act to give the Canadian Transportation Agency authority to determine whether a fire was caused by rail operations. If so, the agency could then determine the costs and require the railway to reimburse the province or municipality for these costs. However, despite all these best efforts, railways will never be able to prevent all accidents.

This brings me to a second component of this bill, changes in the liability and compensation regime for rail. Under the current system, a railway company must insure against accidents, but as we have

seen with the tragedy at Lac-Mégantic, that insurance coverage was insufficient to cover the resulting liabilities.

In response, the bill before us would legislate the minimum amount of insurance that a railway would be required to hold, depending on the type and volume of dangerous goods the railway carries annually. This approach is objective and would provide greater certainty that there will be sufficient insurance coverage in the event of a railway accident.

Requiring federally regulated railways to carry minimum levels of insurance is a necessary first step for the government to fulfill its promise in the 2013 Speech from the Throne.

The second step is to put in place a regime that shares responsibility between shippers and railways, so that industry is held accountable. Common carrier obligations of the Canada Transportation Act require railways to ship any products offered for transport. This obligation benefits shippers, who can rely on getting their goods to market.

Given this, the bill would clearly establish the roles and responsibilities of shippers and railways in the event of an accident involving crude oil. Railways would be liable without proof of fault or negligence, up to their insurance level, for a crude oil accident.

However, to pay for liabilities that could be in excess of a railway company's mandated insurance level, the bill would require shippers of crude oil to pay into a supplementary compensation fund through a levy. This fund is called the fund for railway accidents involving designated goods. This fund would be used to cover the same liabilities for which railways are held accountable. The fund could later be expanded through regulation to include other dangerous goods.

• (1335)

To finance the fund, these amounts would be collected from shippers for the movement of crude oil and held in a special account in the consolidated revenue fund. Together these measures would ensure adequate resources were available to cover the liabilities associated with a disaster of the magnitude of Lac-Mégantic.

Through this, the bill before us would establish the polluter pays principle for rail transportation. The overall approach is similar to the regime now in place in marine transportation and is in line with actions the government is tabling for the pipeline, offshore drilling, and marine sectors as well.

In this way, we would ensure that victims and taxpayers are not on the hook to pay for the costs of emergency response or other liabilities associated with a tragic accident involving dangerous goods carried by rail. We would be balancing the common carrier obligations with shipper accountability.

Government Orders

These measures would allow liability for potential catastrophic rail accidents to be shared between railways and shippers, and it would result in transportation choices that better reflect true costs and risks.

The bill before us would protect our communities by helping to prevent accidents and by sharing information that improves emergency response, and if there were an incident, this bill would ensure that communities and taxpayers were not the ones who pay for the response, cleanup, and compensation. I truly hope that all members in this House will join me in supporting this bill.

• (1340)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with Bill C-52, the federal government appears to be suggesting that as it is the regulator it is also the responsible party when it comes to paying for or assuming the responsibility to regulate those who should pay for the result of a disaster or derailment. However, with Lac-Mégantic, the federal government has only paid a small portion of the actual cleanup costs. We are wondering whether this bill will cause the government to rethink its decision not to compensate fully the Government of Quebec for the costs related to the Lac-Mégantic disaster, part of which is because the railroad involved was under-insured.

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely crystal clear that Bill C-52 would improve the safety of railways in our country and improve the safety of communities as well. That is our ultimate goal and intention. Should an accident occur, we would ensure that industry is held accountable where that is appropriate and that there is shared responsibility between the railway and the shipper.

Furthermore, with this bill we would ensure that there would be adequate levels of insurance in place, and in addition to that insurance fund, a supplementary fund for any costs over and above those insurance levels.

Clearly, these are measures which would significantly improve the safety of communities and of railways across the country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party caucus sees merit in the legislation. The member is the parliamentary secretary for infrastructure and I want to ask him a question which I posed just a while ago.

We all talk about the importance of our rail lines and certain things that we can do with legislation such as what we are talking about that would improve upon it. However, there is no doubt there is also a role for the government going beyond legislation and investing in our rail lines. This is a fantastic opportunity for the government to look at using infrastructure dollars to improve the quality of our rail lines.

I wonder if the member, given his position, might want to provide some comment regarding the government's attitude toward infrastructure spending on our rail lines.

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his support of this important legislation, Bill C-52, and for his interest in the importance of infrastructure across the country.

As the hon. member may be aware, VIA Rail receives a significant taxpayer-supported subsidy to help with its operations. With respect to large railway operations in the country, we certainly expect them to invest in their own operations. That said, under the

new building Canada plan, the largest and longest infrastructure investment in the country's history, there are eligible categories for certain short-line rail systems to support, in particular, small communities.

I hope my hon. colleague will help to raise awareness about all the various supports that the federal government provides for the railway system and for infrastructure in our country.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Davenport.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill, which is strangely entitled "the safe and accountable rail act". I would question the safe part of it, but it certainly is a way of making railroads more accountable for their actions.

The parliamentary secretary said a moment ago that the prime purpose of the bill is to make Canadians safer. I wonder how a bill that deals primarily with insurance and liability would actually make Canadians safer, unless of course, we are proposing to give over the regulation of the railroads to the insurance companies and make the insurance companies responsible for making sure the railroads are safe. Maybe that is what it is doing, but that is certainly not something I am in favour of.

It is a core responsibility of government to protect its citizens. That can come in any number of ways, but here we are talking about how to protect the citizenry of Canada from the actions of a federally regulated body, namely the railroads.

Protecting our citizens is not something the government should see as an expense on the expense line of the ledger, and yet that is all too often what we hear about. It is actually a duty and it is not something on which we should be looking to cut our expenses or cut taxes and make Canadians less safe. It is not something it should be seeming to do, but we have seen the Conservative government do it time and time again, in food safety, in airline safety, and now in rail safety, where we have a system that clearly did not protect the 47 residents of Lac-Mégantic nor the centre of that town which was destroyed by the rail system, which the current government and the Liberal government before it helped to create.

The bill is a step in the right direction. Clearly, the government seems to have adopted the NDP principle that the polluter should pay and that the person who is responsible for something like this should pay, but we think that this could go a whole lot further. There are flaws in the bill that need addressing, and we will discuss those in committee.

Government Orders

However, the bill would not really do what the government suggests it would do to make the rail system safer. It would make the rail system more financially reliant on the shippers and rail companies themselves and less so on the federal and provincial governments. It is a shifting of responsibilities. It is not a creation of safety per se, unless, as I said earlier, we are expecting the insurance companies to be the ones to manage the safety systems in Canada.

Why is there all this focus on rail safety suddenly in this country?

The focus is caused in part because of Lac-Mégantic. Lac-Mégantic opened our eyes to a number of other issues that face us in the rail safety world.

One was that there is a 500-fold increase in the amount of crude oil that is being transported across the country, and it is crude oil that we have also discovered is not particularly inert. In fact, it is very explosive. Once this oil reaches its containers, it catches fire almost immediately, in some cases with huge and explosive results, as was the case in Lac-Mégantic and a number of other places across this country.

As a result, we have witnessed, with that 500-fold increase in the transportation of these dangerous goods, an alarming increase in the number of incidents involving these dangerous goods. There were 11 in the past two years alone. They were major accidents involving rail and the transportation of crude oil.

Now, I will hear the Liberals yelling that if we are not going to have it in rail, we are going to have it in pipelines. Some of this oil, in fact most of this oil, cannot be transported in pipelines because it is too dangerous. It is too gaseous. It would create too high a pressure inside a pipe. It does the same thing in rail but in a much smaller container. As a result, while rail containers are apparently safe as long as they are standing still and not moving, those rail containers, once they are moving and break, have disastrous consequences.

We also have discovered that the containers the government has been using for some considerable period of time to transport water, milk, and inert substances, but only in the last few years have we been transporting enormous quantities of dangerous goods in these containers, were known in 1989 to be unsafe. That was over 25 years ago and yet the government did not do anything about this until last year.

● (1345)

Last year, the minister announced that 5,000 of the 80,000 of these railcars would be taken off the rail immediately and that the rest would be replaced over the course of three years. Then we discovered that the ones that are replacing them are not safe either. Now we have been told that we are going to replace the railcars over a period of 10 years because the DOT-111s and DOT-1232s are not safe for the transportation of oil.

What do we do in those 10 years? What kind of effective safety are we promoting for the people of Canada if the vehicles that are going by their homes, schools, churches and daycare centres are not safe? That is part of what we are hoping the government will actually consider.

We also discovered as a result of this incident, but also as a result of the good work by the Auditor General, that Transport Canada is not doing a good job in particular with regard to managing the safety management system, SMS, with which the Government of Canada has replaced the direct oversight of the rail system. In theory, where before we had random inspections by government inspectors, now we have a system where the government inspects a safety management system put in place by a railroad for compliance and that the inspection of that system is how the government inspects the railroads. The trouble is the inspection of the system did not happen. As the Auditor General discovered, it was not happening, and in something like only 20% of the cases where transport officials intended to audit a railroad did they actually do it.

The Transportation Safety Board also found that Transport Canada had not been doing a good job with regard to its inspections of the safety management systems of the very railroad that failed, MMA, Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway. We examined the results of the Transport Canada investigation. It found 18 separate causes for the incident, although the minister and the parliamentary secretary said it was just one individual. No, it was not one individual. The Transportation Safety Board said very clearly there were 18 separate causes, some of which were with Transport Canada. It did not audit MMA. Despite knowing that it had serious flaws since 2002, it did not audit it. It did not follow up on the safety deficiencies and did not oversee the organizational and operational changes which MMA made, including the one-man crews, which was part of the reason that this all happened.

We have a government that is responsible for Transport Canada, and in turn Transport Canada, with a 20% cut in rail safety over the past few years, does not have the wherewithal to do all of the inspections that it needs to do of the safety management system. We have a system that is falling apart all around us, caused at first by the Liberals and now continued by the Conservatives, a safety management system that is not keeping Canadians safe.

I come back to the title of the bill, the safe and accountable rail act. Yes, it does something about when there is an accident, but we should not be saying "when there is an accident". We should be saying that there should be no accidents.

Last week at committee, CN admitted freely that there will be accidents, that there will be derailments. If we are going to admit that there are going to be derailments, how are we going to effectively protect Canadians? These railcars are not going to be replaced for 10 years. In the derailments that have taken place, such as in Lynchburg last year, the railcars carrying dangerous oil were the DOT-1232s, the newer more modern ones, and the train was going 24 miles an hour. In Gogama the train was going 38 and 43 miles an hour. In Mount Carbon, West Virginia, the train was going 33 miles an hour. In Galena, Illinois, the train was going 23 miles an hour. They all exploded. They all broke and exploded.

Statements by Members

We have been told by the government that it is going to limit the speed of these vehicles in cities to 40 miles an hour. Clearly, even 23 miles an hour is too fast. If we are going to have derailments, we should at least make sure that the oil stays in the car when it derails. The only way to do that is to slow the trains right down, maybe to the speed that was in place after the Mississauga derailment, which was 15 miles an hour.

I welcome the fact that the government is paying attention to rail safety, but I wish the government would actually do something to make Canadians more safe.

• (1350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting that the member made reference to the fact that it was the moving and braking that had the potential to cause issues. Would the member provide some clarification on the issue that VIA Rail will give priority to transportation of large freight trains that carry many of these dangerous goods to the degree in which VIA Rail trains pull to the side and allow the freight train to go through? My understanding is the New Democrats are advocating that VIA Rail should be given priority. If that is the case, we would see more of these trains carrying oil tanker cars having to do more braking and shifting of speeds and so forth.

Which system would be better for the safety of Canadians? Should VIA Rail continue to allow our freight trains to have the priority of going through? Alternatively, should it be reversed, where VIA Rail is given priority to go through and the freight trains would be expected to pull to the side?

• (1355)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, that is a pretty weak argument in favour of pipelines. If the Liberals are trying to suggest that VIA Rail is the cause of derailments, we are not here to talk about that. We are here to talk about whether the equipment that is being used and the manner in which it is being used is safe for Canadians. It is my belief that currently it is not safe. To throw up smokescreens is not helpful to this debate.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has quite a lot of knowledge and understanding of the whole issue of our rail system in Canada. He represents an area just to the north of my own in the city of Toronto. We are right in the middle of a large transportation hub through which much of the dangerous goods that traverse the country pass.

Could the member speak a bit to the issue of emerging and growing cities and communities around rail corridors, and what particular issues occur when we have more and more people living right next to rail corridors?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, clearly my riding is one of those, like that of the member for Davenport, that has a very busy rail corridor running through it. That corridor is carrying DOT-111 and DOT-1232 cars full of very dangerous oil at reasonably high speeds. The residents in my riding and those in Davenport are all worried that the greater increase in numbers of these vehicles is exposing them to a greater risk.

The minister demanded that these rail companies investigate the possibility of diverting these cars around major cities as is done in the U.S. Unfortunately, Transport Canada refused to share those risk

assessments with either the public or the parliamentary committee. Therefore, we are in the dark as to what risk these railroads and these speeds pose to the individuals who live along rail corridors and who live in my riding of York South—Weston and in the member's riding of Davenport.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the state of the tracks throughout the railway system.

Last summer I was at a railway crossing along the trans-Canada railway between La Tuque and Senneterre in the town of Parent. Every time an axle passed over a particular spot, the rails bent about an inch. Then, the train passed over a wooden bridge that is about 75 years old.

If our tracks are maintained according to the same standards used in Siberia, I am wondering whether we actually have any kind of safety in transportation.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the system in Canada of railroads being allowed to let their rails deteriorate as long as they go slower along those rails. In those circumstances, individuals who live nearby are subjected to much slower trains taking much longer to go through and, therefore, making the rail crossings more dangerous. Those individuals are also subject to the notion that these rails are not particularly safe.

It all comes back to the notion of how Transport Canada is inspecting and managing the safety of the rail system in Canada.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, today, March 31, is the deadline for those nations that are ready to do so to table climate commitments with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in advance of COP 21. Yesterday in question period the minister confirmed that Canada was not ready and would miss this deadline. The excuse that was offered was that we were a federation and we were checking with the provinces and territories.

Of the 33 nations that, as of today, have met this and have filed their intended nationally determined contributions with the UN, the European Union had 28 separate nation states with which to consult, confer and develop a plan, and it met the deadline.

The minister said yesterday that we had until December. That is not correct. By October, the UN system will have calculated the cumulative total of all commitments to see if it is sufficient to avoid 2°C.

At this point, we are missing our obligations to the world, to Canadians and to our children.

*Statements by Members***CANADA-INDIA RELATIONS**

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the co-chair of the Canada-India Parliamentary Friendship Group, I am very pleased to see the excitement in our Indo-Canadian community on the upcoming visit of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This is the first bilateral visit by India's Prime Minister in 42 years. It bodes well for continued Canada-India relations, both great Commonwealth democracies, as we move forward in the 21st century world. I commend our Prime Minister for his leadership in Canada's growing relationship with India, and I anticipate positive outcomes from this visit.

To welcome Mr. Modi, the Indo-Canadian community is organizing a huge event in Toronto. I want to thank the chairman, Dr. Azad Kaushik, the co-chairs, Ramesh Chotai and Deepak Ruparel, and their entire team for organizing an outstanding event.

Finally, I would like to wish all Indo-Canadians and those who are celebrating a very happy Vaisakhi 2015.

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[Translation]

TROIS-RIVIÈRES BOOK FAIR

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last weekend marked the 27th Salon du livre de Trois-Rivières.

Over 12,000 visitors of all ages attended this event to browse the books, meet authors, attend workshops, participate in discussions and, of course, plan their summer reading or find a new bedside book.

Most of them left with one or more books. At a time when electronic devices seem to be everywhere, I must admit that a dinosaur like me was thrilled to see so many people of all generations sharing this passion not just for printed books but also, and especially, for reading. Sources of discovery, learning, entertainment, beauty and a thousand interests, reading and books are an essential and integral part of life.

I would like to congratulate and thank Ms. Brosseau, the head of the book fair, and all those who make the Salon du livre de Trois-Rivières possible year after year. Their dedication and involvement allow our culture to continue to blossom and grow. Reading puts the world at our fingertips.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE OF THE VICTIMS OF SLAVERY AND THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw to the attention of the House that March 25 was the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has noted that "This year's Day of Remembrance pays particular tribute to the many women who suffered and died during the slave trade".

While remembering the past female victims of the slave trade, we must continue to fight for the women and girls who are enslaved today in prostitution right here in our nation.

Earlier this month, Toronto police rescued a 14-year old girl being prostituted from a hotel room. A few days before this, the Halton Regional Police arrested a man in Mississauga for trafficking a female minor. In February, police rescued individuals from sex slavery in Edmonton, Toronto, Hamilton, Burlington and Ajax. All of the victims were women and many underage.

Today, our fight against slavery and against violence against women and girls must remain vigilant. We must end modern day slavery.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the Prince Edward Islanders who are involved with the watershed groups of P.E.I. The efforts and contribution that these individuals and groups make toward protecting the environment, enhancing their communities and instilling environmental awareness in others are to be commended.

These Individuals, who are often volunteers, promote public awareness of healthy streams and buffer zones, assist with stream restoration activities, and contribute to stream enhancement. They spend days working in streams to remove excessive debris and reduce sediment using innovative techniques so as to improve water channels and fish habitat. With their knowledge and experience, they help create water-related policies and strategies for the future.

All efforts for watershed protection and enhancement take time and commitment. I commend those islanders who support their local watershed groups and contribute in so many ways to improving our brooks, our streams and our environment. Our thanks for their hard work and dedication.

* * *

● (1405)

FRANK ZANTOLAS AND HAROLD FINNEGAN

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the lives of two decorated veterans from my riding, who recently passed away.

Frank Zantolas was only 19 when he enlisted in our armed forces and was one of 14,000 Canadians who stormed Juno Beach on D-Day. For his efforts during World War II, he was awarded medals for his service in England, Italy, France, and Germany. Most recently, he received the French Legion of Honour, the highest decoration that can be given by France, which I presented to his family this past Sunday at the celebration of his life that was held at North Vancouver's Royal Canadian Legion 118.

Statements by Members

The other veteran is Harold Finnegan, who joined the Canadian army special forces in 1950 and served in the Korean War. He will be remembered for a career that spanned more than 20 years throughout Southeast Asia and Europe. He remained dedicated to the North Vancouver Korean Veterans Association and the Royal Canadian Legion right up until his death.

These men exemplify the spirit and bravery of all of Canada's men and women in uniform, and their contributions to our great nation will not be forgotten. May they rest in peace.

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[*Translation*]

LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about a very special day. On March 23, we had the immense privilege and honour of welcoming the Leader of the Official Opposition to Sherbrooke.

He did not come to Sherbrooke for photo ops, or to make an appearance and leave without proposing anything concrete to the people of Sherbrooke. No, on the contrary, he arrived in Sherbrooke with concrete proposals and clear commitments.

First he visited one of Sherbrooke's flourishing and innovative companies, Surplec HV Solutions, where he presented his plan to support small and medium-sized enterprises. Then he met with Ensaif Haidar, the wife of Raif Badawi. The opposition leader promised to ask the Prime Minister some questions about Mr. Badawi's situation and followed through on that promise two days later.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the commitment my leader made about the Sherbrooke airport: an NDP government will resolve this issue once and for all. This is something the Conservatives have failed to do since coming to power.

I want to thank the leader of the NDP for his clear commitments to Sherbrooke. On October 20, the day after the election, we will finally have a prime minister who truly knows and cares about our region.

* * *

[*English*]

DAUNDRE BARNABY

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply saddened by the news of the death of Canadian Olympian and Brampton resident Daundre Barnaby, while swimming in the ocean with his athletics teammates at a training camp on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts.

His impact can be seen in the outpouring of messages online from Daundre's teammates and all Canadians. Daundre wore the maple leaf with distinction while competing for Canada internationally, including at the London 2012 Olympic Games and the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. I know his presence will continue to be felt by his teammates as they compete near his hometown this summer at the Toronto 2015 Pan American Games.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I offer my sincere sympathies to Daundre's family, friends, and teammates and the

whole Athletics Canada family. Our collective thoughts and prayers are with the family during this very difficult time.

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PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year Parkinson Society Canada will be celebrating its 50th anniversary of putting Parkinson's issues on the map, a milestone for which I offer congratulations.

April 1 will mark the beginning of Parkinson's Awareness Month, a month-long celebration to recognize members of the Parkinson's community across Canada. The needs of the men and women affected by this disease are extensive.

In Niagara, we have Canada's only Parkinson's clinic, funded entirely through private donations. I have had the opportunity to work extensively with former NHLer Steve Ludzik, who suffers from Parkinson's himself, to help develop and build the Hotel Dieu Shaver clinic into one of Canada's pre-eminent Parkinson's clinics. In partnership with the United Way, this clinic serves so many because it is a disease that impacts so many.

I would ask all members of Parliament to take the opportunity to recognize Parkinson's Awareness Month, the month of April, as a significant milestone and important aspect of why we should be paying attention to those who suffer from the disease.

* * *

• (1410)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at midnight tonight, federal funding will end for a program called circles of support and accountability, designed to prevent the most dangerous high-risk sex offenders from repeating their crimes.

Based on the principles of restorative justice, 16 circles of support across the country involve more than 700 trained volunteers, each circle consisting of a group of five to seven volunteers who support and hold accountable sex offenders who are returning to the community after serving their full sentence. The results speak for themselves. No fewer than four independent studies have found that the program dramatically improves public safety and saves money. This is a successful made-in-Canada model that has been copied around the world.

Last May, the Minister of Public Safety intervened and restored funding to the program so that it could continue its important work. I urge the minister to intervene again and support the many community members who are volunteering their time to enhance public safety, promote rehabilitation, and prevent released sex offenders from reoffending. Without this support, the risk of further victimization will be greater and public safety will be compromised.

*Statements by Members***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as part of our responsibility to those who sacrificed, our government places the highest priority on making sure that veterans and their families have the support and services they need when they need them.

Yesterday, our Conservative government announced the critical injury benefit, which would provide a \$70,000 tax-free award for Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans who endure sudden and severe injury or illness while in the line of duty. This benefit is in recognition of the immediate stress and hardship endured by our brave men and women in uniform.

I am immensely proud of the leadership of our Prime Minister and the Minister of Veterans Affairs, who are ensuring that Canadian veterans and their families are treated with the care, compassion, and respect they so deserve.

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[*Translation*]**200TH ANNIVERSARY OF DRUMMONDVILLE**

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we know, Ottawa is the capital of our beautiful country, and Quebec City is the capital of Quebec.

I am pleased to tell the House that the city of Drummondville, the uncontested home of poutine, will be the celebration capital of Canada in 2015, as it celebrates its 200th anniversary.

Drummondville was founded on June 29, 1815, by Lieutenant Colonel Frederick George Heriot, and the city is currently experiencing an economic, cultural and social boom. Its rich history is a reflection of the spirit of the people of Drummondville. I want to take this opportunity to commend the Corporation des fêtes du 200^e de Drummondville for doing an excellent job of organizing the festivities.

This year will be a busy one for Drummondville, which will host a number of activities and events. The city has already played host to the 50th finals of the Quebec Winter Games. Still to come are the Mondial des cultures cultural festival, the Festival de la poutine, and the Drummondville sur son 31 celebration on December 31.

In 2015, Drummondville will be the celebration capital. We hope everyone will join us.

* * *

[*English*]**TAXATION**

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, by now, we know what the Liberal leader and his band of high-tax advisors want for Canadians: more taxes. They do not like our Conservative plan to give money back to Canadian families, because it does not increase government. In fact, I think that the member for Toronto Centre spoke for all Liberals when she said, “amen to raising taxes”.

On this side of the House, we take action for Canadian families. That is why, according to the PBO, after-tax benefits for families with young children are expected to double for the bottom 20%.

When our government introduced the universal child care benefit in 2006, total federal spending on child care almost quadrupled when compared to the abysmal effort of the Liberals.

Canadian families can trust our government to do what is best and give money back to the real child care experts. Their names are Mom and Dad.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, I was honoured to attend a naming ceremony and feast for the new aboriginal health institute at our University of Toronto. The work of this world-class research facility will be instrumental in closing the health outcome gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in Canada.

Interim Director Dr. Jeff Reading made it clear that this institute's exciting new approach will establish a true partnership between researchers and indigenous communities, and it will be grounded in the guiding principles of scientific excellence and community relevance.

The newly named Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health will bear the ceremonial indigenous name bestowed on its benefactor, Dr. Michael Dan, by the Lac La Croix First Nation, and Bryce for Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce, who founded the Public Health Service of Ontario and was an outspoken advocate for indigenous health.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to the vision and generosity of Dr. Michael Dan, who made this new institute possible with a \$10 million donation.

[*Member spoke in aboriginal language as follows:*]*Chi-miigwetch, Michael and Amira.*

* * *

● (1415)

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the rules have always been clear. It is not acceptable to use taxpayer-funded constituency offices for partisan purposes, yet the NDP has been caught doing just that as it continues its pattern of abuse on the taxpayers' dime.

We already know that the NDP is refusing to pay back the nearly \$4 million it owes to the hard-working taxpayers for the illegal use of parliamentary offices outside of Ottawa and illegal mailouts. Today is the deadline for the NDP to repay that money, but all we get from it is excuses.

This is simply unacceptable. When will the leader of the NDP take some accountability, stop breaking the rules and finally pay back the taxpayers of Canada the money that they are owed?

*Oral Questions***CHILD CARE**

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada reported today that, under Conservative mismanagement, the Canadian economy is actually shrinking.

However, Canadian families did not need StatsCan to tell them that they are working harder than ever but still struggling to make ends meet. Rising child care costs are putting the squeeze on families, and the Conservatives have broken their promise to create any new child care spaces.

Now a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirms that their plan is entirely insufficient to help families struggling to afford child care. Meanwhile they plan to take billions from the middle class and give it to the wealthy few, through their unfair income-splitting scheme.

Canadians deserve better. That is why the NDP has an affordable child care plan that will create quality child care spaces for just \$15 a day. We look forward to delivering the real help Canadian families need when we form the first NDP government later this year.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to our family tax cut and enhanced universal child care benefits, every Canadian family with children will have more money in their pockets to help make ends meet.

That is because we know that Canadian families know how to best spend their hard-earned money. Today the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that our plan will increase benefits for 100% of families with children.

The report also confirmed that our plan actually provides the greatest benefit to low-income Canadians. In contrast, the NDP has a plan to only help 10% of families with children, while the Liberals have pledged to take money away from parents and raise their taxes. In fact, the Liberal leader actually thinks that providing benefits to families is “a bad idea”.

I would like to reassure Canadians that our government will not listen to the opposition, and we will continue to increase benefits and provide money directly to parents to help them meet their needs.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, new GDP numbers out from Statistics Canada today show that the Canadian economy is again losing ground. GDP has been flat for over the last three months, but now it is actually starting to fall. The Governor of the Bank of Canada is warning of “atrocious” GDP numbers when the full first-quarter results are released in a couple of months. Governor Poloz is calling for immediate action to boost the economy and create jobs.

Where is the budget?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just to look at all of the facts, the fact is, of course, that the Canadian economy has grown over the past year, and the Bank of Canada and all other experts predict it will grow in the year to come.

Obviously, we are all aware that there are negative impacts on the Canadian economy in the short run due to the fall of global oil prices. That is why we think it is more important now more than ever to make sure we have more money in people's pockets. That is why we cut taxes and provided benefits to every single Canadian family, legislation that is before Parliament right now. I encourage all members to support it.

• (1420)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is going to be the first time in a full generation that a sitting government enters a new fiscal year without a budget. There is no excuse.

[*Translation*]

In January, the Bank of Canada lowered interest rates to one of the lowest levels in history. The Prime Minister is still not doing anything. Canadian families are coping with major layoffs in the retail sector. Another 1,500 jobs were lost at Future Shop over the weekend. Still the Prime Minister has nothing to offer.

The new fiscal year begins tomorrow. When will we get a budget?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Canadian economy has grown over the past year. All of the experts are predicting that it will grow in the year to come.

Naturally, the sudden drop in the price of oil has resulted in some short-term negative effects. That is why we introduced legislative measures in the House to put more money into the pockets of all Canadian families.

I encourage all parliamentarians to support the government's economic policies.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for over three years now, we have been warning the government not to put all of our eggs in one oil sands basket. It did not listen. The sinking price of oil was predictable: it is cyclical. The government did nothing. We lost 400,000 good manufacturing jobs while the government stood idly by. That is the problem. This time, the Conservatives cannot blame the American economy. It is their own fault.

The provinces are doing their job: they are tabling their budgets. When will we see a federal budget?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is pursuing its economic action plan. I recently announced support to open new markets, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises. Yesterday, I was in Ontario, where Honda announced plans to export Canadian-made vehicles to international markets—European markets—thanks to our free trade policies.

The current difficulties due to lower oil sands revenues are no reason to raise taxes, which is what the NDP wants to do. Clearly, it is time to give more money to Canadian families.

* * *

CHILD CARE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is sitting on its hands. What the Conservatives have is an economic inaction plan.

[English]

The Parliamentary Budget Office has revealed devastating details about the Conservatives' bogus child care policy. Under the Prime Minister's scheme, families with older kids or kids who are not even in child care actually get more benefits than families with kids who are in child care. That is the Parliamentary Budget Office's conclusion.

The Prime Minister promised to create exactly 125,000 spaces. Why has he delivered none?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the NDP will never understand is that the vagaries of the economy are no reason to start raising taxes on people. That does nothing but kill jobs, and on this side of the House, we are in the business of creating jobs. I know that the NDP is strongly opposed to anything that gives money to people as opposed to taking it for government for bureaucracy.

Let us see what the PBO actually said about the government's policies: "...all eligible families will realize an increase in their after-tax income if the enhancements to the UCCB...are legislated".

Also, according to the Parliamentary Budget Office: "...total federal spending on child care nearly quadrupled" under this government.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Here is something that is not a vagary, Mr. Speaker. With the NDP, quality, affordable, \$15-a-day child care is one election away.

• (1425)

[Translation]

The Parliamentary Budget Officer's report is scathing. Families that do not use child care are receiving more than those paying thousands of dollars a month for child care. Provinces like Quebec and Manitoba are being punished.

Why are the Conservatives paying billions of dollars for a child care program that does not provide any child care?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not want any of the NDP's policies, which consist of raising taxes for Canadian families and taking away the universal child care benefit.

Oral Questions

The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that all eligible families will realize an increase in their after-tax incomes if the enhancements to the UCCB are legislated. He also said that total federal spending on child care has nearly quadrupled under our government.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more disappointing news this morning from Stats Can. Our economy has shown negative growth three months of the last six. The middle class clearly needs a plan for growth, but we have seen no plan. We have seen no budget. When will we see any action by the government to get our economy moving again?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): In fact, Mr. Speaker, I have announced recently a range of economic actions, including assistance to exporters, additional federal money into infrastructure, tax credits for small business, incentives for people to undertake apprenticeships, the apprenticeship loan program, small business financing, and many other actions.

What the leader of the Liberal Party does not understand is Canadians do not think we respond to fallen oil prices by hiking taxes on the energy industry. They do not think we respond to that by imposing carbon taxes on Canadians. What we do is put money in people's pockets, and that is what we are doing.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Despite all those actions, Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada governor is still saying our economic growth is atrocious. The government does not have a plan. It does not have a budget. The Minister of Finance is completely missing in action.

We know putting dollars in the pockets of the middle class grows the economy, so why does the Prime Minister insist on giving a \$2,000 tax break to the rich?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian economy has grown over the past year and all experts, including the Bank of Canada, anticipate it will grow over this year, notwithstanding the immediate impact of energy prices.

As the leader of the Liberal Party really wants to put money into the pockets of middle-class Canadians, there is legislation before this Parliament that does that, that benefits every single middle-class, in fact every single Canadian, family in this country, but of course, the Liberal Party is wedded to tax hikes, wedded to deficits, and wedded to killing jobs.

Our politics are very different.

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that the Canadian economy is shrinking. It comes as no surprise, since the Minister of Finance is missing in action, the budget has been delayed and the Prime Minister has decided to give more money to the rich, instead of doing something for the middle class.

Oral Questions

When will this government finally develop a responsible plan for economic growth?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will not hike taxes for the energy industry because of falling oil prices, nor will we impose carbon taxes on Canadian consumers. Those are Liberal Party policies.

We on this side of the House are lowering taxes for all Canadian families, which boosts their earnings. I encourage the Liberal Party to change its philosophy, support our initiatives and put money into the pockets of Canadians.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government should be presenting its plan and targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions today. Unfortunately, I think we are never going to see that plan.

The government's inaction is making Canada a laughingstock in the eyes of its allies. Mexico submitted its plan. The United States presented its commitment and Russia is doing the same as we speak.

Why is Canada the black sheep on this issue?

• (1430)

[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 will submit Canada's greenhouse gas emissions targets in the weeks ahead. We are seeking information from the provinces and the territories on how they will meet their targets.

Our Conservative government is the first government in Canadian history to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We will continue to take action in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, without introducing a job-killing carbon tax supported by the Liberals and the NDP.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's talking points continue to be more fiction than fact, because the government consistently misses deadlines. It missed its own repeated deadlines for oil and gas regulations, and it is on track to miss its reduction targets. Now it is missing out on an important North American approach to fighting climate change.

Why is Canada refusing to co-operate with Mexico and the United States, our NAFTA partners, when it comes to protecting our environment and our economy?

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 United States' announcement. We have always said that to effectively reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, all major emitters must be on board.

Canada has one of the cleanest electricity system supplies in the world, our energy coming from sources that emit no greenhouse gas emissions, whereas the United States has only 30%.

Leading up to Paris, we will continue to take action to reduce emissions, without introducing a job-killing carbon tax supported by the NDP and the Liberals.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is not only missing in action, it is missing the point. Not only is climate change a threat to our health, our environment, and our economy, it is an economic opportunity that is waiting for us.

A study by the new NewClimate Institute shows that the U.S. targets announced today will reduce its reliance on foreign oil, avoid 7,000 premature pollution deaths every year, and create 470,000 renewable energy jobs by 2030.

When exactly is the minister going to stop stalling and announce Canada's commitment?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have stated, Canada will be submitting the greenhouse gas emissions targets in the weeks ahead. We are seeking information from the provinces as well as the territories on how they will meet their targets.

Our Conservative government is the first government in Canadian history that has reduced greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. We will continue to take action, without introducing a carbon tax, proposed by the NDP and supported by the Liberals.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' habit of missing target dates goes beyond missions.

Today is the first anniversary of the expiry of the health accords signed in 2004. Instead of sitting down with the provinces to negotiate new accords and improve our health care system, the government chose to deprive the provinces of \$36 billion in transfers.

Why did the minister not make the effort to sit down with the provinces to try to renew the accords?

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is transferring the highest health care dollars in Canadian history. By the end of this decade, the transfers will be \$40 billion per year, and we have committed to year after year increases.

Our government has made amazing progress in terms of these health care transfers.

Oral Questions

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that federal leadership has never been so badly needed, yet the government has totally abandoned the field.

Today marks the sad anniversary of the Conservatives' total abandonment of health accords. They failed to work with the provinces and territories to address the real challenges faced by our cherished public health care system. They failed to act on home care. They failed to act on the high cost of prescription drugs. Why are they refusing to renew our health accords? Why are they undermining our health care system?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2010, our increases to the provinces are more than double what the provinces are actually increasing their expenditures by. What we also need to make note of is it is not just money that is going to make a difference to the system. It is innovation. We have worked very well with the provinces around innovation.

I would like to quote from Brad Wall:

This can no longer just be about money. We've got to find ways to ensure that the health care is here for the future generations—that it's sustainable—without sacrificing patient care.

* * *

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 22 Canadians died of listeria in 2008 from unsafe meat. New inspectors were hired after that, inspections were supposed to be increased. However, now, after CFA has been forced by the government to reduce meat inspections and inspectors, meat sold in Canada is back to pre-2008 inspection levels.

Unfortunately, that is not the same when it comes to the Americans. The meat going to the U.S. is inspected 100%. It is a simple question for the minister. Why is meat going to America better inspected than meat going to feed Canadian families?

•(1435)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has one of the safest and healthiest systems in the world. The OECD rates our food safety system as number one against seventeen OECD countries. It is important to note that in our budget 2014 we committed to 200 new front-line food safety inspectors.

[Translation]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, meat exported to the United States is subject to more inspections than meat destined for Canadians. That is completely unacceptable.

To save a few dollars, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is cutting the number of inspections. These were put in place to prevent a food industry crisis such as the one that occurred in 2008, when 22 people died and dozens fell ill.

Why are the Conservatives moving backwards and putting Canadians' health at risk?

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the Conference Board of Canada rates our food safety system as number one against seventeen OECD countries. We are enhancing inspections and hiring more inspectors. There were 200 committed in 2014.

Some of the additional things we have done are that we have brought in tougher penalties, we have enhanced controls on E. coli and we have new meat labelling requirements. We are certainly making great progress in this area.

* * *

[Translation]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Information Commissioner's report confirms what the NDP has been saying for years: the access to information system is outdated and ineffective.

The Conservatives campaigned on transparency and accountability. However, once in power, they voted against the NDP's Bill C-567, which would have given the commissioner the tools needed to expose government corruption.

Will the Conservatives finally listen to the commissioner and the NDP and strengthen the Access to Information Act?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Information Commissioner for her report. We are currently studying her recommendations.

I can also say that the Federal Accountability Act of 2006 broadened the scope of the Access to Information Act so that it applies to more than 200 institutions. In 2013-14, our government processed almost 59,000 access to information requests, which represents a 9% increase.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Information Commissioner's report is a damning indictment of the government's culture of secrecy. No wonder the President of the Treasury Board is starving her of her basic funds.

The Information Commissioner has warned that under the government the Access to Information Act has become "a shield against transparency" and encourages "a culture delay". She has outlined a pattern of interference, obstruction and secrecy.

Remember back in 2006 when the Prime Minister said that he was going to open the doors, that he was going to bring accountability and that he was going to end the culture of secrecy? What happened to the Prime Minister that he fell so far off the rails to get such a dismal grade on accountability?

Oral Questions

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide the hon. member with actual information. Since 2006, we have released more completed access to information requests than the Trudeau, Turner, Mulroney, Campbell, Chrétien and Martin governments combined.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite Conservative bragging, Canada has again failed at job creation. However, the minister says that mounting job losses are all part of his master plan. Unemployed families struggling to pay their bills are not buying this nonsense.

The 1,500 jobs lost at Future Shop, another 17,000 at Target and now the worst retail sales slide in years is not a plan.

I expect the minister will answer with his phony 1.2 million jobs line that he has used, but middle-class families are fed up with that and they know the Conservative fiscal policies are a disaster.

• (1440)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are trade, training and tax cuts. Yesterday, the Prime Minister was at an Ontario construction plant for Honda where it announced it would be exporting vehicles directly from Canada to Europe for the first time ever because of our free trade deal.

We are training people through more than half a million apprenticeship grants and shifting resources to high-demand industries. There are lower taxes so businesses can afford to hire, families can afford to save and consumers can afford to spend. That formula of trade, tax cuts and training has created 1.2 million net new jobs.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are over two million more Canadians in the jobs market actually looking for jobs. Canada's economy not only shrank in January, it shrank in three of the last six months. The Bank of Canada says that we need "considerable monetary stimulus to avoid falling back into recession". That is why the bank took action and lowered rates, but there has been no action from the Conservatives.

Why has the Minister of Finance spent the last two months in hiding, refusing to table a budget? When the Canadian economy flatlines, why is the finance minister missing in action?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the best possible stimulus for our economy is to put thousands of dollars back in the pockets of everyday families with kids, and that is exactly what we did with our family tax cut and benefits, which will benefit 100% of families with kids by over \$1,000 per family. The Liberals have announced that they will vote against this money, that they will take it away and that they will raise taxes on families.

We know that will not only hurt the middle class, but it will kill thousands of jobs and send shockwaves through our community. That is what the Liberals would do. We will not let them.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that he cannot introduce a budget because of falling oil prices, but Alberta is more dependent on oil prices than Ottawa. However, Alberta's premier did not make excuses; he tabled a budget last week. If Jim Prentice can introduce a budget, why can the Prime Minister not?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are desperate to have a budget that would raise taxes. I have an answer for them. We will never increase taxes. We will never bring forward their policy of higher taxes, more spending and irresponsible debt. We know that would drive the economy into the ditch.

That is why we have a low-tax plan that has created 1.2 million net new jobs, 85% of them are full-time, two-thirds are in high-wage sectors. That is why millions of Canadians have had a phone call that has said "Congratulations, you got the job".

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the humanitarian crisis in Syria is very troubling. After five years of civil war, 220,000 people are dead and there are millions of refugees.

In order to strengthen international aid, the UN Secretary-General organized an important meeting in Kuwait and asked every country, including Canada, to contribute more. Meanwhile, the Minister of International Development did not even attend that meeting.

How does the minister justify his absence? Will he respond to the Secretary-General's urgent call?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague. As we speak, Canada is very well represented at the conference in question.

I would like to remind members that, to date, Canada has helped 16 million people in Syria by giving them access to clean drinking water. We have given food aid to over 4 million Syrians. What is more, we have given emergency assistance to nearly 3 million refugees in neighbouring countries, such as Jordan. These concrete improvements are a result of the commitments that we have made and kept.

We believe that, in dealing with this crisis, we do not have to choose one solution over another, to choose between security and—

*Oral Questions**[English]*

The Speaker: The hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if the minister would actually show up at the conference and commit for Canada to help out with this crisis.

The UN says that it needs \$8.4 billion to help the over 11 million Syrians affected by this crisis, half of whom are women and children. It is the largest humanitarian appeal in UN history. The U.S. has already pledged \$500 million. It has been over a year since Canada last made a humanitarian pledge for Syria.

Why has Canada not made a pledge at this conference? Why can the Conservatives spend over \$100 million for a bombing campaign and not pledge the same to save lives?

• (1445)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are already the sixth largest donor in Syria.

I can tell my colleague that we have paid what we have pledged so far. This is what the other partner countries have to do. Our government believes there is no either/or in response to this crisis.

We are participating in the military mission against ISIL and contributing to the humanitarian crisis. Security and humanitarian go hand in hand. This is the way it works.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a government that never passes up a good chance to score cheap political points instead of taking on the hard work necessary to get things done.

When it comes to Bill C-51, the Conservatives are still putting their efforts into ramming this bill through the House instead of listening to Canadians. Now they are refusing to adopt common sense amendments that would address some of the worst elements of this dangerous bill.

Canadians should not be asked to trade away their freedoms because the government cannot admit to its drafting mistakes. Will the minister do the right thing and withdraw Bill C-51?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hope the member has listened to the many witnesses. Here is one to whom I would like him to pay attention.

Bill C-51, and this is an important reminder, is directed against Islamist jihadists to prevent them from achieving their stated objective of carrying out terrorist threats against the west, including Canada. Our country is facing a serious threat.

—the measures proposed in Bill C-51 to deal with the nature of threats Canada faces are quite rightly and urgently needed....

That was professor Salim Mansur from Western University in Ontario.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, most of the witnesses that we heard from, including those called by the government, confirmed what we have been saying from the beginning.

Bill C-51 is a botched bill. It does not include any kind of oversight mechanism and it jeopardizes our rights and freedoms. From the outset, the Conservative government has been turning a deaf ear, and its stubbornness could undermine the freedoms of Canadians.

Will the minister finally do the right thing and withdraw his bill?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that would be a huge mistake at a time when Canada is facing an international jihadist threat. There have been terrorist attacks in Paris, in Sydney, Australia, and in Copenhagen. A terrorist attack even occurred here in this Parliament, and the New Democrats want us to stand idly by and allow terrorists to take advantage of loopholes in our system. That is despicable.

I would like to reassure the public. We are going to protect Canadians and their rights. We are being threatened by terrorists and we are going to take concrete action against them.

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*[English]***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of National Defence was at CFB Trenton as the Royal Canadian Air Force accepted the delivery of its fifth C-17 Globemaster aircraft.

Under the government's watch, Canada is no longer dependent on the airlift capability of other countries. Could the Minister of National Defence update the House on how our C-17s are used for domestic and international missions?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his good work on behalf of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Back in the decade of darkness, we used to have to beg, borrow and plead countries like Russia in order to get strategic airlift capabilities. Thanks to the historic investments made by this government in our armed forces, we can now project Canada's presence around the world.

Indeed, I am pleased to report that yesterday I received the fifth C-17 Globemaster, significantly increasing the flexibility and lifespan of this critical asset. Thanks to this fleet, we have been able to respond to humanitarian disasters all around the world, and support our men and women operating against ISIL in Iraq.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have not seen the end of the Conservatives' mismanagement of the temporary foreign worker program. Tomorrow, an arbitrary deadline imposed by the Conservatives will force tens of thousands of temporary foreign workers to leave Canada. So-called immigration consultants continue to extort these workers to the last cent, taking advantage of their vulnerability and helplessness.

When will the government take action and put an end to this shameful situation?

• (1450)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the priority for our reform of the temporary foreign worker program was to put Canadians in available jobs. This is working very well. The reforms were well received by employers all across the country. The pathways to permanent residence have never been more numerous, and the rules have been known for months.

What was not known was the NDP's position. The NDP wanted the reform to be done more quickly and is now in favour of keeping all temporary workers—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

[English]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have made a complete mess of the temporary foreign worker program, leaving vulnerable workers paying the price. The Conservatives ignored all the warnings that their deadline was going to have unintended consequences, and now some consultants have taken advantage of desperate temporary foreign workers, bilking them of all their life savings while making false promises.

What are the Conservatives going to do to fix this? How are they going to protect these vulnerable workers and make things right?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has information about an immigration consultant who has broken the law, she or her constituents should give it to the Canada Border Services Agency.

Our temporary foreign worker program is working. It is putting Canadians first. The pathways to permanent residence have never been more numerous.

What is outstanding, what is bizarre, is the position of NDP members. Last year, they said we should have done this reform earlier. Today, they seem to be indicating that we should keep all temporary workers here. They are a weather vane.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives are also letting down Toronto. Yesterday, the mayor made an urgent appeal to the federal government for housing funding. After years of federal downloading by Conservative and Liberal governments, repairs to social housing have reached a crisis

point. Investing in social housing in Toronto is not only good for low-income families, but it would create 220,000 person years of employment.

When will Conservatives finally stop turning their backs on Toronto and start investing in Toronto's social housing?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have done just that. In fact, I recently signed the agreement for investment in affordable housing with Minister Ted McMeekin from Ontario. This is what he said: “The renewed partnership between Canada and Ontario will help improve access to safe, suitable affordable housing”.

What we do is provide funding to the provinces and work in partnership with them. They determine where the funding goes, and I know they are doing that in Ontario.

* * *

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 100,000 Toronto families are on a waiting list for affordable housing. They need more than that member's empty spin cycle.

However, the disrespect for Toronto does not end with that non-answer. A new report from Toronto City Hall shows that the federal government owes at least \$4 million in lieu of property taxes, and that does not include the whopping bill for the island airport.

People pay their fair share of property taxes, so why does the federal government think it can cheat Toronto out of millions of dollars? Why the rip-off?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should check his facts when it comes to this matter.

It is very clear. I understand from the Toronto Port Authority that indeed there is a written binding agreement between the Toronto Port Authority and the City of Toronto with respect to these outstanding facts. I would be happy to share the address of the Toronto Port Authority with the hon. member so that he can contact it for the actual facts.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Canada faces a \$123 billion infrastructure deficit. It is going up by \$2 billion every year. By 2020, nearly 60% of Montreal's water pipes will have reached the end of their life cycle.

The municipalities' confidence is decreasing every day, and so is that of the business world and Canadians in general, since we have a Minister of Finance who refuses to act.

When will the minister take responsibility and deliver the budget?

Oral Questions

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member's former colleague, the mayor of Montreal, is very proud to hear his colleague saying that the mayor is not doing his job when it comes to Montreal's water pipes. I am sure he must be proud of that.

As hon. members know, we are working in partnership with the municipalities and the provinces. Make no mistake: under the Prime Minister's leadership, our government has invested three times more in infrastructure than the previous Liberal government.

• (1455)

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Finance to present a budget, but if it is like the last one, maybe I do not want to hear the budget.

Only two years ago, bridges and transit had a \$2.4 billion annual investment by the federal government, which has now shrunk to just over \$200 million. The mayor of Vancouver has confirmed that his city received zero dollars from the new building Canada fund. It is unbelievable. The impact of this is absolutely obvious. Vancouver now has the worst gridlock in Canada, a direct result of the current government's indifference. It is costing \$1 billion a year.

When will the Conservative government fund infrastructure? Where is the budget?

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, that is wrong. The hon. member knows that is only for the gas tax fund, which is twice a year. The transfer of monies to the provinces and territories was \$2 billion last year, in 2014. It will be more than that in 2015, and he knows that.

Our Conservative government has invested a record amount into public transit across Canada. In Toronto that is the extension of the Toronto-York Spadina subway and the Union Station project; 100% of the gas tax fund of Toronto has been invested in transit, and that is its choice.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, members of the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously adopted a motion calling on the Conservative Prime Minister to immediately transfer the firearms registry data pertaining to Quebec to the Government of Quebec. Let us not forget that Quebec taxpayers helped pay for that data.

Will the Conservative government finally show some common sense, respect the unanimous decision of the National Assembly and give Quebec the registry data?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure my colleague and tell her that we are going to abide by the Supreme Court's decision. We believe that enough of Quebec taxpayers'

money has been wasted on this ineffective and costly firearms registry, which is a bottomless money pit.

We share the point of view of the Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs, which believes that a Quebec registry, like the defunct Canadian registry, would be useless and would not help keep Quebecers or police officers safe.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, where there is a will, there is a way. That is what the Supreme Court was saying. If the Conservatives wanted to, then they could, but they would rather focus on their ideology. Yesterday, 106 elected representatives from across Quebec all spoke out against the Conservatives' determination to destroy the Quebec data in the registry. That goes against the will of Quebec, which has been clear: these data are important to public safety.

Will the Conservatives set aside their ideological stubbornness, listen to Quebec's elected representatives and give them the data that Quebec taxpayers helped pay for? Where is the Prime Minister's open federalism?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if my colleague and her party would set ideology aside, they would support the measures that our government brought in eight years ago. We implemented minimum sentences of three to five years for people who are found in illegal possession of a firearm. We also implemented measures to ensure that harsher sentences are imposed on people who commit violent crimes using a firearm. In the House, we passed measures regarding mandatory training and against domestic violence. The member should stand up here in Ottawa and defend the safety of our country.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, I have been proud to support the significant infrastructure investments that are delivering real results for Alberta and communities across Canada.

Late last week I was very pleased to host the Minister of Health in Fort McMurray for an event that further demonstrates this government's commitment to jobs and the economy.

Can the minister please update the House on this important announcement?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Fort McMurray—Athabasca has certainly been a very strong advocate for Albertans.

Oral Questions

The minister was very pleased last week to announce that Fort McMurray International Airport is being considered for an expansion project of up to \$25 million under the building Canada fund. I understand there is a critical need for the terminal buildings to expand and also the main runway.

This is incredibly important. It creates jobs. Our government has supported the new building Canada plan, which is the longest long-term infrastructure plan in Canadian history.

Together, we are building a stronger Alberta for a stronger Canada.

* * *

• (1500)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year the government had difficulty sponsoring 1,300 refugees.

The situation is catastrophic: three and a half million Syrians displaced to places like Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan; six and half million displaced internally; two and half million Iraqis displaced in their country.

Why, in the face of this catastrophic situation, is the government so miserly? Why is it incapable of stepping up to the plate for refugees?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has had no trouble fulfilling its commitments. On the contrary, we have done more than our part in resettling refugees from Iraq and Syria. We continue to do so. We are one of the leading humanitarian contributors in both regions.

However, we also recognize, unlike the parties opposite, that the source of this problem is Islamic terrorism. The source of this problem is the Islamic State. It is that terrorist threat that has caused millions of people to be internally displaced, to have to leave the borders of their countries. They want to go home, and we, by our action with allies, want—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, another business in my region has fallen victim to the sluggish economy. The Niobec mine expansion project in Saint-Honoré has been dropped. Some 70 people are losing their well-paying jobs as a result.

Niobium is a rare and highly strategic metal, but Canada is once again missing its chance to develop a niche specific to this resource. The economy is tanking and we need the federal government more than ever.

Will the minister finally take action to stimulate our mining sector and create good jobs for the people of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean?

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, mining is a global industry, and our government is committed to attracting investment, opening new markets, supporting innovation, improving regulatory effectiveness, and promoting corporate social responsibility. That is why we are continuing to take action to ensure the success of the extractive sector through the extension of the mineral exploration tax credit and the Canadian exploration expenses.

Our government is proud that Canada has the lowest overall tax rate on new business investments in the G7.

* * *

TAXATION

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Parliamentary Budget Officer released a report looking into the impact of our government's family tax cut and enhanced universal child care benefit. Can the Minister of State for Social Development please update this House on the PBO's findings for our proposed changes and what our government has done to help parents meet their child care needs?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Mississauga South for that question and for the great work she does on behalf of Canadian families.

Today, the PBO confirmed that 100% of families with children will benefit from our family tax cut and benefit package, regardless of their choice of child care. The PBO said, "The introduction of the [universal child care benefit] greatly increased the level of benefits" to families. In fact, thanks to our Conservative government, he said that the "total federal spending on child care nearly quadrupled".

While the opposition votes against the UCCB, we will keep putting money in the pockets of families.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, FD): Mr. Speaker, in the 1980s and 1990s, 72 million trees were planted on privately held forest land through a federal forest development program in eastern Quebec.

Today these trees are between 20 and 30 years old and in need of maintenance work in order to preserve their value, but the federal government has not announced any follow-up program.

On the eve of the budget, private forest owners have expectations. They need support in order to proceed with the required maintenance work and develop the wood.

Will the government support them, or will it allow a \$100 million investment to rot away?

*Government Orders***POINTS OF ORDER**

OFFICIAL REPORT

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has provided unprecedented support for the forest sector. Our focus on innovation, energy efficiency, and expanding markets has demonstrated remarkable results. Wood exports to China have increased by 1400% since 2007, and world-first products are being developed from coast to coast to coast.

Unlike that member who voted against supporting the forest sector at every opportunity, we will continue to take action to create jobs and support forest-dependent communities.

* * *

• (1505)

*[Translation]***INFRASTRUCTURE**

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, FD): Mr. Speaker, although it may not seem like it yet, summer is coming, along with the construction season.

Municipalities need to get going now on planning the infrastructure work they can get done before next winter. Unfortunately, they do not know how much money they will have because Ottawa has still not reached an agreement with Quebec on the building Canada plan.

Will the minister stop telling us that it is the largest infrastructure program in history and realize that if municipalities do not have access to the money in time, there will be no credible plan in the short term?

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, the member should perhaps follow what is happening with this file.

Last June 25, the Prime Minister was in my riding together with Premier Couillard to announce the renewal of the historic agreement with the Quebec government on the gas excise tax.

Every municipality knows how much it will be getting for the next 10 years. The amounts for the next five years were announced previously. The money was transferred to the Quebec government last July and November. The municipalities are well aware of that.

As a former mayor, he should perhaps ask the current mayor.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[English]***PLANS AND PRIORITIES**

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, on behalf of the 84 departments and agencies, the 2015-16 reports on plans and priorities.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hope that I have not chosen the wrong moment, but on Thursday in the debate around ISIS, I discovered in reviewing the *Hansard* that I made an error of fact, and I wish to withdraw it. U.S. Republicans were never featured in a photograph with ISIS fighters. I regret the error.

The Speaker: I am sure the House appreciates the clarification from the hon. member.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[English]***SAFE AND ACCOUNTABLE RAIL ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-52, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place on behalf of the good people of Davenport in the great city of Toronto to debate a very important bill for the constituents in my riding of Davenport, and that is the bill to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act.

What we are talking about here is rail safety. I would like to let people who are watching know that in communities in Toronto, including the community I represent, and in fact, I myself live very close to a major rail artery, every day dangerous goods are carried through. The rail line sort of bisects the city of Toronto, the biggest city in the country. The train that ultimately exploded and led to the tragic events in Lac-Mégantic actually traversed right through the city of Toronto.

For many people that is a staggering realization, because there are thousands upon thousands of people who live literally metres away from the rail line. For them, the debate we are having is not just a theoretical conversation. It is not just about what happens somewhere else. It is about the very communities in which they live.

It is also important to note while we are debating this that in cities like Toronto which have rail lines criss-crossing and intersecting large areas of residential neighbourhoods, when the rail lines were first put in, many of those communities were not there. They were industrial areas, but development has changed the face of cities like Toronto and what we are seeing now are residential communities very close to rail lines.

For the people I represent what is in those tankers is very important. How we ensure the safe transport of what is in those tankers is very important to my community and therefore this debate is important.

Government Orders

As many of my esteemed colleagues in the NDP have said today, we are in favour of the bill, but support for the bill underlines some very serious concerns that we have around rail safety in the country. It is not just the NDP that has concerns about rail safety. It is not just members of my community in Davenport that have concerns about rail safety. The Auditor General also has concerns about rail safety.

I know the government always welcomes the views and opinions of the NDP here in the House, but every once in a while it is nice to quote third parties. In this case, I will read a bit of the Auditor General's 2014 report on Transport Canada's oversight of rail safety, because it is the oversight of rail safety, the implementing of a system of safety that the people in my community are looking to the government to achieve. While we support the measures that are in the bill, it does not go any distance toward ameliorating the concerns in my community around rail safety.

The report from the Auditor General really underlines and gives credence to the concerns of the people in Davenport. The report states:

Despite the fact that federal railways were required 12 years ago to implement safety management systems for managing their safety risks and complying with safety requirements, Transport Canada has yet to establish an audit approach that provides a minimum level of assurance that federal railways have done so. While it has done a few audits of those systems most of the audits it did were too narrowly focused and provided assurance on only a few aspects of SMSs [safety management systems]. At the rate at which the Department is conducting focused audits, it will take many years to audit all the key components of SMS regulations, including key safety systems of each of the 31 federal railways.

● (1510)

That is just not enough for the people of Toronto. That is not enough for people of my community of Davenport. This does not cut it. It is going to take years for Transport Canada to conduct the audits. By the time it has finished conducting those audits, hopefully the Conservative government will be long gone and we will have new regulations and new standards for rail safety in this country.

The guidance and tools provided to inspectors for assessing federal railway safety management systems are missing many key elements. That is not us saying this. That is the Auditor General saying this. For example, they contain few requirements to help inspectors plan, conduct and conclude on audits and inspections, and for following up on findings. This makes it difficult for Transport Canada to ensure that its inspections and audits are effective in determining whether railways are taking corrective actions where necessary.

Lastly, Transport Canada does not have a quality assurance plan to continuously improve its oversight of rail safety. Is it any wonder that Canadians from coast to coast to coast are concerned about rail safety? They may be, as we are, happy that there are steps being taken around insurance and compensation, but we need to talk about preventing accidents as well as who pays for them when they happen.

This is not just a case of red tape versus yellow tape. This is not a question of onerous regulations versus caution tape that we use to cordon off accident sites. This should be a matter of course.

We are transporting dangerous goods in record quantities and record frequencies today. Not only are our regulations not keeping pace with the changes, the government has diminished and stripped

away oversight and allowed companies to do the oversight themselves. The Auditor General's report shows that Transport Canada does not have the tools to even oversee the oversight that the companies are charged with implementing.

Most fair-minded people would accept that when rail companies are transporting dangerous goods through municipalities, the municipalities have a right know what is being brought through their cities, not three months later, but before it happens. That is a fair expectation that most people would have, yet we have not had any of that conversation happen among Conservatives.

I know that in the Province of Ontario, the Ontario NDP has pushed for "right to know" legislation that would enable municipalities to know what was coming through their cities and towns before it came through. This would allow emergency response units and fire crews to at least be properly on guard. It would also allow residents to know what the risks are of what is passing right through their backyards. That is, in fact, literally what happens in Toronto and in my community. It is fair for Canadians to want to know that stuff.

When we look at the Auditor General's report, we understand the enormity of the deficit in rail safety in this country. It also underscores a massive policy failure with regard to the Conservative government and its unwillingness to nurture the clean energy economy in Canada. The Conservatives are leaving \$5 trillion of economic activity in clean energy technology on the table while they continually pump out and transport oil products that clearly do not come with the oversight and safety requirements that they need.

● (1515)

Things like "right to know" legislation are vital for cities like Toronto, where we have neighbourhoods upon neighbourhoods growing and developing right along the rail line. This is not 1920. This is 2015, and we need to pull these regulations and safety requirements up to modern standards.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member and I have worked together a great deal on the whole issue of rail safety in the city of Toronto. We represent very similar ridings.

The member talked about the need to prevent accidents. He cited the Auditor General's report that really highlighted the lack of supervision and the lack of regulatory structure and enforcement to ensure that the public is protected with these major shipping routes of highly volatile substances, such as oil, going through our neighbourhoods.

It was in 1999 that the Liberal government amended the Railway Safety Act that really accelerated deregulation of the industry. It kind of took off like a runaway train. Later they brought in safety management systems that turned safety over to the companies to regulate themselves.

Can the member comment on how effective or ineffective this has been, and how he thinks we should deal with this problem in the future?

Government Orders

• (1520)

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Parkdale—High Park who has done excellent work in the city of Toronto on this issue of rail safety, and not just on the issue of rail issue but on many other issues.

It may be worth reminding Canadians that many of the people who have served on the front bench of the Conservative Party were also on the front bench of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party during the tragedy at Walkerton, which was in part connected to the very fact that inspectors, oversight and regulation of the water supply had been cut down and destroyed by an ideological Conservative government. It is the same gang here now.

It is no surprise that they would oversee or preside over the biggest food safety scandal in the history of this country. It is an ideological path that the government pursues, and it is one that does not put public safety first.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I must point out that there is a seniors' residence on Turgeon Street in my riding that is located less than 100 feet from the rail line. In Rosemère, there are residences that back directly onto the rail line, which runs about 20 or 25 feet above ground. If a rail car were to ever go off the track, it would fall directly on those homes.

This problem can unfortunately be seen all over Canada. Too often, people built homes much too close to the rail lines. Unfortunately, I too have often seen with my own eyes DOT-111 cars travelling along the rail lines in my riding.

I would love to believe that there is no risk, but is it wise to agree to systematically hand over safety responsibilities to private, for-profit companies, as the current government is doing?

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, the description of the member's community is very similar to many right across the country where neighbourhoods are very close to these rail lines.

We have given some of these rail companies carte blanche for decades upon decades. It is time for rigorous oversight and safety measures of the shipping of dangerous goods along our rail corridors.

It is vital. It is vital for the economy. It is vital for the safety of our communities. We have seen time and time again in recent history that the oversight and safety measures are not enough in Canada right now.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill C-52, the safe and accountable rail act.

Before I start, I would like to say that I appreciate the opportunity to share my time with the hard-working member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

There are three points I want to make today. One is why Bill C-52 is important. I want to also talk a bit about the approach that we are using and how this compares to other liability legislation in recent times, and then about some basic provisions of the bill.

The first priority of Transport Canada, as we know, is safety and the prevention of accidents, but if an incident does occur, the liability and compensation regime must be able to respond to and support Canadians and their communities. We must take the steps necessary to ensure that in the event of a catastrophe, sufficient funds are available to compensate potential victims and pay for environmental cleanup and remediation.

We all know, as it has been commented on earlier in the House today, about the tragic accident in Lac-Mégantic with the Atlantic railway in 2013. The cleanup costs alone have been in the hundreds of millions of dollars, but the railway company had third party liability insurance of only \$25 million. The railway has subsequently gone bankrupt. The Minister of Transport has moved quickly following the tragedy to improve the safety regime that applies to railways, especially for the transportation of crude oil.

In January of 2014, there was an accident in my riding involving CN Rail just outside of Plaster Rock, New Brunswick, in a small community called Wapske. It was not a big thing like Lac-Mégantic by any stretch of the imagination, but there were a number of railcars carrying oil and propane.

It is important for us to represent our communities, especially rural communities with a lot of volunteer first responders and firefighters. Kudos to all the first responders who came to the scene during that accident and guaranteed community safety at that time, especially Tim Corbin, the fire chief at the Plaster Rock Fire Department, Mayor Fenner for Plaster Rock, as well as all the first responders and the hazardous materials people who attended the site.

Over the long term, though, we have to ensure that adequate resources are available to compensate third parties so that taxpayers are not responsible for paying. Indeed, the bill before us is based on generally accepted principles that polluters should be held accountable for covering the costs for which they are responsible. How is this principle incorporated into the liability and compensation regimes for other sectors, such as marine and pipeline? Let me share with the House a few observations on those.

I will begin with the marine sector. In the event of a marine oil spill, the financial burden of an incident is shared between those responsible for transporting the oil, the shipowner, and those who benefit from the movement, the receivers of the oil. In the marine sector, there are several sources of compensation for oil spills. This starts with the insurance carried by the shipowners themselves to cover their liabilities.

Government Orders

As well, Canada is a member of the International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds. This body administers two international funds to compensate oil pollution damage caused by persistent oil. In addition, Canada's ship-source oil pollution fund, which is financed by levies on oil shipped by marine, pays compensation for damages caused by spills of any type of oil from any ship. Taken together, this fund provides funding of approximately \$1.4 billion per incident.

What if the extent of a marine spill damage exceeds that amount? Earlier this year, the government announced it would remove the per incident limit of liability to make the full amount of the ship-source oil pollution fund available as part of a world-class tanker safety system. If the costs of an oil spill go beyond the amounts available from the ship-source oil pollution fund and other sources, the government will ensure that the fund is temporarily topped up to cover damages and cleanup costs for the spill. These amounts will be recouped from the industry through a levy. In other words, the polluter will pay.

Another example is the liability and compensation regime for pipelines. In Canada, we are strengthening the regime to ensure that pipeline companies are responsible for damages resulting from an incident. The former minister of natural resources announced that the government will require oil pipeline operators to be able to pay for any damage caused by spills or incidents.

• (1525)

On December 8, 2014, the pipeline safety act was introduced in the House. The act would amend the National Energy Board Act and the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act to, among other things, strengthen the liability and compensation regime for pipelines. Major oil pipeline companies would be required to demonstrate a minimum financial capability of \$1 billion and would be liable for damages up to that amount, regardless of fault. Above that amount, the liability would be determined by who was at fault for the accident. If a pipeline company were to become insolvent as a result of an incident, the government would pay for the cleanup and compensation using the consolidated revenue fund as a backstop. However, the industry would be levied to recover those costs.

These are examples of approaches to liability and compensation in which the polluter must pay for the cost of cleanup and compensation.

The marine model is built around different tiers that enable the sharing of responsibility for those costs. For marine and pipeline modes, the taxpayers is protected when the government is able to levy industry to recoup any loan from the consolidated revenue fund.

The bill before us draws on those best examples from the liability and compensation regimes in these other modes and uses them to create a regime for rail transportation of dangerous goods. First, it would apply the polluter pays principle to rail freight transportation through mandatory minimum insurance levels. This insurance would cover third-party liabilities resulting from any type of rail incident. In addition, it would establish a fund to cover the cost of major accidents involving crude oil that exceeds a railway company's insurance level. The regime could later be expanded to include other designated goods.

Under the bill before us, mandatory minimum insurance requirements would be imposed on federally regulated railways, depending on the type and volume of crude oil and other dangerous goods they transport. Railways that carry small quantities of dangerous goods would be required to hold \$25 million in insurance. For railways carrying higher amounts of dangerous goods, there would be an initial requirement to hold either \$50 million or \$125 million in insurance, depending on the volume. One year later, those requirements would rise to \$100 million and \$250 million respectively. This approach would provide short-line railways with sufficient time to adapt to these new requirements so that there would be a certain predictability for that business and for its customers.

Finally, railways carrying substantial amounts of specified dangerous goods, such as class one railways, would be required to hold \$1 billion in insurance. The Canadian Transportation Agency would assign each railway an insurance level based on its traffic and would review insurance coverage to ensure that each railway carried the appropriate amount. Railway companies would be required to inform the agency of any changes that would affect their insurance coverage. The agency would be authorized to make inquiries as necessary for assessing compliance. If a railway company failed to comply with the insurance requirements or to notify the agency of an operational change that would affect its insurance, it would be subject to an administrative monetary penalty of up to \$100,000 per violation.

One thing we should understand about this insurance, and I heard in some of the comments in the debate earlier today about insurance and what it does, is that it can also be preventative. Insurance will add a certain amount of rigour to this process, because to obtain coverage, the companies themselves will have to have proper safety management systems and will have to account for that as well. In my view, that will also ensure that they up their game when it comes to their safety management systems.

The second tier of funding would be provided by shippers of crude oil collectively. They would be required to pay a levy of \$1.65 on each ton of crude oil carried by a federally regulated railway as a condition of its movement. These amounts would be held in a special account in the consolidated revenue fund called the "fund for railway accidents involving designated goods". Should the cost of an accident involving crude oil exceed the mandated third-party insurance, this account would be used to compensate for remaining liabilities.

Government Orders

The bill before us would establish this new regime. It is consistent with other polluter pays regimes we are having in the marine and pipeline industries, and it is a regime we need in place in response to the tragedy we saw at Lac-Mégantic and to what we saw on a smaller scale outside my community of Wapske. Doing what we are doing demonstrates that we are determined to learn from these incidents to build a more comprehensive liability and compensation regime for the future.

I can tell from the debate that many of my colleagues in this House support this bill going to committee, and I look forward to their support as we send it to committee for further study.

• (1530)

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, each and every year that the Conservative government has been in power, it has spent more money on advertising than on rail safety. This is true even this year, when it is spending \$42 million promoting income splitting and only \$38 million on rail safety. Could the hon. member tell me if he thinks those priorities are correct?

Mr. Mike Allen: Mr. Speaker, I would suspect that in the past few years we have probably spent a bit of money in her riding, so it is funny that the hon. member is asking that question.

The minister has been very conscious of what she has learned from the Auditor General's report and is taking action on railway safety. As I pointed out, when we add the private element of insurance to this, I think there will be an extra level of rigour brought by the private insurance business, which will encourage much more safety and a safety culture in the railways, not only for class 1 railways but for the short-line railways. I think Canada will be a winner after that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while there are elements in this bill I could find myself supporting, there is a larger question. We have had in northern B.C. a number of derailments, unfortunately, like much of the rest of the country. When I talk to first responders, fire chiefs, ambulance attendants, and emergency responders, their concerns are primarily around the safety equipment and the training, particularly as there has been a large increase in materials of different compositions, more toxic materials, and more flammable and explosive materials.

As my friend pointed out in his speech, there are new forms of oil coming through. I believe that 70% or 80% of all the fire departments across the country are volunteer-based. They do not have access to the training or to funds to have the equipment on hand to deal with a major spill of much of what is now transported by rail.

My question for my friend across the way is this: Is there not a need for the federal government, which permits and sanctions a lot of this transport, to come in and be a willing partner in helping many of these fire departments and first responders across the country have the equipment when an accident happens, because we know that one is going to happen again, to protect their communities and protect those first responders, who are often putting the most on the line?

• (1535)

Mr. Mike Allen: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question, because every fire department in my riding is a volunteer fire department, so I understand that very well.

The incident I referred to in Plaster Rock was a good example in terms of some of the provisions in this bill. One of the provisions would allow the minister regulatory authority to provide information to the municipalities so that they know what is coming through. There is some provision in the bill that is on the front end of what he is talking about.

Second, I know that the volunteer firefighters have made presentations to me and were in visiting the fire chiefs, as well, to talk about another kind of levy to provide a fund for that training. That is not contemplated in this bill. However, I am sure that is something the government could be thinking about going forward.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to stand and speak in this great place. Today it is regarding Bill C-52, the safe and accountable rail act.

The bill would fulfill its title, in part, by strengthening the authorities of the Minister of Transport and the rail inspectors of Transport Canada in their efforts to maintain and improve the rail safety regime of Canada's rail transportation system. This is especially vital in the transportation of dangerous goods, including crude oil.

Canada has a good rail system. Some would argue that it is among the best in the world, both in terms of safety and in its ability to deliver transportation services that enable shippers to compete in a global economy. Under the current safety regime, 99.997% of dangerous goods transported by rail arrive safely. That is quite an impressive statistic, but we also know that we can never rest while there are still means available to increase that number even further.

Hon. members may recall that in May 2013, the Safer Railways Act introduced new safety provisions. It strengthened Transport Canada's oversight and enforcement capacity by giving it the authority to make regulations and by requiring all railways to meet regulatory requirements to obtain a safety-based Railway Operating Certificate. Transport Canada's enforcement powers were also strengthened at that time with the implementation of administrative monetary penalties. Existing judicial penalties were also increased.

Now, with the safe and accountable rail act before us, we go further. We would respond to issues raised by the 2007 review of the Railway Safety Act, the 2013 report of the Auditor General, and the recent report of the Transportation Safety Board on the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. Each has called attention to the need for Transport Canada to strengthen its oversight regime for rail.

Government Orders

The bill before us would provide the Minister of Transport and the railway inspectors with more oversight of railway safety and the ability to act when they believe that action is required to address threats to safety.

Bill C-52 would amend subsection 47.1(1) to enable information-sharing regulations that would require railways, for example, to prepare a summary of any risk assessment they have conducted. The summary would also include the mitigation measures identified and the plan to monitor the effectiveness of the mitigation plan itself.

Under future regulations, this summary would be shared with parties affected by any significant change to railway operations. In other words, local municipalities would be informed of changes to operations that would have an effect on safety in their communities. That was just addressed a few minutes ago.

Section 37 of the Railway Safety Act would be amended to permit the sharing of information related to safety. Detailed information on a risk assessment, for example, would be required to be provided to the minister under the terms of the Canada Transportation Act.

The bill would also require railway companies to comply with engineering standards, and failure to comply with these standards would then mean that they broke the law.

Under section 31, railway inspectors would be given broadened authority to issue notices and orders where there was a threat or an immediate threat to safety. Under the current regulatory regime, Transport Canada inspectors are limited in how they require railways to address safety concerns. The bill would broaden that authority so that in the case of an immediate threat, the inspector would have the power to order any appropriate corrective measures to be taken.

The Minister of Transport would be given new powers and authorities under this bill. When she believed that there was a particular threat to safety, she could order a company, road authority, or municipality to take corrective action, stop any action, follow any procedure, or suspend operation. This would give the Minister of Transport a powerful tool to oversee the safety of Canada's rail transportation system. Bill C-52 would also extend this new oversight authority to the safety management systems created by the railways.

● (1540)

I would like to clear up some misconceptions about the safety management systems, or the SMS. They do not represent an abdication of the government's responsibility to regulate and monitor railway safety by passing it off to the railways themselves. Rather, the SMS create an additional level of safety management to how the railways actually operate. An SMS includes, for example, safety goals and performance targets along with risk assessments.

In addition to following existing rules and regulations, the railways need to identify hazards and mitigate risks to prevent accidents, often learning from minor incidents and trend analysis on day-to-day operations.

Transport Canada has created regulatory requirements around safety management systems, and oversees a railway's compliance to the SMS regulations. The department assesses the SMS documents

developed by the railways and conducts periodic inspections and audits.

The role of safety management systems in all modes of transportation was studied by the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, but in the meantime, our government has taken steps to increase the regulatory enforcement of an SMS in rail and has given the minister authority to apply it in an effort to promote a safer railway systems.

Under the bill before us, if the minister believes the manner in which the railway is implementing its safety management system in fact compromises safety, the Minister of Transport can use a ministerial order to direct a company to take specific necessary actions. In this way, the SMS truly becomes another level of safety prevention, adding to the measures already in place to ensure safe and secure transportation.

Another component of the changes to the Railway Safety Act gives new authorities to the Canada Transportation Agency. A new section 23 of the act would permit a province or municipality to apply to the Canada Transportation Agency to recoup costs it must pay as a result of putting out fires believed to be caused by railway operations. Previously, these costs were paid for by the province, the municipality and taxpayers.

The Canada Transportation Agency would then determine whether, in its view, the fire was indeed caused by a company's railway operations. Sometimes those are very difficult to determine on rolling stock. It would determine whether the fire was indeed caused by a company's railway operations, what the costs were and would require the railway to reimburse the provinces or municipality for those costs.

There are many ways in which the safe and accountable rail act would give new force to the regulatory authorities and promote the safety and security of our rail system. We are taking the transportation system and making it better.

Clearly, this is a significant endeavour that will improve rail safety and its protection. Therefore, supporting Bill C-52 is a reasonable and sensible thing to do.

* * *

● (1545)

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed certain bills.

*Government Orders***SAFE AND ACCOUNTABLE RAIL ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-52, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the bill would make some modest progress in rail safety, the constituents in the area I represent in Parkdale—High Park, who have tanker after tanker of highly volatile, highly flammable substances going right by their homes, behind their bedroom windows, are very concerned about the possibility of some kind of catastrophic accident taking place in a highly-populated area, like our neighbourhood.

While there would be some modest improvements in insurance coverage, could the member tell me why there is not more significant attention and urgency being given to regulatory safety, stricter regulatory measures and also better enforcement?

Certainly the Auditor General has indicated that lack of enforcement and a real lackadaisical approach to the safety enforcement by Transport Canada was a key part of the disaster in Lac-Mégantic.

Could he tell me why the government has not put greater urgency on that part of prevention?

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the case regardless of where we live. In my riding, which is quite a rural riding with small towns, the lights will go on, the warning signals go down and a constant line of oil cars will go by. A number of years ago, that was not the case, but we are in a new time.

The proposed safe and accountable rail act addresses just the things the member has brought forward in a couple of ways. Issues were raised back in 2007 about the Railway Safety Act. The bill would make improvements based on those suggestions. As well, there were the comments of the Auditor General in his report of 2013 and also the Transportation Safety Board's recommendation that came from the Lac-Mégantic tragedy.

We have taken very enthusiastic steps forward to help with the prevention of rail accidents and protection of our communities, as well as some unforeseen costs because of an accident with which they may be caught.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we in the Liberal caucus recognize there is some value to the legislation. It would make some improvements in rail safety and so forth.

The question I have for the member is somewhat related to the type of question I asked earlier today.

It is often great to see a government bring forward legislation, but people want to see more than just the legislative component. There has been a great deal of concern in the government's lack of interest in investing through infrastructure programming and what it could potentially be doing to improve the quality of our rail line system.

Could the member share his thoughts on how infrastructure dollars could potentially be used to provide additional safety to our rail lines?

● (1550)

Mr. Bev Shipley: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North who is here every day challenging, which is great because he has brought up a very good point.

In terms of the investment in infrastructure, as members know, we have made a significant investment to the primary line 1 rail systems. The other part, as in my area, is in the short lines.

We have introduced the largest infrastructure program in Canadian history. Part of that will help in some parts of my area, because it is a smaller community. My largest populated urban area is 14,000. Therefore, when I talk about small communities, we now have dollars that are available for municipalities that would actually take over some of the short lines if they come. Now they have those funds to help upgrade and maybe procure those short lines.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Mississauga—Brampton South.

The Liberals share Canadians' concern about rail safety in Canada. After the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, the government promised to take steps to ensure the safety and integrity of Canada's rail network. However, in the past two months, there have been three major derailments in Ontario alone. In March, one of those trains, which was transporting dangerous goods, burned for a whole weekend.

In my riding, Toronto Centre, two rail lines used to transport crude oil go through residential neighbourhoods. Residents and community organizations, such as Safe Rail Communities, are worried and want the government to introduce safety measures and regulations to protect them from potential dangers. However, Transport Canada's rail safety directorate lacks staff, funding and training.

Transport Canada has a lot of catching up to do, but its budget was cut by \$202 million, or 11%, in the main estimates. These cuts followed a scathing report by the Auditor General, who pointed out that the government had conducted just 26% of the required audits and did not audit VIA Rail, even though the company transports 4 million passengers a year. The report also revealed that the government does not have enough inspectors and system auditors to audit critical safety functions. When the Liberal critic questioned the minister in committee in March 2015, the minister said that a single additional inspector had been hired, which brings the total number of inspectors to 117.

Government Orders

This latest bill is yet another example of the Conservatives' piecemeal approach to rail safety. The Transportation Safety Board said in February that the Conservatives' new rail standards do not go far enough, and the recent accidents support that assertion. The TSB clearly stated that the older, least safe tank cars should be removed from the rails immediately. The government's timeline for removing these cars is unrealistic, and the Conservatives know it.

Railways united Canada, and many of us still live close to those same railways that helped build our country. The government has a duty to ensure that Canadians who travel on these railways and who live close to them are safe, and it also has a duty to keep the employees of rail carriers safe.

• (1555)

[*English*]

I represent Toronto Centre, which is a riding where rail safety is an issue of intense community concern. Last fall, my colleagues the member for Trinity—Spadina, the member for St. Paul's, and I held a town hall. We held it on a cold autumn night. It was a Friday, and 200 people showed up to discuss this issue. For me, that was a real measure of how strongly the community feels about this issue.

This is not some remote technical question for my constituents, for the people I have the privilege of representing in this House. This is something that people are concerned about every day, that people worry in a very real, very present way affects the safety of their families, the safety of their children.

We are planning to hold another town hall meeting in April, in a few weeks, simply because there was such intense community concern about this issue. I cannot underscore too much for this House how central this issue is, and what priority we must accord it.

Something that we hear every day, and that we heard again today in question period, is one of the threads that runs through the government's philosophy, and that is a point of view which for me feels like warmed over 1990s U.S. Republicanism. It is a "starve the beast" philosophy, a philosophy that says the central responsibility of government is to cut taxes so that government services can be cut. That really is the central ideological idea of the government.

I personally, as a Liberal, strongly disagree with that philosophy and that point of view. I do not think it makes sense for our economy, and it does not make sense for our society.

I hope that in this House, regardless of the party to which we belong, this is one area where we can all agree that government plays an essential role. Government cannot be underfunded. Regulators must be given the authority they need. We cannot count on industry to regulate itself in this crucial matter of rail safety which touches on the personal safety of so many Canadian families.

My concern is that Transport Canada's rail safety division is understaffed, underfunded and undertrained. It is a division which has been a victim of the revolving door of Conservative ministers, with five ministers in nine years.

I would be remiss if I did not point out that another essential aspect of the rail safety issue to which one of the hon. members opposite has just alluded is the fact that we are seeing far more oil being transported by rail than in the past. That is a big part of the

reason that rail safety has jumped so high up the agenda of the people whom I represent in Toronto Centre.

People know, even though the level of information given in a timely manner about what is being transported is low, and people appreciate that vastly increased amounts of crude oil are being shipped along our railway lines. That has increased both the perception and the reality of the potential danger that this poses.

I must say that reality did not happen by accident. The reality that so much oil is being transported by rail at great cost and posing a great potential public safety hazard is the fault of the Conservative government which has failed to get the pipelines built that Canada's natural resource producers need to get our resources to market.

That failure is partly a failure of a relationship with aboriginal people. It is partly a failure of relationships with the provinces. It is partly a failure of relationships with local communities. It is, above all, a failure of diplomacy and building an effective productive relationship with the United States, our most important neighbour, our most important trading partner.

• (1600)

This is a failure that is of tremendous concern to the people I represent in Toronto Centre, because they feel, quite rightly, that it has put their communities in greater danger. What is really astonishing to me is that it is a failure which, above all, has caused problems for the Canadian economy as a whole.

In closing, we do see some modest improvements in this bill, but we feel that it does not go far enough. What we would like to see above all is a comprehensive, effective strategy for transporting Canada's natural resources and getting them to market.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the main line of CN Rail also runs through my riding of Kingston and the Islands. I held a town hall meeting, and one of the things that we learned is that because of the underfunding in Transport Canada, the dangerous goods division has lost senior management and institutional memory. These sorts of things are very hard to replace simply by restoring funding and hiring new people.

It is also the case that there has been a revolving door of ministers in Transport Canada under the Conservative government. I was wondering if my colleague could comment on that.

Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely right. There are a couple of issues here. As my hon. colleague has pointed out and as I mentioned in my remarks, the revolving door of ministers has not helped this situation. Equally though, we have seen a real erosion of expertise in the division responsible for rail safety.

In Canada, we are very lucky to have some excellent, dedicated, devoted public servants who have tremendous experience and cultural experience in their institutions. One of the tragic legacies of the Conservative government is the hollowing out of those institutions.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague. I have put this question to the government before. Legislation is one way that we can deal with the issue of rail safety, but another way is how we spend our resources. The government, for example, through investment in infrastructure could make a difference and make our rails safer.

I wonder if my colleague might want to comment on the fact that if the government really wanted to, it could demonstrate leadership by working with some of the stakeholders, such as our cities, municipalities and provinces, to see how we could better invest in the infrastructure which would improve our rail lines.

• (1605)

Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. Part of the answer here is better regulation, more regulators, and regulators who have the experience and authority to enforce the rules.

However, there is another part of the problem, which I have been hearing about from concerned people in my community. They are people who either have a past history of being involved in this industry, or in many cases, people who simply describe themselves as concerned mothers who have educated themselves about this issue and have become involved because they are worried about the safety of their kids. What they report to me is a tremendous decline in the infrastructure of the railways themselves.

One of the reasons that we will be putting forward a very ambitious infrastructure program is precisely to repair and rebuild these railways, which have been the backbone of Canada.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, it is also my understanding that a lot of freight lines go back and forth across the border between Canada and the United States. Therefore, there is a need to harmonize regulations, for example, having two engineers instead of one.

I was wondering if my colleague could comment on this additional fact, which makes the relationship between Canada and the United States important.

Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good point from my colleague. One of the things that has been a real issue is the perception that I hear from our American counterparts that Canada is dragging its feet when it comes to rail safety. That, to me, as a Canadian legislator, is a real matter of concern.

We should not rely on the Americans to pass rules to keep our people safe. We should do it ourselves.

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians across the country rely on a safe, well-regulated rail system to get food from farm to fork, to get resources to employers and consumers, and to travel, whether it is to visit loved ones or to get to work. Canadians have a right to feel safe when travelling by rail. They should feel, when potentially dangerous goods are being shipped across the country and through their communities, that their families and homes are not at risk. It is the government's responsibility to ensure the safety of Canadians who travel on the rails or live near the rail lines, as well as the safety of the people who work on those rail lines.

Nearly two years ago, Canadians were stunned and saddened by the news of a derailment at Lac-Mégantic that took the lives of 47

people and demolished a portion of the town. This is the deadliest rail accident since Confederation in 1867. In the weeks following that tragedy, the Conservative government promised decisive action to ensure the safety and integrity of our rail system, but nearly two years later, we have no more guarantees than before, and the government is largely missing in action on this file.

The government's piecemeal approach to rail safety has done nothing to prevent the three derailments Ontario has seen over the course of February and March alone. This March, one of those trains, a train carrying dangerous goods, was on fire the entire weekend in Ontario. When asked recently about the derailments, the minister expressed her concern and stated, "There must be reasons behind it. It cannot just be a fluke of nature".

I do not know if Canadians can be reassured from that type of answer from the minister, who is responsible for guaranteeing train safety. Perhaps the minister might look to the rail safety division in her department, which is understaffed, underfunded, and under-trained. It falls to the Minister of Transport to order railway companies to develop specific rules to ensure the safety of Canadians. It is also within the power of government to make regulations which apply to railway companies and then to audit and monitor to see if those regulations are actually being followed. It resolves itself by actual leadership.

Canadians look to their government to intervene when their safety is in question. It is one of the fundamental responsibilities of government. Yet at a time when it is very clear that Transport Canada has a lot of catching up to do, when safety should be its top priority, its budget was slashed by over \$200 million in the main estimates. That 11% cut follows on an already scathing Auditor General's report, which noted, among other things, that the government only performed 26% of its planned audits and did not audit VIA Rail at all, despite the fact that VIA Rail carries four million passengers each year. Can anyone imagine carrying out only one-quarter of the planned audits? Three-quarters of the job was not done and the safety of Canadians is at stake on this file.

Government Orders

The report also revealed that the government does not have enough inspectors and system auditors to carry out critical safety functions. There is a capacity problem inside the Department of Transport. With the current workforce, the department has conducted too few audits. Only one-quarter of the planned audits that Transport Canada said were necessary to keep rail safe in Canada were actually done. With those staffing levels, how many years will it take before the department audits all key components of safety? When the minister was asked about this by my colleague the member for Ottawa South in committee this month, the minister reported hiring only one additional inspector. How is that good management or good leadership? How does that protect Canadians' safety?

An initial Transportation Safety Board report on the three most recent derailments points to track faults and yet the government refuses to make the necessary investments in inspectors and other key safety professionals. It has not been able to demonstrate improvement in its oversight for air and marine and the recent spate of incidents in rail does not give us any confidence that it will be any different.

This is troubling for the residents of greater Toronto. Many trains carrying hazardous materials move through our communities using the CN or CP rail lines. While the government has made some improvements by phasing out railcars that were involved in Lac-Mégantic and requiring more communication from railways on the frequency and volume of dangerous goods passing through communities, much is left undone.

• (1610)

For instance, I agree with my colleague from Trinity—Spadina, who was a very strong advocate for greater rail safety at Toronto City Hall and continues that advocacy here, that railways should inform municipalities and first responders that dangerous goods are being transported through their communities before they pass through, rather than telling them afterwards, and sometimes months afterwards.

As a Mississauga city councillor, I made the same request almost six years ago after the Goreway Drive derailment. Furthermore, phasing out one rail car was important in the wake of Lac-Mégantic, but the derailments in Ontario this year demonstrate that even more should be done. In fact, I will quote from the Transportation Safety Board report that says:

If older tank cars, including the CPC-1232 cars, are not phased out sooner, then the regulator and industry need to take more steps to reduce the risk of derailments or consequences following a derailment carrying flammable liquids.

Transport Canada needs to immediately put more robust tank standards in place now, not in 2025, when the provisions announced around those cars would be enacted.

There are a number of elements of the bill that Canadians have been calling for, but it is clear from how long it has taken for the Conservative government to act on them that it still does not feel that railway safety is enough of a priority. There are still serious problems at Transport Canada. Without the inspectors, who are needed to audit train and rail safety, we will find ourselves perpetually back here wondering how another train derailment occurred.

The bill also rightly allows inspectors and the minister to order a company to immediately correct safety problems. Legislation is important, but money is needed. There is nothing about increasing capacity so that there are enough inspectors to audit these safety management systems, so how will the minister know about the safety problems? Strong language sounds good but does not help Canadians today—action-oriented words with very little action behind them. Three-quarters of audits are not happening. When will that change?

As I mentioned earlier today, this Conservative government spends more money each and every year that it has been in power on advertising, more than on rail safety. It is spending \$42 million on ads announcing an income-splitting plan that does not help most Canadians, while only spending \$38 million on rail safety just two years after the Lac-Mégantic disaster and subsequent derailments, and while presiding over a 1,500% increase in the transportation of oil by rail in the last three years.

Should this bill pass, I sincerely hope the government takes another look at re-prioritizing its resources. It is clear that it will have to make changes to rail security, but now it must do more than piecemeal updates to rules and regulations here and there, and it must put its money on the table and adequately fund the department and the staff who work every day to protect Canadians across the country from spills, derailments, and other potentially devastating disasters

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you know how generous I am. I had the chance to ask the member a question as though she were a Liberal or as though she were a Conservative. Being a generous person, I will ask her as though she were both at the same time.

I find it a little surprising that, as a Liberal, she has forgotten that it was the Liberal Party that reformed the rail transportation system, particularly with the privatization of CN. When CN was privatized, no regulatory obligations were imposed on it, and this has left us with a system that has massively deteriorated. CN says that it is not responsible. It is not contractually obligated to paint the Quebec Bridge or maintain tracks.

For their part, the Conservatives, who have increased deregulation, are not helping matters. There are more and more accidents. Thirty-five people died in Lac-Mégantic, and we must not wait for more deaths to occur. Unfortunately, from what all of the stakeholders—including the Transportation Safety Board, or TSB, and the Auditor General—have said, there will be more accidents.

We need to have another look at all of the policies, not only the Conservatives' policies, but also the Liberal policies before that.

Government Orders

[English]

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, in fact it is incumbent on the Minister of Transport to set all safety regulations and standards relating to rail. It is then up to the department to check and audit to see whether or not the companies are actually adhering to that legislation or that set of regulations.

What is happening currently is that there have been far too few regulations and oversight when it comes to rail safety. More important, the budget at the department has been dramatically slashed. It is not able to keep up with any of the inspections and auditors. Three-quarters of its planned audits—not hypothetical work that staff had hoped one day to get to on a wish list or a bucket list, but the plant audits that they said needed to be done in the course of the year—were not undertaken and done. That imperils the safety of all Canadians.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I questioned the fire and rescue unit in Kingston, I found out that they have a list of the 25 top dangerous materials that could be passing through Kingston on freight trains and they practise dealing with those 25 types of dangerous cargo. What they do not have and what they wish they had is a faster way to access the dangerous cargo information on a particular train in case there is an incident.

I am wondering if my colleague could comment on that.

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, when I was a municipal councillor, we put this request many times to the rail companies. There was a derailment on Goreway Drive and, while our first responders are always top notch, whether it is firefighters or police responding initially, they do need to have access to that type of information and it seems rather simple to provide. There ought to be some sort of mechanism by which this information could be accessed either online or on the actual trains.

However, this is something that could easily have been put in place by the government. It is something that community after community has been requesting, yet the bill, which does provide some incremental assistance to the issues at hand, certainly has done nothing on this issue.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about our government's efforts to improve the safety of Canada's national railway system through the safe and accountable railway act, a bill to amend the Railway Safety Act. Today I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg South Centre.

I will begin by explaining to my hon. colleagues why these amendments are so important and why we should all support the bill. While Canada's railway system is one of the safest, we all recognize that, like other means of transportation, railways are not without risk. Rare devastating accidents like the tragic derailment that occurred at Lac-Mégantic give us pause and focus our attention on improving rail safety.

The amendments proposed in the bill build on the difficult lessons learned following Lac-Mégantic, address issues identified in the Auditor General's fall report of 2013, and also respond to issues raised in the Transportation Safety Board's final report on Lac-Mégantic.

My esteemed colleagues will remember that, in the immediate aftermath of Lac-Mégantic, our government quickly implemented a series of immediate and concrete actions to significantly improve the railway transport safety regime. We also made enhancing the regulatory framework a priority. Let me remind the House that the fundamental purpose of this already-robust regulatory framework is to protect people, property, and the environment from potential harm caused by railway operations.

The Railway Safety Act, which passed into law in 1988 and came into effect in January 1989, provided the legislative authority for the minister of transport to assume responsibility for the safety regulation of federally regulated railways in Canada. Following a mandatory review in 1994, the RSA was amended in 1999 to modernize the legislative and regulatory framework for railway safety. Included in the amendments were regulations for railway safety management systems, which formally integrate safety into the railway companies' day-to-day operations.

Following the tragic Lac-Mégantic derailment and to address recommendations in the Auditor General's fall 2013 report, the Minister of Transport committed to accelerating a regulatory development to enhance the framework and further strengthen oversight of federally regulated railways across Canada. As a result, the grade crossing regulations and the railway operating certificate regulations are now in force and the administrative monetary penalty regulations, new railway safety management systems regulations 2015, and amendments to the transportation information regulations will come into force on April 1, 2015.

Allow me to highlight why each of these regulations is equally important to enhancing the regulatory framework as well as strengthening oversight and enforcement of railway safety in Canada.

The first of the series of regulatory packages, the grade crossing regulations, came into effect on November 27, 2014, and improved safety by establishing comprehensive and enforceable safety standards for grade crossings, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of railway companies and road authorities, and ensuring the sharing of key safety information between railway companies and the road authority. I am certain members would agree that, whether we are pedestrians, drivers of cars, or passengers on a train, we all will benefit from safer grade crossings. These regulations do just that and will lead to reductions in collisions, fatalities, injuries, and property damage, as well as reducing the potential for environmental disasters resulting from a spill of dangerous goods.

The railway operating certificates for federally regulated railways came into force on January 1, 2015. These certificates, which will be issued to railways once they meet certain safety conditions, significantly strengthen Transport Canada's oversight capacity by giving the department the authority to stop a company from operating in the event of severe safety concerns.

Government Orders

● (1620)

New railway safety administrative monetary penalties regulations introduce a new tool to the rail safety program's enforcement regime that would be used to ensure compliance with the Railway Safety Act, as well as to put in place further regulations, rules, orders and emergency directives.

Amendments to the transportation information regulations would improve data reporting requirements to better identify and address safety risks before accidents happen. This would improve safety by supporting better planning and performance measurements, allowing for more focused audits and inspections, and targeted programs that address specific safety issues.

The new railway safety management systems regulations build on the progress and the lessons learned since the first regulations were introduced in 2001. As such, federally regulated railway companies and local companies operating on federal main track would have to appoint an executive to be accountable for SMS and responsible for the operations and activities of the company.

Railway companies must establish policies and procedures so that employees may report safety contraventions and hazards to the company without fear of reprisal. Railway companies must apply the principles of fatigue science to their employee scheduling processes.

All these regulations build upon the existing strong rail safety program and federal rail safety rules and regulations in place to ensure the safety and protection of the public. They provide Canadians with the safest railway system possible.

In addition to these regulations, in Bill C-52, the Minister of Transport has introduced amendments to the Railway Safety Act to further strengthen oversight of federally regulated railway companies and address issues raised by the Lac-Mégantic derailment and the Transportation Safety Board's recommendations, as well as the recommendations in the Auditor General of Canada's fall 2013 report. These amendments signify better safety for Canadians and Canadian communities, strengthened safety management systems, enhanced sharing of information, and a safer rail industry in a stronger national economy. These are priorities that we all share.

I encourage all members to support this bill. With the agreement of all members we can take a significant step forward to improve the safety of our railways for all Canadians and Canadian communities, and provide a stronger foundation for our national transport system and economy for years to come.

● (1625)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

However, he referred to documents from the Auditor General that we studied together and that were very critical of Transport Canada's inability to fulfill its mandates.

Furthermore, the TSB report, which deals with transportation accidents and did a very detailed analysis of the Lac-Mégantic incident, came down very hard on Transport Canada. Basically all of the stakeholders that studied and analyzed the problem have said that Transport Canada's philosophy of allowing companies to self-

regulate is bad. It is not working. The companies are not doing what they should be doing.

Instead of simply amending the act, would it not be better to change the philosophy entirely and reconsider the sacrosanct but flawed principle of self-regulation?

[*English*]

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, I do enjoy working with my colleague opposite on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. We had the opportunity to review various reports through the course of the year provided by the Auditor General. Clearly this one report on railway safety was one of great concern to all of us. Certainly the issue of Lac-Mégantic was one that brought focus to our committee and functionally to all Canadians on the terrible tragedy that occurred in that environment.

When we studied the recommendations of the Auditor General's report, it is important to know first of all that Transport Canada, the minister and her officials accepted the recommendations of the Auditor General and moved very quickly to put many new safety regulations in place that would ensure that a situation such as the horror of Lac-Mégantic would not reoccur.

More importantly, I would like to point out to the member and I think he will agree with me, that the focus was taken off inspections. While inspectors are critical for day-to-day operations, there was a greater focus put on longer-term audit. Clearly, Transport Canada has increased the number of auditors within that organization by some 85% in very short order. The training is ongoing and is very substantial as they work to create a longer-term view of establishing safety operations within railways. The report that came out of that Auditor General's report by the committee truly acknowledged those changes.

● (1630)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is in two parts. My colleague spoke about safety management systems. What is important for the safety management systems is we want to set up something where we are not relying on the Transport Canada inspectors to find problems and tell the rail companies. We want to push the rail companies to set up a culture, procedures and systems so that safety is taken care of without the inspector having to intervene, or at least minimizing the times when inspectors have to intervene.

Many freight lines pass in and out of Canada along the border with the United States. What can the federal government do to encourage a safety culture in those cases where rail lines pass across the border?

Government Orders

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, let us face it, the bottom line on what we are debating today is installing a new set of standards and requirements for safety in this country that we have never seen before. It is a higher, more aggressive standard and one which puts tremendous accountability back on the railway companies.

Certainly the insurance provisions that are within the new bill force the railway operators to do a better job at managing their operations and ensure that they have the appropriate levels of insurance in the event of a significant occurrence, a catastrophic occurrence such as we have been talking about. More importantly, when we talk about safety standards, the number of inspectors and auditors, it is one thing to push the responsibility to the company, and we have to do that and certainly that is inherent in everything we do in the operation of the company, but we have taken responsibility through the auditing and inspection procedures to ensure that these processes are maintained.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today to the Safe and Accountable Rail Act, or the Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act.

I would like to draw the attention of the House to the changes we are proposing to provide greater oversight of federally regulated railway companies.

[*English*]

We are indeed proposing to further strengthen oversight of federally regulated rail companies. The safe and accountable rail act is progressive and forward-looking. The amendments to the Railway Safety Act would mean better safety for Canadians and Canadian communities, strengthened safety management systems, enhanced sharing of information and a safer rail industry in a stronger national economy.

All of these are priorities of the government, and I believe should be priorities of each and every member of this House of Commons. There is nothing more important than the safety and prosperity of Canadians. That is why my private member's bill is the complementary Bill C-627, which was inspired by my constituents of Winnipeg South Centre.

The Railway Safety Act provides the Minister of Transport with the authority to oversee the safety of federally regulated railways. Transport Canada's role is to monitor for threats to safe railway operations, as well as compliance to the Railway Safety Act and its rules, regulations and engineering standards through audits and inspections.

The amendments to the Railway Safety Act would further strengthen oversight and address issues raised by the Lac-Mégantic derailment, and the Transportation Safety Board's recommendations, as well as the recommendations in the Auditor General of Canada's fall 2013 report.

By proposing these amendments, the federal government is reiterating its commitment to a safe and secure national railway system, and to the safety of communities right across this country. The government is focusing on four key areas that will have the most direct and positive impact: meeting the needs of communities;

ensuring the people or companies responsible are accountable; strengthening safety management systems; and increasing authorities for our railway safety inspectors.

Collaboration between railways and communities is crucial to ensure the safety of Canadian citizens across our vast country. The Government of Canada is committed to enhancing confidence in railway safety, greater sharing of information and co-operation between railway companies and communities.

This is precisely why we are proposing new regulation-making powers, requiring companies to share information with municipalities. This would help address community railway safety concerns, and I know these changes, along with my private member's Bill C-627, would be extremely well received in my home riding of Winnipeg South Centre.

Too often it is the provinces and municipalities, also known as the taxpayers, that are left to pick up the pieces and pay the bills after a railway incident, especially one that requires the assistance of first responders for issues such as fire.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

The Safe and Accountable Rail Act also proposes changes to allow a province or municipality that incurs costs in responding to a fire that would appear to be the result of a railway company's railway operations to apply to the Canada Transportation Agency to have those costs reimbursed. These changes would give the Canada Transportation Agency the power to determine whether the fire was indeed the result of the railway operations of the railway company in question, and, if so, the Agency would have the authority to order the railway company to reimburse the province or municipality, thereby avoiding downloading the costs on to municipal taxpayers.

[*English*]

Under the auspices of the Railway Safety Act, Transport Canada is responsible for oversight, which includes monitoring for threats to rail safety operations, as well as compliance with the Railway Safety Act and its rules, regulations and engineering standards through audits and inspections. The proposed amendments in this bill include broadening authorities to allow inspectors to issue notices in the event of a threat to safety to any person or entity that has responsibility in relation to that threat, including companies, road authorities and municipalities.

Furthermore, in the event of an immediate threat, an inspector may issue a notice and order to any person or entity, again including companies but now also including road authorities and municipalities, and order them to take specific corrective actions to remove the immediate threat. These broadened authorities complement a broader new authority for the Minister of Transport.

Government Orders

Currently, the Railway Safety Act allows the minister to order only railways to take corrective action in cases of immediate threats to safety. The amendments propose adding an additional power to allow the minister to order a railway company, road authority or municipality to take corrective action following specific procedures or to stop any activity in the interest of rail safety operations.

These amendments are about oversight and advancing railway safety oversight and enforcement, together with furthering safety management system implementation by clarifying and broadening the authority and responsibilities of the minister and railway safety inspectors.

What is more, this act would fully align and complement my own private member's bill, Bill C-627, an act to amend the Railway Safety Act, which aims to provide greater protection to persons and property from risks inherent to railway operations. I introduced that bill on September 23, 2014, and I understand it is in committee as we speak. Furthermore, both bills align with the objectives of the Railway Safety Act to further strengthen railway safety in Canada.

The safe and accountable rail act and Bill C-627 are both about safety, they are both about protecting people, they are both about protecting communities.

● (1640)

[*Translation*]

It is hard to argue with these changes. The railway is an integral part of Canada's current infrastructure and will continue to be in the future. The railway has to be sound, reliable and safe.

[*English*]

This government believes these amendments to the Railway Safety Act are essential. They would modernize the Railway Safety Act to reflect the requirements of a growing and increasingly complex rail industry. I believe the important safety amendments contained in the bill are ones that we can all agree on, both quickly and unanimously.

This bill is a step forward. It is a step forward for Canadians and a step forward for rail safety. With the agreement of each and every member of the House, we can take these steps together toward a safer, more reliable and economically viable freight and passenger railway system for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to imagine anything more important than the safety and well-being of our fellow citizens. That is obviously the bill's focus as well. It is unfortunate that we have come to this point because the Lac-Mégantic disaster would probably never have happened had this measure been in place.

Mayors in my riding told me that it imperative to know what is being transported through their region and when. Does my honourable colleague agree that this is absolutely fundamental? Does she believe that this bill does enough to inform municipalities of the dangerous goods transported by VIA Rail in their areas?

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for this question.

As everyone knows, transportation safety in general, and the safety of railway transportation in particular, is one of our government's priorities.

As I mentioned, it is always about co-operation. We must strike a balance between the needs of commercial enterprises and the safety needs of Canadians. That is what our bill does and the reason why I hope that my colleague opposite will support it.

● (1645)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after years of federal government cuts, Transport Canada has lost experienced staff and some of its institutional memory.

This is the question I would like to ask. How can we restore the institutional memory and the experienced staff after years of cuts?

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, as a former public servant, I have so much respect for all of the public servants employed by the federal government and other levels of government.

My perspective differs dramatically from that of my colleague across the way because I believe that, with the right tools, our public servants will be able to make very effective use of the bill we have introduced.

Our bill fills a legislative gap, and I hope that the Liberal Party member will be able to place more trust in our public servants.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, Official Languages.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert.

I am very pleased to speak to the issue of rail safety. It is a very important issue for my riding, which I will explain shortly.

We are debating second reading of Bill C-52, which would amend the Canada Transportation Act and Railway Safety Act. This is something that is closely watched by people in my community, in my riding of Parkdale—High Park.

The bill would require minimum insurance levels for railways transporting dangerous goods, based on the type and volume of goods being transported. It would establish a disaster relief fund to compensate victims of derailment paid for by levies on railway companies that are transporting crude oil. This would be on top of the minimum insurance levels. It would also implement other changes to increase the powers of inspectors.

Government Orders

In general, we support the bill. We think it is important to take immediate action and any improvement is certainly positive. We need to improve the liability and accountability regime for Canada's railways and we need to ensure that the government enforces the legislation, that the regulations are enforced and that the inspectors and auditors have the resources required for this effective oversight. We believe the bill should have gone much further, but I will come back to that in a couple of minutes.

What got everyone's attention in the country on the issue of rail safety was the terrible, tragic rail disaster in Lac-Mégantic in 2013. It is a situation we know well, where a freight train loaded with Bakken crude oil travelled down a hill unattended. It derailed and on impact exploded, caught fire and killed 47 people. The town centre was destroyed. Eight hundred people were evacuated. The land was contaminated. It was a traumatic situation not only for the people who were horribly affected by the devastation but for our entire country.

The subsequent reports made a number of findings and recommendations. They found that back in the 1990s, with the Liberal governments and continuing with subsequent Conservative governments, deregulation of the railway sector and a transferring of responsibility for safety from the government to the railway companies began. In this case, they found a series of problems with the company that was responsible in Lac-Mégantic, such as a very weak culture of safety, mechanical problems and a lack of staffing. With Transport Canada, they found inadequate oversight and inspection. What was highlighted was the weakness of the tank cars.

It is fair to say that people assumed the government was looking out for them and taking care of their safety, that this was surely one of the basic responsibilities of government, to ensure that public safety was respected.

I want to read into the record in the House an email I received from a constituent because this got the attention of people in our riding of Parkdale—High Park. One neighbourhood in our riding is called The Junction. The Junction is the crossing of the CN and CP lines. As one can imagine, there is quite a bit of rail traffic going through our neighbourhood. This was historically an industrial neighbourhood, which over the years has seen a greater number of people with their homes right by the tracks.

• (1650)

I want to read from a constituent's letter: "My partner and I currently own and live on...a street beside the tracks. Our property backs onto the rail yard. Our bedroom is less than 40 feet from the rails that transport tons and tons of goods, many of which are unknown to us. We see black oil tankers go by multiple times a day, cars with perforated holes in them. Since the Lac-Mégantic catastrophe as well as others across the country—they seem to be happening more and more frequently—we are deeply concerned for our safety as well as the safety of our neighbours and friends. Because of our home's proximity to the rail lines, if anything were ever to happen on the rail lines behind us, a derailment or an explosion, we would most likely lose our home and potentially our lives. The number of lives that could be at risk if such an accident occurred here is absolutely staggering."

This is a concern that is very real in our neighbourhood. It goes well beyond the issue about liability, while liability is a key factor because we saw in Lac-Mégantic there was clearly a lack of responsibility and a lack of liability on the part of the shipper.

We have a number of questions from members of our community who have organized into an organization called Safe Rail Communities. They want to know why, while the technology to stabilize light crude oil by extraction of volatile gases exists and is mandated in the state of Texas, it is not required to be stabilized before it is transported by rail. Most of this is required to be stabilized before it is transported by pipeline. People want the substances that are being transported made as safe as possible.

They also want to know why Canadians must wait until 2025 for the new TC-117 tank cars, the safer tank cars. Why do people have to continue to see the DOT-111s or even the newer cars that crashed in northern Ontario roll past their bedroom windows when there are safer alternatives? Why do we have to wait 10 years for safer tank cars to roll on the Canadian lines? Why can people not know what is being transported through their communities? Why do people not have a right to know the hazards that are rolling right past their bedroom windows? These are fundamental questions that need to be answered.

They also want to know, when a catastrophic accident from a flammable train in a densely populated area could have costs going up to \$6 billion, why the strictest requirement is only \$1 billion. In fact, we have written to CN and it has told us that it already has more than \$1 billion in liability insurance, so this would put no new higher standard on it. Why do we not require shippers and those responsible for the products that are being shipped to have insurance that would cover the complete liability? Why would we allow any exposure to liability in our communities?

When we think of the potential tragedy of a major rail accident in our largest city, the city of Toronto, where hundreds of these tank cars carrying Bakken oil or dilbit are transferred every day, surely we need to prevent as much as possible any potential accident from happening. People want to know that what is being shipped is as safe as possible, that it is being shipped at as slow speeds as possible, that wherever possible it is rerouted from their area to the less-populated neighbourhoods, but then should there be any tragedy that the community would not have to once again pick up the tab.

Protecting the public is a core responsibility of the government. New Democrats believe we need to do everything in our power to ensure that tragedies such as that which occurred in Lac-Mégantic never happen again. Fixing liability is just the beginning. We need stronger laws, stronger enforcement, penalties for those who break the laws, and much more serious oversight, inspections and audits by the government.

Government Orders

•(1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her presentation. She raised some very important points.

I would like to comment on the DOT-111 standards. We now have the new CPC-1232 standard. As the member pointed out, there have already been two derailments in northern Ontario. Since last year's announcement, there have also been three derailments in the United States with the new CPC-1232 standard. I think that people are right to worry.

Does this bill do anything at all to protect the public when it comes to the quality of the tank cars that pass by their homes? Can this bill offer any hope of a standard that will actually work?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

Our constituents are asking why we have had to wait 10 years for tougher, better-protected tank cars. The federal government announced that better tank cars that are CPC-1232 compliant are being phased in, but we have already seen that they are not tough enough. These are the tank cars that broke in the accidents in northern Ontario. People who live near railways are concerned about the fact that the standards are not high enough. The government must do much more to protect the public.

•(1700)

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a similar question regarding the speed of trains and the loads on the tracks. I have seen a convoy of these infamous oil tankers pass by at what seemed to be a fairly high speed. I am new to this file, but does the government have anything planned to make sure that these convoys go slower in urban areas? Obviously, if a train is moving at 15 km per hour then the risk that it will explode and catch on fire is much lower than if it is moving at 80 km or 100 km per hour. I would like to hear what the member has to say about that.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question.

Indeed, if the trains are moving more slowly, there is less of a risk. The government is telling us that trains will go slower in downtown areas. However, people who live near the railway tracks say that the trains move quite rapidly, especially at night. We are very concerned about the fact that there is a much greater risk of an accident—a serious accident—when trains are travelling at high speeds, especially in big cities.

If these trains have to continue to pass through our cities across the country, we need to make sure that they slow down in order to keep people as safe as possible.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of my constituents in Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert to speak to the very important topic of rail safety. Since the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic in July 2013, my constituents have been very concerned about the safety of our rail system, especially since they live close to railways.

On average, seven freight trains pass through Saint-Hubert every day, while about a dozen pass through Saint-Bruno. The government's bill is a step in the right direction. Nevertheless, I share my constituents' serious concerns about the methods used to ensure that rail companies comply with the new rules. I do not think we are doing enough, and I think that many more improvements are necessary. Indeed, it is laudable that we are creating a fund and increasing insurance coverage to compensate the communities and citizens affected by an accident, but I think that the amount of this fund is far too low, in light of the potential damage to the environment, our property and even the health of Canadians.

I would remind hon. members that decontaminating the area affected by the Lac-Mégantic derailment will cost more than \$400 million. MMA had only \$25 million in liability insurance. As hon. members can see, the gap between the amount of coverage and the repair cost is huge.

The Conservative government's bill would impose a framework, requiring railway companies to increase their liability insurance and imposing a minimum amount on them.

However, if we look at the bill in detail, we see that, once again, the Conservative government is presenting half measures. The levels of insurance set out in the bill are insufficient. The levels of insurance should be based on the public risk of transporting these products and not just on the type and volume of goods being transported. The damage caused in Lac-Mégantic is estimated at over \$400 million, but the new rules do not seem to bring the smaller companies to that level.

The Lac-Mégantic incident involved a small railway company that happened to be transporting a fairly large quantity of dangerous goods at the time. However, the costs associated with the disaster are far greater than the limits set out in this bill, particularly for small companies.

It is estimated that the transportation of crude oil by rail will continue to grow significantly. It already increased by 320 times between 2009 and 2013. With this increase comes an increased risk of accidents. More than ever, we must improve oversight of infrastructure and hold railway companies accountable by imposing sanctions.

This is the second time I have spoken to a rail safety bill since the session resumed at the end of January. This is the second time that we have been faced with a highly publicized, but badly botched bill.

I would also like the government to explain how it is going to implement the measures it is proposing when it does not have the resources to do so. The number of inspectors is nowhere near enough. Transport Canada hired just one additional railway safety inspector.

•(1705)

The number of inspectors went from 116 in 2013 to 117 in 2015. However, they have to be able to do their work properly. The rail safety budget was cut by \$5 million in 2012 and last year.

Government Orders

How can the Conservative government reassure Canadians that safety is a priority when transportation budgets are being cut?

As I mentioned earlier, many improvements can still be made and a number of possible solutions have been proposed by the Transportation Safety Board of Canada, which I want to acknowledge for its valuable work over the past 25 years. I would like to remind members that the TSB proposals have been circulating for many years. However, none were implemented by previous governments.

It took a human tragedy for the TSB measures to finally be heard and implemented. I am thinking mainly of the retirement of the DOT-111 cars, about which I wrote to the Minister of Transport several times. The truth is that the Conservative government is feeling the impact of the rail deregulation that it voted in, and today it is trying to fix past mistakes.

The NDP cares about the safety of our communities and our citizens. When we form the government, we will ensure that the Lac-Mégantic disaster remains the exception.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and neighbour, who often speaks about Saint-Bruno, the town where I was born and raised. It could be called a rail community.

However, I have a concern and it is the same situation for her and me and for all of our colleagues who have railways tracks in their ridings. When we say that the bill does not go far enough, one of the concerns that comes up fairly often is about prevention. When the government talks about the amounts the companies will have to pay, it is going on the assumption that an incident will occur. The municipalities want tools to prevent such incidents.

I am thinking of the firefighters and all of the people on the front lines who work to save lives when such tragedies occur. For example, there was the train disaster in Mont-Saint-Hilaire in 1990, which could have rivalled the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. Fortunately, the train derailed outside the city's residential and commercial area.

Does my colleague agree that the municipalities need information about the dangerous goods that are passing through them and that we do not want any more disasters so it is not enough for the government to say that the companies will clean up the mess afterward?

• (1710)

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and neighbour, the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas. Like me, he is very familiar with the region and the concerns of my constituents.

Obviously, since the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, I have had the opportunity to hold public consultations with my constituents in Saint-Bruno and Saint-Hubert.

As I said in my speech, people and even the municipalities are very concerned. I also had the opportunity to sit on a committee that deals with the prevention of hazardous spills. It is true that the municipalities are very concerned about the fact that they do not know what the rail cars that are passing through such highly populated areas are carrying. People would at least like the

municipalities to be informed in advance rather than a year after the fact.

I would like to thank my colleague once again for his relevant question and I hope that the government will give us some answers.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her presentation. Her riding is a major rail transportation centre in eastern Canada, so we would do well to listen to what she has to say.

Recently, people in the House have raised concerns about the speed of trains in urban and rural areas. I would like to remind everyone that the tank cars involved in the most recent derailments, which took place in northern Ontario and the United States, were travelling at just 24 miles per hour. That did not prevent major oil spills from happening. That is very worrisome.

When it takes six days to put out a fire in a remote part of northern Ontario and we are presented with new criteria allowing municipalities to report safety problems, that is obviously worrisome.

I would like my colleague to comment on derailments in urban areas. Are the new standards reassuring? Does this bill go far enough?

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question. As I said in my speech, we also have to look at aging infrastructure and companies' responsibility when it comes to train speed.

Unfortunately, train speed is not mentioned anywhere in this bill. All it covers is money for compensation, and when we delve into the details, there is nothing there. The work is half done. It is time to implement the polluter pays principle. When we become the government, we will do a thorough job and talk about all of the factors so that we can prevent instead of cure.

In answer to my colleague, I met with people from CN, and they assured me that the DOT-111 tank cars would be outfitted with bars to make them safe. Unfortunately, the tragedy that happened in Toronto proved that they were not safe.

I hope that work on this will go on.

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and pleasure to speak today to Bill C-52, the safe and accountable rail act. In response to the previous question, we on this side agree that this is part of a three-part analysis or attempt to make rail traffic as safe as possible in this country. One pillar, which the parliamentary secretary talked about in his speech earlier today, is prevention. In the second pillar, we need to be ready for response in case there is an emergency. What we are dealing with in Bill C-52 is the part about accountability, making federally regulated rail companies accountable for what they are doing.

In the next few minutes I want to talk about some of the questions that have been asked of the government and of this legislation before it goes to committee so that more discussion can happen, and I know my opposition friends are eager to have witnesses at committee to discuss the bill in more detail.

Government Orders

Why is the government changing the liability and compensation regime for rail? I think it is relatively obvious to all of us in the House, and it was mentioned by every member who has spoken to it today, that the issue of having the government responsible for the safety of Canadians is a number one priority for our government, and it should be. Unfortunately, we have had some very tragic incidents in terms of rail safety issues in this country, such as Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, with the terrible tragedy that happened there in July 2013. I am from Burlington, Ontario, where we have had rail derailments. Unfortunately, the most recent one was a passenger rail issue and people died from that derailment also. However, this discussion is really about product that travels by rail, not people, so this is important to the people of Burlington to have the opportunity to make sure that there is accountability with rail lines and what they are shipping through our neighbourhoods across the country.

When would this new change come into effect? This is basically about changes to the insurance requirements of rail companies, and we are giving them about a year from when it comes into force to get ready for that, which means they will have to make sure their insurance coverage, the accountability aspects, are in place prior to one year from when the bill gets royal assent.

Did we consult stakeholders? Of course we consulted stakeholders. That is important because, whether it was municipalities or railway lines or others affected, there were a couple of rounds of stakeholder outreach in terms of getting feedback on what can be done as the accountability piece. I believe we received feedback from approximately 27 stakeholders on this, from railways, shippers, and local municipalities.

This is important because the issue of rail travel for products and goods is important. Let us face it: it was important in bringing Canada together as a country, and we need to make sure everyone is involved in that discussion of where we are headed in terms of accountability, of being proactive and prepared to respond, and of prevention. That is why the stakeholders played a big role in coming up with what is in the bill.

● (1715)

I think it would be naive to say that everyone agreed on exactly what to do and at what level, but that is why we have consultations. We think that the polluter pay principle should be put forward as the number one tenet of the accountability portion of this.

What does polluter pay mean for rail? It is an important principle that those who cause the damage as a result of their operations would pay for the damage. It is important that it is the company and, in this case, we are adding a fund from shippers. They need to take significant responsibility in terms of the levels of insurance coverage they need. It should not be the taxpayer. That is what the polluter pay principle is, that it is not the general taxpayers' responsibility. It is the government's responsibility to develop the safety standards, to make sure the rail system is safe, but if something does go wrong, it is not the taxpayers' responsibility to cover those costs but the polluter.

These measures of liability should not be new to companies. No company should say it is not its responsibility, it should be the taxpayers' responsibility. At the end of the day, based on the consultations with stakeholders, including the rail companies, we came to an agreement, which we see in Bill C-52, to deal with this.

Let me go over the proposed amendments. They would make all railways hold a minimum level of insurance, which we have heard many times today, based on the risk posed by the type and volume of dangerous goods being moved. It makes sense that if a company is moving non-dangerous goods, its liability should be less, but a company moving dangerous goods, including oil products and others that can cause significant damage, has to have higher liability. It has to have more insurance to cover the costs because if there is an accident, the damage that is done is much more significant with dangerous goods. We came up with a proposal that railways would have to carry higher amounts of insurance for dangerous goods. It is common sense and something that both the public and the railways clearly understand is the railways' responsibility.

There would be an initial requirement for them to hold either \$50 million or \$125 million in insurance, depending on the type and volume of the dangerous good being carried. That is an initial requirement. Then one year after that, those requirements would double to \$100 million and \$250 million, respectively. These are the carrying costs that would have to be built into the operational aspects of running a railway. It is important for the railways to have the coverage so that taxpayers would not be on the hook for the cleanup of any damage done from any unfortunate accident. When I say "damage", it can obviously be both physical damage, property damage, damage to the environment, and, of course, to human life. There have been tragedies in this country where that has happened. We need to make sure that taxpayers are not going to be responsible for that, but the actual railway shipping the goods is responsible.

Another question was with regard to what we think the financial impact would be, particularly on short-line railways. People tend to think about CP and CN, the big railways in Canada, but we would also require the short-line railways to carry the same requirement. It would be part of railways doing business in this country. It would be part of the decision to carry goods and it would be included in this new regime. This would increase their operating costs, there is no doubt about it, but it is much-needed protection for taxpayers as we continue to implement the polluter pay principle, including short-line railways.

● (1720)

Is there insurance available at this level? We are assured that there is. We have had a number of insurance brokers say that it is possible for them to provide that level of insurance and are willing to take the risk. Therefore, they cannot use as an excuse that they cannot get the insurance, which was an issue we needed to resolve to make sure it was available.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

● (1730)

[English]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed from November 18, 2014, consideration of the motion that Bill C-613, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act and the Access to Information Act (transparency), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When the House last took up this question, the hon. member for Victoria had six minutes remaining for his comments on the question.

● (1735)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to say a lot in six minutes on an area as important as access to information, but let me do my best.

Today, was a historic day. After two hard years of deliberation, our Information Commissioner, Madame Legault, brought forth a whole variety of recommendations to improve the Access to Information Act. I say that in the context of the debate on Bill C-613 that is before us, because this bill would not go nearly as far as even a tiny way toward what the commissioner said is necessary to fix our broken open government system.

A bill that would have gone much further than that was introduced by my hon. friend, the member for Winnipeg North, under the title Bill C-567, which I had—

Mr. Pat Martin: Centre

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I should say the member for Winnipeg Centre. I stand corrected.

I had the pleasure of speaking on that bill, and I found that it was a fascinating bill because it would have addressed the changes required to the access to information regime in a very specific way. What it did was call for the changes that the government had suggested when it was seeking a mandate from the Canadian public. The wisdom of the bill was to limit itself to just those changes that the government said were required to fix the act. Only one of six was implemented, as I recall.

This bill before us today would do a couple of things. First, it would require the minutes of the meetings of the Board of Internal Economy to be opened by default. That is an interesting concept. Interestingly, though, retired clerk Mr. Rob Walsh says that it is entirely unnecessary. There was no need for a bill to address that because it can be done, as in all committees, by making its procedures open if it wishes to do so. The second amendment was to change the purpose clause of the Access to Information Act, something that I note the commissioner herself thought was unwise.

I will conclude by saying we have had some tragic rail accidents in my own riding of Burlington in the last number of years. We have also seen across the country other very significant accidents in the railway system, mainly dealing with the shipping of dangerous product. We need to have assurance that the polluter needs to pay and we need to protect the taxpayers, and this is what Bill C-52 would do.

I look forward to the bill going to committee for discussion and back to this House quickly so that we can pass it and make it law, because it would not take effect until a year after it has royal assent. Therefore, we need to get royal assent as soon as possible.

● (1725)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): 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 second time and referred to a committee)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

I see the hon. government House leader rising on a point of order.

* * *

COMMON SENSE FIREARMS LICENSING ACT

BILL C-42—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-42, an act to amend the Firearms Act and the Criminal Code and to make a related amendment and a consequential amendment to other acts.

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

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I see we are having a hard time getting the House to come to order. As is usually the case, the House appreciates the notice on the part of the hon. government House leader to acquaint the House with the notices from time to time as he is so fit to do.

It being spectacularly close to 5:30 p.m., the House will proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

Private Members' Business

I commend to the House Professor Sean Holman, a professor at Mount Royal University in Calgary, who wrote an article about the so-called transparency act before us. Its title is revealing. It is “Are the Liberals Fooling Everyone Again?” That says quite a bit about this issue. It has, as he says, some laudable ideas, but when pressed about the concept that somehow government information would be “open by default”, which the hon. member for Papineau referred to in his remarks, Professor Holman said that the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor said that people would still have to file access to information requests to get government records. That does not suggest that big a change.

The notion that the government would be required to provide detailed rather than brief explanations on why it was opposed to the disclosure of information would, in my judgment, would simply be a speed bump along the way to withholding information. Frankly, it would just require people to push a computer button and have the regular bumf as to why this particular exception does not work.

The real guts of what is required is to fix the exemptions in the statute, which are outrageously out of date in the context of our 21st century economy. This came in before we even had computers. The exemption is where the action is. This bill is entirely silent on it. I commend to the House the excellent recommendations found in the long-awaited report by the Information Commissioner today, which will show us the road map to really provide open government in Canada. It is not this bill, I am afraid to say. Though laudable in some respects, it does not even go a tiny distance to doing what is required, which is the root-and-branch work, the hard work that she has suggested needs to be done in her report.

With that said, I do not wish to suggest that there are not some things that are important. The thing that this bill would do, which I commend, is what my hon. friend from Winnipeg tried to do with his bill, giving a power that every commissioner across the country has, which is to order disclosure and make binding orders on the government. That is something that has been sought for decades.

The Access to Information Act, after all, is three decades old. It has never had the ability to enable the commissioner to do anything more than simply recommend disclosure. It is full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, whereas in the provinces an order by the information commissioner is binding on the government, subject only to judicial review. That is the law. One shall disclose what the commissioner orders.

Finally, the bill, and I give credit where credit is due, would do that. It is a long-standing policy of the NDP and something which most critics have said is needed, and I commend the member for Papineau for doing that. It would also require a legislative review, which of course we think is eclipsed by the excellent work on the commissioner's part today.

In conclusion, I do not know whether amending the Parliament of Canada Act with respect to the Board of Internal Economy's disclosure provisions is necessary. The retired clerk says no, but why not? It is okay. The order-making power is good, absolutely. As to changing the purpose clause, the commissioner does not think that is a good idea and neither do I in particular, but the idea of ordering disclosure is a long-overdue improvement to the legislation.

Would that the bill went far enough to give Canada the open government that the government of the day here has promised us and which it has failed to deliver on ever since the so-called and much lamented Accountability Act was first brought forward.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be here to talk about this very important private member's bill. It is one we have looked at before. We are now into our second hour, and the mover of the bill will be up shortly to address some of the questions being raised here.

I want to start by directly answering one of the comments made about the fact that it does not go far enough. It almost seemed that the Conservatives wanted to have a little more proactivity involved in the sense of what we are doing here with the Liberal Party of Canada, when in fact, we were the ones who brought forward far greater measures on proactive disclosure than this House has ever seen. Yet some members, including the one who just spoke, seemed to think that we were in a position of dragging people in, kicking and screaming, on proactive disclosure, which Canadians demanded and now have. We are all doing it now.

The person behind that is the person bringing forward this bill, so the theme continues. We think this is a substantial step in making this House far more accountable and far more transparent than it ever has been.

I want to go back to what happened earlier today, when the report came out from Suzanne Legault, the Information Commissioner. She brought forward the concept, which we recognize, of “open by default”. Canadians watching this, from coast to coast to coast, might assume that it is happening already, but it is not. We have run into problems on committee.

Many journalists I have talked to talk about the redaction of information that is out there that is really unnecessary and how the power of this particular office needs to be restored. Right now, I would even go so far as to say that it has become an empty shell, by way of title only.

Let me bring forward some of the messages the Information Commissioner brought forward today. She talked about recommendations. She had 85 recommendations, which is substantial. She said that the recommendations would address ways to modernize the act “[t]o deal with current realities and the expectations of Canadians”, some not being fulfilled when it comes to transparency, plus we are now in the digital age, which I will talk about in just a moment; “[t]o simplify the administration and the application of the Act by focussing only on the interests that legitimately require protection”, and I mentioned redaction earlier; “[t]o increase timeliness in the processing of access requests”, which is long overdue; “[t]o permanently resolve recurring issues; [t]o align the Act with the most progressive and strongest laws in Canada and abroad; and [t]o maximize disclosure in line with a culture of openness 'by default'”.

Private Members' Business

In light of the developments, the commissioner recommended modernizing the Access to Information Act. These are some of the major highlights:

- extending coverage to all branches of government;
- improving procedures for making access requests;
- setting tighter timelines;
- maximizing disclosure;
- strengthening oversight;
- disclosing more information proactively;
- adding consequences for non-compliance; and,
- ensuring periodic review of the Act.

That brings us to where we are now on Bill C-613, brought forward by the hon. member for Papineau. There are several measures we talked about, messages we want to put out there to Canadians about what this bill will provide. Transparency is another goal in what we call open parliament. Obviously, this is a step in the right direction. It is a private member's bill. Beyond this, more legislation will follow so that we can follow through on an open parliament concept.

With its enormous power and responsibility, it is simply not acceptable in modern society for the Board of Internal Economy to meet in secret. Canadians deserve greater accountability. We have been saying this now for the past little while, and we continue to say this. The Board of Internal Economy provides a very specific function and a vital function in the heart of our democracy. It is certainly a vital operation within this House of Commons. We have seen it all over the news lately, for reasons I will not get into.

As secretive as it may be, in some cases we can understand why, when it comes to personal information, but for all the issues it deals with, there is no really grand or true reason it should be secret.

The transparency act would raise the bar on openness and transparency in government by significantly strengthening Canada's access to information laws, as was pointed out earlier. Again, that is open by default.

Canadians deserve a strong access to information regime that ensures true transparency and accountability.

● (1740)

The Access to Information Act has not changed in any significant way since it was passed and now it is time to act. We are proud to say that the member for Papineau, the leader of our party, has decided to act on this with his private member's bill, Bill C-613.

Let me go back to the Board of Internal Economy and the reform that is being proposed with the bill. The transparency act makes the House of Commons Board of Internal Economy open by default. Today MPs are making decisions about the regulations that govern their own spending with insufficient public scrutiny. Public scrutiny is the concept we have been using here for quite some time. It is bandied about within the media, not only the media here on the Hill but media throughout the country. That is why it is very important to make sure that this secretive committee is far more open than it used to be, to have this in the public realm. Discussions there are secret by law. It is time to change that law. By bringing openness to the board's conversations we could better serve Canadians. They have

demanded more accountability and they would get more accountability upon passage of the bill.

Earlier speakers talked about it not going far enough, but we think this is a very substantial step.

We just spoke about access to information. The report came out today so let me expand on that and relate it to Bill C-613.

Achieving more open government makes sense for Canada. Governments around the world that embrace this concept have demonstrated new ways to reduce costs, spark entrepreneurial initiatives and help the public and private sectors to better serve citizens. A country's access to information system is the heart of open government.

We were in committee and spoke to the commissioner at that time. She talked about examples around the world and how it was a low-cost mechanism, very open, very accountable and very efficient in many ways. The problem she cited was that the office here was not given the resources to bring it up to an international standard that was acceptable, not just acceptable in the eyes of other countries and what they are doing administratively, but acceptable to all Canadians across the country who expect open government from us. Several of the measures we have taken earlier show that and this particular bill is that substantial step.

The information commissioner said:

Real improvement in the access system will only come from modernizing the act—a long-overdue step that is crucial to advancing the cause of transparency and accountability in Canada.

Therefore, it is not just from those of us who are supporting the bill, but it is also from the commissioner herself who is mirroring these comments about why it is so necessary to make these changes so that we can be open by default.

We are open to amendments, suggestions and improvements on the bill. We look forward to that in time.

The other thing the information commissioner spoke about, and she spoke very well, is the efficiency of the system and the cost. She told us that she did not want the cost of the system to rise. That is why we use the \$5 fee in the bill, to talk about that and how it is refundable after someone does not get the information in a specific period of time.

Private Members' Business

When we were in committee, the Conservatives talked about having another tier of fees for private individuals. In the case of businesses where they wanted certain information from the government and it was not coming quickly enough, they said that maybe we should charge them more. If I had a small business, I do not think I would have liked to hear that. I do not know if they thought that through fully, but if we think about it, if we are going to start escalating two-tier costs and also in talking about privacy they want more redaction within this, who is it really serving in this particular case? Now we have legislation, an act that is servicing the government by putting on the false show of saying that we are open by default when in fact that is not the case in practice. There are two things here, the costs are down but if something is going to be redacted, in this particular legislation it should be justified to the hilt. It should be justified to the point that we are open by default. Therefore, it is not up to the government to just say that something is politically insensitive, so it will redact that part of the information and therefore Canadians cannot see it.

This may not come as a big surprise to many people in the House, but I do support this piece of legislation. I urge all members in the House to support it because this is a very significant step toward open government, open by default, as certainly was put forward by the information commissioner today.

ROYAL ASSENT

• (1745)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

Ottawa

March 31, 2015

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 31st day of March, 2015, at 5:02 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Patricia Jaton

Deputy Secretary

The schedule indicates the bills assented to were Bill C-27, An Act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (enhancing hiring opportunities for certain serving and former members of the Canadian Forces)—Chapter 5; Bill S-218, An Act respecting National Fiddling Day—Chapter 6; Bill C-54, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2015—Chapter 7; and Bill C-55, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2016—Chapter 8.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-613, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act and the Access to Information Act (transparency), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my concerns about Bill C-613, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act and the Access to Information Act, on transparency. I would like to focus specifically on the part of the bill that deals with the Access to Information Act.

As members know, this part of the bill proposes to change some of the wording in the “Purpose” section of the act to state that:

(a) government information must be made openly available to the public and accessible in machine readable formats;

(b) necessary exceptions to the right of access should be rare, limited and specific; and

(c) decisions on the disclosure of government information should be reviewed and enforced independently of government.

These amendments may seem to be only a few words on the page but their effect on the access to information system, and the infrastructure and resources set up to administer it, are far-reaching and costly.

Further, we object to the bill because these changes that it proposes are not necessary in light of existing practices under the act. In fact, they would overburden the administration of Canada's access to information regime. Indeed, they would lead to increased cost pressures and delays in responding to information requesters.

The bill would also give the Information Commissioner order-making powers under the act. Once again, this is unnecessary. The Information Commissioner already has the strong mandate needed to investigate and resolve disputes concerning access to information requests.

However, while we do not support this bill, let there be no mistake about this government's commitment to transparency, accountability and getting government information into the hands of Canadians. Indeed, Canadians are accessing more government information now than ever before, and the government is more open and transparent today than it has ever been. We understand that government information and data can enhance the transparency and accountability of our public institutions, and spur economic activity. We are committed to strengthening and modernizing our access to information and privacy program. We have already accomplished a great deal in this respect.

We have created online tools. These include a dedicated website that allows users to make and pay for access to information and privacy requests online. This website provides better service to information requesters by making it simpler and more convenient to request government records. It started as a pilot project in April 2012, but its use has expanded to include 21 government organizations.

Private Members' Business

We have also posted summaries of completed access to information and privacy requests online on our open data portal. More than 100 government organizations are currently doing this. Canadians can search out completed requests on our open data portal at data.gc.ca. In fact, in 2012-13, we provided Canadians with more government information than ever before, nearly six million pages. We have also posted three million pages of archived government records online.

We are committed to modernizing our access to information and privacy program, and we are taking concrete action in compliance with the acts as they are.

Another important part of the government's commitment to transparency is the work we have been doing on open data, including the creation of the open data portal, which I just mentioned. As members know, open data is a growing worldwide phenomenon. Open data is about making raw data available in machine-readable formats to citizens, governments, and not-for-profit and private sector organizations. It has the potential to spur innovation, and drive social, political and economic change here in Canada and around the world.

• (1750)

In fact, the U.S. global management consulting firm McKinsey and Company estimates open data could unlock trillions of dollars in the global economy. However, the full potential of open data will be realized only when it is available to as many people as possible.

That is why we are making it as easy as possible for people to find, access and reuse government data. One way we have done is through our open data portal at data.gc.ca. This portal is a one-stop shop for nearly 200,000 data sets from over 40 government departments that can be downloaded free of charge by anyone in Canada or around the world. A key feature of this portal is the open government licence, which gives users unrestricted use of government data and information.

We are also supporting open data by putting as much government data as possible into the hands of users. Let me give an example.

We are working on an initiative called open data Canada, a collaborative project with provincial and territorial governments, to create a seamless pan-Canadian open data community. When this is in place, Canadians from across the country will be able to search for and have unrestricted access to data from multiple governments. We are working hard to leverage open data as a public asset.

By making more and better data available, we will have a pan-Canadian platform for better decision making in business, research and social programs in the day-to-day lives of Canadians.

Our objective is to get government data into the hands of inventive users. One way we are doing this is by tapping into the creativity of Canadians. We have just concluded public consultations during which we heard from Canadians on how we could do even more. The result of these consultations will be Canada's second action plan on open government. This plan will be released in the fall and will build on the steps we have already taken to improve transparency and accountability, steps like ATIP Online, the Open Government Licence and Open Data portal.

Let me add that Canada has been at the forefront of the international open government movement.

In April 2012, we announced our membership in the global Open Government Partnership. As part of this, we pledged to support and promote open government both in Canada and around the world. Since then, more than 60 countries have signed on to Open Government Partnership, with each country committing to promote transparency, empower its citizens and harness new technologies to strengthen governance.

I should also mention that Canada is the co-chair of the Open Government Partnership working group on open data, with over 30 countries and 75 civil society organizations represented.

In closing, open government is something our government is firmly committed to, in all its aspects. A strong, modern access to information system is part of our commitment.

Our goals are to improve the transparency and accountability of government organizations and strengthen Canadian democracy and spur economic innovation.

While these are our noble goals, I question the motives of the Liberal leader on transparency, and here is why. First, he and his party are committed to repealing the First Nations Financial Accountability Act. Second, he accepted speaking fees from unions and then voted against the union financial transparency legislation. Third, he committed to running open and transparent nomination contests and turned his back on that.

With these points in mind, I would ask hon. members to see Bill C-613 for what it is, an unnecessary and costly waste of taxpayer money.

• (1755)

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the speech of my hon. colleague who just preceded me is a good example as to how the Conservatives have kind of convinced themselves that they are still the champions of transparency and accountability in this country. The reality is that they are not.

Private Members' Business

If they were listening, they would be hearing from the hundreds, if not thousands, if not millions of Canadians who are concerned with the secrecy and lack of accountability of the government. As the Treasury Board critic for the official opposition, I hear from a lot of Canadians who are worried that the democratic institutions of this country are being eroded by the need of a government to remain secret, to do things behind closed doors or in camera. In fact, the use of in camera meetings in committee is a great visible example of the government's commitment to transparency. I can imagine Canadians turning on their televisions at home, tuning into a committee that is dealing with a subject that is important to them, and seeing a blank screen. That is a great symbol of the approach the government has to open government.

The reality is that it did start with quite a broad vision of what an open government can be. The problem is that it got whittled down and whittled down, and whittled down again, as the government got used to power. It went from open government, to open data, to an open website. The committee studied that website and experts were not impressed. They were not impressed with the quality of information available on the website, the website's searchability, or its format.

The Conservative government must recognize that delays under the ATIP system, the number of complaints, and the level of public frustration have reached unacceptable levels. In wilfully abandoning the ATIP system through degradation and delay, the Conservatives have broken their own electoral promises. The Conservatives' growing blanket of secrecy endangers the very foundations of our parliamentary democracy.

I would like to remind Canadians that the Conservatives voted against Bill C-567, but I ask them to at least consider supporting Bill C-613, which is really just a weaker version of the NDP's bill, instead of voting another time against their electoral promises. Let me remind the House of those promises.

In 2006, the Conservatives promised to give the information commissioner the power to order the release of information, to expand the coverage of the act to all crown corporations, officers of Parliament, foundations and organizations that spend taxpayers' money or perform public functions, to subject the exclusion of cabinet confidences to review by the information commissioner. I would like to add that the government has used a record number of cabinet confidentiality excuses to totally bar information from Canadians, blacking it out. It is used in increasing ways and it is worrying.

The Conservatives further promised to provide a general public interest override for all exemptions so that the public interest is put before the secrecy of the government. They are beautiful words, but that is all they are. They further promised to ensure that all exemptions from the disclosure of government information are justified only on the basis of the harm or injury that would result from disclosure, not blanket exemption rules which is in fact the practice that is going on today.

Let us also remind ourselves of the Liberals' record on transparency. In 1994, the then justice minister Allan Rock pledged to strengthen the federal Access to Information Act, but it was not until early 2001 that then prime minister Jean Chrétien set up a

government task force to examine the flaws. The Liberal access committee task force was just a delay tactic, as the federal government failed to act on the task force report. In fact, in late 2001, the Liberal government instead proposed new so-called anti-terrorism laws to keep more information secret from the public.

At their February 2014 convention, the Liberals passed a motion to promote "A more effective Access-to-Information regime with stronger safeguards against political interference", but this bill does little to fulfill that motion.

• (1800)

By recommending that the Board of Internal Economy consider conducting internal exploratory consultations to help increase transparency, the Conservative-dominated PROC report essentially advocated the status quo on the Board of Internal Economy.

In their supplementary opinion, the Liberals recognized that transparency can be enhanced by mandating that the Board of Internal Economy hold its meetings in public and that these meetings would only go in camera if the board was discussing matters related to "security, employment, staff relations, or tenders, or...if unanimous consent of all members of the Board present...is obtained". This exact phrase, which is also found in clause 1 of Bill C-613, provides the government of the day with huge elbow room and a grey area to act and to keep things silent from Canadians.

The Liberals are also silent on the issue of replacing the Board of Internal Economy with independent oversight. Let me remind the House of a motion passed by the NDP, with unanimous consent, on June 18, 2013. It sets out our vision for transparency and accountability by the government and at the Board of Internal Economy:

That, notwithstanding any Standing or Special Order or usual practice of the House: in order to bring full transparency and accountability to House of Commons spending, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be instructed to:

(i) conduct open and public hearings with a view to replace the Board of Internal Economy with an independent oversight body;

Now that is transparency.

(ii) invite the Auditor General, the Clerk and the Chief Financial Officer of the House of Commons to participate fully in these hearings;

(iii) study the practices of provincial and territorial legislatures, as well as other jurisdictions and Westminster-style Parliaments in order to compare and contrast their administrative oversight;

(iv) propose modifications to the Parliament of Canada Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Auditor General Act and any other acts as deemed necessary;

(v) propose any necessary modifications to the administrative policies and practices of the House of Commons;

(vi) examine the subject-matter of the motions, standing in the name of other members of Parliament;

(vii) report its findings to the House no later than December 2, 2013, in order to have any proposed changes approved.

That is a reasonable and transparent vision of government. That is what we are proposing as the official opposition.

Private Members' Business

Unfortunately, Liberals react only when they are caught, and when they do react, they respond with half measures and convenient grey areas in their legislative proposals to safeguard their discretionary elbow room, which they use abundantly to restrict access when they are in power.

On this side of the House, that is, at this end of the opposition benches, in line with the Auditor General's recommendations and in the spirit of the NDP June 18, 2013 motion, which was passed in the House unanimously, we propose meaningful changes to POCA that entrench independent oversight of Parliament's expenditures and operations and that make accountability to all Canadians, not just MPs, a priority.

We need the other parties to commit to pushing for a fully transparent and accountable system, the backbone of good governance, which is so lacking today and so necessary to restore the credibility of our parliamentary institutions and political system. We propose that we stress, however, that even with the best possible reform of the ATI Act and the BOIE, changing the rules will never be sufficient if the people in power aspire to thwart the system. Integrity should be at the heart of governance. Integrity cannot be legislative, and integrity is a missing element in past federal Liberal and Conservative governments.

• (1805)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Since no other members wish to speak, I now invite the hon. member for Papineau for his right of reply.

[English]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to today's debate on my private member's bill, Bill C-613, the transparency act, with great interest.

The member for Don Valley West actually spoke quite eloquently, using all the right words about what open data and open government actually mean, which is all the more disconcerting, given that it means that the government is acting not out of ignorance but actually wilfully to have the most secretive, opaque government Canada has ever known.

I believe the conversation we have had today in this House has been a timely one, and I hope Canadians are all the more convinced now that adopting the bill is a wise and necessary step for this House.

[Translation]

The purpose of the transparency act is to make important changes to how Canadians stay informed about what their government is doing. The measures outlined in this bill guarantee a government whose information is automatically accessible

The members have already shown that they are ready to take up the challenge.

The Liberal Party was the first party to opt for proactive disclosure of parliamentarians' expenses, and I was pleased to see the members of the other parties follow our example. However, there is more work to be done.

[English]

It is not acceptable any more that decisions about the regulation of MPs' spending are made behind closed doors, entirely in secret, far from the light of public scrutiny. That is not the way things ought to be done in 2015. Instead, the House of Commons' Board of Internal Economy must be made open by default.

The challenge that the NDP members have not quite understood or highlighted in their speaking points is that the Board of Internal Economy is not a regular House committee. It is one that, by oath, must remain secret on a wide range of things. Regardless if we have unanimous consent at the BOIE to overturn that secrecy, it cannot, without possibly facing sanctions for having broken the Parliament of Canada Act. That is why a legislated change is needed to open the BOIE.

Canadians should know more about what their elected representatives are doing and how the rules are made that govern spending. Some things would remain confidential, such as personal matters or contractual dealings, but overall, reform of the Board of Internal Economy is well overdue.

• (1810)

[Translation]

We also cannot expect Canadians to be satisfied with the current access to information system, which is now outdated. It is a complicated and confusing system that often delivers results that are far from satisfactory. This is not surprising, considering that it has not undergone any significant changes in over 20 years.

We need a new approach, a system that allows Canadians to understand what we do here in Ottawa, as well as a system that takes into account the technological advances that have completely reshaped the information landscape and data sharing.

[English]

This bill would update the Access to Information system in four ways.

First, it would make all government information and data open by default and easily accessible.

Second, it would require that accessing information cost no more than the initial \$5.00 fee.

[Translation]

Third, this bill would expand and strengthen the Information Commissioner's mandate, giving him or her the power to enforce access to information laws. Once the government opens up, we want it to remain open. This was actually a Conservative promise during the 2006 election campaign.

Fourth, this bill provides for a mandatory review of our access to information system within 90 days of this bill receiving royal assent and every five years thereafter.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

I put forth the transparency act in good faith with my colleagues here, who I hope share the spirit with which this bill was introduced. That is, that we are all striving to make a better government for Canadians.

I believe more openness and transparency, along with strengthened information laws, will lend more accountability to this place. It is important to Canadians and to the continued health of our democracy.

In the spirit of openness and transparency, I will be hosting, in 20 minutes, an information session at 6:30 p.m. in East Block Room 362, where I will be glad to take any and all questions from my colleagues on these important improvements to transparency.

Tomorrow, I am hopeful members will join me in voting Bill C-613 through to committee stage.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 1, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on February 27, I was concerned about French-language television programming outside Quebec. A number of

Canadians and francophone organizations across Canada are outraged about the current situation.

I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages to support the NDP's motion to have the Standing Committee on Official Languages study Canada's French-language television programming. I would like to give an overview of the situation before I ask my questions of the minister.

It is sad to see that the responsibility for protecting the French language falls to a government that won the booby prize from *Impératif français* for its lack of leadership on francophone issues, that has been cutting funding to the French network of the CBC for years, and that appoints unilingual anglophones to positions that are critical to promoting French within the government.

Every day we get more bad news about official languages. Last week we learned about new cuts at the CBC, this time to the French network.

Louis Lalande, vice-president of French services, announced the elimination of about 80 jobs, plus 20 more through positions left vacant and retirements. Ten jobs will be eliminated in Acadia, 15 in Ontario, 16 in the western provinces, and 10 at ICI Musique. *Téléjournal* will also be cut by 30 minutes in Rimouski, Rouyn-Noranda, Saguenay and Trois-Rivières.

The experts we want to see appear before the Standing Committee on Official Languages will say that these decisions will have a major impact on the vitality of Canada's Francophonie.

I would like to remind hon. members that the government is required to respect the Official Languages Act and the Broadcasting Act. The minister should coordinate the implementation of official languages commitments within all federal institutions, including CBC/Radio-Canada. However, thousands of francophones outside Quebec are seeing their services dwindle, particularly in the area of broadcasting.

CBC/Radio-Canada has the mandate to strive to be of equivalent quality in English and in French. Minority francophone communities in a number of regions can no longer watch the Montreal Canadiens hockey games in French because this service is available only to subscribers and no longer offered in French.

Our problem with the government is that it is not respecting the rights of French Canadians to have equal services in both official languages.

Is the minister comfortable with the cuts to French television programming in Canada? She must be, otherwise she would do something about it. Nothing is being done in this regard. The minister is hiding behind her Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013-2018, while French continues to disappear in this country.

We have witnessed a steady drop in French over the past 30 years. It is frightening. Year after year, there is a steady decline in the demographic weight of francophones in Canada.

Adjournment Proceedings

I find it appalling that the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages is happy with the progress that is being made in the official languages file. She needs to roll up her sleeves and get started on the tremendous amount of work that needs to be done to maintain the equal status of both official languages in Canada.

I am therefore asking the minister again whether she will support our request that a committee study Canada's television programming and respect the rights of francophone minorities, and whether she will come and testify in committee if she is asked to do so.

• (1815)

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss French-language television programming outside Quebec, programming that our government happens to support in a number of ways.

To begin, the Canada media fund, which is funded by the federal government and cable and satellite distributors in Canada, is the largest fund in the industry for the production of Canadian television programs and digital media content. The CMF funds Canadian television programs and digital media content in both official languages and in aboriginal languages. It also encourages official language minority community productions.

Through a contribution agreement, the government has allocated a stable, permanent envelope of \$134.1 million per year since 2010-11. Under the agreement, we set the CMF's guiding principles and broad public policy directions.

One of the things the contribution agreement between the government and the CMF stipulates is that one-third of the funding allocated through the convergent stream and the experimental stream must be granted to French-language productions. This provision ensures the sustainability of French-language television production, while giving Canadians the opportunity to watch programs produced in both official languages.

Also under the contribution agreement, the government must guarantee French-language television producers outside Quebec access to the francophone minority program. That program will provide \$10.75 million in 2015-16 to support productions that reflect the realities of living in francophone communities outside Quebec. In 2013-14, 32 projects were funded through that program, for a total of 147 hours of television, a record high for the past four years.

The total production budgets supported by the francophone minority program, considering all other sources of funding, increased by \$4.1 million compared to 2012-13, for a total of \$24.8 million. Other measures also exist to support French-language programming, notably through the CRTC.

For example, in 2013, the Commission granted a licence to UNIS, a new French-language television service with the mandate of representing minority francophone communities. The CRTC recognized the importance of providing programming for francophones living outside Quebec by making the distribution of UNIS mandatory with the basic package of cable and satellite television service providers across Canada. Accordingly, all Canadian subscribers of these services have access to it.

In addition, our government recognizes that CBC/Radio-Canada, as the national public broadcaster, plays a vital role in official language minority communities. Every year, our government allocates more than \$1 billion to help it fulfill its obligations as a public national broadcaster.

With the most recent renewal of the television licences of CBC/Radio-Canada in May 2013, the CRTC established conditions to ensure that services reflect the realities of the country and official language minority communities, and also to promote understanding and mutual respect through information and national news programming.

Under the conditions of its licence, Radio-Canada is also required to devote at least 6% of its annual budget to Canadian programs by independent producers from Atlantic Canada, Ontario, the west, the north and Quebec, excluding Montreal. This obligation resulted in \$9.5 million in expenditures for independent regional French-language programming in 2013-14.

In closing, the corporation's French-language services must also broadcast, on average, a minimum of five hours of Canadian programs produced in the regions I mentioned every week over the broadcast year.

• (1820)

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, once again, we have many criticisms of this government's handling of official languages.

This morning we learned that more than 1,000 internships are in jeopardy in Canada. The new Canadian rules put in place by the Conservative government without consultation could undermine a historic agreement between France and Quebec.

More than 1,000 French students who come and invigorate our schools and businesses as part of internships in Quebec could be denied visas. Canada could become less attractive to francophone students, which is very worrisome.

These francophone students enhance the vitality of our francophone communities, and they are likely to help maintain the demographic weight of Canada's francophones.

Can the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration explain why he is not fulfilling the promises made by the Minister of International Trade to attract more than 450,000 students by 2022?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I am not the minister who can answer that question. However, in her previous question, the hon. member mentioned that Montreal Canadiens games were not always available to francophones across the country.

That situation exists because of private negotiations for regional broadcast rights between broadcasters and NHL teams. Those negotiations are guided by market forces and are not subject to government intervention. I am sure we can all agree that it would be inappropriate for the Government of Canada to intervene in negotiations between private sector companies about broadcast rights for Montreal Canadiens games.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1). (The House adjourned at 6:24 p.m.)

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