



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

---

VOLUME 145 • NUMBER 072 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

---

OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, September 28, 2010**

—  
**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

## **CONTENTS**

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

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, September 28, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

---

*Prayers*

---

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[English]

### SENIORS CPI PROTECTION ACT

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-564, An Act respecting a Senior Consumer Price Index.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vancouver East for supporting me on this important bill.

When seniors get an increase because of CPI, they feel that they are being slighted because seniors do not buy electronic goods nor do they buy brand new cars. The way that the CPI is calculated, targeting what normal working people base their purchasing on, does not reflect the reality of seniors.

Therefore, I am introducing the bill today to try to target more efficiently to those areas that senior consumers need. I want to say that I am excited by this bill, which we call the seniors CPI protection act.

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

\* \* \*

### PETITIONS

#### PASSPORT FEES

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my petition calls on the Canadian government to negotiate with the United States government to reduce U.S. and Canadian passport fees.

American tourists visiting Canada are at their lowest levels since 1972 and has fallen by 5 million in the last seven years, from 16 million in 2002 to 11 million in 2009. The passport fees for multiple member families are a significant barrier to the traditional cross-border family vacation and the cost of passports for an American family of four can be over \$500. While over half of Canadians have passports, only one-quarter of Americans have passports.

At the recent midwest legislative conference of the Council of State Governments, attended by myself and 500 other elected representatives from 11 border states and 3 provinces, a resolution was passed unanimously that reads, be it:

RESOLVED, that [the] Conference calls on President Barack Obama and the Prime Minister...to immediately examine a reduced fee for passports to facilitate cross-border tourism;

...we encourage the governments to examine the idea of a limited time two-for-one passport renewal or a new application; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution be submitted to appropriate federal, state and provincial officials.

To be a fair process, passport fees must be reduced on both sides of the border. Therefore, the petitioners call on the government to: (a) work with the American government to examine a mutual reduction in passport fees to facilitate tourism; and (b) promote a limited time two-for-one passport renewal or new application fee on a mutual basis with the United States.

#### ANIMAL WELFARE

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition today with regard to Bill C-544.

The petitioners are saying that Canadian horse meat products that are currently being sold for human consumption in domestic and international markets are likely to contain prohibited substances and that horses are ordinarily kept and treated as supportive and companion animals.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House of Commons and Parliament assembled to bring forward and adopt into legislation Bill C-544, an act to Amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act, thus prohibiting the importation and exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption, as well as horse meat products for human consumption.

#### BUS DRIVERS

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today from my constituents concerning bus drivers, whether they be para-drivers, school bus drivers or just general transit drivers who, increasingly in this country, unfortunately, find themselves under violent attack.

*Business of Supply*

It seems that no one is free from attack from a public that wants its service immediately and does not necessarily like the service it gets but continue to put these drivers at great risk.

The petitioners are asking that the code which protects police officers be enacted so that it would cover off public transit drivers, school bus drivers and so on.

One would think that those who are providing a service, like the public transit drivers and school bus drivers, that we would value that service, and I think most folks do. However, unfortunately, from time to time they are subject to the violence and, in some cases, severe violence that actually keeps them off of work and, in rare cases, prevents them from ever returning to their occupation.

Therefore, the petitioners are asking that the code be amended so that they be covered.

## ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present a petition signed in support of private member's bill, Bill C-544, as did my colleague from Beaches—East York.

The petitioners support the bill to amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act to prohibit the importation and exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption, as well as horse meat products for human consumption.

The petitioners are concerned that horses that are kept for sport and companionship and not for human consumption are often administered drugs that are prohibited substances and are not administered to other animals destined for human consumption.

## KAIROS

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present. The first petition is with regard to funding for KAIROS.

As we have heard in the House, KAIROS received notice from the Canadian International Development Agency that \$7 million in funding was denied. The petitioners are saying that this decision severely impairs the capacity of this respected ecumenical organization to improve the lives of millions of people living in poverty and conflict around the world and that hurts communities helped by these progressive projects. These petitioners come from around Nova Scotia.

• (1005)

## UNSOLICITED MAIL

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition concerns junk mail or unsolicited mail.

Some 1,300 pieces of unsolicited mail yearly arrive at our doorstep. Therefore, the petition asks the federal Minister of the Environment to consider introducing some kind of legislation that would require unsolicited ad mail and flyers to be produced using recyclable paper, to phase in the use of hemp paper and that distributors of flyers also obey no flyer signs in Canada.

## OIL AND GAS PRICES

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today to enact Bill C-442 from the 39th Parliament.

Gas prices are a great hardship on everyone in northern Ontario, including small business owners and ordinary motorists. This past Sunday, I had an opportunity to speak with Mayor Dennis Brown of Atikokan and a number of people who live in Atikokan who are very concerned about these prices.

The petition contains 500 signatures from folks in my riding who are asking the government to give speedy passage to Bill C-442 so we can have a meaningful vehicle, so to speak, through average Canadians speaking up about the price of gas and to help consumers fight the high gas prices that we are facing in northern Ontario and right across the country.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

## OPPOSITION MOTION—LONG FORM CENSUS

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.)** moved:

That the House calls on the Government of Canada to reinstate immediately the long-form census; and given that no person has ever been imprisoned for not completing the census, the House further calls on the government to introduce legislative amendments to the Statistics Act to remove completely the provision of imprisonment from Section 31 of the Act in relation to the Long-form Census, the Census of Population and the Census of Agriculture.

He said: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time this morning with my colleague, the hon. member for St. Paul's. Furthermore, I would greatly appreciate it if you could warn me one minute before the end of my 10-minute speech.

I am very proud to rise today on this first Liberal opposition day to speak about something that is very important to Canada. I would like to read the English text of my party's motion:

That the House calls on the Government of Canada to reinstate immediately the long-form census; and given that no person has ever been imprisoned for not completing the census, the House further calls on the government to introduce legislative amendments to the Statistics Act to remove completely the provision of imprisonment from Section 31 of the Act in relation to the Long-form Census, the Census of Population and the Census of Agriculture.

What happened this summer? I can guarantee that when all of my colleagues in the House today left Parliament in June, they never would have thought that come September, we would be here debating the census.

*Business of Supply*

•(1010)

[English]

What happened this summer on this issue? When I entered politics, I entered because I had a vision, like that of my party, for this country. I recognize that other parties have different visions, but I never for one second thought that today I would be arguing for the government to back away from what is a ridiculous decision on its part to change the long form census questionnaire.

During the quiet of the summer, when people were not looking and people were at their cottage, the current government, as it does sometimes with other issues, decided that it would announce a change to the long form census, that it would take this priceless and extremely important database, which is used to get an accurate portrait of the Canadian mosaic, and it is a complex mosaic, and that it would jeopardize its future value by turning it from a compulsory census to a voluntary census, not realizing, perhaps initially, or at least it said, that this would jeopardize the value of this census.

The census itself is a database that allows government policy to be formulated in the most intelligent manner for the benefit of Canadians. It requires accuracy and completeness because the Canadian mosaic is composed of rich and poor and of minorities, whether they be linguistic, ethnic or our first nations. Canada is a complex mosaic and in order to have an accurate portrait of the country, we need to know the level of education of Canadians; their habits with respect to commuting, because we are very interested in trying to promote public transportation in this era where we are concerned about the environment; and a host of important answers to questions that allow us to put in place informed policy.

Why did the current government not realize that by switching from a compulsory census to a voluntary census that it would be jeopardizing this priceless database?

It was clearly a bad decision and one that we and all Canadians reacted to very decisively. In fact, as members know, over 350 well-respected groups have said, "Stop this insanity. Do not do this. This is the wrong thing to do. This is an essential tool for public policy. It is an essential tool for non-governmental organizations that are concerned about social and economic issues. Why disturb something that has been working extremely well for the past 30 years, essentially in the same form?"

I have been asked by many people why the government did this. I have had great difficulty in answering that question.

The only one that makes sense to me is that the Conservatives thought they would get some political gain by announcing this decision, that they might be able to consolidate their base or find some new adherents to their party. Of course, this throws out the window the importance of scientific rigour, logic and truth, and replaces them with ideology and dogma. It takes us into darkness. This was a bad decision.

Let me quote some of the people who have talked about it. The Canadian Association of University Teachers said, "We are deeply concerned about the disastrous consequences this will have for the scientific understanding of Canadian society, and for the ability to make informed decisions about social and economic policies".

[Translation]

We will no longer be able to draw certain conclusions or know whether the gap between young and old or the gap between regions has grown. These kinds of analyses will not be possible.

[English]

The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council said, "You're not going to have the same level of reliability" with a voluntary survey.

[Translation]

This makes us even more vulnerable to a government or an interest group that claims something, because we will not have the data to contradict them.

[English]

Canada's professional planners depend on accurate, timely and consistent data to help build Canadian communities. Making the collection of this data voluntary undermines good public policy.

We know about the letter that was sent by two previous clerks of the Privy Council, Mr. Himelfarb and Mr. Cappe, as well as the letter sent by David Dodge, a highly respected former governor of the Bank of Canada. Ivan Fellegi, who was really the father of Statistics Canada, a widely respected organization, sent a letter to the Prime Minister asking him to please reconsider.

We have heard about evangelical groups and the Canadian Jewish Congress expressing very openly the fact that this was a wrong-headed decision.

We have heard the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney, express recently that this may make it more difficult for the Government of Canada with respect to its fiscal policy.

The complaints that have been brought out in the past three months have been thunderous and overwhelming. Let me mention a few of them. Many of them are in ridings where members of the government actually reside. The cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Fredericton, Hamilton, Kelowna, Kitimat, Langley, Mississauga, North Vancouver, Merritt, Montreal, New Westminster, Ottawa, Penticton, Pitt Meadows, Prince George, Spruce Grove, Surrey, Toronto, Vernon, Victoria are just some of the municipal governments that have said this is the wrong thing for the government to do.

We have heard from a host of different groups. They have protested because they realize the voluntary survey will only be filled out by a fraction of Canadians, possibly if they work very hard at it, up to 65% of Canadians. The people who will not be represented are the ones who will not fill out the form. They are the ones who are most in need of the policies of the Government of Canada, the ethnic minorities and linguistic minorities. At the moment the Canadian Federation of Francophone and Acadian Communities is taking the government to court to try to get it to reverse its decision.

I will give my place now to the hon. member for St. Paul's. We will be debating this motion all day long, but I certainly hope the arguments that are presented today will make the government reconsider this ill-advised step for the benefit of all Canadians.

*Business of Supply*

•(1015)

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like the member to elaborate on the consultative process. In a decision as important and vital as this one, a decision that will affect every Canadian, every Canadian group, organization and religion, we would have liked to see a very extensive period of consultation with those groups and organizations.

Was there any consultation done with any of those groups, organizations and individuals? Is the hon. member aware of any consultation with Parliament, a parliamentary committee, his own cabinet, his own caucus? Was anyone in Canada consulted about this particular decision?

**Mr. Marc Garneau:** Mr. Speaker, the short answer is no. As far as I can make out, the decision to change it was made by the Prime Minister's Office. The government asked Statistics Canada how to make it work so that it looked okay. Statistics Canada, based on documents that we have seen, essentially said that it was a bad idea. The government decided that it was going to do it anyway and brought out its communication policy to sell it. We all know from listening to the Conservative government during the summer that it botched its communication. It brought up various bogus arguments over the course of the summer and did not persuade anybody.

The government did not consult the industry committee on which I sit. It did not discuss this in Parliament. The government did not present it to Canadians to see what they thought of it. The answer is no, there was no consultation.

[Translation]

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the member from Westmount—Ville-Marie. I was very interested in what he had to say, and one word in particular struck me, the word “ridiculous”. I am sure that the member opposite will agree with me when I say that it is ridiculous to put honest citizens in jail for refusing to say how many bedrooms they have in their houses or even what kind of cereal they eat in the morning. That is the issue before the House. How can we collect useful data without infringing on individual freedoms?

I would like to know whether the hon. member is ready to work with the government, as he has done in the past. Two questions have been added to the short form to collect information for validation purposes, information that will be useful to all Canadians.

Is he ready to propose real solutions and to acknowledge that society and individual freedoms have evolved?

•(1020)

**Mr. Marc Garneau:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member from Lévis—Bellechasse. I hardly know where to begin.

It makes me laugh to hear the Conservative government keep talking about prison sentences. Was my Conservative Party colleague asleep under a rock all summer long? Did he not hear the opposition parties say that they were ready to get rid of prison sentences? In fact, that is in today's motion. I do not know why he always has to make it all about prison sentences.

On the radio this summer, I remember hearing him say to listeners that the census asked people what kind of cereal they ate for breakfast. That is disinformation. It simply is not true. The 2006

census did not ask people what kind of cereal they ate for breakfast or how many toilets they had in their houses. But that did not stop the government from waging a disinformation campaign to promote its ideology.

I would suggest that the member read the census. That way, he will know what questions are in it and will understand that those questions are important for policy-making in our country, and for helping people in Canada, including the residents of Lévis—Bellechasse.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my colleague has made some excellent arguments supporting the mandatory census questionnaire and the elimination of jail time.

[English]

As the critic for democratic reform, and as the proposer of a private member's bill to enshrine the mandatory long form census in the Statistics Act, I want to use my time today to demonstrate that the decision of the Conservative government to eliminate the mandatory long form census is an affront to our democracy and the parliamentary process. We disagree with what the government has done and also how the government did it.

This morning the *Globe and Mail* editorial said that the census is for Parliament to decide.

[Translation]

However, according to this morning's edition of *Le Devoir*, the Minister of Industry has already said that he will ignore the result of the vote. Yesterday, he told reporters that his government typically takes the stance that a motion is simply a motion and does not commit the government to anything.

[English]

As the member for Parkdale—High Park said, the decision is something that is on the Prime Minister's bucket list. There has been no consultation, no support, and it is based on a libertarian ideology. It has nothing to do with the evidence and expert opinions, nor the opinion of those who use the census data.

[Translation]

Canadians need to know that this decision was made in secret. The groups that use these statistics were not consulted. Even worse, the committees appointed by this government, such as the National Statistics Council, were not consulted either. The council is mandated to advise the Chief Statistician on Statistics Canada's activities. It is also implicitly responsible for program priorities. It was not even consulted. And now we find out that all of these people disagree with the government's decision.

[English]

The decision was taken by a minister without consultation, in secret, without even the advice of the committee established to advise the minister and the chief statistician, while Parliament was not sitting. Now, regardless of what Parliament votes, the minister has stated that he will not abide by the will of Parliament.

*Business of Supply*

It seems that the minister has made the decision on the direction of the PMO and is fulfilling the ideology of a Prime Minister who prefers there be no role for government, and who particularly dislikes the idea that there would be a government agency that could track the numbers and expose the government policies based upon ideology that fly in the face of the facts.

When the statistics show that crime is going down, better to shoot the messenger. Statistics Canada provides the facts. The government would prefer not to have those facts, so punish the agency that collects the data that the government does not want.

The mantra of management is: if it is measured, it gets noticed; if it gets noticed, it gets done. The government refuses to manage, to govern. The government only campaigns, criticizing the opposition and fearmongering. In fact, it refuses to abide by the principle of good government, which would be evidence-based policy.

However, there is no government in the country of peace, order and good government. We are governed by a party that does not believe in the role of government. Since its data often will show the need for government to interfere, better not have the data.

As we heard at the AFN annual general meeting, Professor Brenda Elias told us at our round table that if one is not counted, one does not exist. The census is the count in accountability; be counted.

On July 21 at the industry committee, we heard from the wonderful Elisapee Sheutiapiq, a board member of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, who said:

You have to remember that in the long form census there are questions such as how many bedrooms are in a house. In Arctic communities it's too cold to be homeless. There's hidden homelessness. We'll never get that data if the long form is not filled out.

She went on to say:

...yes, because in northern communities, they're still very much intimidated by forms, especially the elders, because some of them can't read English, so they're intimidated. But if you have someone who has been trained through Stats Canada going house to house, they would be very comfortable having the person come and help to fill out those forms.... As Inuit, because of our small numbers within our great nation, sometimes we fall through the cracks, but this data brings real information that's needed in all levels of government and non-government organizations.

[*Translation*]

And that is why francophones are presenting their case in court today. If one is not counted, one does not exist. The Conservative government is abdicating its constitutional responsibilities.

● (1025)

[*English*]

The Canadian Council on Social Development has over 370 groups in favour of the census, as are, as my colleague said, the Bank of Canada, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, bishops, and churches. Against it are the Fraser Institute and the National Citizens Coalition. We believe they will have a great deal of difficulty explaining to people why they are advising that the government spend \$30 million more to get less reliable information. It is the conceit of the Prime Minister.

We believe Parliament has the right to direct the government to save \$30 million.

At the Women Deliver conference in Washington, the Gutmacher Institute called Canada an evidence-free zone and lamented that they were once one under George Bush. Now our Prime Minister has relegated Canada to an ideologically driven policy backwater.

It is embarrassing to the experts, to community-based organizations that need the data with which to plan their communities. It is embarrassing to economists. For the sake of ideology, the Conservative government is prepared to spend \$30 million more in order to get data that is less reliable, but more important, impossible to compare with previous censuses. It is impossible to determine if things are getting better or worse. It would be like me as a physician dealing with a lab that changed the tests so that I can no longer figure out if a patient's sugar levels or cholesterol are going up or down.

The Prime Minister wants to pay more to get less. He has already cancelled the invaluable PALS, the participation and activity limitation survey that tracks the needs of Canadians with disabilities.

We need to remember that if the government thought the expanded voluntary census was better, it could and should have said so. Instead, on July 28, the government quietly gazetted the 2011 census questions. Thankfully, the conscientious CP journalist Jennifer Ditchburn noticed that the mandatory long form census questions were not there, and buried in the Statistics Canada website was a national household voluntary survey. She raised the alarm, and then the people who used and needed the data were shocked. They had not been consulted at all. The decision had been made unilaterally. They could not believe the government had made this decision with absolutely no consideration to those who need the data with which to plan.

As we have heard, from the Bank of Canada to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, all felt undercut, their needs ignored. Even more alarming, the very council appointed by the government to advise it on matters related to the census had been excluded from the decision. It was not consulted. The advisory council was not allowed to advise. The council members were not amused and have been very clear that they do not agree.

The government yet again in a secretive, sneaky manner tried to impose a decision in the middle of the G8 and G20 visit, with Parliament not sitting, hoping that Canadians, the users of the census data, indeed the advisory committee, would not notice. Yet again the government treated Canadians as though they were stupid; *Father Knows Best*. People were not to worry their little heads. The Conservatives hoped that when they were caught and it was noticed that it would be too late for the 2011 census. It is not.

*Business of Supply*

The Conservatives then misrepresented the chief statistician as though he had given this advice, and I will quote from Munir Sheikh's statement:

I want to take this opportunity to comment on a technical statistical issue which has become the subject of media discussion. This relates to the question of whether a voluntary survey can become a substitute for a mandatory census.

It cannot.

Dr. Fellegi said that the government had misinterpreted the imposition of this long form census when in 1971 and before 1971 there was only a long form census. The short form census was introduced in 1971.

•(1030)

[Translation]

The government continues to show contempt for Parliament and for Canada's democratic institutions. Parliament is being treated like a suggestion box decorated with Christmas lights once a year.

[English]

The Minister of Industry said yesterday that he will not abide by the will of Parliament. This has been the conduct of the last two Parliaments.

This long form census is a test of the government. Now that Canadians are watching, will the Conservatives finally listen? Will they listen to the experts and to the communities? For this once, will they let Parliament decide as *The Globe and Mail* said this morning: "The census is for Parliament to decide"?

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am really surprised at the umbrage and the hyperbole expressed by both of the Liberal members who have spoken, members for whom I have a great deal of respect.

The member for St. Paul's just mentioned data about Inuit housing. It is as if all of this priceless data will be lost. I am sure with the expanded voluntary census that will be going out that such important data will be put forward by the communities that value that information getting into the system.

The issue here is not about eliminating the long form census. It is about eliminating those penalties, including fines and imprisonment. The Liberals are now asking for some of these penalties to be changed. Is that not interesting?

The member spoke about the priceless data. There have never been penalties for false information in the database, and this priceless data that so many scholarly people refer to may not be as accurate as they like to think. For example, I understand some 26,000 Canadians listed their religion as Jedi Knight.

So I wonder about the member's umbrage and hyperbole on this issue that we seem to be getting closer to consensus on fixing.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Madam Speaker, they just do not get it. There is no way that a voluntary census will give us data as usable as the mandatory one. A mandatory census is not just whether we decide to fill it out at our dining room table, it is actually whether there is an obligation for the government to follow up if people have had trouble filling it out, as the wonderful member from ITK said at committee. It is a matter of the resources to the government to help

someone who does not speak English, help other people to be able to fill out this data that ends up being in their best interest.

It is irresponsible for the government to try to pretend that the voluntary census, for which it will spend \$30 million more, can in any way be a replacement for the mandatory long form census as was said at committee by Munir Sheikh.

•(1035)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to raise a point that has not yet really been mentioned here today. As usual, the government has a habit of coming up with statements and we never know how or what they are based on. It makes certain statements about crime, for instance, and would have us believe they are supported by facts and statistics. For example, the government says that crime is on the rise and is a real problem. However, just today, a Statistics Canada survey shows that victimization rates have not increased since 2004.

Does my colleague agree that this attack on the census is nothing more than the government's underhanded way of ensuring that the facts are less reliable in the future, so that it can continue saying whatever it wants about any topic, without ever being contradicted by data from researchers or Statistics Canada? Does my colleague believe that this is a way for the Conservatives to open a door for themselves in the future, so they can say whatever they want without being refuted by statistics?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Madam Speaker, I totally agree.

Basing one's decisions on ideology without any evidence is completely irresponsible. I truly believe that the Conservatives' decision to scrap the mandatory census is an attack on reason.

[English]

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to talk about the changes that this government announced earlier this summer regarding revisions to the 2011 census process, including the move from a mandatory long form census questionnaire to the new voluntary national household survey.

Before I begin that, I think it is important to note the contrasting positions between the opposition and the government. The difference could not be made more clear.

This government believes we must strike a balance between the need for information and the threat of jail and/or fines to gather that information. The opposition instead brushes those concerns aside and demands that Canadians provide detailed information on over 40 pages of questions whether they want to or not.

It is our position that the opposition's position does not provide balance. That is plain and simple.

We have always been and continue to be fully supportive of the census in terms of its objective. Yet we must strike that balance between Canadians' rights to refuse answering those questions and the government's needs or desires to know the answers.



*Business of Supply*

It is in this context that the government announced its decision to move away from the mandatory long form census to the voluntary survey. This change reflects our government's belief that no individual should be coerced on threat of imprisonment or fines into surrendering the answers to the 40 pages of questions that make up the long form.

Let me put this question perhaps a little bit rhetorically to any member of the Liberal, Bloc or NDP coalition partners. If someone in their riding does not want to complete the 40 pages of personal, private questions about their ancestry or parts of their belief system, about their day-to-day routines or about the state of repair of their homes, is it the appropriate government response to harass them until they relent and comply?

The members opposite have been clear that this is what they believe. That is what they stand for. It is not what I stand for, nor is it what this government can support. Asking someone how many sick days they took last year, under threat of imprisonment or massive fines, is quite rightly seen by some as incredibly intrusive on the part of the state.

It is because of this issue that our government compromised by creating the voluntary national household survey.

It is my belief and the belief of this government and representing Canadians who believe this way as well that this new approach achieves the appropriate balance between the need to collect information on households for informed public policy purposes and the removal of undue legal penalties on Canadians who choose not to do so.

What I have found most profoundly disappointing in the course of this debate over the last couple of months is the casual acceptance of coercive tactics to acquire more and more personal information from Canadians. It is a form of data farming.

We know there is appetite for more information from business and from other organizations, but under this 40-page form, government becomes the strong arm of enforcement to get this information by using threats.

I know the opposition says no one has been jailed, but quite frankly, when Canadians have someone at their door saying, "You're going to go to jail" and that person represents the government, that is a threat of jail. It is a threat of massive fines. Those threats are delivered by agents of the government.

Just think of this. For many in our society, many Canadians, our friends, our neighbours, perhaps family members, this is their only encounter with the government and it is not a pleasant one.

I have spoken to some of our hired census takers. One of them was in tears as she told me how new Canadians, terrified, thought they would be deported if they did not answer the long form questions.

• (1040)

Some members on the other side of the House are laughing at me right now. I do not think this is a laughing matter. They laugh and they interrupt. That is their casualness toward this issue.

Another census taker said that despite the best efforts of Statistics Canada, because it has a policy on this, some census takers were hired from the same neighbourhood as the responders, meaning our neighbours could know some of our most personal and intimate information.

For the opposition and other segments of our society, these are but trifles. They are of no major concern. Their position is information is key and the desire and demand for that information is to be balanced by nothing. However, we believe this is a terrible degradation of the social contract between the governors and the governed. We need to restore balance.

I recognize, for the purposes of debating this motion, that some critics have come to the table by calling on the government to introduce legislative amendments to the Statistics Act to remove completely the provisions of imprisonment from section 31 of the act in relation to the long form census, the census of population and the census of agriculture.

Colleagues will be pleased to know that I have already announced that we will remove this kind of heavy-handed punishment upon acceptance by this chamber and the other place. The new legislation will remove the threat of imprisonment for a citizen who chose to exercise the right to refuse to participate in any and all mandatory Statistics Canada surveys.

It has always been the position of any government, regardless of political stripe, historically in the country that the government of the day has always determined which questions are mandatory and which are not. This is not the first time changes have been made to the census. In fact, the census has evolved over time. Questions are modified, added and deleted with each new cycle to take into account a number of factors such as consultation feedback, support of legislation, program of policy needs, historical comparability and alternative data sources.

[*Translation*]

Although the census dates back to 1871, the long form has existed only since 1971. The amount of private detailed information the government is asking of Canadians has increased considerably.

• (1045)

[*English*]

Remember that the basic long form census questions have remained constant for decades, but the additional 40 or 50 questions that suddenly appeared in 1971 have been continually modified with new ones added each census. Not only the questions have changed, but the collection methods for the census have evolved over time. Some changes are definitely on the plus side, including, for example, the fact that in 1971 Canadians began to complete the questionnaire themselves rather than the previous approach of giving oral answers to an interviewer, although that practice exists in certain extenuating circumstances, or that beginning in 2006, Canadians were given the option of providing their answers via the Internet. It is our hope that in 2011 even more Canadians will choose to respond online to both the census and the national household survey.

*Business of Supply*

However, not so welcome has been the probing questions under a mandatory regime and they seem particularly less welcome in a technological environment where Canadians are more and more sensitive about privacy issues.

The short form census continues to be mandatory, but the short form questions are much less invasive. Because it is short, the form is considerably less onerous to fill out. It contains questions on core demographic information such as date of birth, gender, marital status, mother tongue, which previous short form censuses included. Although there is an element of compulsion to fill out the short form, the questions, by virtue of what they are and the fact that there are only 10 of them, make filling out the form much less of a privacy concern for most citizens.

I want to repeat for the record that all households in Canada will receive the short form census in 2011. As hon. members might be aware by my answers in question period this past week, our government further compromised, by being the fair and reasonable government that we are, by adding two additional questions on official languages in the short form. I can assure the House that all questions relating to the official languages asked in the 2006 census will be maintained in the 2011 version, including knowledge of official languages, mother tongue and languages spoken at home.

[*Translation*]

The 2011 census includes additional questions on Canadians' ability to speak both official languages and on the language spoken at home. These questions will allow the government to respect the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Official Languages Act.

[*English*]

I truly believe a voluntary survey combined with the census for which the threat of jail time is removed in instances of non-compliance is an approach that strikes a reasonable balance between the privacy of citizens and the need for these data. This does not mean that the national household survey will be any less comprehensive than the current mandatory form. The questions will virtually be the same and will include queries on income and housing which, for example, measure crowding and identify housing needs, leading to the development of community housing programs.

One of the key issues in the public debate on these changes to the census has been the issue of data quality. I can report in this place that Statistics Canada believes, rightly so, that the national household survey will result in usable and useful data that can meet the needs of many users.

On the advice of Statistics Canada, which recognizes the sample size would decrease as the long form becomes voluntary, the government has agreed to send the national household survey to nearly double the number of Canadian households as compared to the 2006 long form census. This will be the largest survey distributed to the Canadian population in our nation's history in terms of volume with the long form being distributed to more households than ever before.

Statistics Canada would administer the NHS in close coordination with the census. It will use a variety of methods to encourage people to fill out the new survey, methods similar to those used in its other

voluntary household surveys that have already proved to be very useful. This includes direct mail outs, highlighting the importance of the NHS and reminders to non-respondents to complete their forms. The agency will also pursue the best approach to encourage Canadians to complete both the census and the national household survey.

Inherent in this approach is a reasonable compromise that gives us the ability to get what the chief statistician has called "useful and usable data" to meet the needs of many users. To ensure that the sample size is sufficient in order for the data to be useful and usable, we have to actively work with individuals and groups. The government has a plan to do just that, while relying on Statistics Canada's ability to conduct voluntary surveys, its experience, professionalism and rigorous methods.

Through the methodologies I just described, I think they meet head on some of the issues of survey bias. However, our government is focused on finding an appropriate balance between the needs of organizations of governments to use the data, as I mentioned, and the needs of ordinary Canadians who do not like being threatened at their door.

I have often heard members of the opposition attempt to set aside the government's concern about the threat of jail by citing the number of Canadians actually sentenced. I refer to the survey in my remarks. As I mentioned, this misses the point entirely. Canadians who refused to fill out the long form census in previous years have been threatened with fines, jail or both. I have heard this not only in my own personal encounters, but at the committee hearings that were held this summer in this place.

I would be wrong if I did not acknowledge publicly that some unknowns exist out there. We still have to fight against selection bias, although no one really knows until we actually do the survey. We know that some groups tend to under-sample, the very rich, the very poor, new immigrant groups and so forth, but we can then work with those groups and those individuals to get those numbers up.

What the government will not do, however, is compel Canadians, under threat of a criminal record, to complete the national household survey. I want to be clear on that point. We took a principled decision, and I believe the right decision, to put an end to the concept of threatening Canadians with fines and/or jail time for not completing the 40-page census long form, and we stand by that decision.

In short, the government wants to protect our citizens from invasion of privacy and not be the source of those invasions. Be it our neighbours, friends or family members, simply some do not want to fill out the form based on those privacy concerns. I simply cannot agree with those who endorse any sort of a coercion as acceptable and indeed desirable government policy for the long form census

*Business of Supply*

•(1050)

We believe that our new approach of combining a mandatory short form census with a voluntary long form survey achieves that appropriate balance between the need for data to inform public policy research, while respecting those hard fought for privacy rights of Canadians.

For hon. colleagues, I reiterate that the 2011 census will provide a high level of demographic and economic information as it always has. I am also confident that the change to our collection process for the new national household survey will provide that useful and reliable data for the government and indeed for all Statistic Canada's clients. This is an important point and it is a point that our government remains steadfast, that we have not only taken the time to seek the reasonable balance, we have found the reasonable balance.

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Madam Chair, we are aware that every justification just given by the minister has already been debunked by organizations and experts, including the former chief statistician who resigned because he believed he had been misrepresented by the minister.

This costly, damaging change to the census will undermine important information required to provide services. The minister claims to be speaking for Canadians in making these changes. However, we also know that zero privacy complaints were received by Statistics Canada for its 2006 census and only three complaints were received by the privacy commission in the past decade, none of which were upheld. Therefore, there has not been consultation. There has been no record of complaints.

The minister mentioned that this was a principled decision. Is this a decision based on the Prime Minister's principle as expressed in his comment, "I make the rules"?

•(1055)

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Madam Speaker, I hope the hon. member listened to me as I outlined, for 20 minutes, the rational and reasonable basis for making the decision.

Let me spend a few moments to respond to the privacy complaints issues because this is an important and valid issue.

It strikes us that if people have privacy complaints against a government agency, the last thing they will do is go to that government agency to register those privacy complaints. The more normal thing to do is to approach their members of Parliament who are elected to represent their values and interest in this place.

That is what individuals across the country have done. Whenever there is a census, we get the complaints. The number of complaints to MPs has grown throughout the years. With each census, there are more and more complaints.

An hon. member is shaking his head. He has not had a complaint. That is great but others have had those complaints and we are acting on those complaints because we think there is a valid way to meet the concerns of those complaints, while still getting the useful and usable data for which some in our society hanker.

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am saddened and I am worried that the minister

and the government do not believe in democracy or in government. However, almost worse than that, they do not believe in science-based public policy.

I am a scientist and I know and I agree with the Statistics Canada, the Canadian Association for Business Economics, the Canadian Economics Association that a voluntary census has little if any statistical validity.

Will the minister vote to eliminate the silly punitive coercions and restore the long form census immediately and will the government return to putting science-based policy formulation ahead of petty politics?

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Madam Speaker, it will come as no surprise to the hon. member that I disagree with his premise and therefore I disagree with his conclusions. However, for the record, we believe we have found a reasonable balance.

The thing that has continued to shock and surprise me during this debate, since the end of June really, is how cavalier some members of this place are when considering and supporting the idea that coercion should be used and we can not or will not look at any alternatives.

We have taken the time to look at alternatives, to try to get "useful and usable data", to use the chief statistician's own words. At the same time, we have tried to balance this requirement and need in some parts of our society for this data with an approach that will respect the rights of Canadians from coercive intrusion into some very personal aspects of their lives.

That is the fair and reasonable balance that we stand for on this side of the House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the minister's argument is rather inconsistent because he still supports the mandatory short form census with the same sanctions. We know that one of the questions requires the respondent to provide their date of birth and it is mandatory that the person respond. I have always been told that it is impolite to ask a woman her date of birth or her age. It is simply not done. It is too personal.

The minister is accusing the opposition of wanting to put people in prison because we want them to fill out the form, but he is the one insisting that everyone—men and women alike—give their date of birth to census workers. Why does he want to put people in jail for refusing to provide their date of birth?

It is absurd. The minister does not want to put people in jail any more than any member of Parliament wants to. By all accounts, to have reliable data, we have to make sure people respond in a reliable way.

I would like the minister to explain this contradiction.

*Business of Supply*

• (1100)

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Madam Speaker, there is no contradiction. The results of the census are important. I have already said that. It is important to have a short census with responses, but at the same time, with regard to the long form census, it is important to strike a balance between society's needs in terms of data and information. Nonetheless, we need to come up with a solution to ensure that it is not mandatory to answer very private questions.

[English]

The hon. member stands in his place and tries to strike a reasonable pose, but when his leader, the Bloc leader, was asked how he would enforce the census, he said he would take away citizens' passports, take away their drivers' licences, refuse EI. That is the Bloc solution to this problem. That is not the best solution for Canadians.

**Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC):** Madam Speaker, because it has been suggested that people do not feel threatened if they do not fill out the long census form, I am wondering how many court cases there are. I know there is one in Saskatchewan that is going before the courts again this fall. The lady did not fill out the form, and for the benefit of the opposition, who claim that this is a political move we are making, she has made it quite clear that she does not vote Conservative. It is the only policy of the Conservatives she has ever agreed with. She has to fight this in the courts.

I would like the minister to comment on that.

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member is correct: there is still a court case, so I cannot get into some of the details. It is a matter of public record, but the person in question has, since the previous census, taken the government to court because of the intrusiveness and the coercion involved.

This is a matter that has from time to time raised its head. The number of complaints that MPs receive tends to increase census by census. This seems to be a bit of a societal shift. People are more careful about their privacy now than in past generations. But I think it is also because the number of questions that are being asked continues to grow. Certainly, most of us would agree that some of the questions are private questions, intrusive questions. But not everybody would think so. Some people have no problem answering those questions, and we would encourage them to do so, but not everybody feels that way.

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have watched the Minister of Industry twist himself into a pretzel trying to justify the ill-advised decision of the government. I think he is an intelligent man who is not really comfortable with what he is saying, but he is saying it because he has to toe the party line.

I want to ask him a direct question. Did Statistics Canada tell you that going to a voluntary system would lessen the quality of data?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I would ask hon. members to direct their questions through the chair.

The hon. minister has 30 seconds for a response.

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Madam Speaker, I actually like pretzels but I am not a pretzel. I want to state that for the record.

In answer to the member's question directly, it is no secret that Statistics Canada would have liked to stay with the status quo. I have never made any bones about that. Our duty and responsibility, however, is to balance the need for data with the rights of Canadians. Of course, we understand that many people, like the statisticians and business community, would like to have more data. But we have tried to strike a balance.

• (1105)

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Madam Speaker, last June, when the Conservative government announced that it was going to change how the census was taken, hundreds of groups immediately and publicly denounced the government's decision. Consequently, I am pleased that we are having this debate today, especially since I am a member of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, which held emergency meetings this summer to examine the issue.

By announcing this decision in the summer, the government undoubtedly hoped to slip it by hundreds of organizations, experts, researchers, professional associations, universities and others more easily. Unfortunately, as I mentioned earlier, the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology had to hold emergency meetings to determine the reasons for the Conservative government's decision to change a questionnaire that collects important data about Canada. The committee heard from various groups affected by the changes made to the census.

Before going any further, I will summarize the changes that the government wants to make. First, the mandatory long form census questionnaire, which has been used for 35 years and includes detailed questions about various socio-economic aspects of households, is being eliminated. In 2006, this form was sent to 20% of the population at random. The Conservative government, for reasons that are still unclear, wants to replace it with a shorter questionnaire that would have more general questions, be less useful and remain mandatory. The questions pertain to the number of people living in each household, their age and their sex and is sent out to all citizens.

The government now intends to send the long form to 30% of the population, but it will be voluntary. That is the crux of the problem—the decision made to move from a mandatory form to a voluntary form.

In an interview with the *Globe and Mail*, the Minister of Industry said that he wants to put an end to the intrusion of the state in people's lives. I will read his statement: "I think you'll have a much more honest and enthusiastic response than you would under the threat of fines or jail times to elicit a response. I would question the validity of that."

*Business of Supply*

The minister's statement leaves me feeling confused about the government's true intentions. We have an approach that has been working relatively well for many years, yet for reasons that seem to me to be purely ideological, the government decided, without consulting anyone, to make radical changes to a tool that provides very valuable information to hundreds of organizations in Quebec and Canada. Moreover, switching from a mandatory long form census to a voluntary questionnaire will cost the government an additional \$30 million. Why increase federal government spending when there is a deficit? I know that some government members will sensationalize the issue by saying that it is unacceptable to send a person to jail for refusing to fill in the form, but nobody has ever been sent to jail. Would it not be better to amend the law to remove that section rather than toss out the whole system? Before he resigned in July, the former head of Statistics Canada said that replacing the mandatory form with a voluntary form would be less effective.

The government's decision to do this is surprising. It seems the government has decided to scrap the only tool that enables it to get a picture of Canadian society every five years. It is important to be able to compare data over time and to make plans for the kind of society we want in the future.

• (1110)

The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne has taken the government's proposed changes in the long form to the Federal Court.

If the long form is not mandatory, the government will no longer have access to reliable, representative data to ensure that it complies with its obligations under the Official Languages Act to provide federal government services in French.

The Bloc Québécois believes that this decision was based on strictly ideological criteria that will undermine the ability of Quebec and its municipalities to develop targeted, effective public policies.

By diminishing the quality of the information available, the government is trying to suppress legitimate criticism of its policies. The Conservative government wasted no time discrediting information collected by Statistics Canada in order to justify its ideological decisions.

As the Liberal Party motion proposes, we believe that prison sentences should be eliminated, but that fines should remain. However, we are open to any other measures, such as refusing to provide certain government services—for example, passport renewal—to citizens who have not filled in the form.

Changing the census was a unilateral decision that has been heavily criticized by countless civil society stakeholders. The decision echoed the American right, which opposes census-taking despite the its confidential nature.

For those who were not able to follow this file closely over the summer, I would like to remind them that certain associations have condemned this decision.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities stated that it is worried that these changes mean that cities will no longer have reliable, local

information, especially when it comes time to create new transit routes or decide where social housing should be built.

Pierre Noreau, president of the Association francophone pour le savoir, also condemned this extremely problematic situation, saying that social science researchers cannot do without such complete and reliable data. Through their analyses, researchers are able to propose solutions to the challenges we are facing, including an aging population, managing our health care system and immigration issues.

The Fédération québécoise des professeures et professeurs d'université believes that the changes the government has made to the census will have serious consequences for university research. The federation believes that eliminating the mandatory long form census will make it almost impossible to describe how a situation—be it social, linguistic or economic—is evolving without personally undertaking specific, complex and costly studies.

The Fédération québécoise des professeures et professeurs d'université went even further to say this, "It is devastating. When a government has to choose among various policies, it can consult the available data and make a decision based on facts and not simply on political preference."

For the Canadian Institute of Planners, changes to how Canada gathers census information will have negative effects on the growth and development of Canada's communities.

Jean-Pierre Beaud and Jean-Guy Prévost, professors at the Université du Québec à Montréal who are experts on the census, were unequivocal, saying, "Two or three years ago there was an uproar when a study on income trends showed that there was a growing gap between rich and poor. The right-wing media lashed out, accusing Statistics Canada of Marxism. There is tension between the government and Statistics Canada, which exposes a reality they would rather not see."

• (1115)

Lastly, I would like to quote Martin Simard, a research professor at the department of human sciences at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, who claims that we need to maintain the mandatory long form census.

So the data may be deemed as less reliable, especially for academic research. That may hinder our research, making it less accurate than the research done in other countries. That may also affect private companies that conduct market studies to choose locations for restaurants or businesses. Major problems will also arise in the development of public policies, especially locally and regionally where data may be even more inaccurate.

I could have mentioned more organizations, associations or individuals who spoke out about the census form, but I think that in general, their comments were proof of the need to maintain the long form census in its original form.

*Business of Supply*

The Bloc Québécois thinks that Ottawa's decision is incomprehensible and especially unexplainable. But I am sure we will hear all kinds of arguments over the course of the day. Earlier, we heard one argument from the minister. We heard that even if it is mandatory, we have no way of proving that the public will respond honestly, that the government must protect citizens from invasion of privacy, that the government should not threaten people by interfering in their private lives. But all of these arguments are just smoke and mirrors. The Conservatives actually abolished the long form census for ideological reasons, and the Bloc Québécois thinks that is unacceptable.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his input.

I was taken aback by the minister's argument that people were being harassed and that therefore the government had to do this, because it does not want Canadians to be harassed. Yet it strikes me that if there is harassment going on, it is not evidence that there is a problem with the census; there is a problem with the census takers.

I am curious. I would have asked the minister why.

When the government first announced the decision, it said, and I quote from the official government position, "The fundamental principle we're defending here is the right of citizens not to divulge personal information".

It was really simple. It was their right not to divulge. Yet it is a constitutional obligation of the government to take a census. It makes no sense—maybe no census either—that we would not want to proceed with the census simply because if one is protecting the rights of Canadians not to divulge information, one is in fact working against the Constitution and is saying that it is okay if nobody responds.

I wonder if the hon. member has some response to that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** Madam Speaker, I would like to make one thing clear right now. I am obviously in favour of keeping the long form questionnaire that has been used for 35 years.

I do not believe that I said anything about harassment. What I wanted to say was that the Conservative government would be all over the map today when explaining why it made this decision.

I believe that it does not take a great deal of effort for a Quebecker or a Canadian to fill out the long form questionnaire every five years. First of all, the questionnaire is sent to 20% of the population. Thus, every five years, it is sent to one fifth of Canadians. This means that, as a citizen, I will have to co-operate. But it is normal for citizens to work with their government and provide personal information that will serve a purpose. We know that the information is confidential. In my case, in 25 years, I may be chosen once to co-operate with the government and provide all the information. That does not seem to be asking a lot of people.

Therefore, today, the Bloc Québécois is against the position taken by the minister this summer. We must be critical of the government's arguments because they are not defensible.

● (1120)

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my question for the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord is simple. I would first like to remind him that all Canadians participate in the national census every five years, and that will not change.

However, to hear him speak this morning, one might think the earth would stop spinning because we changed the national household survey. Yet as we heard this morning, that form dates back to only 1971. Canada did just fine for 104 years and it will continue to do so. As we also heard, the census has been changed. Some questions have been added and others removed. The methodology has changed. The census, like Canadian society, is evolving. That is what the minister told us this morning, because, as we heard, the national survey was invading people's privacy.

I was shocked to hear that my colleague wants to place people under house arrest and take away their passports for refusing to answer a questionnaire. I consider that an unacceptable infringement on my freedom. If that is the Bloc's idea of democracy, I say no, thank you.

My question is this: What would he say to people who refuse to answer the questionnaire? Would he send them to prison? And what would he say to researchers—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** Madam Speaker, I would have liked the hon. member to attend the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology meeting held this summer. Experts appeared before us and told us that the Minister of Industry's decision was not based on any scientific facts. That is the problem.

Do we want scientific data; do we want reliable data? That is what the experts asked us. In that regard, I think the minister made a very serious mistake.

What will I say to my constituents? I will say what I said earlier: co-operation is needed. We receive government services and, of course, sooner or later, we must co-operate. I would add that they will be asked to complete the questionnaire only once over a 25-year period, and it will take them about 30 or perhaps 45 minutes, but that is what it means to co-operate.

That is how I replied and I can say one thing: the message is getting through.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the minister received a series of correspondence in his office when he changed the policy. There were 3,695 individuals and organizations who contacted his office. Of those, 3,456 were opposed to the Conservative idea of spending more money on the census and having less quality data, and 239 supported the minister.

I would like to ask my colleague why, if that is the party that is supposed to be listening to its constituents, the minister is being hypocritical. He is supposed to be listening to his constituents on issues, but on this issue we see a level of response that is clearly in favour of keeping the status quo as opposed to spending more.

*Business of Supply*

To finish, 84.5% of that correspondence was from individuals, not from special interest groups.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** Madam Speaker, I understood from the question that the minister had—I think—heard from some people who were opposed to his decision. This summer, I had the opportunity to ask the Minister of Industry some questions. I asked him whether he had consulted anyone before making his decision. Do you know what he told me? He said there were no consultations. He made a decision. He said that, as minister, it was his responsibility. He made this decision.

I heard the hon. member for Beauce say that he was getting criticism and complaints about the census. I can say that I did not receive any complaints in my riding. One person called me. He is a professor and researcher at the local university. I invited him to come share his thoughts. In other words, in all this time, I have received only one complaint. Only one person has protested.

Therefore, what they said, what the minister said and what the hon. member for Beauce said about receiving tons of complaints is absolutely false. It does not hold water.

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to commend my colleague. He did a good job of exposing the absurdity of this decision, which was made under the radar this summer, when the House was not in session.

I do not want to go back over the various comments that could be made about the government's decision. The only thing I want to ask my colleague about is the fact that we have a government before us that believes in Canadian unity, in consulting the provinces and in collaboration. I wonder why the government is not consulting the provinces that have shared jurisdiction over this. That is the case for Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Manitoba. These provinces have already spoken out against this policy that the government wants to bring in.

I would like the hon. member to say a few words about the need to respect jurisdictions and to consider what is best for the country before introducing such legislation.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

Clearly, this is a government that says one thing and does another. And here is the proof. In normal circumstances, if the minister were to consult with the provinces, he would change his mind and reverse his decision, because many provinces oppose the decision. But he did not consult the provinces, and he does not listen to them. Therefore, I have to conclude that there is only one reason for this decision: ideology. I can think of no other way to explain it.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this issue. I will be sharing my time with the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

This issue should not even be in front of us here in Parliament as we are consumed with so many other issues relating to the economy, health, the environment and global warming. We have a situation

where we are dealing with an issue that is based on science in terms of data accumulation, but that has met an ideological front, being the Conservative Party of Canada and a minister who want to dismantle it. I honestly believe this is a short part of a longer game to eliminate discourse in this country and to make further cuts to individuals, organizations and groups that sometimes are on the fringe of society and need support. This serves the government's ideological agenda quite significantly, otherwise there would no reason to discuss it.

The first thing I want to touch on is the ludicrous arguments by the minister. It was interesting to watch him again in the House of Commons this morning. It is almost embarrassing. It is embarrassing because he gets up and talks about how the opposition wants to put people in jail and that government agents go to people's doors and infringe on their privacy. He uses language that is not becoming, I believe, of minister and is not defensible when we look at the actual facts.

The first fact is that the government's policy is to keep a policy it has had for four years, which is that if people do not finish their census or they do not fill out the form there is jail time. There is no way it can get around that. It has had this policy in place for four years, and had knowledge of it, and now throws it back on opposition members. When we looked at this policy, we said that it did not make any sense, that it did not seem fair, that we did not care to have it and that we did not want it either. We know that it was not even being used. We have not dragged people out of their homes, arrested them and put them behind bars, but that is the minister's policy.

For four years, the current government has known about that. It has had to plan the census. It has had to plan what it would do with it and how it would roll it out, and the government has maintained that. It is nothing more than a cheap game at the end of the day to try to fear monger.

The government tried earlier in the campaign to end the mandatory census when it talked about personal privacy. All of a sudden, there was a huge privacy concern that the minister raised originally. I picked up the phone and called the Privacy Commission to ask if it had concerns about the census. I found out that very few Canadians, in over 10 years, or something like that, had actually even called in to register a complaint, and then it worked on those complaints.

What I also learned in that conversation was that the census had already gone through a Treasury Board audit for privacy, which is required. So, the census that has been compiled, that has been written and that we have already spent money on it to make it ready to go, has gone through an internal privacy audit here in the House of Commons.

It also went through a privacy audit through the Privacy Commissioner. The Privacy Commissioner had already vetted the questions that would be on the census. In fact, the Privacy Commission described the relationship with Statistics Canada as being excellent and, in fact, ongoing. They worked together hand-in-hand to ensure they would get good quality data, that Canadians would be protected in terms of their privacy and that that they would eliminate these issues even before they came to the forefront.

*Business of Supply*

The minister had to drop that argument but picked up the mantle of “we’re going to put people in jail”.

During question period, which I have been listening to since the discussions began, for the minister to continue to talk about throwing people in jail and how it is wrong, is embarrassing because we know that is not happening. We know that is his policy that he never changed and we know Canadians are not buying that hyperbole.

What Canadians want to know is why the government wants to spend more money, advertise more and print more to do a census that would be voluntary, that would achieve limited results, that would throw away all the comparable data that we did in the past because we would not be able to compare them, and that has met universal opposition from business organizations to small community groups, even the remotest communities and aboriginal communities? They all recognize that the census in its current state is a much better option than what the minister and the Conservative Party are proposing.

• (1130)

The House of Commons is supposed to be a place where we can work together. What we learned from the minister’s testimony this summer when we were called back to the committee was that on June 17 an order in council was made to make the mandatory census into a national household survey, similar to a bad experiment that was done in the United States but in reverse.

When I was at the Canada-U.S. Parliamentary Association meeting in Louisville this summer, Congress members, senators and census people from all across the United States were watching what Canada was doing and asking why we were doing it. They said that they had already gone there and that they had to reverse themselves because it had caused them all kinds of problems. They were mystified as to what was taking place in Canada.

At committee on June 17 we learned that, while the minister was in the House of Commons, he was already scheming to change the census without telling anybody else. The industry committee has a history of working fairly well together with members and try to be non-partisan. Normally, we would study an issue, call in some experts, examine the issue and then table some recommendations back to the House. The minister harboured that.

On June 26 the *Canada Gazette* issued the change but it was not until July 1 or 5 that the minister made his first public comments on the issue. As a result of those comments, on July 21, Munir Sheikh, the chief statistician of Canada, resigned because of what the minister said in public. It was a pretty dramatic departure.

In that context, the supposedly fiscal Conservatives, who claim to be good with people’s money, ended up spending more. The industry committee had to be recalled, which resulted in more money and more time being spent, not to mention more waste. We could have met during the last session of Parliament and it would have been a more co-operative environment. The Conservatives refused to give agreement to scheduling, so one meeting was a complete waste of time and it cost thousands of dollars.

We are supposed to be protecting the pocketbooks of Canadians right now but because of the Conservatives’ ideology and headstrong position, they ended up costing Canadians more money. I will repeat

that again. To do the census the way the Conservatives want to do it will cost Canadians at least \$30 million more. On top of that, businesses, researchers, churches and other types of religious organizations, indigenous populations, scientists, a whole series of groups and organizations that are the customers that buy the census data to the tune of millions of dollars, are telling us that this will ruin the census.

The response rate to the census is around 95%. The census acts as a scientific backstop to other types of surveys and data.

I have a letter written by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada to the minister. This group was consulted about the census in general. It says in the letter, “At no time was there any indication that the long form might be eliminated”. This group is opposed to this and has offered other suggestions to help out. However, the minister has refused.

• (1135)

Canadians have a choice in this: pay more money for the Conservative agenda or save more money and have less hassle by keeping the census the way it is, protect the scientific data that is necessary for a civilized society and ensure we will be able to use all the past investments Canadians have actually put into by completing past censuses. That is what we need to do.

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I, like my friend who just spoke, am shocked at this decision. I am shocked at the repercussions and the effect it will have on Canadians. Every group that spoke on this issue, with the exception of the Fraser Institute, spoke strongly against it.

Does the member know how this decision was made by the government? It obviously did not consult the Statistics Canada task force. It did not consult with any groups, organizations or individuals. Statistics Canada was consulted and it opposed it. There were no religious organizations. The government did not consult with its own cabinet, its own MPs nor with any senators.

Is my friend aware of anyone in Canada who was consulted about this particular decision?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister probably consulted the minister and told him to get rid of it. The minister is probably the only person who was actually consulted in this process, because it makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.

Making this decision during a parliamentary recess, when work was going on behind the scenes when Parliament was in session, undermines a process of democracy that is really important. If the government had this idea, why did it not bring it forward to Parliament and have the evidence come forward and prove its case? There are times in the House when there is common ground, but the government did not do that. It did it over the summer. It tried to sneak it though but it became exposed and that is the end result.

All kinds of groups and organizations were actually there prepping the mandatory census. They were actually consulted under the mandatory census basis. The Conservatives went through the privacy audits of the census, they finished all that work and then later on decided to change it to a national survey. It makes no sense and consequently it will cost \$30 million more for this plan.



*Business of Supply*

•(1140)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, given that the Conservatives should be looking at best practice, and certainly in the past they have liked to follow the United States, we only have to look back to 2003 when George Bush was the president of the United States and this experiment was tried there. The U.S. Census Bureau conducted an experiment in 2003 and what did it find out? It found out that the data degraded so much that fixing it would be too expensive and the idea was quickly abandoned.

Did the Conservatives look at other jurisdictions? If they had taken time to look at other jurisdictions, they would have found that this movie had already been played and it was a failure.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Madam Speaker, my colleague is correct. This Frankenstein approach to the census is clearly a flop.

What is sad about this is that it is really a scientific debate in terms of the response rates. If we have a voluntary response rate, we will have lower numbers. The Conservatives, however, have decided to spend more money to send more people more census forms. This does not even pass the nod test. In a sense, sure they will get more responses, but if they get over-response in areas like Calgary, Vancouver or Montreal versus rural Canada, the data will be skewed. It is important to make reference to the fact that the data will be skewed and therefore useless.

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, Canadians listening to this debate will be caught in two worlds. First, the world the government is projecting, which is that this is all about forcing mandatory imprisonment and that is what the long form census is all about. It has been for 144 years. It is a story of imprisoning Canadians for not wanting to give their personal information.

This side of the House reflects on the fact that educational institutions, those who provide educational administration, health administration, social services and others, use that information to provide appropriate services with the best use of taxpayer dollars.

In all of our collective experience in dealing with the long form census, does the member know how many Canadians have been jailed?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Madam Speaker, there have been zero people jailed. The reality we are facing, though, is that this is the Conservatives' policy. They have had it for four years, and that is their policy. They can try to make us wear it, but they are just making it up, because it is their policy. It is also their policy to spend \$30 million more, and it is their policy to treat farmers differently by having fines and penalties for the mandatory agriculture survey. They have not changed that either.

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the census is used for a variety of reasons, as Canadians and members in the House know. At a very minimum, a census provides a measure of the size of the population in this country and compares it to what it used to be. One can extrapolate as to what it might be. That is the very minimum a census needs to provide in terms of information.

The long form census goes further and of course helps the House and governments right across the country decide on such things as riding boundaries and the reapportioning of seats, for example, in the provinces and territories. Those sorts of things are another function of the census.

I will speak about 2006. The mandatory, or what used to be mandatory, long form census asked for basic demographic information such as age, sex, and marital status. In fact, 2006 was the first census that had questions about same sex marriage, for example, and those sorts of relationships. There were questions about the occupational and educational background of the respondent. Other questions asked about the individual's place of birth and his or her relationship to the head of the household, questions that most people did not have any problem answering and which are very important.

This kind of information is used to develop evidence-based public policy, to make science-based decisions, as my colleague from Thunder Bay—Superior North so eloquently put it in a question to the minister in the House earlier. It responds to the needs of Canada's various communities, and we have varied communities. It deals with such things as housing, education, and services for vulnerable or marginalized groups, which include women, the disabled, and visible and linguistic minority groups.

Data gathered through the mandatory census is a crucial reference, not only for governments at all levels but for community groups, civil society organizations, and faith-based social justice groups.

We know that the individuals who are least likely to fill out a survey, even a mandatory one, already tend to be those in groups that rely most on federal, provincial, and municipal social programs. They include recent immigrants, aboriginal populations, and so on. Scrapping this portion of the census will likely result in undercounting these vulnerable groups. It will also have the effect of reducing the quantity and quality of information on these vulnerable groups, groups that are often very difficult to serve.

I cannot say it any better than what was said in a letter I received this past week from Marlene Davidson, who is the president of the Atikokan Métis Council. I would like to read a few portions of her letter into the record:

As a citizen of the Métis Nation of Ontario, I would like to ask for your support to help convince the Government of Canada to abandon its plans to eliminate the mandatory long-form census.

The loss of the credibility of the data that is derived from the long form sampling would be devastating to the Métis people, and set us back to a time when governments ignored the Métis people in this country. As you know, the Métis population is a vital and important part of the communities throughout Ontario. The government's decision to eliminate the mandatory long form will result in the loss of valuable data about the Métis in your riding and Métis in ridings from Ontario westward.

### *Business of Supply*

There are several important reasons why this data is so important to the Métis people. Firstly, it is the only way that government that actually attempts to capture information and learn about the Métis as a distinct Aboriginal group in Canada. The Métis are often referred to as “the forgotten Aboriginal people” because for generations in this country all levels of government denied our very existence and rights.

● (1145)

In previous Census, there was no place for individuals to identify as Métis. Government officials and politicians conveniently used this reality to support their flawed positions that rights-bearing Métis communities did not exist in Ontario as well as throughout the rest of the Métis Nation.

Since the advent of s. 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 and the recognition and affirmation of Métis rights, along with the Métis Nations's ongoing work with Statistics Canada, we have slowly been reversing the trend of longstanding wilful blindness to the Métis reality in Canada. Increasingly, we have been able to gather more accurate data on Métis populations, including important demographic indicators such as mobility, median age, and locations. We believe this makes Canada stronger because it assists Métis in being recognized and understood, instead of being ignored because governments cannot see a community with a recognized land base. This data has allowed the Métis Nation to educate government officials that we are another Aboriginal people that lives, uses and occupies areas with other Canadians and First Nations.

Secondly, without the vital information collected through the long-form, federal, provincial, and Métis governments are at a considerable disadvantage in terms of tracking the rapidly evolving Métis population. With this data we are better able to provide appropriate and efficient services to our citizenry in such areas as health, job programs, education and training and population-specific social services. In addition, the data enables us to construct detailed and judicious long-term strategic plans for the betterment of Métis communities and Canada as a whole. This type of data can only be obtained through a credible and reliable sampling of the population of Canada (i.e., a 1 in 5 sample), which the current long form model is based on. A voluntary census form is not a sufficient replacement for the mandatory form because it will not allow for accurate demographic profiles to be produced on Métis and the communities they live in throughout Ontario westward. This decision is essentially ensuring that Aboriginals, such as Métis, the most marginalized people in society, will continue to be underrepresented.

If we have learned anything from our history in this country, ignoring the challenges Aboriginal populations face is not the answer. Wilful blindness is not a solution. It has not worked for governments in the past, when it has come to dealing with Aboriginal peoples and it will not work in the future. All that will result is giving comfort to those that want to ignore Aboriginal peoples and allow current cultural, social and economic disadvantages to grow without credible data to make sound policy decisions. I do not believe that this is an acceptable result for a responsible government.

She goes on to say,

I strongly urge you to contact the Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Industry, and urge him to reconsider this flawed and short-sighted decision. I believe we all have a role to find solutions to make Canada better, however, the federal government must continue to fulfill its role in collecting the data that will allow these solutions to be found based on sound data and policy.

Again, that is from Marlene Davidson, who is the president of the Atikokan Métis Council.

I suggest an immediate reversal of the government's changes to the mandatory long-form census. The long-form census is a vital tool for good policy-making, and the decision to amend it was shortsighted and was carried out without consultation. Therefore, the government should immediately reverse the changes to the long-form census. I have a whole list of people who would validate that particular position, which I will not read at this time.

An interesting argument was made earlier by one of the speakers, and it was about the cost factor. That seems to be the thing that pops up most often. Mr. David Cameron, the U.K. Prime Minister, got rid of theirs. He cited the price tag. Well, the price tag is different here. In fact, what is being proposed is going to cost considerably more,

and I think Canadians should be concerned about that, particularly at this time, when the deficit continues to grow every day.

Marlene Davidson, a host of others I have talked to, and I would like to ask the minister to reverse his decision and to reverse it now.

● (1150)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, since the Conservatives took office in 2006, the following senior public servants have been shunted aside or forced out of their offices: RCMP Chief Superintendent Marty Cheliak; Nuclear Safety Commission President Linda Keen; Canadian Wheat Board President Adrian Measner; Veterans Ombudsman Pat Strogan; Competition Bureau Commissioner Sheridan Scott; Victims of Crime Ombudsman Steve Sullivan; RCMP Public Complaints Commissioner Paul Kennedy; Military Complaints Commission Chair Peter Tinsley; Immigration and Refugee Board Chair Jean-Guy Fleury; Information Commissioner Robert Marleau; and Chief Statistician Munir Sheikh. The Parliamentary Budget Officer seems to be the next to go.

The point of the list is to indicate that there seems to be a pattern here. If one does not agree with the government, with the Prime Minister, or if one has an opinion, one should not give it, because according to the Prime Minister, he makes the rules.

I wonder if the hon. member shares the same concern that the government is not making fact-based policy. In fact, it is politically based policy.

● (1155)

**Mr. John Rafferty:** Madam Speaker, I certainly agree with that statement.

The industry minister has publicly stated that the decision was made without consultation with stakeholders. He also made conflicting statements, suggesting at times that he approached Statistics Canada and it did not agree with his decision and at other times that Statistics Canada officials supported the government's decision. He is all over the map.

If I can just go back to the bulk of what I just said, the minister must have understood that the impact of the decision he made is such that it is going to have a very negative impact on many groups that rely on census data to tailor their programs.

I guess the question for me is why there was no consultation with these stakeholders, such as, for example, the Métis Nation of Ontario?

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this motion. I commend my colleague who brought this motion forward.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Don Valley West.

There are a number of terms that get used in the House far too often. One of those terms is “unprecedented”. When members talk about something that is unprecedented they seem to be talking about things that have not happened for 72 hours. It becomes part of the vernacular here.

However, I think the number of people who have come together to say that this decision on the long form census is foolish is entirely unprecedented.

The response to this decision has brought together groups from east, west, north, south, left and right, religious and secular, business and labour. People have come together to talk about this senseless census consensus. All agree that it makes no sense to do this.

Recently, I received a copy of a letter sent by the mayor of the Halifax Regional Municipality. He did not copy it to all Atlantic members, as he usually does. This letter was to the hon. Minister of Industry. It states, "The mandatory requirement for people to complete the long form census results in a validity and comprehensiveness of data that is not likely to be achieved under a voluntary system".

That is our mayor, Peter Kelly of HRM, slamming this Conservative government. We will see if he continues to do that.

This has caught people off guard. No one can understand it. Some people say that it is simply dumb. That is a charitable assessment. I do not think that the government was dumb on this issue. It might be dumb on other things, I will give them credit for that, but on this I do not think it was dumb at all.

I think this was done purposely. The Conservative government knows the value of information. It does not want to have to use it to make or justify decisions. It does not want to know what governments might be able to do based on need, because it does not believe that the government has a role in assisting people who need help.

The best characterization of this decision was made this summer at a round table held in Winnipeg by my colleague from Winnipeg South Centre. A University of Manitoba professor, a non-political person with no axes to grind, came and expressed amazement at this. She said that in this country the government is going from evidence-based policy to policy-based evidence.

We see this all the time. The government comes up with a conclusion and then it manufactures the evidence to justify it. It makes it up out of thin air in many cases. Governments are supposed to believe in evidence and information.

I think the government uses information when it suits it. Imagine that big war room somewhere in Ottawa, with apparatchiks sitting around computers and making calls for money, doling out false information about opposition members. I bet the government is not asking for less information from their donors. They know the value of information when it comes to that.

We have a Conservative government that does not want information but a Conservative Party that does. It knows how to use money. It knows how to use wedges in society. Unlike most governments in Canada, Liberal and Progressive Conservative, that see a wedge in society and want to bring those people together, this government wants to drive them farther apart.

The Conservative Party wants all the information it can get. The Conservative government wants to take a Sergeant Schultz approach: "I know nothing and therefore I can do nothing to make things better".

### *Business of Supply*

We heard this argument from the Minister of Industry in the summer hearings. He said, "We believe it is not appropriate to threaten jail. God forbid, somebody actually takes it to the limit and actually fines himself with a three-month jail sentence for objecting to answering those personal questions".

We hear this all the time. It is the most ridiculous thing we could ever imagine. Here is a solution. I offer it at no charge to the government. Let us have amnesty for all those Canadians languishing in Canadian jails because they did not fill out the census. We could do it by noon and it is one minute till noon now. It would be the cheapest, easiest amnesty in the history of this country. No one has gone to jail for not filling out the long form census. It is a ridiculous allegation.

The member for St. Paul's is proposing it in her legislation. We support it. Change that. There is no problem, but do not take away the integrity of our long form census.

I want to talk about a group that is going to be really hurt by this. They are among the people who are most marginalized. A lot of people who work with people who live in poverty are saying they cannot do their work if they do not have the information. They know that in many cases the government most likely does not want to have the information, because it does not want to assist. It does not want to have the evidence. It does not want to know who is poor. It does not want to know who is disabled.

• (1200)

It is unbelievable that we would actually have a government that would bring in a policy that hurts the people who are most marginalized, but it is a trend. The PAL survey, which studies participation and active living among people with disabilities, was cancelled.

Laurie Beachell, who is with the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, said, "We have a huge challenge here. We had something that was working". It's gone.

This spring, the government finally ratified the UN convention on the rights for the disabled. There was some hope in the disability community that, finally, people were going to listen to them, in the current government. For the first time, they thought something positive was going to happen.

However, we have the cancellation of the PAL survey. On top of that, we have the double whammy of the long form census. We could even go further to say that the Canadian Council on Learning, which brought information together on learning and looked at vulnerable populations, was cancelled as well. That makes no sense whatsoever.

As Mr. Carney from the Bank of Canada put it, a non-trivial range of data will be affected.

That is a pretty delicate way of putting it, compared with many others.

However, people in the disability community are saying that this is not a small problem for them. It is a huge problem.

I am quoting from an article from Canwest:

*Business of Supply*

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, a national organization representing millions of Canadians who live with hearing loss, urges the Government of Canada to immediately revoke its recent decision to eliminate the mandatory long form Canadian census questionnaire.... The long form mandatory questionnaire is normally sent to 20% of households. It is a crucial source of information about disability, diversity, employment, income, education and other issues. This information is used to provide a solid foundation for good legislation, public policies and programs.

Louise Normand, the national president of the association, said, "Throwing out the mandatory long form questionnaire flies in the face of international commitments that Canada made only a few short months ago".

There are people across this country, specifically people in the not-for-profit organizations, the charitable groups, the health foundations, and social agencies, who need this help.

We have heard from the marketing groups. We have heard from just about every single religious organization in this country. We have heard from chambers of commerce, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. We have heard from all kinds of municipalities. We have heard from provinces.

I specifically want to provide a voice today, in this discussion, for Canadians with disabilities, the people that every member, all 308 members of this House, would agree are worthy of attention and assistance. Individually, everybody would say that these people deserve help. To many people, Canada is the standard of how to treat people who need help the most. We are not as great as we should be, and we are not as great as we sometimes think we are. However, I am sure that every member of this House would say that they want to be there for Canadians with disabilities, that they want to be the one who provides assistance, equal opportunity. They want to be the one who stands and says that if people, especially through no fault of their own, have been dealt a hand that causes them to need some assistance, they will be glad to provide it.

We believe that government has a role in assisting people with disabilities. Yet we have a policy on the census that flies in the face of that. It would mean that people would not be counted and people would not have their information taken. Then the government would be able to say that it does not have the information, that it cannot assist those people, that it does not even know what they need, because it has not counted them. What makes it even worse is that the government knew what it was doing.

Today's *Globe and Mail* quotes Rosemary Bander, assistant chief statistician as saying that some survey data "will not be usable for a range of objectives for which the census information would be needed".

So, what we have had is this incredible consensus, this unbelievable and unprecedented senseless census consensus in Canada. Our government is not acting in the best interests of people in this country. People with disabilities, people who are living a marginal existence, aboriginal groups, minority language groups: these people who rely on this information will not have it. Nor will they be able to index it to previous years, because the data integrity will be violated.

● (1205)

As amazing as it is, we now have a situation where the Government of Canada is in essence saying that it does not even want to know about Canadians' problems. It is not its fault, concern, or priority. It does not want to be there. It does not want to have the information it needs to make decisions.

I would suggest to hon. members and to Canadians that this is now how the country usually operates. That is not the Canada most Canadians believe in.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question of genuine interest. I am trying to understand a little more about the effect that this change in the census procedures will have on disabled people.

In my riding, I have the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf, a rehab hospital for people who have had strokes, and the central Ontario headquarters for the March of Dimes. These are all significant institutions working with people with disabilities. They have told me they need the census information. However, I am still trying to understand exactly what would be of significant importance to people with disabilities.

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

The people in this country who have disabilities and those who advocate on their behalf are concerned that the government is not going to have the right information. People with disabilities, like many other marginalized groups in Canada, are not going to fill out an optional census. That is just not going to happen. I think it has been established, statistically verified, that is not going to happen.

However, it is not just the census. I mentioned the PALS, the participation and activity limitation survey, which was cut by HRSDC. They say they are going to replace it, just as they are going to replace CCL and everything else, but we have not seen any signs of it yet.

We have also lost the following: the workplace and employee survey, cut in 2009; the survey of financial security; and the longitudinal survey of immigrants to Canada. These are all pieces of information about Canadians that will assist the government in determining the programs and assistance that people in Canada need most. They are being cut.

I mentioned the Canadian Council on Learning. Why would anyone cut that? Everybody knows we need more information. We are heading into an age when we will have jobs without people and people without jobs. We need to know where we are on education. We need to know who is being educated; we need to know who is not. We need to know why people with disabilities are not full partners in education. How do we help them? That is what a government is supposed to do.

The government is just saying no, as if it were not their problem. They do not want to be there. They do not care.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I must confess that I never imagined I would be standing in the House of Commons today addressing a motion about saving the census. When I was elected, I never thought that I would be coming here to try to salvage something we have assumed is an institution of value, of merit, of interest, of high acclaim around the world because the government has decided that people have become afraid of census data or census takers.

I have had no experience whatsoever in my entire life of hearing about anyone being afraid of the census. The census is something that may annoy people from time to time. People may resent having to take an hour every five years to fill it out, but I have never had anyone in any of my churches as a minister, in community life as a neighbour, or in my work life as a member of Parliament, say to me that he or she was seriously troubled by the census. It is therefore somewhat of a surprise that we are standing here today trying to reinstate what we consider to be a valuable institution in Canada.

I have a larger concern, though, which is that the government seems to have moved away from a policy we have had for decades. The census slogan has been that we should count ourselves in, but the government is moving to a policy of counting ourselves out. Not everyone gets counted out in this process. The hon. member who spoke before me pointed out that certain groups have been particularly targeted by the government. He raised the issue of people with disabilities. I would like to talk about the cultural communities that make up Canada.

While in opposition, the current Prime Minister spoke of recent Asian immigrants as “people who live in ghettos and are not integrated into western and Canadian society”. Now in office, the Prime Minister has gone to great lengths to convince Canada's cultural communities that such sentiments are a thing of the past, that there has been a significant change in the Conservative Party's approach to diversity, to inclusiveness.

I beg to disagree. The government's decision to end the long form census betrays the reality that the government has decided to not count those people in who may get left out, people who will be left on the margins of society. They need to be heard. They need to be understood. They need to be valued and represented.

The proposed changes to the census were brought in in the dog days of summer. The government thought it could shift policy dramatically and no one would notice. The opposite is true. Over 350 individuals and significant groups in this country have risen up and have said that they need, want and value the information which the long form census provides.

The government has clearly underestimated the backlash from Canadians from all walks of life. It has tried to raise fears where there were none. It has tried to make fools of experts who would not stand for it. For decades, average Canadians, moms and dads, kids, senior citizens, everyone, have heard the call to count themselves in. They have seen that as an exercise in democracy, an exercise in being valued as individuals, as families and as communities. Now the Conservatives are telling them to count themselves out.

The vital information on our demographic makeup, particularly on new Canadians in our communities, helps determine where the

strongest needs are and the most difficult problems we face when helping newcomers integrate into Canadian society. The elimination of this data and the way we are able to analyze it will count as nothing less than a pre-emptive strike on a vital tool that all three orders of government need in order to serve newer Canadians justly and fairly.

In my experience, new Canadians want desperately to integrate. They want desperately to be part of the fabric of Canadian society. Language training and other newcomer services are a vital part of that process. These services need to be offered where newcomers live. To do that, we need to know where they live. We need to know how many of them there are. We need to know what language barriers they face. We need to know what employment they seek. We need to know what their qualifications are. We need to know from where they came. Most important, we need to know where they want to go. This is information that is provided on the census long form.

● (1210)

If the Conservative government gets its way, new Canadians and cultural communities will be under-represented in official data. They will be offered fewer tailored services to help them in their everyday lives.

There is, though, a silver lining in what the government is doing. The Conservative Party usually wants to divide Canadians, but uniquely, the elimination of the long form census has served to unite Canadians.

Last night I met with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. This is a strong constituency that has normally supported the party opposite. It is severely concerned that the information provided by the long form census will be lost. Without that information, it would not know how to plan to eradicate poverty in Canada, to do the good work that it has been involved in. It would not know how it would be able to offer church programs for people who want to be heard, want to be counted in. It would not know where to plan new church development.

This reminds me of the business uses of the data as well. There are businesses across the country that actually purchase census data. They add to the government purse. They want that information in order to know where to put stores and restaurants, how to serve Canadians. They buy data. The census is a money-maker for the government.

Members can imagine how shocked I was to note that not only will we get data that is not valuable and which will actually impede decision making, but it is going to cost \$30 million or \$35 million more to gather ineffective data. It shocks average Canadians to hear that a government wants to waste money for an ideological reason.

*Business of Supply*

The reality is that churches, synagogues, mosques and the societies who take their concerns forward to the national Parliament are all concerned about this issue. They have raised it, as have social planning councils, libraries, municipalities, provinces, charities, organizations, businesses, business leaders, Canadians who are eminently qualified to talk about the role of statistics, the role of expert evidence, the role of data.

The Conservative government needs to learn that the plural of anecdote is not data. We cannot just tell stories and think that if we tell enough of them, we will get hard data. The reality is that data is based on the scientific collection of information in approved formats that have been ethically tested, that have survived decades of understanding and interpretation, and that will add to a continuum of knowledge over decades. We build on that information.

If we lose this one moment of data collection, we will actually put in jeopardy decades of data collection. We look at trends. We look at how things are changing. We look at where movement is happening. In that way, our academics can analyze the data. Businesses can use it. Community groups can help understand it.

One of those community groups is the Social Planning Toronto. It wrote all members of Parliament, I assume, to raise the issues it is facing in trying to make our cities, communities and neighbourhoods better. John Campey wrote:

Census data provides some of the most reliable socio-demographic data at the neighbourhood level. It simply cannot be replaced by a voluntary survey. In our experience over many decades in communities, we have never been made aware that local citizens resented the time needed to respond to the survey nor that they believed their privacy was being invaded. Quite to the contrary, grass-root community groups have been pleased and grateful to have access to quality data that provide insights on their communities so that as citizens they can engage in responsible and informed decision making on local issues.

The census data tells us the makeup of communities, the age, gender, ethnicity, language and income levels, emerging demographic data. How are we going to understand and cope with an aging population, decreasing birth rates, immigration trends, local labour force changes, unemployment, under-employment, types of work, transportation needs? Those are the kinds of things that help us to provide a society that works, a community that is compassionate, cities that are livable, and a country that stands as a model to the world about the way we value expertise and the way we use it to make our society better.

• (1215)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member hit on a very important point, that there are many thousands of businesses across the country that rely on census data. In fact, they contribute to the revenue flow to the government to support the census. The government is finding that it has climbed out on a branch and somebody is sawing the branch.

In all these years I have never seen a government operate in this fashion. Normally consultations are done. It is rudimentary practice to do some consulting. The government did not do any consulting. The Conservatives are in a situation now where even their friends are against them on this issue. One wonders what kind of thinking is going on.

In terms of phone calls, I believe it was the member for Beauce who indicated that he had 1,000 phone calls on this issue. Other MPs

in neighbouring ridings report zero or maybe one or two calls. I have not had any phone calls whatsoever supporting the government on this. I do not understand what is going on in the government and who is really in charge and what direction it is headed when it picks up on issues like this one.

• (1220)

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Mr. Speaker, members of the business community can always count on the NDP to stand up and support them in their needs. I want to commend the hon. member for standing up in the face of a government that does not understand the needs of the business community, to stand with community groups, with church groups and other faith groups and with the business community. Every one of them is clamouring for this data.

The hon. member mentioned consultation. That is one of those missing pieces. The consultation has begun and this debate is offering the government an honourable way to correct this mistake. It is offering an honourable way for the members who are gathered here, for those who may be on the backbenches to go to the government ministers and say, "Frankly we have made a mistake. We have to do further consultation. We are not going to be able to turn back the clock on this easily. We are going to have to do it". I actually believe in the goodwill of all humankind and I think they can change their minds.

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one of the issues in this debate is the penalty if someone does not complete the long form census. Does the member think that someone should be incarcerated or fined in the event that he or she does not complete the long form census?

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that question because I know he has read our motion and he knows our intent is actually to take out that provision. Obviously, we do not believe in incarcerating. Decades of Liberal governments have never incarcerated people for not filling in the census form. Even John Diefenbaker did not. As much as he might have loved prisons, I do not think he sent people to prison for not filling out the census.

The government has a bit of a fetish for prisons and with \$10 billion earmarked for criminals of unreported crimes, I think there will be space in those prisons for possible offenders, but we are not going to use it. A future Liberal government will not incarcerate anyone for not filling out the census form. We are asking the government to bring in legislation immediately to remove that provision and to stop raising the spectre of fear. This is simply not an appropriate response for an elected government.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was looking through the list of 355 people who are against the government's position and to my great surprise, it includes the West Hill Community Services, an organization in my own riding which provides services to poor, vulnerable people in a community that is changing dramatically, like Scarborough. It relies on the data because of the multiple changes that are happening to the ethnic composition, to the health needs and the homeless needs that are in my riding.

In 13 years of representing these folks in the House, I have never known them to be political and here—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I need to stop the member there to give the member for Don Valley West 10 seconds to respond.

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Mr. Speaker, this group of 355 represents millions of Canadians. They are significant organizations such as the province of Ontario and the province of Quebec, as well as West Hill.

The amazing thing is the government has inadvertently managed to unite Canadians, at least on one important issue.

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to join the debate on this significant issue. The minister made an important point that seems lost on the opposition members. Our government has already compromised on this issue.

The opposition has chosen to take a position that is not a compromise. The opposition believes only in the status quo, that law-abiding Canadians should be forced to answer detailed questions on their personal lives.

Speaking of compromise, I will specifically address the opposition motion. As members are well aware, the motion calls on the government to immediately reinstate the long form census and to remove the threat of jail time. However, it ignores the importance of the national household survey and the balance it aims to achieve by addressing the needs of user groups, while also addressing the concerns of Canadians.

It is important to remember why we are here today. We are here to talk about what the appropriate limits are to a government's coercion of its citizens. The short form census has always and will continue to provide critical data to governments. Access to relevant, high-quality information is fundamental in an open and democratic society to support decision making by people and their elected representatives.

No one has made the argument that the data collected in the former long form census is not valuable. What is lost on the opposition members is that by taking the position they have, they deny Canadians the right to object against providing this information under the threat of fines or jail time. In essence, their opinion is not valuable or worthy of consideration.

Too often this summer, the opposition cited the number of Canadians who wrote to the Privacy Commissioner, complaining about the intrusive questions in the long form census. This completely misses the point. Canadians who value their privacy are less likely to register their personal information with the

government, whether they are registering with the Privacy Commissioner or with the Chief Statistician.

Our point is simple this. We want to strike a balance respecting those Canadians who feel they should not be threatened with jail or fines to disclose this information, while still providing useful and helpful information to user groups. We believe the government's proposed changes will meet those demands. As the minister indicated earlier, these changes are more procedural in nature rather than substantive and in no way undermine the objective of the census.

Within the context of procedural change, I will confine my remarks to penalties and privacy issues and comment on the new national household survey.

It is important to note that the 2011 census, which is mandatory, includes the exact same questions found in the 2006 census short form questionnaire, with the additional two questions on official language usage to ensure we meet the provisions of the Official Languages Act. The questions cover basic demographic characteristics such as age, sex, marital and common-law status, household relationships and mother tongue. As in 2006, there is a question asking for the consent of Canadians to release their personal census information to the National Archives after 92 years.

The government compromised by adding two additional questions on knowledge and use of Canada's official languages to ensure we were meeting the provisions of the Official Languages Act.

Throughout the summer and before the industry committee hearings, we had discussions about the matter of penalties associated with the census and the fact that answering a long list of pretty intrusive questions was mandatory. I believe we have made our position on such penalties and compulsion pretty clear.

I found one of the frustrations during the committee hearings was to be repeatedly asked how many people had gone to jail as a result of not filling out the mandatory long form. That question completely misses the point. It was never a question about how many people were punished. It was the threat of punishment that was the problem.

I ask the members opposite, if an agent of the government comes to their homes or the homes of their family members and says that they must provide him or her with details on the number of rooms in the house or details on their personal daily schedules and then follows that up by threatening them with a \$500 fine or jail time if they choose not to answer, is that the kind of respect Canadians are due from their government?

*Business of Supply*

If they choose not to answer for whatever reason and that same person comes back to the house on multiple occasions, using the same coercive tactics each time, is that appropriate? If he or she starts asking neighbours to confirm when they will be at home so he can be sure they cannot avoid him or her, is that acceptable? Is that right?

•(1225)

Clearly the opposition thinks that is right. Clearly the opposition parties believe it is appropriate for the government to treat its citizens that way. Our government does not.

I cannot help but think of new Canadians who come from countries less democratic than ours who might wonder why their chosen country would force them to answer the types of invasive questions previously found on the census long form. Is it sufficient to coerce these people into answering and then say to them, "Do not worry, it is for your own good", if they are upset at having to answer?

This may be the Liberal, NDP and Bloc position, and they will have to explain that to their constituents as this debate continues. On this side of the House, our response to our constituents will be simple and clear. We have found a balance between the right of Canadians to not be threatened with jail and fines to disclose personal information and the rights of user groups to that information.

There is a better way to get people to fill out a form that is 40 pages long and that asks a lot of personal questions than by simply threatening them. Think about this: the one time many Canadians in the census have an interaction with a government official, that government official is implicitly threatens them to fill out the form or else. We need to treat Canadians with more respect than that. All those issues and problems surrounding the invasion of privacy go away by the simple measure of making the long form survey voluntary and removing the threat of jail for not filling out even the compulsory census.

We are pleased that our hon. colleagues opposite agree on the matter of threatening jail time. I am sure they are equally pleased that we have committed to remove these severe sanctions from all mandatory surveys that fall within the purview of the Statistics Act.

Let me now turn to the sum and substance of the national household survey. Information previously collected by the mandatory long form census questionnaire will now be collected by this new voluntary national household survey, or NHS. The questions are virtually identical to those asked in the mandatory form in 2006. The NHS questionnaire will include questions on demography, activity limitations, language, citizenship and immigration, ethnicity and religion, aboriginal identity, mobility, education, labour markets, place of work, income and housing.

The national household survey will also include the standard 92-year question that the short form contains. According to the Statistics Act, respondents may consent to the release of personal information after 92 years. All this stemmed from a change to the legislation in 2005. The net effect was that Canadians were asked to decide, starting with the 2006 census, whether they would allow their personal census information to be made publicly available 92 years

after it was collected. Records would only be made available when consent was given. Informed consent about the use of one's own personal information is a matter of fundamental privacy protection. Canadians should have the right to decide for themselves if they want their personal census records to be made publicly available in the future.

The 2005 legislative amendment only applies to the census and not any other surveys. With the replacement of the long form census with the national household survey, this personal information could be lost to genealogists. To deal with this challenge, the minister has committed to introduce legislation that would permit the release of this information in the same manner as the census long form data would have been. Consequently, Statistics Canada will include the 92-year question in the voluntary 2011 national household survey.

Although this is the first time Statistics Canada will undertake this voluntary survey, it will conduct and release the results applying the same methods and high standards used for all of its surveys.

The NHS will be conducted within four weeks of the May 2011 census. It will be distributed to one in three households, which represents approximately 4.5 million households in total. This is an increase from the 2.9 million, or one in five that received the long form questionnaire in the 2006 census. Statistics Canada expects to receive responses from more than two million households, which is a significant number. The agency will be conducting extensive outreach activities to encourage participation in both the census and the NHS.

•(1230)

Finally, let me recap the legislative changes that the government plans to introduce in the days to come. They are as follows.

Consistent with our concerns about the inherent unfairness of prison penalties, our objective is to remove jail times for non-compliance for not only the census but all other mandatory surveys.

To deal with the 92-year rule I mentioned above, the government plans to introduce legislation that would permit the release NHS data in the same manner as the census data. Consequently Statistics Canada will include a question in the national household survey asking for respondents consent to release personal data after 92 years.

The questions are essentially the same as the 2006 process and identical to the questions that would have been on the 2011 long form. We have essentially doubled the sample size to offset any loss in data. However, most important, we have eliminated the threats of jail and fines that even Liberal members and witnesses agreed were excessive for the questions.

As I said earlier, the opposition has put forward an intellectually dishonest position on this matter. The opposition members pretend that we have outright eliminated the census long form. Nothing could be further from the truth.



With that in mind, our government wants to put the following reasonable amendment forward. This amendment clearly demonstrates that our government is striking the necessary balance on this issue respecting the needs of user groups and while at the same time taking seriously the concerns raised by Canadians.

I therefore, on behalf of the government, put forward the following amendment for which we hope to obtain full party support. I move: “That the motion be amended by replacing the words “provision of imprisonment” with “provisions of imprisonment and fines” and by inserting after the words “long-form census” the words “and imprisonment from”.

• (1235)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie if he consents to this amendment being moved?

**Mr. Marc Garneau:** Mr. Speaker, I do not.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened quite extensively to the member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont. I was surprised by his statement at the very end of his remarks, accusing the opposition of intellectual dishonesty in terms of our motion. If intellectual dishonesty rests anywhere, it rests with the government on this issue.

What this is all about on the government's part is ideology over substance, paying \$30 million more for a census return from this borrow and spend government to get less accurate information. That does not make sense.

However, the member's argument, and he went to great length in his remarks, was that one reason the Conservatives were doing away with this was because of the criminal aspect for the long form and the mandatory nature of it.

There is a double standard on that side of the House. If that is really the substance of the government's argument and the principle of its argument, then why is it still a criminal offence for farmers if they do not fill out the agriculture census?

At 12:10 this afternoon, I took this off the Statistics Canada website. One question on the agriculture census was, “Are there penalties for not answering and returning the questionnaire?” The answer was:

Yes. Under the *Statistics Act*, agricultural operators are required to complete a Census of Agriculture form. Refusing to answer the questions on the census form could result in a fine of \$500 or a jail term of three months, or both.

Most agricultural organizations support the agriculture census with the penalties in it because they know the value of the agriculture census to the agricultural community. However, my point is this. If the government is talking about principle, then why the principle in one area and not in the other, or is its argument just intellectual dishonesty?

• (1240)

**Mr. Mike Lake:** Mr. Speaker, this question is about balance. The hon. member talks about ideology and substance. The ideology here is about striking a balance. Certainly we maintain the mandatory nature of the short form census, because I think we all agree to the

### *Business of Supply*

importance of that fundamental census information that most Canadians would associate with a census. We have struck a balance.

The government believes fundamentally that what is not appropriate is to go to what the Liberal Party would call the most vulnerable groups. They are the ones who are least likely to fill out the long form, as stated by Liberal member after Liberal member. It is not appropriate to go to and threaten them with fines of \$500 because they do not want to tell the government how much housework they did last week.

Fundamentally we believe on this side of the House that it is wrong to go to someone in poverty, say a single mother with three kids in poverty, and if she does not want to tell the government how much housework she did last week or how much time she spent with her kids, threaten her with jail time or fines of \$500. We believe on this side of the House that is wrong.

We also believe on this side of the House that when someone repeatedly tells their constituents they will vote in favour of abolishing the gun registry, for years and years, as the member for Malpeque did, it is wrong to then change that vote to satisfy the whims of his leader.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the core argument that the hon. member seems to put forward is that this is a balance. It must mean that on the list of 355 organizations and persons, these folks are unbalanced.

I would ask the hon. member, does he think Alberta Health Services is unbalanced in its opposition to the government's position, that the Alberta Professional Planners Institute is unbalanced or that the C.D. Howe Institute is unbalanced? Is the *Calgary Herald*, hardly a friend to the Liberal Party, unbalanced?

How about the Canadian Chamber of Commerce? Is it unbalanced, since government members seem to be fond of quoting it when it suits them? Of course, that is the kind of modus operandi that goes on around here. They only quote the people who actually support them.

How about Mel Cappe, the former Clerk of the Privy Council? I would ask the hon. member to stand in his place and say that Mel Cappe is unbalanced; or the Conference Board of Canada, where the Government of Saskatchewan is engaging it to assess the benefit to Saskatchewan with respect to the potash takeover. How about Don Drummond?

How about his colleague from Edmonton—Leduc? Is he among the unbalanced?

Why is it that all these eminent Canadians, all these eminent organizations, these organizations that we draw on for good public policy, including the *Edmonton Journal*, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and a whole raft of others, including even Tom Flanagan, are all unbalanced?

**Mr. Mike Lake:** Mr. Speaker, I would point out that while the hon. member selectively quotes groups that are in favour of his position, the Alberta government has taken a different stand on this.

*Business of Supply*

I would say first that there are two debates going on side by side here. If the question is about information, if the question is, “Do you like information”, which I suspect many of the groups that he quoted are answering, I think I would say, “Yes, I do too”. I think all of us would agree that information is good, and I made that very clear in my speech.

Fundamentally we are asking a different question. We are asking the question that in our search for that information as a government, we have to balance both the need for information and privacy concerns at the same time, the freedom and rights of our citizens. We have said that there is a line there. New Canadians are another one of the vulnerable groups that the Liberal Party has referred to. When a census taker comes to the door of a new Canadian and that person says he or she is not comfortable answering the question about his or her religion and he or she will not do it, and the census taker tells the person that there is a \$500 fine attached to that and the person says he or she is still not comfortable answering that question, we believe fundamentally on this side of the House that the new Canadian should have the right not to answer that question of the government without being threatened with a \$500 fine or a threat of jail time. Obviously on the Liberal side they believe that is okay.

We will be having a good debate about this over the next few days. Apparently there is a private member's bill coming from the Liberal Party, and I am sure that we can give the Liberals a chance to defend that position, but again, fundamentally we do not believe that a new Canadian should be threatened with a \$500 fine simply because he or she does not want to tell the government what his or her religion is.

• (1245)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, clearly the government's position has changed on this point over the last four years, because four years ago when Conservatives were dealing with the 2006-07 census, the member for Beauce was defending the position of the government and defending StatsCan's 2006 contract with Lockheed Martin. He was quoted as saying:

Statistics Canada has taken a number of important safeguards to protect the privacy and confidentiality of Census responses.

However, this time around, just recently, the member for Beauce wrote:

Fundamentally, my position is that whatever the presumed usefulness of these data, I don't believe it justifies forcing people to answer intrusive questions about their lives, under threat from [a fine or jail time] if they don't

The question is, why did the government change its position from 2006-07 to now?

**Mr. Mike Lake:** Mr. Speaker, of course, there are a couple of interesting distinctions. First of all, in the 2006 census, the machinery behind it was in motion prior to our government taking office, so those would have been decisions made under the Liberal Party.

The member talks about the safety and security of information at Statistics Canada. That is not what this debate is about. Fundamentally, the debate is about Canadians' right to say that they do not want to share specific information, certain information about their personal lives such as how much yardwork or housework they do, when they leave for work in the morning or what their religion is,

the fundamental right of Canadians to say that they do not want to share that kind of information, without being threatened with a fine of \$500.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Malpeque.

I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this opposition day motion. I want to congratulate my colleague who put this motion forward.

The scrapping of the mandatory long form census has come out of nowhere. There was no stakeholder consultation. It did not appear to be part of a Conservative Party platform. There were no motions in committee. There was no public discussion on the issue. Instead, the Prime Minister's office chose a quiet time in June, during the summer parliamentary break, to introduce yet another example of what I would call divide and conquer politics and another concrete example of what we know as the I-make-the-rules regime in this country.

The country has never seen such a widespread and broad-based list of people and groups against this change. Over 370 groups are opposed to the changes brought forward by the government. There may be about a dozen who would be supportive of it. While I have a long list here of groups that I intended to read into the record, I think we have heard many from it, and if I have time at the end of my comments I will add to the list.

If the primary motivation of the Conservative government was to remove the threat of a jail sentence for refusing to respond to the mandatory long form census, one must ask simply why the government did not introduce legislation to remove this threat itself, as the Liberal motion does today.

Earlier this morning the Minister of Industry repeated that the opposition wants to criminalize those who do not complete the long form census. Yet once again I repeat that it is not the Conservative government but the Liberal caucus that has introduced legislation to amend the Statistics Act.

If we do not count people, they do not count, their problems do not count, and then a response by government is not necessary. I suspect this is the primary reason behind what the government is doing by removing the mandatory aspect of the long form census.

We all know the census is the fundamental source of information for the country, the fundamental source of information for society. The mandatory long form census has, since 1971, provided objective, reliable data that provides sometimes quite inconvenient information for governments. It provides information on unpaid work, women's wages, the status of disabled persons, and the state of Canada's housing stock. Is it inconvenient for the government to know that 16 people live in a 1,000 square foot house on a first nations reserve? Is it inconvenient to know that the housing stock in first nations communities continues to be a national disgrace? Is it inconvenient for a government to know that a newcomer requires resettlement support and help? Is it inconvenient to know that governments are delivering services less effectively and less efficiently than they might otherwise do?

On August 5 I met with members of my community in Winnipeg to discuss the removal of the mandatory aspect of the long form census. Participating in this discussion were representatives of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, not-for-profit agencies, university researchers, representatives of aboriginal communities, and disability communities. Some organizations said they would like to be there but because they receive government funding they were afraid to come. In a country such as Canada, they were afraid to speak about their concerns about not making the long form census mandatory.

It is important to note that at that meeting I heard things such as completing the mandatory long form census is part of civic duty, that it is not intrusiveness, it is citizenship.

● (1250)

I heard that the government's decision to scrap the long form is part of a trend by the government, as one of my colleagues quoted earlier, to seek out policy based evidence rather than making evidence based policy. I heard that administrative data is more intrusive than census data and far more expensive to access.

Regarding the validity of a voluntary national household survey, it is shocking to hear the Minister of Industry say earlier that the government was acting on the advice of Statistics Canada. We know that the chief statistician had to resign to make it clear that a voluntary household survey cannot become a substitute for a mandatory sentence. The government conducted no real consultation with Statistics Canada. Instead, it began with the premise that the mandatory long form would be replaced.

Other members have spoken today about the need for reliable data and that only a mandatory long form census can produce that data. I would point out that even the minister admitted that a voluntary census had selection biases and will have low levels of response from low and high income earners, as well as aboriginal Canadians. He also tacitly acknowledged the fact that we will pay more for less.

I will also point out that we take a census every five years, not only to see a snapshot of where we are in society at a point in time, but to make comparisons over time. A voluntary survey will be incompatible with previous long form census data and make this type of comparison impossible.

As well, even the Prime Minister knows or knew of the importance of consistent methodology. In his 1991 master's thesis, he used census data to make his case about political business cycles. He even noted how disruptive changes in methodology could be for long-term analysis in understanding how Canadian political behaviour changed over time.

The government says that it needs to try to balance the need for data with the need to remove the threat of jail time. I would ask the government to acknowledge the fundamental imbalance that it has created by choosing to scrap the mandatory long form census rather than remove the threat of jail time and keep the census.

As I stated earlier, never has this House seen such a broad-based range of stakeholders, such as a coalition, including other levels of government, against the decision to scrap the long form census.

### *Business of Supply*

I want to read into the record the words of the National Council of Women of Canada, when it, in a letter to the Prime Minister, said:

NCWC is a staunch supporter of recognizing unpaid work in contributing to Canada's vibrant economy. We are now writing to oppose the proposed changes to Canada's census. Through a voluntary census, information gathered becomes unreliable and unusable. Any other surveys on social services are also compromised without a reliable comparative demographic scale to be used alongside.

I will conclude my comments by referencing an editorial in today's *Globe and Mail*. *The Globe and Mail*, in its conclusion to its lead editorial, said:

It is unfortunate that something as sensible and fundamental as the long-form census has to be hard-wired into law. But given that its abolition was born of political calculation, the political arena, where the consensus against abolition is so great, is where it should be settled.

I would ask members opposite, and particularly the Prime Minister's Office, to respect this institution, respect the vote that comes out of this debate here today and maintain the mandatory long form census. We have heard from Canadians from coast to coast to coast, from church groups, to business groups, to school groups, to women's groups and to disabled groups. Canadians right across this country know, use and need the mandatory long form census. I would ask members opposite to respect the decisions in this House.

● (1255)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, just this past summer we celebrated the 50th anniversary of former Prime Minister Diefenbaker's Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights established a lot of things in law that Canadians, prior to that, had felt but never actually had in a written document. Among those rights were rights to privacy, liberty, freedom and rights of the person, for example.

Sometime after that, about 11 years later, another prime minister, Prime Minister Trudeau, came along and implemented the long form census, if my history is correct.

For the Liberal Party members, they do not actually believe Canadians are capable of making any decisions on their own so they feel they need to know everything about them so they can make all decisions for Canadians on their behalf.

I do not know if the member has taken statistics courses but I have taken a lot of statistics courses in my lifetime and this is the first time in any debate I have ever heard that voluntary data is somehow less valuable than mandatory data. I had never heard that before this debate. We have a lot of surveys done in Canada.

I have a question for the hon. member. Is it inconvenient to respect Canadians' right to privacy when the greatest civic duty in this country is to vote and we do not make that mandatory? Why does the hon. member see this as a civic duty that is more important? I actually think government should respect Canadians' right to privacy and individual liberty.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, members on this side very much respect a citizen's right to privacy but, more important, we respect the right of citizens to have services from their government. We expect the government to respond based on good information and quality information so that the needs of Canadians are identified and that it has landmarks to see whether progress is being made.

When we talk about privacy, it is incumbent upon the hon. member opposite and his government to look at the many breaches of private citizens' privacy that have taken place under their government.

• (1300)

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to me, this debate is really about citizenship.

I will go back to a line that was actually attributed to President Kennedy but was in fact an idea that came from Greek philosophers, I am told. Perhaps it was from Pericles. The line reads, "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country".

It seems that the Prime Minister cannot even fill out a form every 10 years for his country.

Someone raised the point about how some people may feel annoyed or uncomfortable when a census taker comes to their door asking them to fill out a form. That may be true, some people, without a doubt, will feel uncomfortable, but that information is used to decide where hospitals will be built. That is a greater common good. It is the responsibility of the citizen to look after the greater common good.

In that equation, would it not be worth imposing the annoyance to produce something that is for the greater common good?

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier about citizenship. I think that filling out the mandatory long form census is about citizenship.

However, my colleague raises an important point. This information talks about the kind of health care that is needed. We do not want to go to a hospital that is primarily a maternity hospital when the needs are for geriatric individuals. We do not want to see that there are not enough police on the streets or that the allocation of police is not what it should be because we do not have the information.

We want schools and communities to be able to plan so that infrastructure meets the changing needs of communities.

What I am hearing from hon. members opposite is that we benefit by ignorance. We on this side do not accept that.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this motion today, moved by my colleague from Westmount—Ville-Marie, calling on the government to reinstate immediately the long form census.

The motion, as members know, goes somewhat further by calling:

...on the government to introduce legislative amendments to the Statistics Act to remove completely the provision of imprisonment from Section 31 of the Act in relation to the Long-form Census, the Census of Population and the Census of Agriculture.

As members know, I questioned a member of the government earlier on the fact that at 12 o'clock today the census on agriculture still has a fine of \$500 and a threat of imprisonment. That shows the double standard that the government has and the lack of principle for its remarks on this particular issue.

This is an extremely important motion in that it goes to the heart of political decision making at all levels, decisions that should be based on facts and facts that should be based on absolutely accurate data. Whether it is a bus route in a city, a school in a community, a rural community centre or a rural health centre, those decisions by municipalities, by provincial governments, by federal governments and by community advisory committees rely on accurate data. Therefore, accurate data is essential.

An article in *The Globe and Mail* by Steven Chase outlines how ridiculous the current government's position on the census is and has been. He states:

A study conducted by Statistics Canada weeks before Ottawa revealed its plan to scrap the mandatory long-form census found that significant errors can creep into survey results gathered on a voluntary basis.

He goes on to say, "it'll undermine the rich trove of data upon which they rely".

I would add that because of the way the government is changing the 2011 census, it will throw off the trend lines and the reliability over time of data that Canada has become famous for around the world. We were respected around the world through Statistics Canada. We were the model to follow. The government is undermining that respect and that international reputation.

The article in *The Globe and Mail* goes on to say how the "new census-taking rules could skew data in a range of areas from housing to demographics".

As the article implies, anyone who deals with statistics and data collection around the world knows that a voluntary census is flawed.

However, to make it even worse, the government is not only going to go to the voluntary census, it is trying to cover it up by putting out more forms, which will actually make the data even more unreliable because it will skew the figures. It is spending \$30 million more than the regular census for less reliable information. Does that make sense? I know this is a borrow and spend government and there is nothing even on the census that it does not want to spend more money on to get less reliable information. Does that make sense? I certainly think not.

However, as we have seen on so many issues on what the government does, it does not want its government of ideology, ideology over substance and ideology over facts, and it takes the position of not letting the facts get in the way of decisions it wants to make and it will try everything to skew those facts. We have seen that in some of the debates recently in this House.

The government's position is clear. It is ideology over substance and ideology over facts that infiltrates most of the decisions of the government.

*Business of Supply*

•(1305)

In my responsibility as agriculture critic, I can look at the Canadian Wheat Board. The minister does not want to hear the facts of that issue either. In fact, he has been minister for a long time, but he has not even been to its offices yet because he does not want to learn the good work it does. My point is it is ideology—

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** We don't believe in them. We believe in free markets, Wayne. It's foreign to you.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** —or the law, as the member is screaming opposite. He is a law and order member of Parliament. It is the law and order agenda: spend \$9 million more for prisons for unreported criminals and crime. What ridiculousness.

However, let us look at what others, who are responsible for decisions, are saying about this stupid decision that is based on ideology by the government. In a report prepared and presented to the Edmonton city council on July 15, the actions of the federal government on eliminating the mandatory long form census were condemned. The report stated that the elimination of the census would have a direct impact on all the citizens of the city in that the loss of this data could negatively impact the ability of the municipality to plan everything from the location of recreational centres to transportation issues.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, in a letter to the Minister of Industry in July, stated that clearly that not only did federal and provincial governments require the data from the mandatory long form census, but municipalities like Edmonton, Calgary, Charlottetown, et cetera relied upon this data.

The Canada West Foundation's CEO, Roger Gibbens, has opposed the drive to ignorance by the Conservatives, stating the foundation knows, "a voluntary census will not produce reliable data. This is not an opinion; it is as close to a fact as one can get".

The Canadian Medical Association appears to share the concerns of the city of Edmonton. According to the article in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* on July 15, it stated that the decision of the government was absurd and dangerous. It said, "With no consultation, the [Prime Minister's] government has undermined evidence-based decision-making in Canada". It went on to state, "In health care, it is an essential tool in the planning and delivery of services". It concluded by saying, "If this decision is not reversed, Canada will stand alone among developed nations in not having detailed information about its population".

That is quite a statement. It shows where the government is taking Canada. No wonder we are losing international respect. The government bases all its decisions on ideology and tries to avoid the facts at all costs.

Let me look at another area of hypocrisy of the government. The Conservatives claim they are doing away with the mandatory long form census to keep Canadians out of jail, or having to pay fines. That does not and apparently will not apply to farmers.

Who will be responsible for sending farmers to jail? It will be the Minister of Agriculture, according to the Minister of Industry. When the Minister of Industry was before committee, he said that is the Minister of Agriculture's decision.

As I said earlier, there is a clear double standard in that the government argues that it is all about jail time, but as the Minister of Agriculture knows, the agriculture census is important. The only way to get that reliable data is through a mandatory form. It is mandatory with fines and jail sentences applied against the farm community. The farm community accepts that because it knows how valuable that information is and how accurate it must be in terms of business decisions.

What we have is a decision made somewhere in the bowels of the PMO in the spring, imposed down on the government's members in the House. Now they are all singing the tune and trying to argue the case. It really is ideology over substance. That is all.

•(1310)

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I talked earlier about the fact that the Liberals have singled out the most vulnerable, the poor, aboriginal communities and new Canadians for example, as people who are least likely to fill out the mandatory long form census.

I have two questions for the member.

First, if a single mother with two or three kids lives below the poverty line and does not want to tell the government, for whatever reason, how much housework she did last week, does the hon. member believe she should be threatened with a \$500 fine?

Second, if new Canadians, for whatever reason, say that they do not want to share with the government their religion, should they be threatened with \$500 fines?

Those are two very simple yes/no answer questions. I hope to get that type of answer from the hon. member.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, the member just does not get it. Those are the kinds of citizens from whom it is important to get information. If we do not get information from the full sector of society, and that is why it is required to be mandatory, then the data is thrown off. We need that information. Whether they are single mothers, or in the aboriginal community or in the farm community, we need that information. A voluntary census, as expert after expert and organization after organization have told the government, will not provide that reliable data.

Therefore, it is important to get it. It is important for those citizens who the member is talking about to provide that information so the right public policy decisions can be made to better their lives.

The member is trying to undermine—

•(1315)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Gatineau.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what does my colleague think about the statement made by the member for Beauce, the former industry minister who was once responsible for the census? At the July 27 meeting of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, which I attended, the member for Beauce said that he had received as many as 1,000 complaints a day about the census. But Ms. Stoddart, the Privacy Commissioner, told us that they had received 52 complaints over the last 20 years and six complaints in the last decade.

What kind of disinformation and demagoguery is that? Could the member explain what is going on with the Conservatives?

[English]

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, the member makes a very valid point. The government spin is all about that. The member for Beauce never backed that up with emails or the information. It was a figure he pulled out of the air to try to spin the line to argue the Conservative point of view.

The government is all about that. We hear it every day, even on the gun registry debate. We have seen it use false statistics. We need accurate information.

Therefore, the member for Beauce is clearly wrong because he has not backed up that argument. I would go to the central authorities that have documented how many complaints they have received, and that would be the more accurate figure.

It just goes to Conservative spin once again and goes right to ideology.

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we all know no one has ever been convicted for not filling out their form, so let us get away from that.

I want to talk about what was raised a few minutes ago and that was new Canadians, immigrants and so on. One of the major tools we have to get the data that tells us the settlement rate, the kind of jobs they get, the blockage they face in schools and so on is through the census.

Perhaps the hon. member could tell us exactly how this information helps the government in developing policy for multiculturalism, race relations and immigration.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely right. She mentioned there were members of the community who were fearful of filling out government documentation because of some of the countries they came from. However, when it is made mandatory and Statistics Canada personnel explain to them that it is important for decision making relative to their geographic—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I will share my time with the member for Gatineau. It is a good thing we are not having a talent show today, because my voice might go up or down a few octaves. The flu is setting in all over.

My thoughts on Statistics Canada's long form census, which the government wants to change from mandatory to voluntary, are very clear. The government is trying to discourage the large percentage of people who responded to the mandatory long form census. At the same time, in a way, the government wants to disengage from more humane and socially oriented policies.

Some time ago—even some years ago—the government set about cutting subsidies and bursaries for human and social science research centres. Hon. members will recall that there was a huge outcry over this. Today, we still get the feeling that the government does not want to assume its responsibilities, because it does not want to have an accurate portrait of Quebec and Canadian society at five-year intervals. This portrait can initiate policy development, especially social policy, but policies in other sectors as well.

Everyone probably knows an urban planner somewhere. I was a municipal councillor and I recently spoke to the urban planner in charge of statistics. He said the government is under the impression that it is paying for these people to gather information that other people end up using. It is not a big deal because the work needs to be done. They have general information, but to make the information more specific and to interpret the information these people also have to spend a great deal of time making the information relevant to the municipality or to the region. It is labour intensive.

On August 27, I had the opportunity to attend a committee meeting where there were three groups of witnesses who, I must admit, were there to support keeping the mandatory long form census. Very few people were there to support the government's action to make the form voluntary.

At the previous meeting—to set the date for a meeting of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology in order to continue talking about the census—the government initially wanted no part of it because it could not come up with credible witnesses to support its position. Nevertheless, it was striking to see the differences and to see what motivated each group.

Proponents of maintaining the long form census are all, or almost all, in agreement. Take Mel Cappe, president of the Institute for Research on Public Policy, for example. He knows all about government and the federal public service. He was appointed by order in council as a deputy minister under Brian Mulroney. He is a former clerk of the Privy Council and cabinet secretary to Mr. Chrétien. He is finishing his career in loyal service to the current Prime Minister. This man was thoroughly impartial in this testimony. What he told us was in no way partisan. He said that he had written four letters to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Industry. He did not receive a response from the Prime Minister and received only an acknowledgment of receipt from the Minister of Industry's office.

*Business of Supply*

• (1320)

It was very clear to Mr. Cappe that the long form census is in the public's general interest. It also responds to the public's needs. It allows us to track emerging trends, needs and public concerns.

Obviously, it is mandatory, which deeply disturbs the Conservatives. And they know full well that a large segment of the population will not fill out the questionnaire if it is voluntary.

If it were simply a statistical issue and the proportion of people who did not fill it out were equal to the proportion that did, then maybe nothing would change. But we know what happens in these situations. People do not necessarily see it as an obligation, but they see it as their responsibility to help create fair and equitable policies in this society. But with voluntary participation, there will be groups of people who will not answer, groups of people living in specific circumstances. So we will not have any information on these groups of people, which will make a voluntary questionnaire useless, in practice.

Numerous people, even internationally, have stated that Canadian statistics will be useless, or close to it, and that they will not be trustworthy and will not have any credibility.

As we know, the Canadian Institute of Planners has taken the same stand. It uses the data often, if not all the time, for short-term as well as medium- and long-term planning. In fact, we know very well that we must be able to forecast certain population movements and compare them from census to census. This will no longer be possible commencing next year if the government does not change its policy.

As Mr. Cappe stated, we must produce reliable and robust data. He also talked about minimizing coercion, minimizing the intrusion into people's private lives and maximizing respect for the confidentiality of the data. As for confidentiality and privacy, I reread the 2006 questionnaire. I could not really say which questions were truly invasive or of a personal nature in the questionnaire. My responses to the questionnaire could have been published in my region's daily newspaper without my permission and it would not have bothered me. There was nothing special there.

Groups that concurred with the government and claimed to represent many organizations with hundreds of thousands of members said quite seriously, with a straight face, that more people would fill out the questionnaire if it were voluntary. On the contrary, it was clear from the presentations that people would not. As I was saying earlier, an identifiable group of people would no longer participate in the census if it were voluntary. Therefore, data would be missing and in the end, the government would have less success in creating sound policies.

This affects many areas of activity. We must reinstate the mandatory questionnaire in order to establish and implement policies that meet the needs of the people, sometimes those who are more marginalized. The government is always swimming against the current. People increasingly believe that they are required to participate in this evolution of society by having as much information as possible on a given date.

It is obvious that this government is not concerned with the social sciences. We need only look to the Canadian Association for

Business Economics, which is also opposed to this decision that it maintains was made "without serious consultation with the broad population of data users".

• (1325)

Furthermore, according to the association, "Decisions are made regularly by business and government about the location of resources and new initiatives based on the data in the long form."

Even economists are saying that we must keep it.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, accountability is often talked about in this place. In my view, accountability is a concept that means that one needs to be prepared to explain or justify one's actions or decisions in a manner that is true, full, and plain. That has not happened here. The member has noted a couple of examples. There has been no consultation, no rationale, and no support from anyone, other than the Fraser Institute. There is no justification for the changes. There is a reliance on the bogeyman, such as the threat of going to jail, which does not happen.

On privacy breaches, there have been no complaints. This really goes to the heart of what the Conservative government stands for. The government's official position is that it is defending the right of citizens not to divulge personal information.

The government has a constitutional obligation to sponsor a census on a periodic basis. Its reasoning is that it will allow people to not answer questions to protect their privacy. It is basically saying that nobody has to answer any of the questions. This is a circular argument that gets us absolutely nowhere and that, in fact, damages Canada as a whole.

Does the hon. member believe that the government has been accountable not only to Parliament but to Canadians?

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Cardin:** Mr. Speaker, several witnesses who appeared before the committee expressed regret about the fact that the government appears to have made this change so suddenly, seemingly overnight. Several witnesses also said that responsibility for the method and the tools should lie with the chief statistician to ensure that the best possible methods are used to get answers that give us the most accurate view of our society, how it is evolving and how it is changing.

I think it is important to revisit the main argument of the Conservatives, who are saying that people are being threatened with jail time. Not a single person has ever been jailed for this, and besides, the motion proposes removing that measure.

Now when it comes to fines, as far as I know, we will still have the short form census and we will still have fines. In that regard, if we remove the jail time and fines, we might as well make tax returns voluntary. I think that very few people would file them, and we would have no information and even less money to put policies into action.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder what my hon. colleague thinks of the statement made by the member for Beauce, who said he received up to 1,000 complaints a day concerning the census when he was industry minister, when the Privacy Commissioner said that only about 50 complaints have been received in the past 20 years and six complaints in the past 10 years?

I wonder if my colleague could talk a little about the demagoguery demonstrated by the member for Beauce?

**Mr. Serge Cardin:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Beauce might have exaggerated a bit with his 1,000 emails a day, since I imagine that it would take a lot of propaganda to bring in that kind of response.

My office, which receives a lot of complaints, has not received that many. Not even close. It reminds me a bit of the people who would sometimes make requests to the municipal council and also to Parliament. They always tend to exaggerate to give some weight to their weak arguments. The Conservative government is making arguments to try to get support. But that is not even it, because they do not even want support. People are being forced to take action to try to slow down this very ideological government.

I think that this government has not yet found the best political advisors who are in tune with the needs and aspirations of the public, as revealed by a good, mandatory long form census.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois supports the Liberal Party's motion to immediately reinstate the mandatory long form census. In the same vein, the Bloc is also calling for the removal of the provision on possible imprisonment if someone does not complete the census.

I want to point out one very important thing to our Conservative friends about where the census comes from. Let us go back to a time of obscurantism—I am not necessarily talking about the Reform Party of Canada, which was the precursor to the Conservative Party and still instills fear, because we know and see some of the members—when despots had absolute power. These despots could choose whether their subjects lived or died. These monarchs wanted to get as rich as possible, even at the expense of other kings or their own people. In other words, the king's opinion was the only one that mattered; he had a monopoly on the truth. Many of these kings even felt that they ruled by divine right.

Then came the revolutions. After them came a period of reflection when intelligent thought gained the upper hand. I would like the Conservatives to come back to earth rather than having us go back in time. I would like them to stay with us. During the liberal revolutions, these despots were removed. A new system was put in place. For almost 400 years—perhaps a bit less—this is how things have worked: a democratic system has been put in place. The democrats who are elected care about the lot of their people and reflect on how to improve it and how to improve citizens' lives. They also believe that they need information.

At the time, this information was known as political mathematics. That is where it all began. Political mathematics entails having all the—I would like my Conservative friends to listen carefully to the next word—scientific information, obtained by using a scientific method. The term scientific is very important. I know that some MPs believe that the world was created 5,000 years ago and that human beings

lived alongside dinosaurs. That is not true. They should stop believing such things. They are not helping science and not helping the Quebec or Canadian public.

The fact remains that scientific mathematics has adopted the connotation of the German word *statistik*. These statistics, like those published by Statistics Canada and the Institut de la statistique du Québec, help the decision-maker, the elected representative, the democrat. The elected democrat wants to help the people, the citizens, and take an enlightened and scientific view of that people's situation in all spheres of life and society and throughout the nations they represent. Therefore, it is very important for the Conservatives to remain in the contemporary world and not take us back to the Middle Ages. It is very important to take note of this.

For these and other reasons based on scientific common sense, the Bloc Québécois rejects the changes to the census questionnaire proposed by the Reform Conservative government. These changes are based strictly on ideology, which is frightening, very frightening. In fact it worries us; science is being attacked.

These changes will hinder the ability of Quebec and its municipalities to put forward targeted and effective public policies that meet the needs of citizens. I know that this is a new concept for them. I would like them to move in that direction and we will help them do that.

In order to achieve the goal of collecting reliable data for proper scientific sampling, the mandatory nature of the long form census must be maintained. The Reform Conservatives want to sabotage the scientific aspect of the census, which is troubling, very troubling. I have heard the Reform Conservatives say things that are complete nonsense about this. I mentioned one such thing earlier, and I repeat: the member for Beauce has suggested that when he was the minister responsible for the census—the industry minister—he received up to 1,000 complaints a day regarding the census. Anything Capitaine Bonhomme could say is far less scary than the terrible things the member for Beauce is saying. A real bogeyman he is, that member for Beauce.

● (1335)

Yet the Privacy Commissioner, Jennifer Stoddart, said on July 27, 2010—I was present at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology meeting—that over the past 20 years, only 52 complaints have been received regarding all aspects of the census. We are talking about 52 complaints in 20 years, even though the hon. member for Beauce said he received 1,000 a day. There have been only six complaints in recent years. I find it appalling that he would say such things. I think he should be sent to the corner to think about what he has done, because, let me assure this House, his opinion is not typical of Quebecers.



*Business of Supply*

We are sick of hearing the Reform Conservatives say that we are threatening Canadians with jail time if they do not complete the census questionnaire. First of all, as we know, the census has been mandatory since 1918. That is important to emphasize—1918, one year after the National Hockey League was created. My colleague, from Edmonton, an MP and secretary of state, will like that, since he once worked for the Edmonton Oilers, a team that has had its share of glory days.

Once again, it should be stated that all the opposition parties—there are three in the House—agree with eliminating the jail term. We do not want people to go to jail because they do not fill out the census form. I will say it again so that they understand. We do not want people to go to jail because they do not fill out the census form. I saw my colleague from Ottawa—Orléans nod his head and we agree on this aspect. This measure needs to be taken out; it makes no sense.

More than 300 organizations and municipalities, including the City of Gatineau, are opposed to the Reform Conservatives' unscientific approach that will deprive them of statistics essential to the well-being of their citizens. Once again, this government has demonstrated its hostility towards science with this decision. All scientific organizations and university professors are calling for the mandatory long form to be reinstated as it is the best method for obtaining a representative sample of the whole society. A voluntary sample would never be approved by researchers given the unrepresentative characteristics of the answers received.

It is clear that by eliminating the long form census the Reform Conservative government is hoping to dilute science—which is appalling and sends a chill down my spine—and then be in a better position to discredit it. It is frightening. This tactic could be used to weaken social programs at various levels of government. Instead of fixing and eliminating the issue of poverty, one way for a right-wing government to avoid action is by hiding it. A voluntary survey could have that effect by under-representing many social groups, even entire regions or cities, where there are underprivileged populations. It needs to be said.

How are we to justify measures to help society's poorest and our linguistic minorities when the data are incomplete and unreliable? That is a fair question, and the answer is understandable. This makes no sense to do this. It should not be done. But it will be easier to justify imposing what we all know is an appalling right-wing Reform Conservative agenda opposed to scientific progress when the picture of reality is distorted by poor-quality statistics.

A voluntary census will make it much easier for this Reform Conservative government to better justify its ideological, demagogic measures by ignoring reality whenever reality does not suit its purposes.

Even Munir Sheikh, who resigned on July 22 from his position as Statistics Canada's chief statistician, said so. He sent dozens and dozens of emails urging the government not to do this. This man of principle took a stand against the government, then he resigned because he did not want his reputation blackened by the lack of scientific rigour favoured by a government that is not acting in the best interest of Canadians and Quebecers.

● (1340)

[English]

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in this whole debate what I think is disturbing Canadians the most is the decision-making process used within the present government.

Normally when a decision of this magnitude is made, we would expect a very deep analysis to be done. It would be logical. It would be rational. The pros would be weighed and the cons would be weighed. There would be an extensive period of consultation, and the many groups, stakeholders, and organizations would be consulted. However, in this case, the evidence, according to the debate and all media reports, is that no consultation took place. There were no groups, no organizations, no individuals, and no religions consulted. Statistics Canada was consulted, and it said no, this is the wrong decision. Then I hear, disturbingly, that the cabinet was not consulted. Members of Parliament, representing about 45% of Canadians, were not consulted. The senators were not consulted. This is reflective of just how this decision was taken.

Does the member share my view of the problem with the decision-making process for arriving at this very bizarre decision?

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member from Prince Edward Island.

I completely agree with him. On the whim of a few decision makers who head up the party—which says a lot about how the party operates—the government decided to make changes to an internationally recognized institution that was working well. It did not just throw a wrench in Statistics Canada's works; it sabotaged the whole machine. Its goal? If this terrible decision is not reversed, scientific method will no longer shape the data arising from the next census. As such, the government will not have to recognize the data.

If this decision remains in place, the *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series International* will no longer accept Statistics Canada's data because the data will not be scientific. This is a step backward. The Conservatives think they are making progress, but walking backward or just moving their legs around does not mean progress. They are moving backward. They are taking away the tools. They are taking away an essential tool in an undemocratic fashion. They are doing this for purely ideological reasons. They did not bother to think before acting, and they have no respect for science.

● (1345)

[English]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I made the point earlier that this has to do with whether we respect people's right to privacy and whether we should ask them to provide information about themselves or whether we should tell them, and in fact threaten them, to provide private information about themselves.

*Business of Supply*

It was interesting that a little while ago the Liberal member quoted former U.S. President Kennedy, who said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country”. It is funny that the quotation starts with the word “ask”. Respect your citizens.

Does the member believe that we are here to serve the people or that the people are out there to serve us? Should we be telling them, by order of law, how they should live their lives? Do they have a right to privacy or not? I think that is a fundamental question. Do we believe in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms or only when it is convenient?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** Mr. Speaker, the member is an excellent speaker, but what a load of demagoguery. What the Reform Conservatives are doing is taking away an essential tool that is supported by a long list of scientists. I know that scientists are not very important to the Conservatives. All they care about is taking power, getting a majority and practising obscurantism.

There were only six complaints about the last census and 50 or so complaints about the last two censuses from Canadians and Quebecers. The government is doing away with an essential tool. It wants to throw it in the garbage for the sake of an ideology that ignores what the public needs in favour of a political agenda, instead of helping the public.

That is shameful. I am ashamed of them.

[*English*]

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my able colleague, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

I never thought I would have to give a speech like this or have a discussion like this in the House of Commons. Obviously, in the quiet days of summer, just after Parliament ended, the Minister of Industry decided, in his infinite wisdom, to simply change what had worked for the country and was our jewel in the crown as far as the acquisition and aggregation of information goes. In one simple statement, the long form census that was so necessary to the fundamental understanding of who we are was gone, or at least it was proposed that it be eliminated.

In its place, we heard, in a rather pathetic excuse from the Conservative government, would be a voluntary form.

What we knew at the time was that the government actually had accurate, reliable, precise, honest information to suggest that what it was going to propose as an alternative was, in fact, a very poor cousin to the information it had.

I will go very quickly through this, because in the 10 minutes I have I want to come to the point of what we are really discussing here: the dumbing down of Canada by the Conservative government. What it does not want to do is provide information to Canadians and allow Canada to have a better understanding of itself.

I wish that some of the government members would understand that there is some wisdom in Yogi Berra's saying that if you do not know where you are going, chances are that you are going to wind up somewhere else.

The Conservative government, in what I consider an act of statistical vandalism, has thrown Canada into uncertainty so that people around this country will understand less about who we are. I am not talking about people who happen to support particular programs or who happen to have a political agenda to grind. I am talking about people who come from all walks of life. Mr. Speaker, you know them. They are the police associations in my riding.

**An hon. member:** Firefighters.

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** The hon. member quite rightly pointed out firefighters.

They are nurses, demographers, small businesses, the backbone of our economy, and municipal officials. While many of them in my province are embroiled in municipal campaigns, it is coming up as an issue. They are concerned about the ability to determine needs effectively, particularly in larger urban centres, but also in smaller urban centres. For instance, I think of my friends where my parents live, in Peterborough, Ontario. There is grave concern about what this will mean down the road.

It also means, for many people in this country, the ability to make decisions based on changes in the demographics of our country.

It may be tough news for the Conservatives, who would like to rely on information that is thought up or that perhaps some kind of pollster out there gets for them. The reality is that we are taking a perfectly good system, under the pretext that some people were intimidated into responding, and we are throwing away something that is vital and fundamentally important for understanding who we are and for planning where we are going to go.

I know that planning, forethought, and doing things down the road may be a problem for the Conservatives, because frankly, they do not want to plan ahead. They want to navel gaze and divide and conquer.

I have a question for the hon. members, and I hope that they can answer this: Why is it good enough to force rural Canada to use a long form census but not urban Canada? What is it that they have against rural Canada that they would force them into that kind of situation?

I know that this is hard for the Conservative Party to accept, and I see that they are finally animated. A simple answer would have been to create a voluntary response by removing the criminal section instead of throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

I know that it is difficult for the Conservatives to understand this because for the first time in 17 years, I have now come to understand that no Conservative government, no Liberal government, and no provincial Liberal, New Democratic, or Conservative government I know of has ever ventured or suggested what the government has obviously done.

Against an overwhelming, absolute understanding by media and organizations across this country, the government continues to act like modern-day Luddites in the face of what is a very important document for better understanding this country.

*Statements by Members*

I know that it is a problem for the hon. members over there to understand how that information is used even for the composition of this House of Commons and for understanding how programs are allocated and how small businesses make their determinations in various census areas, CMAs, across this country. If they are prepared to throw it out, I say that it is a very sad day for intelligence and the ability to come forward with information that is so vital to the country we now have.

• (1350)

I understand that hon. members can get animated about this, but frankly, most of them were never consulted either about the decision by the industry minister. It must be nice to be able to do the cat calling, or whatever it is that is being done over there, but the reality for us on this side of the House is that a bad policy has ensued from a very bad decision.

Why does the government not just admit that it is wrong? Why does it not have Canada's bigger, wider interests at heart? Why is the Conservative Party not prepared to stand up for Canadians and understand that we are going down a road that will have an important determination as to the policies that will be developed in the House of Commons? I am appealing to the government's sense of understanding the importance of census information. It seems to me that what has been lost is the government's concern about bringing forth proper facts and information.

Hon. members have talked about intrusion and I understand that some people are uncomfortable in answering questions on the long form census. That has happened in the past. However, the facts do not bear out the government's concern. The privacy commissioner appeared before the parliamentary committee established at the urging of the Liberal Party to review this wayward decision by the Minister of Industry. There were, if members can believe it, three official complaints in the past 10 years, and the Conservative Party is prepared to turn everything over on its head in order to make a partisan point. I am not sure what that point is.

I ask hon. members simply to consider removing the criminal sanction as opposed to destroying a perfectly good regime which not only works for Canadians, but also is the envy of the world.

For many the long form census is an important issue, but I remind colleagues in the House of Commons that it is also a constitutional obligation. It is in our Constitution. Every nation has done a census since the Roman times.

It is important and vital. Believe me when I say it is important for people to understand that if we do not have an accurate picture of the nation as it goes ahead, it is very likely that we will wind up making bad policy for the country. People are not going to be able to get reliable information to make proper, effective and responsible decisions about this country.

To the hon. members on the Conservative side of the House who are following their industry minister over the hill in this matter, I would suggest very strongly that they reconsider the position they have taken and do what they believe is necessary. If they are concerned about the criminalization of an individual, I would point out that it has never happened. I think it is very important to

recognize that not one person in Canada has ever been incarcerated for not filling out a long form census.

Is this a policy in search of a problem? Is this a solution in search of a problem that does not exist? Is the government responding to some kind of unspecified, unnamed fringe perspective about what these long form censuses are about?

Our demographics are changing. We have an aging population. A lot of new people have come to this country. There is a shift between the rural and urban parts of this country, and a shift back. Some regions in the country are doing very well; others are not. The most important way in which we can be precise in understanding who we are as Canadians is to allow the long form census in its current form with the amendment provided by the hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie to simply remove what some perceive to be the offending part, and that is the criminal aspect of it.

We talked about privacy and intrusion. There are other areas where there is a requirement to divulge information and there is the promise under sanction that no one can divulge information that would lead to a potential privacy conflict. We know this, for instance, with respect to Revenue Canada. I hope the government understands that this also applies to individuals' medical records and their personal information. These things are guaranteed under law. Access to them is privileged, and it ought to be privileged.

When Canadians have an understanding of what is being proposed by the Conservative government, and to which the Liberal opposition is saying no, it is very clear that common sense will prevail.

• (1355)

People understand. I think it has been a horrendous summer for the government. It has taken a number of very controversial decisions. The government thought it could float this as a trial balloon, but it has seen this one shot down in flames.

I call upon all members of the House of Commons to recognize the significance of the organizations that are asking that the long form census be restored. These groups are not known to make public commentary. They are, however, the bulwark of our nation. Our nation is crying out to the Conservative government. I ask the government to listen to what these groups have to say. It should do the right thing, be reasonable and stand up for Canadians.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member will have five minutes for questions and comments after question period, but now we will move on to statements by members.

---

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### BOWEN SHARES

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Andrea Bastin and Michael Segal on the safe arrival of their beautiful twin boys, Will and Charlie, on the wonderful island community of Bowen in the riding I represent.

*Statements by Members*

Bowen has taken the noble effort as a community to step beyond its borders and reach across the ocean to help others. As a part of Canada that has resources to share, Bowen has taken on the challenge of establishing an outreach in Ghana through the project known as Bowen Shares, which works to fund a small orphanage in Ghana.

Through Bowen Shares, Andrea and Michael heard of the need for parents to adopt two small boys from the orphanage, Will and Charlie. Showing great character and supported by many people on Bowen, Andrea and Michael braved a lengthy and difficult process to adopt the boys from Ghana. The family persevered and this past month, Andrea, Michael and their son Finn were united with Will and Charlie on Bowen Island.

I stand in this House today proud of their efforts and I congratulate the whole Bowen family. We as a nation are a richer place for the arrival of Will and Charlie.

\* \* \*

• (1400)

**BAHA'I COMMUNITY IN IRAN**

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for decades now, members of the 300,000-strong Baha'i community have suffered relentless persecution at the hands of the Government of Iran. These incidents have been documented by the United Nations and have received international condemnation.

These attacks reached new heights in March and May of 2008, when seven leaders of the Baha'i community in Iran were arrested and charged with espionage. Since then, the violation of norms of international jurisprudence, in other words, their arrest, prolonged solitary confinement, denial of access to their legal counsel, false charges, sham trial and subsequent sentence communicated verbally to their lawyer, has been universally condemned.

I am calling on the government to call in the Iranian chargé d'affaires, head of the mission, and to call on the Iranian government to stop the persecution of the members of the Baha'i faith and to immediately release the seven leaders of the Baha'i community who remain imprisoned in Iran.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**QUATRE LIEUX HISTORY AND GENEALOGY SOCIETY**

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Société d'histoire et de généalogie des Quatre Lieux on its 30th anniversary. Through its various activities and publications, this non-profit organization showcases the history of the rural communities in my riding, including Saint-Cézaire, Saint-Paul d'Abbotsford, L'Ange-Gardien and Rougemont.

Headed by Gilles Bachand, the history society is made up of volunteers who work hard to share our history with all Quebec families, including our youth.

I would like to take a moment to call attention to two volunteers with the history society: Aline D. Ménard, a founding and still-active member, and Marie-Paule Rajotte LaBrègue, a Quebec historian who

donated much of her personal collection of history books to the organization.

Once again, congratulations and continued success to the Société d'histoire et de généalogie des Quatre Lieux.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**NIAGARA FOOD FESTIVAL**

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Niagara region will celebrate local farmers and food producers at this weekend's 17th annual Niagara Food Festival in the city of Welland. The festival, which attracts thousands of visitors every year, focuses on regional producers from Niagara and the surrounding area. This region, rich in agriculture, produces food that is high in quality and diversity.

In the last decade, food imports have risen almost 50% which has left our local producers struggling to stay afloat. In Niagara, that struggle has been exacerbated by the closing of CanGro, the last fruit cannery east of the Rocky Mountains. Now, canned fruit is produced offshore, with less rigorous inspection than what was previously done at CanGro in Niagara.

In addition to supporting our farmers, buying local also helps the environment by reducing travel distances. It revitalizes local economies and promotes a healthier lifestyle.

I would like to congratulate the organizers of the Niagara Food Festival for promoting locally grown foods. I encourage all Canadians to think homegrown and to support their local economy by buying from their neighbours.

\* \* \*

**SENIORS**

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Canada's seniors.

Thanks to our government, October 1 is Seniors Day in Canada. This a chance to thank the men and women who have done so much to build our communities and our country.

This builder generation defended Canadian values in two world wars, rose from the hardships of the Great Depression and forged Canada's road to prosperity through the 20th century. They built a seaway and highways to connect us and gave us a true north strong and free. Now they are our sages and form the backbone of our volunteerism.

We owe our seniors so much. Our government, on behalf of Canadians, is doing so much to show its thanks, from historic support of our veterans, to important pension reform and major tax savings, to increased investments in affordable housing and community projects for seniors, safer streets and neighbourhoods, and a seat at the cabinet table.

This Seniors Day, I ask members to join me in saying thanks to our seniors.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on October 1, we will celebrate the 10th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, with particular attention to situations of conflict.

On behalf of all women, I am calling on the Prime Minister to take into account the status of women in cases of violence and in Canada's peace operations. I am asking that all Canadian Forces training guidelines include the protection of women's rights and needs.

Canada reaffirmed its position in the final declaration of the Global Parliamentarians Summit on population and development held in Ottawa in 2010, and in the recommendations by the G8 leaders. These declarations include universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, and care and support for women with HIV or AIDS, a condition that must also be part of every new peace accord.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

[English]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is committed to placing the interests of victims ahead of the interests of criminals.

We are investing \$50 million in the Drumheller and Bowden Institutions. That is 96 new medium and 50 minimum security spaces to be created by 2013 in both institutions.

We anticipate 2,700 more spaces in men's and women's facilities across Canada in the future.

Over many years, my constituents have consistently called on the federal government to keep their communities safe by keeping dangerous criminals behind bars until they have served their time, not releasing them into the streets automatically and much before they are ready.

Our government takes very seriously our responsibility to build stronger, safer communities across Canada.

We are investing in the resources that members of the law enforcement community have been telling us they need. We have already hired over 1,000 additional RCMP personnel.

We understand that there is a cost to keeping dangerous criminals behind bars. We believe—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**LOUISE BELLEMARE**

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today on Parliament Hill a reception is being held in honour

of my long-serving riding assistant, Louise Bellemare, who has been working for the House of Commons since 1988.

This year the Bloc Québécois is celebrating its 20th anniversary and it is thanks to the dedication and commitment of people like Louise Bellemare that our party has maintained the confidence of Quebeckers.

Through her diplomacy, her ability to listen and her immense empathy, Ms. Bellemare has also been second to none in supporting people through the ins and outs of the federal public administration.

Today, the members of the Bloc Québécois want to acknowledge the excellent work of Louise Bellemare, a woman who has never counted the hours when serving the people of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CANADIAN FORCES**

**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government believes that each and every ill and injured soldier and veteran is a Canadian hero and they and their families deserve our support to help deal with new challenges.

We are allocating \$2 billion to provide enhanced allowances to those who have been seriously injured.

Today our government announced the legacy of care platform to further increase the assistance that we offer to severely injured Canadian Forces personnel and their families.

We will be providing barrier-free transitional housing to those Canadian Forces members who are in rehabilitation.

During that time we will assist by providing support for day-to-day living challenges such as transportation to medical appointments, child care and respite care.

This government recognizes the valuable contributions military families provide those members recovering from serious injuries.

I am proud to be part of a government that supports our military personnel and our veterans.

This government is listening and acting.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU**

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today we remember a remarkable prime minister, one of our nation's greatest builders. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, 15th Prime Minister of Canada, had a profound impact on Canadian society.

[English]

From the creation of the Official Languages Act and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to his hand in advancing Canadian women by the appointment of the first woman Speaker of the House, Speaker of the Senate and Governor General, to his broadening of Canada's relations with countries such as China and Cuba, Mr. Trudeau's legacy continues to shape Canadian policy today.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

Mr. Trudeau's list of accomplishments was remarkable. Above all, Pierre Elliott Trudeau was a great family friend, and we will always have fond memories of him.

[English]

I also know that Mr. Trudeau would smile warmly if he could see his son, the member for Papineau, serving in this House with the same passion that marked his service.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**CANADA'S ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN**

**Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday our Conservative government updated Canadians on the progress of its economic action plan. The detailed report showed the plan is working. It showed that the plan is injecting \$22 billion in major stimulus into Canada's economy this fiscal year.

It showed that close to 23,000 economic action plan projects across Canada have funding committed. It showed that close to 97% of those projects are under way or already completed, and it showed that Canada is creating jobs, 430,000 net new jobs since July 2009.

In my riding of North Vancouver, work is well under way on a number of projects, including a new state-of-the-art film centre for Capilano University and a new track and field and indoor soccer facility at Windsor Secondary School.

Clearly, Canada's economic action plan is delivering real benefits for everyday Canadians. In the words of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, it has been effective and has created a lot of jobs.

Jobs and the economy, that is what our Conservative government is focused on.

\* \* \*

**DISASTER RELIEF**

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the flooding in the north island highlights again the inadequacies of disaster relief. As residents of Newfoundland have already discovered, it may take weeks to learn who will be eligible for financial assistance to rebuild their lives.

Full assessments happen after waters recede, but as people are moving their belongings to higher ground they want to know that financial help is on the way.

When floods happened in Duncan last December, our community was shocked at the news that landlords would not be eligible for assistance. Some tenants lost their homes because their landlords did not have the funds to repair or rebuild.

For first nations, disaster relief assistance should not come at the expense of other programs as it did in Kashechewan where special education funds were used to pay for emergency expenses.

People need to hear today that their federal government will be there to help them when disaster strikes.

[Translation]

**AEROSPACE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services met with representatives of Canadian companies who came to Ottawa from all over Canada to express their support for the investment our government has made in the F-35 joint strike fighter program.

This investment in Canadian aerospace companies all over the country will create jobs, economic growth and opportunities over the next 40 years.

By replacing a plane that is at the end of its lifespan, the government is showing its continued support for the armed forces, and is injecting money directly into the Canadian economy, thus creating jobs.

Our government supports families in Quebec and Canada who earn a living working for our aerospace companies. The opposition continues to play political games and to jeopardize the thousands of jobs that this kind of investment will create in the decades to come.

\* \* \*

**QUEBEC**

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, following in Don Cherry's and Rex Murphy's footsteps, there is another employee of CBC, Radio-Canada's English counterpart, who is engaging in Quebec bashing.

Earlier this week, after fans at the Bell Centre let the goalie know how disappointed they were, Jason Davidson, a sports producer, criticized sovereigntist Quebecers on CBC's and *Hockey Night in Canada's* Twitter account. He admonished separatist Canadiens fans to stop booing Price. He added that he knew it was idiots of their type.

This is not the first time we have heard discriminatory and racist remarks about Quebecers on *Hockey Night in Canada* and the CBC.

And even though the producer in question has apologized, how is it possible that such remarks are tolerated in a crown corporation when part of its revenue comes from taxes paid by these so-called "idiots"? This sort of behaviour would never have been tolerated on the French-language Radio-Canada network.

\* \* \*

**MARIO LAGUË**

**Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to pay tribute to a great Canadian—a husband, a father, a colleague and a friend: Mario Laguë.

Mario was a Quebecer and a Canadian, a man of great vitality, charm and energy.

He was so full of enthusiasm that when he cheered for the Montreal Canadiens, he could be heard three houses away.

As director of communications in my office, he always managed to keep his cool, his sense of humour and his sense of irony.

• (1415)

[English]

Mario Laguë was proud to have been a Canadian ambassador, a public servant, and an adviser to prime ministers, but he was proudest of his family: Caroline, Arianne and Clara. We thank them for sharing Mario with us.

Today we pause and reflect in this chamber. In the public life of our country, there is a void where a boisterous, courageous and funny man once stood.

Au revoir, Mario.

We miss him.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### MARIO LAGUË

**Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this summer, we were all deeply saddened to learn of the tragic death of Mario Laguë, the opposition leader's director of communications, at the age of 52.

[English]

Throughout a distinguished career, the late Mario Laguë served his country with dedication both in Canada and abroad. His numerous roles included serving as director of communications for Canada's 21st prime minister, the Right Hon. Paul Martin, as Québec's delegate in Venezuela and in Mexico, as Canada's Ambassador to Costa Rica and as Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet in the Privy Council Office.

[Translation]

Mr. Laguë was a skilled communicator whose legacy includes devoted service to his country.

On behalf of all government members of this House, I would like to extend my sincere condolences to his wife, Dr. Caroline Vu-Nguyen, his two daughters, Arianne and Clara, as well as his friends and our colleagues in the official opposition.

[English]

Our thoughts and prayers are with them and we share their grief.

---

## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### GOVERNMENT SPENDING

**Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening at a public forum in Outremont, a woman asked why the government was spending \$16 billion on airplanes when there is a serious shortage of funding for affordable housing in Quebec.

My question is for the Prime Minister.

### Oral Questions

Can he explain to this woman why he needs to buy this particular plane at this price on an untendered contract while ordinary Canadian families are having trouble making ends meet?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, F-35s will replace our CF-18 fighters, whose useful life will end at the end of this decade. This purchase has the strong support of the Canadian Forces and the unanimous support of Canada's and Quebec's aerospace industry, which is one of our largest employers.

**Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister were to participate in an open public forum with open questions, I think that he would have a hard time convincing Canadians that he shares their priorities. He would have a hard time convincing the woman who asked that question yesterday evening.

I would like to ask the question again. Why this particular plane at this price on an untendered contract when ordinary Canadian families have other pressing social needs?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this company was selected by the former Liberal government. This purchase has received strong support. Our Canadian Forces need these planes. This purchase has received strong support from an industry that is one of the country's largest employers. This is very important for the economy. Those of us on this side of the House are not playing political games at the expense of the aerospace industry or our Canadian Forces.

• (1420)

**Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are not playing political games. We are asking questions to which Canadians want clear answers.

[English]

Even the United States Pentagon cannot tell us how much the plane will cost. The costs are skyrocketing. We are in the middle of a \$54 billion budget. The bid was not competitive.

How can we go to a town hall anywhere in Canada and explain this choice to Canadians when there are so many other priorities that are pressing on hard-pressed Canadian families?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, the CF-18, which has served the Canadian Forces well, will be retiring at the end of this decade after some four decades of service. That is why successive Canadian governments, not simply this government but the previous government, planned in advance to purchase a plane to replace that plane when it reached the end of its useful life and to do so in a way that would bring jobs and opportunity to the Canadian aerospace industry.

What is the Leader of the Opposition seriously suggesting? Is he suggesting that we would simply ground the air force at the end of the CF-18? Is he suggesting that we would fund one airplane but buy another airplane? His policy makes no sense other than the political game.

*Oral Questions***G8 AND G20 SUMMITS**

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for months the government buried details of its billion dollar G8 photo op, hiding receipts behind a pretense of security.

Now, pried out into the open, are \$200 million of that spending, \$200 million burned in a Conservatives-gone-wild weekend blowout on hotel suites, car rentals, glow sticks and bug spray; \$85,000 for two days of snacks at one hotel alone. It makes the \$200,000 they spent on fiddlers and dancers look like a deal.

The excuse of security is gone and the event is over. When will the government come clean with all the details of this billion dollar mess?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, unlike any other government, our government is transparent in respect of the expenses that we have made. We are proud of the accomplishments of the G8 and G20 summits. Canada is leading the global economic recovery, as well as international efforts to aid developing countries.

As we have said from the beginning, these were legitimate expenses, the majority of which were for security. There were approximately 20,000 security personnel on the ground during those summits. The violence and the destruction that occurred proved the need to ensure that those who attended the summits were protected.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, they should be anything but proud. The Conservatives do not get it. They racked up the biggest deficit in history and then tossed on \$1 billion for a 48-hour photo op.

While \$85,000 was being blown on in-room snacks, thousands of Canadians hit by the recession could not buy groceries. While the Conservatives blew \$20 million in a weekend on hotels, thousands could not pay their mortgage. While the government hides receipts, people cannot get jobs.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Who authorized this mess? Who chose waste over the priorities and needs of Canadians?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, coming from an individual who thinks that cameras are a replacement for police officers, that is not a criticism that we should take seriously.

As host nation of unprecedented back-to-back G8 and G20 summits, we are proud of their success.

As we have said all along, the majority of the costs for the summits were security related. Approximately 20,000 security personnel were tasked with safeguarding both summits. Canada was responsible for the safety and security of those delegates and we carried out that responsibility.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CENSUS**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, an internal Conservative government report confirms that abolishing the mandatory long form census will make certain data no longer reliable. The government knew the consequences its

decision to abolish the mandatory long form could have and went ahead with its decision anyway.

Why is the Prime Minister insisting on changing the census when he knows full well that this will compromise the reliability of data that a number of groups in civil society depend on?

● (1425)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government's position is clear. We recognize that some people are a bit reticent when it comes to information about their private lives. We intend to work in a co-operative manner with the public. We are not threatening to go after the public for being reticent. We are working with the public like adults.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government and the Conservatives were very critical of previous Liberal governments for not respecting the will of the House. Now that the Conservatives are in power, they are doing the same thing. The Conservative government has announced that it will not respect the motion to reinstate the mandatory long form even if the motion is passed by a majority in the House. While he is at it, why does the Prime Minister not lock the door to the House of Commons? That way he could govern all alone to his heart's content.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc has said that if people are reluctant to give their personal and private information to the government, the government should withhold their employment insurance benefits. That is the position of the leader of the Bloc. The Conservative position is much more responsible and respectful of the public.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne is in court to remind the government that it has an obligation to provide these communities with services in French and to enhance their vitality. To that end, reliable data on the evolution of francophone communities is required. The changes to the census will permanently affect existing databases.

Does the government realize that by eliminating the mandatory long form questionnaire, it is renegeing on its responsibilities towards francophone communities?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, we added two questions to the short form census to better protect the official languages.

We do not believe it is appropriate to require Canadians to provide personal and private information under threat of sanctions. Our position is reasonable and fair.

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, aboriginal peoples are also concerned about the changes made to the census questionnaire and are considering going to court to keep the mandatory long form. Their associations point out that aboriginal peoples living off reserve also have rights and that they must be included in the census.



*Oral Questions*

As part of its fiduciary responsibilities, the government has an obligation to develop the necessary tools to be aware of the aboriginal reality. How will the government fulfill this obligation with skewed and incomplete data?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have already stated, we have taken a fair and reasonable position that strikes a balance between Canadians' right to privacy and the need for access to information that is important to society.

However, as the Prime Minister said, the Bloc leader's position is clear, and I quote: "If people refuse to take part in the census, Ottawa could refuse to issue them a passport or pay them employment insurance benefits." That is not the position of a reasonable government.

\* \* \*

[English]

**OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while the world is focusing on Canada's oil sands, the government is turning a blind eye not only to the environmental consequences and impacts, but also to the economic impacts of the oil sands development.

We hear about the mutant fish. We are learning about contaminated water and serious health impacts on downstream populations and yet what does the Conservative government do? It gives billions of dollars of subsidies, \$2.5 billion this year alone, and there is no accounting for the environmental cost down the road of billions of dollars.

When will the industry be held to account by the government?

● (1430)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** First, Mr. Speaker, as a matter of correction, this is the government that brought in legislation to eliminate subsidies for the oil sands.

We are aware of environmental challenges and we continue to work with the industry and our provincial partners to address those.

However, what we do not do on this side, like the leader of the NDP did, is simply fly over a bunch of working Canadian families and tell them that we will shut down their industry without even visiting. That is what the leader of the NDP did in the oil sands but that is not how this government operates.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should be better briefed on where the leader of the New Democratic Party has been and whom he has talked to. He should also understand that he has just given, this year alone, \$2.5 billion to those very same oil companies. So much for his fancy legislation. He has left the unemployed behind and slammed the door on them.

[Translation]

The government sets aside crumbs for renewable energies, yet it continues to subsidize the oil sands, even though they pollute our water, increase the risk of cancer, kill ducks and create mutant fish.

When will the government hold the oil industry accountable?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government cut subsidies to the oil sands. Unfortunately, the NDP voted against that bill, too, but that is what they do.

This government does not say that it will shut down an entire industry without having the decency to talk to the people who work in it, as the NDP leader did.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, our former candidate was a trucker in the oil sands and a union president.

It is clear that they do not care about the environment. The Minister of Natural Resources thinks that two days is enough to resolve the issue of transporting tonnes of nuclear waste through the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River in an area inhabited by millions of people.

Will the government extend the public hearings and conduct a comprehensive environmental assessment? Yes or no?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has a clean record. It has always based its decisions on science. This organization operates at arm's length from the government. It has its own experts, and it is the watchdog. Once again, someone here is trying to discredit that expertise. We trust this regulator. Public hearings will be held. The public will be able to make its concerns known, and an appropriate decision will be made. The opposition should stop scaring people.

\* \* \*

**CENSUS**

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada is fighting the Conservative decision to eliminate the long form census because it threatens French-language services.

In court yesterday, we learned that the government knew from the outset that eliminating the mandatory long form questionnaire would make the data useless for numerous federal institutions.

So why are they persisting when they know that their new questionnaire will be more expensive and will make the government less effective? Why?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, we do not feel it is appropriate to require Canadians to provide private and personal information under threat of sanctions. Our approach is fair and reasonable, and it respects the interests of those who want the census while at the same time respecting Canadians' privacy.

It is the position of a very reasonable government.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government knows its decision will make the census more expensive and less effective. It knows the information will be useless to many federal institutions, but also useless to businesses, to charities and to the Bank of Canada.

They know all this, yet the Conservatives still want to make the government less expensive and less efficient. Why?

• (1435)

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the Liberals and their coalition partners have a very cavalier attitude when it comes to protecting the rights of Canadians to be free from the coercive intrusion of a government when it comes to very personal information.

We on this side of the House try to respect the rights of Canadians, try to find an equitable way to get the data, useful and usable data, in the words of the chief statistician, and at the same time respect the rights of Canadians. That is why we are a fair and reasonable government.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian doctors and nurses have been clear. They need accurate census data to prepare for pandemics like H1N1, to make decisions where to put our hospitals, where to put the ambulance stations, where to put vaccination clinics.

The Conservatives knew all along that the voluntary survey was not as good, yet they killed the mandatory long form census anyway. Why are they attacking the ability of our doctors and nurses to deliver health services to Canadians?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, not at all. As I have said, as the former chief statistician has said, as the current chief statistician has said, there is useful and usable data to be obtained through a voluntary long form.

On this side of the House, we are balancing the interests in certain institutions and businesses to have access to the data with the rights of Canadians to be free from coercion when it comes to intrusive and very personal questions. That is the obligation of a fair and reasonable government, and we are meeting that obligation.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the doctors and nurses are fighting to retain the census because they need the information to properly look after Canadians. The statisticians have been very clear the information is not as good.

Why will the government not listen to the doctors and nurses and the public health departments? Why is the government putting the health of Canadians at risk?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if I may say parenthetically, I will take our record of listening to doctors and nurses when it comes to ensuring we actually deal with pandemic situations rather than the Liberals' record any day of the week.

We are listening to Canadians. We are listening to those who are concerned about the intrusive and coercive aspect of the long form census in its previous form, a 40 page form. We think we have found a way to have a fair and reasonable balance that serves Canadians well and gets the useful and usable data that is necessary.

*[Translation]***INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, echoing the widely held view of Quebec's municipal officials, Bernard Généreux feels that the Conservative government is showing an "ideological obsession" that is bordering on sadism by refusing to extend the March 31 deadline.

Will the Minister of Finance stop being so stubborn and recognize that his attitude is threatening a third of Quebec's infrastructure projects? Will he listen to Bernard Généreux, president of the Fédération québécoise des municipalités and mayor of Saint-Prime?

*[English]*

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have great news. We have 23,000 projects right across the country that we are committed to in the government. We encourage all these projects to be completed on time. We will work with the municipalities and the provinces, right through to completion of these projects, in a very fair and reasonable way.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, according to the vice-president of the Union des municipalités du Québec and mayor of Rimouski, Éric Forest, Quebec's municipalities are being taken for a ride when it comes to the infrastructure program. They could be left with colossal bills if the federal government cuts off funding as of March 31, 2011.

Why are the Conservatives refusing to listen to the repeated calls from municipalities to extend the March 31 deadline for all projects? They want nothing to do with the Conservatives' case-by-case approach.

*[English]*

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to enlighten my hon. colleague that 23,000 projects across the country is a great news story for Canadians. Canadians are working; projects are getting built. This includes the projects in Quebec. We encourage that these projects be completed on time. We will work with those provinces and municipalities, right through to completion, in as fair a manner as possible.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the municipalities are calling on the government to extend the infrastructure deadlines. This weekend the mayor of Roberval criticized the Conservatives' obstinacy and said that the municipalities could lose all of their subsidies, because it will be practically impossible to complete all work before the deadline.

*Oral Questions***POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Will the Minister of State for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, who is the former mayor of Roberval, try to convince his government to show some flexibility?

• (1440)

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if it were up to the member, no projects would have been carried out—zero, nada—because the Bloc Québécois voted against all these projects.

We have carried out thousands of projects across Canada. I am proud of our record.

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, the minister is trying to tell us that he understood absolutely nothing.

The March 31 deadline is also jeopardizing the expansion of the Monique-Corriveau library in Sainte-Foy, in my riding. The project might not be completed before the deadline, because of a great deal of administrative red tape.

Since the federal contribution has already been committed, will the government use common sense and extend the March 31, 2011, deadline?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities said last week, he recently held talks with the Quebec Minister of Municipal Affairs, Regions and Land Occupancy. We will continue to work with the provinces, as we have done since the beginning of the process. Discussions will continue and here on this side of the House, we will continue to support the projects under way in the municipalities.

\* \* \*

[English]

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the current government has chosen to spend \$130 million on self-promotional advertising and millions more on pointless signs.

It has been seven months since it promised to spend \$10 million to address the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women. Now travel sites advise readers to avoid the Highway of Tears in British Columbia.

Why can the government find more than \$130 million for vanity advertising, but not the \$10 million required for missing and murdered women and girls, a critical issue of public policy?

**Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I had a meeting today with the national president of the Native Women's Association of Canada. We understand the Sisters in Spirit initiative is next week. The government will continue to push forward on a response in terms of the \$10 million that have been allocated on this file.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a recent Bank of Montreal survey found that 64% of Canadian parents will be unable to afford to send their kids to college. However, rather than help these students, the Conservative government is borrowing \$20 billion more to provide corporate tax cuts, which will add to its already record deficit.

Young Canadians are getting slammed twice. They get no cash for college, but they will be forced to deal with the debt left behind when these guys leave.

Students and their families are asking this. How can the Prime Minister borrow money for corporate tax cuts rather than investing it in education?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that for the jobs of tomorrow 80% of people will need post-secondary education of one form or another. That is why we have taken so many steps to help people, whether it is young people or mature adults, to get back to school to get the skills and training they need. One of the ways we have done that is through our Canada student grants program that helps people by giving them cash, which they do not have to repay, so they can pursue those studies.

It really is a shame that the Liberals voted against helping 140,000 more students than they have.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ARTS AND CULTURE**

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us take a look at their decisions. On the one hand, the Conservatives have made drastic cuts to culture. On the other hand, they went on a spending spree for the G8 and G20 meetings.

The total cuts to culture represent 4% of the G8 and G20 expenditures. I repeat, 4%. The infamous fence cost \$4.5 million, which is three times the amount of the cuts to documentaries and three times the amount that was cut from the FrancoFolies.

How will the government explain to Canadians that the fake lake, fencing and stuffed ducks are more important than our books, our theatre and our movies?

[English]

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the host nation of unprecedented back-to-back G8 and G20 summits, we are proud of their success.

As we have said all along, the majority of the cost for the summits was security related. Approximately 20,000 security personnel were tasked with safeguarding both summits. Canada was responsible for the safety and security of world leaders, delegates, visitors and Canadians living and working near where the summits took place. We also had the opportunity to showcase Toronto. It was money well spent.

*Oral Questions*

●(1445)

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Conservative priorities are misplaced. Some 10 billion hard-earned taxpayer dollars are being spent on American-style superprisons when crime rates have gone down significantly for two decades.

The Conservatives should be investing in the priorities of Canadian families. In southwest Ontario that means vital improvements and supplying staff to ease border crossings, crucial for the growth of jobs in many Ontario industries and communities.

Why can the minister find \$10 billion to satisfy the fetish of the Conservatives for prisons, yet not find the money to speed up our border crossings?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one-quarter of Canadians, 7.4 million people, reported being a victim of crime over the last year. Our Conservative government finds this figure far too high.

The Liberals have it wrong. Dangerous criminals should not be released onto the street just to save a buck. Unlike the opposition, we truly understand the cost to victims and we will continue to work on their behalf even if the Liberals will not.

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since 1997, Canada has been a participant in the joint strike fighter program. Canada participated in an extensive competitive process to determine who would produce this next generation fighter. The ultimate selection of Lockheed Martin as the manufacturer was made under the previous government in 2001.

Today we heard leaders in the Canadian aerospace industry say how excited they were for the opportunity this represented for them.

Could the Minister of Industry please provide an update on the many benefits of the F-35 program?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Kitchener—Waterloo and members of our party do not understand why the Leader of the Opposition and his party seem to be threatening to cancel this great opportunity for our country and for the Canadian Forces. The forces will acquire a spectacular new aircraft that will be in service until 2051 and the Canadian aerospace firms are ecstatic. They see the benefits, the opportunities and the jobs that will come as a result of these contracts.

What does the Liberal Party have against companies like Avcorp in British Columbia, Magellan in Manitoba, Héroux-Devtek in Montreal or Composites Atlantic in Nova Scotia? What do the Liberals have against giving the men and women of the Canadian Forces the best equipment we can?

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, British Columbia's Fish Lake is well known for its rainbow

trout but soon it may be better known for its 860 million tonnes of toxic mining waste from the proposed Prosperity mine. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has already advised against the mine because of the environmental damage it would create. Now the Conservative government is considering overriding this advice.

Will the minister do her job and protect Fish Lake?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is working to advance our response to the environmental review panel report, and that reply will be forthcoming. This is a very serious issue and our response will balance the environmental, economic and social perspectives of this project.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after intensive lobbying, the B.C. government changed its mind and said that it was okay to kill Fish Lake. Taseko has been lobbying the federal government since 2006. In fact, this past summer the company hired four new corporate lobbyists to pressure the Conservatives to allow the lake to be killed.

Will the government reject the corporate lobbying and stand by the decision to protect Fish Lake?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have received much correspondence on both sides of this very serious issue.

What is important is that we take the necessary time to make the right decision in the best interests of the country.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while the Conservative government did not even try to get guaranteed economic benefits for Quebec, the American government is reviewing contracts already awarded to produce F-35s. This reconsideration suggests that Quebec will benefit even less than anticipated.

My question is for the Conservative members from Quebec. Where are they? Where are they hiding? Can they explain why they are not willing to stand up for the aerospace industry, which is concentrated in Quebec?

●(1450)

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is a good day to talk about F-35s. Several presidents of aerospace companies, many of them from Quebec, were here in Ottawa today to express their support for our government's action. One executive stated: "We have a short window of approximately 24 months to maximize our participation in the full rate production for this aircraft, and any uncertainty or delay creates risks for our industry."

We are creating jobs.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Pentagon will use its review of contracts for building F-35s to help American manufacturers. While the Americans are vigorously defending their national interests, the Conservative government seems unable to demand anything at all for Quebec aerospace companies. It seems to me that when the government signs a \$16 billion contract, it should be in a position to impose some conditions.

When will this government go to bat for Quebec's aerospace industry?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, this process started in 1997 and led to a decision made by the former government in 2001. Our government worked with eight other countries. Nine countries pooled armed forces resources to select the best equipment for our armed forces. This will result in billions of dollars in economic spinoffs for the country's aerospace industry, much of which is in Quebec. We keep our promises.

\* \* \*

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on one hand, the Conservatives are saying that they are going to arbitrarily cut funding on March 31; on the other hand, they are saying they will be fair. It would be fair to give an extension to the Pat Burns arena, to the 2-22 Ste-Catherine project in the Quartier des spectacles and to all the other threatened projects in Canada.

Why are they refusing to grant these extensions?

[English]

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would inform my colleague that there are 23,000 projects across this country. We are working collectively with the municipalities and the provinces. We encourage all these projects to be completed on time. We will work with those provinces and those municipalities in a fair and reasonable way right through to the completion date.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government's own report tells us that one-third of all projects will not be completed by December 31 when we will be into the dead of winter.

Therefore, municipalities across the land are into a bidding war for labour and materials, meaning higher costs on the backs of municipal taxpayers.

Rather than grant case by case extensions to its favourite towns, will the government, for once, act rationally and grant a six month extension to all municipalities today?

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of the 23,000 projects, they have six months yet to go. My hon. colleague may be a little ahead of himself with regard to that.

We encourage all these projects to be completed on time but we will work with all of the municipalities and provinces with regard to these 23,000 projects to make certain that we follow them through to completion.

[Translation]

**HEALTH**

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Health Canada has quietly dropped its plans to put stronger warnings on cigarette packages.

The provinces, anti-smoking organizations and health care professionals all agree: the decline in the rate of smoking has levelled off in the past five years.

This decision does nothing for the health of Canadians, but it pleases the tobacco companies.

Why have they abandoned their plans for new anti-smoking warnings?

• (1455)

[English]

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when we were first elected, one of our goals was to reduce tobacco-related deaths and diseases in Canada. We acted quickly by introducing Bill C-32, the Tobacco Act. This was an important bill because it banned the advertising and flavours that were particularly appealing to children.

We are encouraged by the results of the recent Canadian tobacco use monitoring survey report which shows an increase in the number of young Canadians who have stopped smoking.

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while countries all around the world are taking tougher action to curb smoking and educate consumers, the government is actually moving in the opposite direction.

Not only are Conservatives backing away from new warning labels, they have cut anti-smoking commercials altogether.

When will the minister stop putting the tobacco lobbyists' concerns ahead of the health of Canadians and do more to protect Canadians from the dangers of smoking?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have allocated \$15.7 million annually under the federal tobacco control strategy to support a number of tobacco projects across Canada designed to help people stop smoking, prevent youth from starting to smoke and to protect Canadians from second-hand smoke.

Thanks to the actions of our government, Canada is a world leader in tobacco control.

\* \* \*

**FIREARMS REGISTRY**

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week, the coalition voted to keep the long gun registry.

We know that the registry does nothing to prevent crime and that it is wasteful and ineffective. This party does not believe in treating law-abiding farmers and hunters as criminals.

Would the Minister of Public Safety update the House on our efforts to scrap the long gun registry?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his hard work on this file. I also thank him for having the courage to stand in his place and vote to scrap the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry any way we can do it.

Coalition MPs, like the member for Malpeque, will need to answer to their constituents as to why they flip-flopped on the vote.

This is the furthest we have come to scrap the wasteful \$2 billion long gun registry and we will continue our work to scrap it.

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while the government has wasted tens of thousands of dollars on glow sticks, snacks and mosquito traps, it has shown no interest in helping unemployed Canadians.

The EI pilot project for extended weeks of benefits ended in September. Two more pilot projects, best 14 weeks and increased allowable earnings, are scheduled to end in October and December. The unemployed are stressed out enough and these two pilot projects need an extension.

The question is simple. Will the minister approve an extension to these two pilot projects, yes or no?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under our economic action plan, we introduced several new measures to help those workers and families who were hardest hit by the recession. I am pleased to say that those measures have been very successful.

Pilot projects are just that. They are attempts to try something new to see if we can provide further benefits in a cost-effective way that is a responsible use of taxpayer money and that will help those hardest hit.

We are reviewing these pilot programs. We are sensitive to the needs of Canadians as we go forward with the economy changing and we are sensitive to the effects of the U.S. economy. We will be reviewing these projects accordingly.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SECURITIES**

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, securities have always fallen under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. But the Conservative government's attempts to create a Canada-wide securities commission undermine the concerted effort made by the 10 regulatory commissions. According to Louis Morisset, from the Autorité des marchés financiers, the federal government's plan is counterproductive and it divides Quebec and the provinces.

When will the government recognize that the decentralized system works well, and that it would work even better if the government minded its own business?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a voluntary initiative. We have respected the provinces' jurisdictions. We will continue to do the same in the future.

• (1500)

[English]

**STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today is the 40th anniversary of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women report. However, instead of celebrating, women across the country, four decades later, are still waiting for action on key recommendations: pay equity, child care, support for first nations and recognition of women's unpaid work.

Rather than moving forward, the government has actually backtracked on equality. Women are still waiting. When will the government start listening to Canadian women and take action on these recommendations?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government has listened and we have acted. In fact, we have increased the funding for women to its highest level ever in the history of Canada. We have increased the funding by almost 40% more than it was under the previous Liberal government. We are now supporting projects in every province and territory across the country.

I would ask the hon. member to work with us to support women instead of dividing women's groups.

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians trust our Conservative government to manage the economy.

Two years ago, when the global economy was pulled into the deepest recession in over a generation, our government responded with the economic action plan to ensure that the Canadian economy was the least affected, the last to enter the recession and the first to recover from it, and stronger than any of the other industrialized countries.

Would the minister tell this House about the new program from our Conservative government to support Canadian small and medium enterprises?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member from Sarnia—Lambton is talking about an exciting new program that our government has created called the kickstart program. It will help Canadian small businesses to get off the ground. This new initiative provides \$40 million to support Canadian entrepreneurial spirit that will grow and build the Canadian economy and Canadian jobs.

We were happy to get the upbeat endorsement of Brett Wilson from CBC's *Dragons' Den* who said that the government was recognizing that the gap between innovators and ideas in the marketplace was simply someone willing to bet on them. We are willing to bet on Canadian small businesses.

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the minister that these pilot projects were designed to increase workforce participation and provide much needed income to the unemployed, including youth, women, part-time workers, low-skilled workers and workers in low-income families.

Will the minister take this issue seriously and convince her own government to stop borrowing money for corporate tax cuts and extend pilot projects 11 and 12? Unemployed Canadians are stressed out enough. Will the minister commit to extend these pilot projects, yes or no?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have made it very clear over the last two and one-half years that we are there to help those who have lost their jobs through circumstances beyond their own control. We have provided an extra five weeks of benefits. We have extended the benefit period for long-tenured workers who have been out of the job search market for a long time.

We have done a lot to help Canadians through these tough times. We will continue to monitor the programs to ensure we are providing support while still responding to the needs of employers to find the skilled workers they need for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

\* \* \*

## PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** Order. I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Sukhbaatar Batbold, Prime Minister of Mongolia.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** It is my pleasure today to welcome to the House of Commons several athletes, coaches, and managers associated with Canada's Special Olympics team. They are gathered from across the country for Hill Day, an opportunity to meet one-on-one with senators and members of Parliament.

[Translation]

On behalf of all members, I congratulate them on their achievements.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

\* \* \*

● (1505)

[English]

## WAYS AND MEANS

## NOTICE OF MOTION

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I wish to table a notice of ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4 and other measures.

I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

*Business of Supply*

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

## OPPOSITION MOTION—LONG FORM CENSUS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** When the matter was last before the House, the hon. member for Pickering—Scarborough East had the floor for questions and comments consequent upon his speech. I therefore call for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale.

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have high regard for the member for Pickering—Scarborough East. However, I was shocked at the speech that I heard regarding the census. I do not know if I was shocked more by the lack of substance or the basketfuls of hyperbole that he used.

One of the things that amazes me in this debate is how often the members of the opposition conveniently leave out two important facts: first, the mandatory short form is still in place; second, this form accounts for a great majority of the information needed for public policy.

They also leave out the fact that the long form is still available in a voluntary format, unless, of course, they want to brush it aside and discredit it.

I will ask this one question of the member. Could he please table in the House evidence that a voluntary survey has less efficacy than one that is forced by statute? He must have that evidence. He speaks so confidently about it.

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** Mr. Speaker, I would gladly take up the opportunity for the hon. member, who has not yet spent the necessary time on this topic, but soon will, I hope, as a new member of the industry committee. I wish him well there. But I am more than willing to give him the evidence.

I am pleased to present for the hon. member's perusal documents from 355 organizations, groups, and individuals from across this country who speak with great breadth and integrity on this matter. I would have no difficulties in providing the hon. member a copy. In fact, I will be so generous as to suggest that we provide it to all members.

However, let me remind the hon. member that he knows, statisticians know, the evidence is clear, what he is proposing derives from his fear of what exists. The question is, why does the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale believe it is important to throw away good information? Does he not believe in an honest, factual version of what Canada looks like?

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on September 10, four former top bureaucrats, namely, Mel Cappe, David Dodge, Alex Himelfarb, and Ivan Fellegi, a former Statistics Canada head, wrote to the Prime Minister, asserting that the government's decision to make the long form census voluntary has damaged Statistics Canada's credibility and international standing, and that in their view the chief statistician, not the minister, should have the power and independence to decide on the methodology and techniques that the agency needs to do its job.

The government's response was, and this is a quote from the communications officer of the Prime Minister's Office: "The fundamental principle we are defending here is the right of citizens not to divulge personal information and the government not to threaten [them] with jail and fines".

In my view, this is a curious response to a constitutional obligation to undertake a regular census.

I wonder if the hon. member would care to comment on the government's attitude toward the Constitution.

• (1510)

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** Mr. Speaker, members will recall that in my speech, which obviously was not listened to, or perhaps understood, by some members of the Conservative Party, I said that there may be constitutional questions related to the importance, or rather the requirement, of having an accurate and proper census to take evidence of what this country is.

I am not surprised to hear some grumbling from the benches on the government side. This is the same grumbling we heard after the government pushed a number of significant people out of their positions because they happened to challenge it.

We have to ensure the integrity of the system.

I wish my Conservatives colleagues on the other side would recognize that there is a difference between their own ideological peccadilloes and the importance of maintaining credible information for the country. There is a difference between the two. They ought to be separated. My hon. colleague from Mississauga South is indeed correct. They must be separated.

Given the track record of the current government of damaging, destroying, and removing things that are valuable to this country, I think the time has come to ensure that there is independence for statisticians in this country.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the debate today because I had a wonderful opportunity all day yesterday and half the day today to be a spectator at a presentation that was being held not far from here in one of the two courts in the Supreme Court of Canada building, the Federal Court of Canada. The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne was there to present its application to have the government's decision announced in August overturned and to request an order to make the census form that the government is proposing to send out next year mandatory and not voluntary.

I will mainly focus on the official languages aspect of this unfortunate decision by the government to drop the long form census

—as it is proposing to do—which was mandatory, and to make it voluntary, although sent to more people. The people from Statistics Canada have testified by affidavit. I could provide the hon. member opposite with a quote from the testimony of these people who, without reservation, have said that information obtained by Statistics Canada, government agencies and all those using such a survey, would be less valid and reliable than information obtained through a mandatory census form.

The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne is focusing mainly on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Official Languages Act, part VII, subsections 41(1) and 41(2) in particular. Some colleagues in the House will recall that it was in 2005 that we made the last changes to this section of the act that I will now read in order to give everyone some context in this debate.

Subsection 41(1) of the Official Languages Act states that:

The Government of Canada is committed to (a) enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and supporting and assisting their development; and (b) fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.

Subsection 41(2), entitled, "Duty of federal institutions", reads:

Every federal institution has the duty to ensure that positive measures are taken for the implementation of the commitments under subsection (1). For greater certainty, this implementation shall be carried out while respecting the jurisdiction and powers of the provinces.

I mentioned that these amendments were passed in 2005, when we were in power. I was the minister responsible. And I must say to my colleagues across the way that they supported these amendments. Also, I thought that they had understood the meaning of what they had approved at that time.

I would like to make a few comments about the intent of the lawmaker at that time. The commissioner of official languages at that time, Dyane Adam, made a wonderful comparison that I would like to share. The lawmaker's main intention was to create an obligation for all agencies and departments in the Government of Canada.

I would like to remind the members that this section was added to the Official Languages Act in 1988 under the Mulroney government. But it was mainly seen as a wish and not an obligation. It was not binding. In 2005, as a result of Bill S-3, which was introduced by my predecessor in the House, Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier, we jointly amended the Official Languages Act to create this obligation and make it binding on all agencies and departments. I want to highlight that this law, which was implemented within a year, applies to all departments and agencies.

• (1515)

At that time, Ms. Adam made a comparison to help people understand the new obligation that had been created. It was an obligation to act positively because we were dealing with positive measures. She compared it to a trip to the doctor. If someone goes to the doctor, the doctor is obligated to act and must, therefore, make a diagnosis. And that combines the government's obligation to undertake consultations and to obtain the most accurate information possible. With this diagnosis, the doctor can then prescribe something—medication, an operation or something else. There is an obligation to act. There is no guarantee of results, but there is an obligation to act on the diagnosis.



*Business of Supply*

With the adoption of this section of the act, Government of Canada departments and agencies now have the obligation to act based on consultation, that is, based on information which, it is hoped, is as accurate as possible. Hence the responsibility of one agency in particular, Statistics Canada, to do what it must to obtain accurate information. This was part of the basis for the application of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne to the court. I am anxious to see the court's decision. It seems that the decision may come fairly quickly given the circumstances. I will be watching. I understand the *sub judice* convention. I spoke about the facts and did not venture into interpretation. I will leave that to the courts, and that is as it should be.

I was listening to the presentation by the government's lawyers this morning. They argued that because there are no regulations there is no obligation with respect to the census. That argument is somewhat disturbing because we must not forget the legal hierarchy where the Constitution is at the top, followed by laws, and after the laws, there may be regulations, and after regulations, there may be guidelines for application. Just because there are no regulations does not mean that the law is null and void and that the responsibilities of the agencies and the government with respect to the law are diminished. That seems to be the gist of what they were arguing this morning. I look forward to the court's decision and eventually, if there is an appeal, the final decision. In fact, it may be appropriate at that time for lawmakers to adjust the act by regulation or amendments so that the intention is not misunderstood.

I would also like to say that the government's decision is unfortunate because if it is not reversed, it would affect everything that has been done since the last census, the post-census studies. This point is worth our consideration. A post-census study does not just have to do with official languages, but that is certainly one important aspect. For example, not too long ago, I went to visit my friends in the Eastern Townships. They were nice; they gave me a study, in both languages, on the anglophone community in the Eastern Townships.

• (1520)

[English]

It is "Profile of the English-speaking Community in the Eastern Townships", second edition. They were quite proud to give me this document, because it is a document that gives a very precise profile of their communities and their membership. It would be rather disastrous if we could not produce this kind of document and profile anymore, which would be a consequence of not having the mandatory long form census.

[Translation]

I have tried to understand the government's intention here, and all I can conclude—and we all agree, at least those who bothered to try to understand—that as soon as a census becomes optional, the wealthy will be less inclined to fill it out in full, and so will the poor and the most vulnerable. So we will have a less-than-complete portrait of society and its inequalities. The only thing I can figure is that by abolishing this mandatory census the government is trying to camouflage, conceal or hide all of the inequalities in our society. Then it would feel less pressure to create programs to eliminate these inequalities, or at least to reduce them. I find that deplorable.

Now it is very clear that the government is not presenting us with a hidden agenda. Their agenda is clear, and Canadians have to deal with it.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier about the census.

I come from a francophone community. A few weeks ago, I went to Saskatchewan to visit with francophones. This week, I visited Acadians in New Brunswick. It is clear that many francophones in this country live outside Quebec.

Can the member tell me how francophones outside Quebec will be affected by the fact that there will no longer be a long form census?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, one of the documents the FCFA presented to the court is an affidavit signed by Ms. Bender, assistant chief statistician at Statistics Canada, who clearly states that the results obtained from a survey like the one proposed by the government would be less reliable than the results obtained from the mandatory long form, especially for small groups, including minority francophone communities and certain minority anglophone communities.

Thus, the impact is more serious for the communities my colleague is talking about, which is why the FCFA felt it had to go before the courts to exercise its constitutional and legal rights as recognized by the House, or by both Houses and the Parliament of Canada.

[English]

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know, in all the time I have been here, that I have ever heard so much rubbish and fear-mongering as I have today. I have to say that.

The hon. member opposite made a statement. Maybe it was changed in translation, but it came across as, "if it is not overturned, all the data will be lost". That is one of the ridiculous statements and positions we have heard all day.

When we were at committee, we actually had one professional pollster who came to committee. He was asked if it was possible to gather this data and have good data from a voluntary survey. He said that of course it was. He did this for a living and said that of course it was possible. So everything we have heard today is actually fear-mongering.

*Business of Supply*

The one reality that does exist is that people have been intimidated by this process in the past. I want to give one example from my riding, because the people called me. I have had dozens of people call me, but this one stood out, because it was a farmer who was being called about the farm survey. He was getting cancer treatments. He told the Statistics Canada person on the phone that he was getting treatments and needed to be left alone. Rather than do that, they started calling from 7 o'clock in the morning until 11 o'clock at night. He could not convince them to leave him alone until we finally intervened and asked Statistics Canada to stop calling. That is the kind of thing that has happened.

I know other people who have been threatened with fines and jail time if they do not fill out the long form census. I have had many calls in my riding. This has been one of the sources of contention in my riding for a number of years. People in my riding are telling me that they are very thankful.

It is interesting that the other side is more than willing to represent special interest groups, but those groups are often at odds with the real people who are sick and tired of being told what they have to do. It really reveals a difference between this side of the House and the coalition. The main difference is whether we seriously think we should be invading people's privacy or not. On this side we do not think so.

The questions they want to force people to answer include how many bedrooms they have in their houses or what time they leave for work in the morning. Those are the kinds of things they are willing to go to the wall for. We think it is reasonable to let people answer these questions voluntarily. We know that Canadians will do that. They will stand up. They love and respect their country. They will take care of these issues.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, I did not say that. Perhaps there was a problem with the interpretation. I will confirm that. I did not say that all the information accumulated so far would be lost. However, the usefulness of that information could be considerably reduced because the continuity would be broken. I am not the one who says so; professional statisticians and historians said so repeatedly this summer before the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

The member can try to put words in people's mouths, but he will not succeed in my case. I know what I said and I would be willing to do so anytime, anywhere. As for the issue of the threat of imprisonment, he can repeat that all he likes, but on this side of the House, we agree it should be removed. So I do not understand his problem. We simply have to get rid of it. Besides, if he does not want to do it, we will; we will remove prison sentences. There is a big difference between that and deciding not to ask Canadians for information. I wonder if the government would be willing to let Revenue Canada do the same. I doubt it.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to take part in this important discussion we are having on the revision of the 2011 census. In particular, I would like to discuss where official language questions sit within the new 2011

census. However, first I want to say a few words about the history of the census, because it helps put the recent events into context.

Since it was first conducted in 1666 by Canada's first official statistician, Jean Talon, the census has provided a portrait of our people and the communities in which we live. At that time, the census tallied a grand total of 3,215 inhabitants and recorded age, sex, marital status, and occupation. This information was used to help plan and develop the colony of New France, and it set the stage for succeeding governments to use statistical information to guide decision-making.

In 1871, the first national census occurred, following which the constitution required that a census be taken every tenth year thereafter. In that year, information was collected on housing stock, armaments, livestock, crops, buildings, churches, grist mills, firearms, race, religion, and ethnic origin. The main goal of this national census was to determine the appropriate representation by population in the new Parliament.

Let us move forward, a full 70 years later, to 1941, by which time data collection was becoming more sophisticated and comprehensive. By 1956, rapid growth in our population and agriculture promoted the need for benchmarks at five-year intervals to provide a more accurate basis for annual statistics. It was that year that the first national quinquennial census was conducted. In addition, for the first time, television was used to encourage Canadians to fill out the census. Again, the passage of time led to revisions in our census-taking methods. Accordingly, the 1971 census introduced more innovations than any of its predecessors. In fact, it is only since 1971 that Canadians have completed the questionnaires themselves rather than give oral answers to a door-to-door Stats Can interviewer.

Also, 1971 was the first year of the long form census. The short form was distributed to a sample of Canadian households covering the basic population, and it asked nine housing questions. The long form went to the remaining households and contained the same questions as the short form plus 50 additional questions dealing with a wide variety of socio-economic matters, which greatly expanded the scope and intent of the census from what it had been in prior years.

In 2006, as more and more Canadians gained access to the Internet, households across the country were offered the convenience of completing their questionnaires online.

That, my colleagues, is the briefest of highlights from 360 years of census history in Canada. As a country, we have grown from 3,215 inhabitants to a nation of more than 33 million.

The 2011 version will continue the tradition of earlier censuses. It will continue to paint a picture of the people living in Canada. We have refined the collection methodology and at the same time are making the process less intrusive, less coercive, and easier to complete. In short, in 2011 the census has once again been revised and updated to suit the times, as it has been many times in the past.

•(1530)

The long form census will now be made voluntary and the threats of jail time or heavy fines will be removed.

It may also interest the House to know the questions in the 2011 national household survey are exactly the same as what would have appeared in the mandatory long form census.

The government does not dispute that we need solid, basic demographic information about Canada and Canadians. Clearly this has been the purpose of the census for many years and we feel that this necessary information will be collected on the census short form rather than on the long form introduced in the 1970s. With the existing distribution of the national household survey going to so many millions of households and with the short form being sent to 100% of the households with the same demographic and language questions that the 2006 census covered, we are confident that the 2011 version will continue to provide vital planning information for governments and other users of census data.

The debate before us today is not about the data. The debate is about the differences, and most important, the contrasting positions between the opposition and the government, a difference that could not be more pronounced.

The government believes we must strike a fair balance between the need for information and the personal privacy rights of Canadians. Further, we strongly believe it is unacceptable that an agent of the Government of Canada uses the threat of jail or fines to gather that information.

The opposition coalition has made it clear that they do not care about those concerns. They choose instead to demand that Canadians provide detailed information on over 40 pages of questions whether they want to or not. Under their rules, data at all costs trump the personal rights of Canadians. The opposition cannot have fully thought through their position, though, because I cannot think of any member of the House who could honestly tell a constituent to fill in a form against his or her will or go to jail.

I have to assume that we are all here today debating the invasion of Canadians privacy for nothing more than reasons of pure partisanship. I would think those we represent would expect that we could do something much more productive with our time, perhaps finding more ways to get more Canadians into jobs, or working harder on pulling Canada out of the recession.

On that note I would like to address concerns about how the government is able to comply with the obligations under the Official Languages Act. First and foremost, as has been said, the government is committed to providing usable and useful data that can meet user needs. As hon. members know, to address any official language concerns the government has added two additional questions to the short form. I can assure the House that all questions relating to official languages asked in the 2006 census will be maintained in the 2011 version, including knowledge of official languages, mother tongue and languages spoken at home. Of course, the government, in all its actions on this matter, remains fully committed to taking into account the priorities and any concerns of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

### *Business of Supply*

To meet both the spirit and the letter of the law, the minister announced in August the addition of two language questions in the census questionnaire to meet the requirements of the Official Languages Act.

The following questions were approved by order in council and published in the *Canada Gazette* on August 21:

Question 7 of the 2011 census reads:

Can this person speak English or French well enough to conduct a conversation?

Question 8(a) reads:

What language does this person speak most often at home?

Question 8(b) reads:

Does this person speak any other languages on a regular basis at home?

Question 9 reads:

What is the language that this person first learned at home in childhood and still understands?

These questions together will ensure the government's compliance with the Official Languages Act. This includes providing services to and communicating with the public in both official languages, supporting the development of official language minority communities, and fostering the full recognition and the use of English and French in Canadian society.

•(1535)

Of course, these questions on the 2011 census go beyond the mere meaning of legislative requirements. The answers to these questions will provide the government with key official language demographics throughout Canada.

In that regard, I would be remiss if I did not remind my hon. colleagues that, just as the mandatory long form did before it, the national household survey will also have a question on the language most often and readily used in the workplace. The point is that between the census and the national household survey we will be gathering essentially the same official language information as we did in 2006.

The government is fully committed to the notion that the vitality of the official language minority community is fundamentally important to the cultural mosaic that is Canada. To back up these words, we are proud of our unparalleled investment of \$1.1 billion to support those communities through the road map for linguistic duality initiative.

It seems to me that through these actions we will be in a position to provide the sort of information that stakeholder language and cultural groups find most valuable.

The long and the short of it is that the government has a clear vision with respect to supporting and developing official language minority communities and promoting our two official languages to all Canadians.

*Business of Supply*

Part of that support is through the data that has been, and will continue to be, collected via the census and other sources. We believe the 2011 census and the national household survey, along with the other survey sources from Statistics Canada, will continue to play this important role.

I would ask that all members encourage their constituents to complete the census when they receive it next May, because ultimately it will provide us with the information we need to build a better future.

A concurrence motion was brought forward by the NDP on Friday of last week and I had the opportunity to speak to that motion. I do not know why the coalition does not get its act together to find out who is moving what and when so we are not debating the same thing twice within a five-day period, but that is fine.

I want to go over a couple of points.

I made the point that according to the definition of a census in law, a census has to carry penalties. All of us in the House agree about removing the jail time. No one has ever served jail time.

The other part is the issue of the fine. For it to be defined as a census, it has to carry a mandatory requirement and that mandatory requirement needs some sort of punishment or it is not mandatory but voluntary, and that is all we are doing.

There is a lot of misinformation that the long form census has now disappeared. It has not disappeared. We are making the long form census voluntary, because there was a requirement for penalties. To make sure that we get a good return on the voluntary form, we are increasing the number of Canadians who will receive it by 30%.

I am a bit of a numbers person. We are going from about 2.5 million to 4.5 million people who will receive the long form. Even the statisticians and the people who appeared before committee said we would probably get about a 70% return rate. That is 800,000 more returns than we have now under the mandatory system.

People argue that we might get more back but they are worried about the quality. I disagree. I believe Canadians understand that providing us with information through the voluntary system, through the national household survey, will help with the development of public policy. It will help social service communities and business communities.

● (1540)

Canadians will come to the plate, whether they are in the upper income brackets or receivers of social services. They will fill out the form. There is no evidence that there will be a skew on who will fill it out and who will not. I am confident in Canadians, and as I said in my speech, I ask every single member of Parliament to encourage Canadians in their riding to voluntarily fill out the form when they get it.

To be clear, the way the law stands now, if one does not fill out the form, under the mandatory system, one is facing a fine. Let us assume that there would be no jail time, although there is the threat there; one would face a fine. One of the questions on which a person would be facing a fine is about nationality, where one's parents were born or where one comes from.

Here is one of the questions on which I do not understand why the opposition members want to make it the law to fill out the form. The question asks what is the person's religion. It does not care whether that religion is practised but what the religion is. Maybe the person is Anglican and his wife is Roman Catholic. There is a long list of religions, such as Lutheran, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh. What if individual Canadians feel that religion is a private matter between them and their god? I do not think the Government of Canada needs to know what a person's religion is or whether that religion is practised. Under the present system, if one refuses to fill it out, that could carry a fine because it is a mandatory census.

All we are doing on this side of the House is saying it is a question that should be answered voluntarily by Canadians. We ask them to do it because it does provide information, but it is their private information and not a government requirement.

A constituent of mine, in a previous census, where it asked for nationality and one of the options was native Canadian, put native Canadian. His wife got a phone call from Statistics Canada asking for his Indian card number. She said her husband was not an Indian. Statistics Canada said that he ticked that off and wanted his number. She said she had been married to him for 40 years and should know whether he was an aboriginal Canadian or not. His grandparents were born in Canada. His great-grandparents were born in Canada. Statistics Canada called him back and said to him that he had marked off native Canadian and if he did not have an Indian status card number he could face a fine or jail time for not giving the proper information. They negotiated and he changed his answer because he was not going to face a fine over it, but he made his point.

Do we have to have employees of Statistics Canada calling individuals and threatening them with fines and jail time to fill out these questions? I say not, the Conservatives say not, and I think most Canadians say not.

● (1545)

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member spoke about the concern he has in regard to asking questions about what religion somebody might be. Yet the religious organizations in Canada, such as the Anglican Church, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Evangelical Fellowship, and the United Church, are all demanding that the census be used.

I will quote Bernie Farber, the CEO of the Canadian Jewish Congress, who said that every Jewish federation in the country signed a letter to the Prime Minister asking that he reverse the census decision. Mr. Farber said:

Without that demographic data, we just can't plan properly.

Bishop Pierre Morissette, president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, said about the long form census:

This is one of the only ways in which we, at the national, regional and diocesan levels, can gain knowledge of the demographics and identify the geographic areas where our services are required

*Business of Supply*

The churches are saying that they need this data. One of the ways churches help many people is by helping those who need help the most, the disadvantaged. That brings me to people with disabilities, who are very concerned about this.

Does the member think he knows more about the needs of vulnerable Canadians and the needs of Canadian churches than the most vulnerable themselves and the churches themselves?

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Madam Speaker, the churches are asking to make sure that they have the information.

If we want to be honest with them, I would say we are sending it out to 30% more Canadians. We are expecting a return rate of 70% instead of 95%. I question that the 95% return rate was because there was the threat of jail time and fines. I think the return rate was 95% because most Canadians thought it was the right thing to do, not because of the threat.

My response to the churches is we are going to get them more responses and they will be as good in terms of quality. The churches will have more information on which to base their decisions as to where they provide their services. It is not a bad thing.

The survey is not disappearing. The long form census questions are not disappearing. They are still being asked. The only difference is that we are asking Canadians to volunteer the information. They will not face jail time. They will not face fines. It is voluntary.

It will be quality information. The churches will still be able to make quality and quantity decisions on where they provide services.

• (1550)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member in his opening remarks said that it is not about data; it is about differences between the opposition parties. I would like to correct the hon. member. It is about data. That is all it is about. It is about data.

One of the questions the respondent did not like was what time the individual leaves for work in the morning. That question is not relevant to me, but it may be relevant to municipalities when it comes to public transportation planning.

The member mentioned the information regarding the number of bedrooms in a person's house. That too is important for the municipalities if they are planning rental housing.

I think the government is concerned about safeguarding privacy. I would like to quote one of the government members. He said:

Statistics Canada has taken a number of important safeguards to protect the privacy and confidentiality of Census responses.

That is a quote from the member for Beauce.

I would like the hon. member to tell me, if privacy was not an issue before, why is it now?

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Madam Speaker, privacy is important to all Canadians. It is becoming increasingly so with the onslaught of new technologies. We can look at the role our Privacy Commissioner has played in the Facebook issue. She has made a significant contribution to privacy issues around the world. Privacy is an issue.

Where the questioner is wrong is that those questions, which were not in my speech but I am happy to speak to them, such as about the number of bedrooms in a person's home and how long it takes to get to work, still exist. We are not getting rid of those questions. The form is exactly the same as the long form, but it will go to more people. We will have more data. We will have more responses. Canadians will fill it out because it is the right thing to do. They are the exact same questions. There is no difference in the questions.

What is being expressed by a number of opposition members is a fallacy. The questions are exactly the same.

**Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague is right and he keeps reinforcing the point. We keep hearing from the other side that it cannot be done.

I live in a riding where volunteerism plays a large role. Each and every day volunteers come out and do something, whether they are volunteer firemen, volunteers who coach little league or hockey, or volunteers who put on the fairs, run the legion, name it. That is volunteerism in Canada.

Members on the other side are suggesting that we cannot get this information voluntarily. That is what we are suggesting. Instead of hitting people with a stick, we are going to ask them to do what is right for Canada, do what is right for their city. We are going to ask that they give us the information voluntarily.

Do you think you will have any trouble voluntarily getting the information in Burlington?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I would ask all members to address their comments to the Chair.

The hon. member for Burlington.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Madam Speaker, in my experience as a municipal councillor, I found the people of Burlington to be engaged in public policy. The return rates on our voluntary surveys at the city of Burlington and at the region of Halton were tremendous. We would get good information. Someone said at committee that we would not know where to build the fire halls or we would not know how big the pipes should be because the census would not be accurate. That is an absolute fallacy. We know where to put the fire halls because the census tells us where people are living and where they might live. However, that was only a small chunk of the information that the municipality used in planning communities.

*Business of Supply*

We will get the responses. I believe in Canadians. We will have to promote it, but we will do the promotion. We all have a responsibility to do the promotion. We will get accurate information. We will continue to provide the public services that this country demands and which Canadians are receiving today.

● (1555)

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, our party is very concerned about human rights. We are the party of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Many international organizations are very concerned about human rights.

I would like to ask the hon. member how many letters has he received from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch demanding the release of these prisoners of conscience from Canadian penitentiaries, these prisoners of conscience who simply refused to fill out their long form census? How many blood-stained letters has he received from these prisoners of conscience in Canadian prisons?

Perhaps most importantly, how many Canadians have actually been jailed for not filling out the long form census? The member referred to that as the compelling reason, that we have to free these people from Canadian penitentiaries for their failure as prisoners of conscience to fill out the long form census. How many people have actually been put in Canadian penitentiaries for this violation?

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Madam Speaker, I am glad to get an opportunity to respond to this question. As I said in my speech and in answer to other questions, it is my understanding that the jail term will disappear, as has been agreed to by all parties. However, for the form to be defined as a census, it still requires some sort of punishment and that includes fines.

I am looking forward to working with the hon. member, who is his party's new finance critic. He used to be a Tory, but he flipped sides and went to the other side. It will be very interesting to see what his financial acumen is now that he is a Liberal.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have been in politics almost 10 years and never ever have I participated in such a ridiculous debate. It is ridiculous in the sense that the government is proposing that we go with ignorance over knowledge, ideology over reason. There are 355 organizations and individuals who seldom enter politics denouncing this move. The Conservatives talk about jail time when not one Canadian has ever gone to jail for not completing the census. The Liberal bill will remove that possibility even as a theory.

There are people from across the land in every kind of occupation and profession professing that this long form census data is crucial to our understanding of our country, whether we are in business, whether it is a provincial government, a municipal government or whatever. It makes absolutely no sense and the government keeps changing its arguments.

An hon. gentleman who actually worked with me as the deputy minister, Munir Sheikh, a great Canadian, a great public servant, had no option but to resign as chief statistician after his advice to the government was, to put it charitably, mischaracterized.

I will now talk a little bit about the economic angle, but I am just astounded as a Canadian in politics that this issue should ever have

come to the floor of the House of Commons because it makes absolutely no sense. It is counter to what is good for Canada. The Conservatives have no arguments to the contrary, so I am a bit floored, I must admit.

Let me now turn to some more detail on the economic side. For example, we have Mark Carney, a highly respected Governor of the Bank of Canada, whose job it is to set interest rates and conduct monetary policy for the good of the Canadian economy. He himself has said that the absence of long form census data will impede his ability to conduct monetary policy for the good of the Canadian economy. To quote him, he said, "There is a non-trivial range of data that could be affected". Then according to a *Globe and Mail* story, when asked which data could be affected, Mr. Carney said, "That's part of what we're going to have to work through. Obviously a series of surveys on the household side, and the potential implications for the labour force survey".

Here is the man appointed by the Conservatives, and in this case I would say a very good appointment, to conduct the monetary policy of the nation saying that his job for the good of the Canadian economy will be negatively impacted by this ridiculous, stupid decision by the government to abandon the long form compulsory census. That is just the tip of the iceberg. We have 355 solid organizations confirming how ridiculous this move is.

Let me just say one thing about statistics. Those on the other side do not seem to understand the basic principle of statistics. We do not get more accurate information by increasing the numbers. It is not a question of how many respond; it is a question of which type of person responds. The experts are unanimous that there are certain classes of Canadian citizens, certain types of people, perhaps new Canadians because they have trouble with the language or poorer Canadians, who will not answer and therefore will be unrepresented. We could have 10 million Canadians answering, but if they are disproportionately of the, shall I say upper or middle class or parliamentary types who are not in these negatively affected groups, we will get a disproportionate answer and we will not get accurate data. That is what all the statisticians are telling us. That is what the government either does not understand or chooses to ignore.

● (1600)

This affects not only the Bank of Canada but businesses that are making investments, such as a business wanting to set up a new Tim Hortons or a grocery store, they want to know where people live. These businesses are the backbone of our economy. However, they will no longer have accurate information in terms of demographics and where people live, the incomes of people and all of those things needed to conduct their business in an effective way. It is bad for business and bad for the Bank of Canada and the management of the Canadian economy.

I will give the House a few more quotes. The thing is beyond the pale. We really do not need more quotes because it is so obvious but since we are debating this issue I will read more quotes.

*Business of Supply*

Craig Alexander, president of the Canadian Association for Business Economics and the chief economist at TD Bank, said, "... the census is the single most important piece of information we get." They will no longer have it thanks to the anti-diluvium attitude of the Conservative government.

The Nunavut finance minister said:

We depend largely on information that they gather to help us shape our policies, programs that we deliver in Nunavut in areas such as the homeless issue, health, education.

Nunavut will no longer have this information.

[*Translation*]

The Association des statisticiens et statisticiennes du Québec, which has more than 110 professional statisticians in its ranks, is in favour of reinstating the mandatory long form questionnaire for the 2011 census.

[*English*]

The statisticians of Quebec are hardly a left-wing, subversive socialist gang who the government should be afraid of. These are people who do not usually get involved in politics and they are typical of those who are speaking out against this ridiculous decision on the long form census.

John Winter, president and CEO of the B.C. Chamber of Commerce, again not a socialist subversive to the best of my knowledge, said:

Having dependable and quality data which achieves a high response rate to questions covered by the long form is vital for business analysis and policy development. Businesses, regardless of size and sector, base their planning and decisions on dependable census data. This determines how they will develop initiatives and allocate resources to remain successful.

That goes back to my example with Tim Hortons.

Madam Speaker, I forgot to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

I could go on forever with quotes but I will give the House just one more.

Marni Cappe, president of the Canadian Institute of Planners, said:

The mandatory framework of data collection under the current Census system provides a validity and comprehensiveness that is not likely able to be matched by a voluntary system....

I have been in politics almost 10 years and I have never seen a more ridiculous action taken by any government than this action on the long form census. It destroys the quality of data needed by businesses, by governments, by NGOs and by others to run our country effectively. They will be paying more money to get weaker data. The notion of people being sent to jail is totally ridiculous because no one has ever been sent to jail. The Liberal member's private member's bill would eliminate, even in theory, the possibility of jail time.

I see absolutely no reason for this and we on the Liberal side will work as hard as we can to get this motion through in order to block this anti-diluvium dinosaur move by the Conservative government.

● (1605)

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to bring to the member's attention the issue of quality of the data, which has been talk about all day.

I had a look at some of the testimony before the industry committee on July 27 and in response to a question from the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie concerning a survey that Ipsos Reid had done that indicated that 19% of Canadians, if asked, would probably not participate in a volunteer survey of this sort, Darrell Bricker of Ipsos Reid pointed out that a little over 81% would. On that point he said, "But in my experience, a survey response rate of 80% is better than anything I've seen".

This is different from what we have heard today. Here we have a professional pollster admitting that this is good quality data. I wonder if the member has something else to offer with regard to that statement.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Madam Speaker, we have 355 solid groups opposed to this. We have one, the Fraser Institute, in favour. I think that says something.

The member's question displays a regrettable lack of statistical knowledge. We can have 80% of the people answering the form but if 80% of them are disproportionately white, middle class or upper middle class, then we leave out those who are less fortunate in society and the view of the nature of our country will be a biased one. That will serve the country badly. That is the fundamental point he does not understand.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member for Markham—Unionville cited a whole number of groups across the country. He may be aware that the city of Burnaby and the city of New Westminster in my riding have both taken a stand against this gutting of the long form census. That is what it is. That is what the government is attempting to do.

What is interesting in all of this is that the Fraser Institute, as the member points out, the National Citizens Coalition and even the President of the Treasury Board have been saying that the long form census is too invasive so they will take example from countries like Finland where the government takes over the personal and confidential data file of citizens and then uses that information to create the census.

As we have heard cited here, this is really big brother gone rampant. It is administrative data, a personal file, that is taken by the government.

Does the member think that is the eventual end game of the government? The President of the Treasury Board has said that the government wants to be like Finland and take over the personal data file. Should Conservative voters be concerned about where the Conservatives are heading on this?

*Business of Supply*

•(1610)

**Hon. John McCallum:** That is an interesting question, Madam Speaker. What the member said is absolutely true. The Scandinavian system is much more invasive than the system under the long form census that we have. If the Treasury Board minister wants to go the way of socialist Scandinavia, so-called, does this mean that we have a Conservative big brother process? That is one theory, which the member seems to be proposing.

My preferred answer in terms of the government's motives, although I am just speculating, is that it is really just playing to the small minority of super anti-government types that are a part of the Conservative base.

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the residents of Mississauga—Streetsville, I am happy to join in the discussion on the long form census.

Earlier this summer, the government announced its intent to abolish the mandatory long form census, which will compromise the accuracy and integrity of the data that Statistics Canada collects. Its rationale was that the mandatory census was overly coercive, intrusive and that no citizen should be punished with a jail term for failing to complete the form. However, according to Statistics Canada, no person has ever been sentenced to jail for failing to complete the census and a very small number of individuals have ever been fined.

Since the announcement back in June, the industry committee was recalled to hear voices and Canadians, from coast to coast to coast, came forward to express their discontent and often their visceral disagreement with this announcement.

We next witnessed the resignation of a lifelong civil servant, the director of Statistics Canada, Mr. Munir Sheikh, who could not, in good conscience, justify, rationalize or accept this policy. He knew that the data would be inaccurate and compromised.

The list of those Canadian civil servants who spoke out against this included former chief statistician, Ivan Fellegi, who celebrated 51 years as a civil servant; former PCO clerks, Mel Cappe and Alex Himelfarb; and former Governor of the Bank of Canada and finance deputy minister, David Dodge. They all urged the government to reverse its decision on the long form census.

In fact, the current governor, Mark Carney, stated that the Bank of Canada may no longer be able to rely on the data from Statistics Canada for analysis because of the proposed changes to the census. Mr. Carney said that the changes could have an impact on the quality of the research in important areas and force the bank to supplement the information with its own research. According to Mr. Carney, "There is a non-trivial range of data that could be affected".

The central bank draws from a wealth of information about subjects, from the job market to housing and household debt, to track the economy and to help it decide whether to adjust the country's overnight lending rate. It receives that from the statistics that Statistics Canada collects.

In the face of rebuke, the response by the Minister of Industry was, "I got bigger fish to fry", demonstrating the Conservative government's arrogance and contempt for its opponents and, in this

case, for a man, Mr. Fellegi, who has dedicated his life to the service of our country for over a half-century.

In my time remaining I will discuss three issues: first, the historical basis for this vital tool; second, why it is so critically important to decision making; and last, why the decision to dismantle it is more ideologically driven than rational.

What is behind this irrational decision?

First, I will give the history of the census. The first known census to be taken was in Babylon at about 3800 BC. Not only were people counted but livestock, butter, honey, milk, wool, vegetables and weapons were also counted. The Egyptians, Chinese, and Persians all implemented a census. The Romans conducted a census every five years, including a very famous one that forced a very pregnant Mary and her carpenter husband Joseph to travel to Bethlehem to register themselves and their newborn son in 33 BC.

As most of us know, Jean Talon completed the first census in Canada, then known as New France, in 1666. He recorded age, gender, marital status and occupation. Through the years, more questions appeared. Questions of livestock, crops, buildings, churches and grist mills were added.

As Canada matured and grew, questions on race, religion and ethnic origin were also introduced. Yes, even as far back as 1710, questions of armaments and firearms also appeared. How fitting is that, given our vote on the long gun registry just last week?

Since 1666, census information has been used to collect information for the betterment of our society. It helped define our rich mosaic and create an accurate portrait of our nation and, most important, it helped us plan for the future.

Second, why collect census information at all? Quite simply, the census helped us shape our nation. If we do not have vital statistical information, then governments cannot make reliable, scientific, evidence-based, factual, efficient and cost-effective decisions to plan for our future, such as projecting the funding for our schools, our hospitals, our public transit and our police forces based on population growths, and for funding of settlement agencies based on projections of new immigrants arriving at our doorstep.

•(1615)

James Turk of the Canadian Association of University Teachers stated:

—we are deeply concerned about the disastrous consequences this will have for the scientific understanding of Canadian society, and for the ability to make informed decisions about social and economic policies.



*Business of Supply*

The collection of data is not something to be feared. Statistics are used for creating, evaluating and monitoring federal legislation, for policies and programs, for rural communities, for ethnic communities, for women's groups, for the poor and for the disabled. It is used to collect demographic trends and information used to determine transfer and equalization payments to provinces for veterans, for health and social transfer payments, for Citizenship and Immigration to aid in the settlement of refugees and for language instruction for newcomers to support their economic, social and cultural integration into our nation and for labour market activity and income to plan Canadian pension needs, employment insurance programs and old age security.

The government's decision to eliminate the mandatory census will compromise the integrity of data and render it unreliable. Certain ethnic groups and other minority groups will be underrepresented in the data and will lose out on programs and services. Demographic trends will be missed altogether.

This decision has drawn opposition and has been widely condemned by media outlets, community groups, NGOs, not-for-profits, business groups, economists, aboriginal leaders, francophone groups, cities and municipalities. Over 350 organizations do not support making the long form census voluntary. The government stands virtually alone in its decision to proceed in its decision to proceed with abolishing the long form census.

Some of those who oppose dismantling it include: Canadian Association of Journalists, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the Anglican Church, the CD Howe Institute, Canadian Population Society, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, cities and municipalities from across the country, Canadian Marketing Association, Canadian Labour Congress, the CMA, Catholic Women's League and the Prime Minister's former adviser, Tom Flanagan from the University of Calgary.

The list goes on, but I know my time is limited so I will move on to my final and third point, which is ideology versus science and rationality. I believe the decision to abandon reason and facts stems from the government's underlying and fundamental civil libertarian views and ideology, which places the rights of the individual ahead of the collective good.

We see Conservatives cutting government programs and services all in an effort to reduce the size and capacity of government. We see them attempting to eliminate tools deemed necessary by professional law enforcement agencies, such as the gun registry, because of the perceived nuisance it causes gun owners to register their firearms.

We see the Conservatives attempting to eliminate the mandatory census because they claim that governments should not be in the bedrooms or the gun closets of the nation, that it has no right to collect data on individuals even if it is in the interests of protecting the collective good, or to create a scientific evidence-based internationally praised and accredited database for all to use.

We see the Conservatives put ideology ahead of respect for democracy and silence those who oppose them as we have witnessed with the dozens of courageous civil servants who have been fired in various departments and ministries. We see them eliminating a credible, scientific policy planning tool for all to use in the delivery

of social programs, of veterans programs, of language and settlement programs.

Not knowing the facts means not having to deliver the goods and services. The Conservatives will continue to base policy on anecdotes as we saw with the rationale for building more prisons, because unreported crimes were on the rise. They base policy on ideology rather than on facts and statistics.

I am not just speaking of the elites of society, as the government House leader has suggested, but of the myriad of groups and organizations that have taken the government to task for its decision to eliminate the data generated from the mandatory long form census for planning and policy purposes.

We need to ask the government this once again. What is its true motive for cancelling the mandatory long form census? Why would it proceed with its decision in the face of opposition from every sector, every region and every level of government? The decision has been universally panned, but rather than accept the folly of their actions and adjust their policy position, the Conservatives remain headstrong, self-righteous and sanctimonious.

I will gladly stand and be counted and support this motion. I hope the Conservatives and all members of the House will do the same.

• (1620)

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member opposite is very proficient at name-calling, but her logic does not quite follow as well as her insults do.

The previous member talked about how ridiculous this debate is, and he is actually right. I do not think either one of them were at industry committee this summer when we had a professional pollster before us. We asked him if he could get this information.

**An hon. member:** A pollster?

**Mr. David Anderson:** Madam Speaker, the member does not want to let any other members speak because she is too busy insulting them to let them have their say.

He was the one professional who was called to the industry committee, one who does this for a living. When he was asked if he could get this information, he said that he absolutely could, that this was what they did all the time. We asked him if it had to be mandatory and he said absolutely not, that there was no reason why it had to be.

One area where voluntary information is used extensively across our society is the efficacy of drugs. When drugs are approved, all the testing that is done is voluntary. The information is gathered on a voluntary basis. I do not think the opposition would be so foolish as to actually suggest that all those approvals are invalid because the information has been gathered voluntarily.

*Business of Supply*

I want to address the issue of jail time. The folks opposite say that they do not like to see Canadians go to jail. We know that Statistics Canada has used that as one of the basis to intimidate people to fill out the form. If jail time is removed as a penalty, it still does not take it away because the fines are left in the legislation. If people do not want to pay the fines, they will end up in jail anyway, and—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie:** Madam Speaker, what is really at stake is the reliability and the accuracy of the data.

If we look at a quote from the former head of Statistics Canada, Mr. Munir Sheikh, he says, “It is recognized that the quality of data collected by the voluntary survey will be lower than that of a mandatory survey”.

If we look at his assistant, Chief Statistician Rosemary Bender, she says, “The information will not be as usable for a range of objectives for which the census information will be needed”.

When we talk about punitive measures, Canadians get it. They understand how important a tool the mandatory long form census is. It is used for creating policies and programs that serve their needs: social programs, veterans programs, health programs, public transit programs, language programs. That is why we see the rate of non-compliance being so low. There has never been an imprisonment over not filling out a mandatory census. There have been only a few people fined over decades and we have had only three complaints to the Privacy Commissioner.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Madam Speaker, when the member for Mississauga—Streetsville raised the question of what was the motive of the government to go to this position, as I recall the end of the last session, the government was getting pilloried by questions about the Afghan detainees, the supremacy of Parliament.

When we watched the headlines throughout the summer, what was the point of discussion? It was the mandatory long form census. The Conservatives succeeded, much like a magician who distracts us with one hand while they pick our pocket with the other one, in deflecting the conversation away from those items that were very clearly damaging to them.

Would the member for Mississauga—Streetsville agree that is potentially what the Conservatives might have been up to?

• (1625)

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie:** Madam Speaker, if my colleague had read the *Globe and Mail* this morning, he would have seen a resounding headline that said, “The elimination of the long-form census defies reason”.

The census is a senseless debate. We are wasting precious House time when we should be focusing on the economic mismanagement of the Conservative government. We should be focused on the waste of spending, including \$9 billion on prisons and the sole-source contract on \$16 billion in fighter jets, \$20 billion in corporate giveaways or \$1.3 billion on a G8/G20 summit, much of it spent on glow sticks.

We should be focused on Canadian families and the rising cost of post-secondary education, keeping public health care strong and sustainable and caring for the sick and aged and our veterans, or properly funding retirement pensions or funding higher quality full-time jobs, not prisons, not fighter jets and not this senseless debate on this voluntary census survey—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Before resuming debate, I would ask that if members would like to be recognized for questions and comments, they wait until they are recognized.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to share my time with my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie.

I am pleased to be speaking today about Statistics Canada's mandatory long form questionnaire. I was wondering when the long form questionnaire was introduced in Canada and why. Someone was wise enough to say that we needed to have this data. That was years ago. I am not sure how long the questionnaire has existed, but I know that it was not started just last year. It definitely was not introduced by the Conservative government, that is for sure.

For us, for minority communities, the long form survey is important, especially for the development and vitality of our communities. The FCFA has been in hearings at the Federal Court since yesterday. They were there again this morning until 12:20 p.m. An association that represents one of the largest francophone communities in the country had to go to court to ask for an injunction to keep the government from scrapping the long form survey, which would deprive organizations, and the government itself, of fundamental data.

This will deprive organizations of basic data. The long form gives them access to information that helps them tailor their services to communities and request services from the government, which is responsible for making programs available for francophones and anglophones in Quebec.

A review of parts IV, V and VII of the Official Languages Act shows that the government has certain responsibilities toward citizens. Now the government has the best excuse ever. I suppose it was trying to imitate Canada's former Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who said that the state has no business in the bedrooms of the nation—

**Hon. John Baird:** Or their bathrooms.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** —or their bathrooms, as the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons just said, or their living rooms or kitchens. Or their garages either.

*Business of Supply*

When Pierre Elliott Trudeau made that comment, it was for another reason. Back then, he was referring to what people did in their bedrooms, not to the number of bedrooms people had.

When the mandatory long form asks how many bedrooms people have in their houses, it is asking for a different reason. The government does not want to know the answer to that question because if it asks a family how many children it has, then finds out it has four but only two bedrooms, that means more housing has to be built. We need affordable housing. That is the government's responsibility. That is an answer it would rather not hear. It does not want to know how many bedrooms people have, because the number of bedrooms reported on the long form suggests that if a family has four children and only two bedrooms, it needs more bedrooms. The government does not want to know that people need affordable housing with four or six bedrooms. The government should tell people the truth instead of playing this negative game.

The Conservative government would like to have nothing to do with Canada or the nation. It does not want to have to help them. It wants to make laws and build prisons, and if people act up they will know what is coming to them. The Conservative government prefers that to knowing the truth and understanding what people need. Cities, mayors, academics and responsible people who see the importance of the long form census are calling on the government to make it mandatory again.

• (1630)

The Conservatives are saying they do not want to start jailing people who do not want to disclose details about their private lives. The people who gather this information have a responsibility, and we can trust them. There have been no cases, despite what the government says. No one has ever been sent to prison for this. It is like making a law to create a speed limit on the highway and not stopping people who are speeding because it is not bothering anyone and the government is not in the business of issuing fines or getting involved in other people's business.

We need leadership from the government. A government has to know things about the people and what is happening in the nation. We need to know how many people live in cities. How many francophones live in Alberta and what are their needs? Are there health services or not? Are there government services or not? Are there child care services or not? We need that data. How many immigrants speak both official languages? We need to know. In Montreal, how many immigrants speak French? How many immigrants speak French in Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, in all the regions?

Under part VII of the Official Languages Act, the federal government must take positive action to support the development and vitality of official language minority communities. What did the Minister of Industry state in this House? He said he added two and a half questions—that should equal a bedroom and a half—on language, which will meet the requirements of the Official Languages Act. It would be interesting to ask him if he really knows the requirements of part VII of the Official Languages Act. It would be interesting to ask him that and hear his answer.

In particular, does he understand the obligation of federal government agencies and departments to adapt their programs and

services to meet the needs of those communities regarding health, the integration of immigrants, education and economic development? How is the government supposed to adapt to communities and populations if it does not know what is going on in the regions?

When we look at how the government is handling this whole issue of the mandatory long form census, it is a real joke. We have a government that is responsible for providing services to its citizens, but it does not want to know anything about them. The Conservatives believe that people will answer voluntarily and they will get all the information they need. That is really unacceptable.

How can positive measures tailored to the needs of francophone and Acadian communities be implemented without reliable data such as those obtained with the mandatory long form? Statisticians are saying that unless participation is mandatory and people are compelled to tell the truth the data will not be reliable. It is an incentive for making people fill out the questionnaire.

Instead, the government steps in and encourages people to say that they do not want to know what the government is doing, that the government does not want to force them and does not want to intrude in their private lives. If we do not want to intrude in people's private lives then, in the same vein, a police officer should not ask a driver if he has had a beer that evening. We should not be asking a driver if he smoked a joint that evening. That pertains to his private life. That is the most ridiculous argument about a person's private life. It is an excuse that permits the government to not carry out its responsibilities towards its citizens, to not provide services to francophone and anglophone communities. The government will say that it did not have the relevant data or that had different data.

Our communities are clearly telling us that they need this data. Canadians need it. Therefore, we are asking the government to change its mind. If we look around in this country—and this is what I am hearing in my riding—Canadians are wondering where the Conservative government is going with this. As usual, it is going in the wrong direction.

• (1635)

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have been here since the debate started this morning, and I have been writing down some of the points that have been made.

I thought it was interesting that the fact-based evidence shows that the database is being jeopardized. This was a point raised by a lot of people. The fact is that 355 organizations disagree with the government, and one organization, the Fraser Institute, agrees with it, which does not seem to be a consensus of support for the government's position.

A number of other points were made. There were no privacy complaints. There was no evaluation base, no support from anyone, no consultation, no rationale, and no accountability. When I put it all together, I think I have it figured out.

*Business of Supply*

I am going to ask the member if he can comment. I think this move on the census by the government was done intentionally. It really wants to destroy the quality of information available to Canadians to assess policy so that the government can continue to pursue what it believes is its ideological and scary agenda.

I wonder if the member has a comment on that.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Madam Speaker, I want to tell the member what the people at home are saying. What is it that the government does not want to hear? What is it the population is telling them about what is happening in their communities and what is needed in their communities that is scaring them?

That is exactly what the people are saying at home.

When we talk to the people, they ask, "What is wrong with this government? What is wrong with this Prime Minister? Why is he so upset about doing things that we do not like him to do?" It is something that is good for the community. We have organizations saying to us that those communities need this information if we want to bring them programs to help them.

When those questions were raised, the Conservatives talked about the nation not having any business in the bedrooms of people. We are not asking what they are doing in their bedrooms. We are asking how many bedrooms they have, and if they need affordable housing, they will get affordable housing.

That is what the nation needs to know and what the government needs to know as a responsible government.

**Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am very happy to be speaking in this debate on the long form census. However, what I am hearing here is a bunch of hogwash. I am hearing that the gathering of data would be very beneficial to first nations, Métis and federations. That bothers me, being first nation myself.

I am hearing the Liberals, the NDP, and the Bloc advocate for these organizations. I think Canadians have to know what is going on. They have to hear what the census is all about.

One of the misleading things I am hearing from the opposition is that it is going to be very beneficial for first nations. I would point out and let Canadians know that in the 2006 census, 22 reserves refused to participate in the census. What does that mean? One-quarter of the population was unaccounted for. I think Canadians need to know that. The census is skewed, so the gathering of the data is not getting the proper details.

One of the points I would like to bring out is that the government looks at the Indian registry. This is another form of gathering and collecting data.

I would like the member to clarify this. Would the registry be beneficial and more accurate than the census?

• (1640)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Madam Speaker, probably both would be good. Why give one up?

Aboriginals do not live only on reserve. We have aboriginals living in the cities, and they need to know how many people may be living in cities and what we can do to help them.

The aboriginals have told us that it is not good to get rid of the long form.

Why get rid of it? Why does the government not want to have the information about its citizens? It just does not make sense. I believe that no other country is doing this, if they care as a government, except the Conservative government, which likes all Canadians to be on their own. Give them their taxes back in their pockets and they can look after themselves.

That is not the type of country we have. We have collectivity. We look after each other—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie.

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure to speak on this very important topic, as it affects the members of my community and people across Canada.

I want to speak to this issue today from the perspective of its impact on those who are most at risk and marginalized in our country. I want to, first, put it into some context.

I have been working very hard for 20 years now at a senior level of government on the issue of poverty and how the policies and programs of government have an impact, directly or indirectly, on the lives of those in communities across the country who are struggling to make ends meet, to keep body and soul together, and to look after themselves and their families.

I believe that government has no greater responsibility than to look after those in its jurisdiction who are most at risk and marginalized. I have watched governments at both the provincial and federal levels, particularly in the last 15 years, try to define the issue out of existence rather than do things on behalf of and in support of those who are challenged.

All of us who are involved have been engaged in a constant, perpetual debate about how to measure poverty. What measurements should we use? Some people talk about the low income cutoff. Others talk about the market basket. There are many other vehicles people have argued about over those 15 years. All the while, the people who are counting on us, who are looking to government for some assistance, who are thinking that we will work with them to help them better their lives, get nothing. They get no leadership, no direction, and no partnership. They get nobody coming to the table to work with them to help them out. We who have been given this great responsibility to set up programs to deal with their issues cannot get to a place where we agree on what poverty is, what the measurement is, what the level is, and what it looks like so that we can get on with putting in place some of these very important programs.

The other context I want to talk about is a very important discussion that has been going on at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. The member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, who is in the House today, will know about this and so will the member for Huron—Bruce, who sits on that committee and is here this afternoon.

*Business of Supply*

We have been, for two years now, out and across this country talking to people, people who are working with those who are living in poverty and people who are living in poverty themselves. We have talked with different levels of government, municipal and provincial, that are trying their very best to respond to the ever-increasing challenges facing ordinary families and working men and women across this country as the economy changes, the recession hits us, and we try to work our way through it. They are asking who will put in place programs that will assist them in dealing with these very complicated and difficult realities they have not experienced before and now have to deal with.

We are trying, as a committee, to bring forward some strong recommendations to this House that would make a difference. Those recommendations would be based primarily on our ability, together, in a non-partisan way, to decide on some measurements that would indicate to us where it is that we need to start to deal with this very difficult challenge.

• (1645)

As we crossed the country, we discovered that poverty had a different face. I went to Vancouver, Penticton, Castlegar, and Burnaby. I went to Edmonton and Calgary and met with people there. I then went over to Saskatchewan, to Saskatoon and Regina. I went to Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, many places in the wonderful province of Ontario, and then down to Halifax, Moncton, St. John's, and Montreal. We went across this country. We discovered that poverty presents itself in different ways because the challenges are different. We need to get a handle on what it looks like and how we can best make a difference in the lives of our people.

In this context, removing the long form census, discarding important data that will give us the ability as a standing committee to measure poverty and know what it looks like in different places in the country, will tie our hands behind our backs. It takes away the vehicles we need to make the recommendations that government must have to respond to the challenge of assisting people across the country.

Many provinces, to their great credit, have launched anti-poverty strategies in their own jurisdictions. They need the long form census to get that information. They need to continue this important work. If the federal government is going to respond to the call of those provinces, if the government means to come to the table and be an effective partner once again in a national anti-poverty strategy, then we need the long form census to acquire the information necessary to target the resources that will give us the best return on our investment.

It is an important piece of public policy that we are debating here today. I appeal to the government and its sense of fairness and justice, in looking at its own jurisdictions, ridings, and constituencies to agree with me and the members from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Huron—Bruce, Chambly—Borduas, and the many who have been working so hard for a number of years. The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development will need these vehicles as well. Give us the tools we need to do this job properly.

As an example of how all this will affect the country, let us take a look at the disabled community. The member from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour raised this in committee. Last spring, the disabled got

the first indication of what was coming when the government announced that the important PALS survey, which was based on the census, was not going to continue. The PALS survey went to people who reported a disability on their census form. Because the census form was mandatory, it was thought to be a reliable sample of the disabled community.

The Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, Statistics Canada's major collection of data on individuals with disabilities, was cut by the government department that paid for it: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. There was real concern and skepticism in the disabled community on how reliable the information would be with the proposed new database culled from tax information, welfare rolls, and similar databanks.

That is just one of the groups we concern ourselves with when we look at poverty and the impact it is having. We are looking at the larger group and the many smaller ones we need to address as we bring forward a national anti-poverty strategy.

I agree with all those who have put their voices on the record in opposing the removal of the long form census, which is an essential element in the work the government does on behalf of its constituents.

• (1650)

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member for Markham—Unionville a few minutes ago referred to how foolish this whole debate is, how unnecessary. In many ways, it is like having a debate about whether the earth is flat or round; it is that bizarre.

My colleague from Sault Ste. Marie spoke about poverty. He was in Winnipeg in early August, as I was, for a poverty round table. We were trying to determine how to make Canada serious about combatting poverty. He heard the concerns, as he had done before, of people who were trying to do things for people in the community.

The Canadian Council on Social Development, CCSO, has done a lot of work on the census over the summer. I congratulate it for this work. At one point the organization referred to some work that had been done and asked, "So what will we be left with [without the long form]? A skewed picture of mostly middle class Canadians. We'll look less diverse, less poor, ultimately less in need of government support".

I certainly believe that is what the government wants. It wants a skewed picture of this country so it will not have to spend money that it does not want to spend on needs that it does not want to recognize. I wonder if my colleague shares that view.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Madam Speaker, I certainly do. There are many others in this country who share that feeling as well. It has probably even been mentioned a few times here today, but particularly in the context of trying to put in place programs that will help those who are most in need.

*Business of Supply*

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada said the government is acting like Pharaoh in the Old Testament, not recognizing that, if the census is good enough for God when he deemed that everybody needed to be counted, then it should be good enough for the government.

Top Jewish leaders from across Canada wrote the industry minister warning that the loss of key demographic data on religion and ethnicity gleaned from the long form questionnaire would hinder charitable efforts to help members of their own community and, in many instances, the poor.

Canadian bishops have said that a great deal of this information based on data gathered by Statistics Canada is helpful to all faith groups, especially when they try to respond to those living around their parishes who are in need of help.

• (1655)

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to make a clarification. We are not getting rid of the long form census. It is changing to a voluntary response from a mandatory requirement, under which non-compliance was punishable by jail or fine.

There was a 95% return rate in the last census. Of that 95%, how many volunteered to return the survey because they thought it was the right thing to do? Of that 95%, what percentage does the member think did it only because there were penalties involved?

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Madam Speaker, that question came from a minority voice.

Anybody who knows anything about the census and data gathering, including the former head of Statistics Canada, will say that if the long form census is not mandatory then we are not going to get the information we need, particularly from people who do not want to fill the forms out, such as those who are living on a low income and are too busy trying to keep body and soul together to bother with a form. If we make it mandatory, they are more likely to sit down at the kitchen table, fill it out, and get it in, so that we can get the information that we need.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Before resuming debate it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Halifax, Health; the hon. member for Davenport, Transportation; the hon. member for Yukon, The Environment.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank all hon. members who have participated in this debate today, for their efforts in trying to inform Canadians as to their views and their parties' views on whether or not the long form census should be retained and maintained in its current form, that being, of course, a mandatory census with requirements to refer all questions back to the government, return the census in the form it was intended, under threat, however, of either imprisonment or fine.

Let me make one thing clear. The government agrees that the information gleaned from this type of census is necessary for the development of secure and sound public policy. We take no issue

with that whatsoever. However, we do take issue with the manner in which this information is being gleaned from Canadians.

As all members of this place know, currently the Canadians who receive the long form census and who have received forms in the past are required to answer all the questions and return their forms to the government. If they do not, they are subject to fines or jail sentences.

We feel that this threat of fines or imprisonment is not acceptable to Canadians. We believe we have found a far better way to retain and gain all the information required, without threatening our Canadian citizens with imprisonment or fines. In other words, we think we have struck a proper balance.

The opposition seems to be suggesting that, if the census or the newly named household survey is not mandatory, the information coming back to the Canadian government will be suspect. I take issue with that.

I want to deal with both the reliability of the data and the compliance with these surveys. At committee, we heard a couple of interesting points, none of which has been brought forward in comments by members of the opposition.

In committee, a number of expert witnesses came to testify, giving their viewpoints on whether the long form census should be retained, or whether it should be discarded and replaced with a voluntary survey, similar to the option we have decided to favour.

The only witness who appeared before committee with any expertise in research surveys was a gentleman by the name of Darrell Bricker, the president of Ipsos Reid. During Mr. Bricker's testimony, he was asked whether Canadians, if presented with a voluntary survey, would respond in sufficient numbers with enough information for public policy development. Mr. Bricker's response was unequivocal, because he had done research surveys on this very issue. Mr. Bricker pointed out that his surveys indicated that over 80% of Canadians would respond voluntarily, if asked to do so, because they would feel that it was their civic duty.

Currently the opposition members are pointing out that under the current mandatory system 95% of Canadians have returned their surveys, giving the government information.

I would point out to one very interesting point that Mr. Bricker brought forward. This is an empirical point: Mr. Bricker stated that, if Canadians were asked on a mandatory basis to provide data, the reliability of the data would be suspect. In other words, the more strenuous the need to respond, the more unreliable the data.

Let me repeat that. The more strenuous the need to reply, the more unreliable the data. What that means is simply this: if Canadians are forced to respond to a survey, the data they give may not be accurate.

As Mr. Bricker pointed out, in the last census, which was conducted in 2006, 21,000 Canadians, when asked what their religion was, responded with Jedi Knights. That is not a surprise. Canadians are saying that, if the government is forcing them to answer questions that they consider to be intrusive and private, they are going to give an answer, because otherwise they might be fined or thrown in jail, but they are not going to give accurate information. In other words, "Screw you, government".

*Business of Supply*

• (1700)

Madam Speaker, I am sorry for the colloquial, but we have seen this in other jurisdictions in other forms. In Australia there is a mandatory election act and citizens are fined if they do not vote. The elections officer in Australia has stated time and time again that there are a lot of spoiled ballots or ballots that are ridiculous in nature, people voting for say the Rhinoceros Party, or the Marijuana Party, or the equivalent, simply because they are offended that the government is forcing them to vote. Therefore, they will put down an answer on the ballot paper, which is really irrelevant, frivolous in nature.

The same thing is happening here. The more strenuous the need to respond results in the more unreliable data. Mr. Bricker went on to say that over 80% of Canadians who said that they would respond on a voluntary basis would then end up in a situation where their data that would be provided to the government would be reliable and accurate. Since our plan is to send out roughly double the amount of surveys from years past, the results will be simply this. In all probability our government and future governments will receive more information from more Canadians and it will be more reliable. It is a win-win situation.

The opposition seems to suggest that if we change the mandatory aspect of the census, the data will be less and it will be less reliable. In fact, the opposite is true. We will receive more information from Canadians and it will be more reliable in its nature, which will allow our government and future governments to develop sound public policy. There is an old saying, which we are all aware of, “garbage in, garbage out”. That is what seems to be happening now. If the information we are receiving from the mandatory census is flawed, then the public policy responding to that will also be flawed.

I am sure all of us in this place want to see sound public policy developed to benefit all Canadians. I do. I do not think there is one member in this place who does not agree with me on that. However, we want to come up with a method that provides accurate information to the government so when policy is developed, it can be developed in a fashion that is also sound.

Let me repeat this once again. According to Mr. Bricker, and extensive surveys that have been done beyond Mr. Bricker's, if we ask for information from Canadians to be provided on a voluntary basis, over 80% of Canadians will respond voluntarily, resulting in more accurate information being provided to the government. Since we are doubling the amount of surveys being sent to Canadians, it is logical to expect the results are going to be more information and more accurate information being provided, resulting in more accurate, sound public policy that will benefit all Canadians.

The issue before us is very simple. The changes we are suggesting and we are planning to implement are not some knee-jerk reaction because we are afraid of the government's invasiveness and the coercion of governments into the private lives of Canadians. That may be part of it, but also we are attempting to change the system to allow our government and future governments to develop sound public policy, with more accurate results coming in from Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

The results will speak for themselves. I look forward to engaging in debate over the course of the next few minutes with my colleagues opposite to defend this position.

• (1705)

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I note my colleague is relying for his position that mandatory censuses would supposedly result in worse information and supposedly that we cannot rely on the information we have had from Statistics Canada over many years. He is basically trying to deny that is of any value, which is nonsense. However, he is relying for that assertion on the statement of one pollster.

Mr. Bricker may or may not be a statistician, I have no idea. I expect normally when someone is a pollster, they have some experience with statistics. However, would my colleague agree with what the mayor of the Halifax regional municipality said? Mr. Peter Kelly, who wrote to the Minister of Industry on August 16, said:

The mandatory requirement for people to complete the long form census results in a validity and comprehensiveness of data that is not likely to be achieved under a voluntary system. Statisticians argue that with a voluntary survey, certain socio-economic groups may be less likely to participate, which skews the results of the survey and calls into question the reliability of the census information.

He is saying that as opposed to just one pollster, statisticians generally are of the view that the mandatory system actually works better and provides better information. Does the member disagree with the mayor of the Halifax regional municipality?

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Madam Speaker, I definitely disagree with His Worship. With all due respect, the mayor in question does not engage in scientific research surveys on a regular basis. In fact, in listening to the comments in that letter, they are basically talking points that I have seen before, issued by others in the opposition. All that is happening is the head of a municipal government in my honourable colleague's riding is basically parroting the comments made by some of the people who oppose our changes to the long form census.

I also point out that Mr. Bricker in his testimony said that this was not just his opinion. This was empirical evidence shared by many other researchers throughout the world. They are not just suggesting, but providing solid empirical evidence that data based on a mandatory requirement is less reliable. He also suggests that the 80% is across the board, affecting every demographic group. It is not going to be unrepresentative of certain circles.

For the benefit of my colleague, I want to also read a letter that is very germane to this conversation. I have heard comments during the day of debate, where members, particularly from the official opposition, have said that there has really been no question that the mandatory census in years past has been well received. In other words, there have been no complaints.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. parliamentary secretary can continue his letter after the next question.

The hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to point out to the parliamentary secretary who just spoke that he gave just one example. He talked about a person he spoke with who participated in an opinion poll. He seems to have confused an opinion poll with a scientific survey. We ask people how many bedrooms they have in their houses because we want to know if they are living in poverty with a certain number of people. That is the kind of factual data they do not want to know. It is unlikely that poor people will respond to a voluntary survey.

How can he know in advance that equal proportions of all segments of society will respond to a voluntary survey?

• (1710)

[English]

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Madam Speaker, I point out for my hon. colleague from the Bloc that is his opinion. The information provided by our expert witness at committee was not merely an opinion. It was based on statistical realities. It is empirical in nature.

I will return to what I was about to say before, particularly for the benefit of my friends in the official opposition. In 2006 the industry minister received a letter from a member of Parliament. I want to read it because it is very brief. It says:

I have received a few letters of complaint from constituents concerning the length and detail of the 2006 census.

They are primarily concerned with the great detail of personal information they are required to fill out and therefore the potential invasion of privacy.

I share this constituent's concern and would appreciate an explanation as to why these details are needed...

Who wrote the letter? It was the sitting Liberal member for Richmond Hill.

All day we have heard from the official opposition members that there are really no complaints with the current form of mandatory census taking. In effect, they know there are. Members of their caucus have written this government complaining about the intrusiveness and the invasion of privacy. We share those concerns among many others.

I point out for my friends in the official opposition that they should take heed of the advice and the concerns of one of their members before they stand and try to defend the indefensible.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Madam Speaker, on September 18, I stopped in my community of Sturgeon Falls, which is a small community. About 40 people were present. They talked to me about their pensions. They talked to me about their health care. They talked to me about a lot of things. However, they did not talk to me about the census.

Another place I went to this summer was to the committee hearings for the census. I listened to the member's speech at the committee. I understood that he said that expert after expert supported the government's position on the long form census, but I want to—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the hon. parliamentary secretary has a little less than a minute to respond the question before I call the vote.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Madam Speaker, just to correct my hon. colleague, my hon. friend from the NDP probably was not listening intently, which surprises me because most often those members do. I said that there was only one expert who appeared at committee who had expertise in research surveys. He unequivocally stated that the information he provided to the committee was accurate in empirical nature.

I will ask my friend opposite this. When he was on his listening tour throughout his riding, did he hear comments about the gun registry and how disappointed members in his constituency were that the NDP turned its back on rural Canadians and supported the long gun registry?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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 (Ms. Denise Savoie):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The recorded division on the motion stands deferred until tomorrow following government orders.

• (1715)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if you were to seek it, if you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Is there unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.



## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed from May 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-467, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (children born abroad), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this debate on Bill C-467, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (children born abroad), a private member's bill tabled by the member for Vancouver South.

The bill would amend the Citizenship Act to provide that a child born abroad to or adopted abroad by a citizen employed outside Canada, in or with the Canadian armed forces, the federal public administration or the public services of a provinces be considered like a child born in Canada.

I should say at the outset that New Democrats support the bill. We hope it passes this stage and we look forward to discussing it further at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

In recent years, Parliament has spent some time on trying to fix the provisions of the Citizenship Act. We have seen great concern about this law over the years. Problems with the 1947 Citizenship Act in particular led to many Canadians, perhaps hundreds of thousands of Canadians, losing their citizenship. These lost Canadians, as they are called, were and are folks who, any reasonable person would agree, are indeed fully Canadian but because of the peculiarities of the law were excluded from citizenship.

Bill C-37, debated and passed in the previous Parliament, went some way to correcting these problems. However, some problems still exist, as the subject matter of the bill before us today attests.

The Lost Canadians Organization, headed very ably by Don Chapman over very many years, has done incredible work on these issues. They describe the current situation this way:

While Bill C-37 solved the citizenship problems of hundreds of thousands of Canadians whose citizenship had been taken away from them by the arcane provisions of the 1947 Citizenship Act, it also created a new problem of statelessness in children who are born abroad after April 19, 2009, to Canadians who themselves were born abroad.

What this means is that Canadian citizens who were born abroad, called the first generation born abroad, cannot pass on their citizenship to their children if those children are also born abroad. Hence, the second generation born abroad rule, which came into effect in April 2009, has already started to create serious problems for Canadian citizens who do not realize that their children do not qualify for Canadian citizenship.

New Democrats, while supporting the bill before us, believe that it does not go far enough. It is clear that Canadians working in some capacity for the government, in the armed forces or the diplomatic core for example, should be able to ensure that Canadian citizenship is passed to their children, born while they are working overseas, in exactly the same way it would be if that child had been born here in Canada.

There should be no discrimination against children of Canadians who are serving our country overseas, but why the limitation

### *Private Members' Business*

imposed in this bill? Why does this bill not apply to the children of Canadians studying overseas or to those of Canadian journalists working in another country or to those Canadians who work in international aid and development.

What about the children of Canadians working for a Canadian company offshore? Surely these Canadians continue to make a significant contribution to our country by their overseas service. Why should their children and grandchildren be subject to different criteria for maintaining Canadian citizenship than children born here in Canada or than children born to folks serving the government or the armed forces.

This is especially true of children born to Canadians overseas who risk statelessness. This can arise due to the laws of some countries which do not confer citizenship status on children born in that country as we do here in Canada. We must always ensure that no one is at risk of being stateless and our laws must never contribute to someone being or becoming stateless, but we also risk creating statelessness by not allowing a child born to Canadians overseas the ability to pass on their citizenship to one of their children who was also born outside Canada. This must be fixed.

My colleague, the member for Trinity—Spadina and the New Democratic citizenship and immigration critic, has identified this problem. That is why she has also tabled a private member's bill, Bill C-397, to resolve this problem. Her bill would end the second generation citizenship cutoff for all children born abroad to Canadian parents.

• (1720)

These changes are crucial in today's world, a world that, thanks to the ease of travel and globalization, is much smaller than it once was, and a world where it is increasingly common and even necessary to work in a foreign country.

Canada is strengthened by the experience gained and the work performed by Canadians overseas. We should be encouraging such activity, not putting in place barriers to it. Ensuring that the children born to Canadians working overseas have Canadian citizenship in exactly the same way that children born here would address one such barrier.

The member for Trinity—Spadina pointed out an interesting aspect of this situation when she spoke to the bill. She noted that in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, and perhaps other provinces, pregnant women have sometimes been sent to U.S. hospitals to give birth because of the lack of space in Canadian neo-natal care units. She wondered if these families knew that because their child was born outside Canada, that there would be a limitation on their child's ability to pass on Canadian citizenship to his or her child if that child were also born outside Canada. She wondered if people knew that their grandchild could potentially be stateless given this situation. Surely this is not an acceptable risk in these particular circumstances.

*Private Members' Business*

Some people would doubt the attachment to Canada of Canadians who live and work overseas. While there may be some who find Canadian citizenship convenient, we would be wrong to assume that is true of the vast majority of those who are affected by these circumstances.

We must also ensure that we do not enshrine different classes of citizenship in our laws. Canadians must not be punished because they chose to work overseas and their children and grandchildren must not be punished because they happen to be born outside Canada. There must not be two types of Canadian citizenship: one for those of us born here and one for those of us born elsewhere.

It may be necessary to consider ways to ensure attachment to Canada for individuals who spend considerable time away from home but that is a far different project than putting arbitrary limits on citizenship.

The NDP has made it clear that we will seek amendments to this bill at committee that would ensure it addresses the situation of all children born outside Canada to Canadian parents, not just those born to members of the Canadian armed forces or who are directly working for the Canadian or provincial governments.

To paraphrase what the member for Trinity—Spadina said in her speech, no child should be left stateless because his or her father or mother, or grandfather or grandmother, chose to become an aid or development worker and do good work outside Canada. No child should be left stateless because his or her parents or grandparents decided to work as journalists overseas. No Canadian mother working overseas should be forced to travel home to Canada, interrupting her family and career just to have her baby in Canada to preserve that child's full citizenship rights.

This bill is a start and it provides an opportunity, which is why I will support it. I hope other members will do the same.

• (1725)

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vancouver South for introducing this bill that covers an area that has not been properly addressed in the Citizenship Act.

Ensuring that public servants' children and Canadian armed forces children are able to transmit citizenship is an important aspect of this bill and I strongly support it.

[*Translation*]

We should also restore citizenship to some people who lost their citizenship because they were born outside Canada, and this should be effective as of the date they lost it, for the reasons covered by the bill introduced by my colleague from Vancouver South.

I am happy to know that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration supports the principle of this bill and that he would like to see it sent to committee, so that changes and amendments can be made to make it enforceable and practical.

Children of our public servants and members of our armed forces should not be penalized and prevented from transmitting their Canadian citizenship, simply because they were born abroad. Many of these people have no choice but to be working abroad when their

children are born. These are not choices they make willingly. When someone is sent by their government to be a commissioner in a Commonwealth country, they must go because it is their duty to do so.

In fact, it was an international trade commissioner, Howard Cumber, who worked in Singapore in 1979, who brought his children's case to the member for Vancouver South's attention. Because they were born in Singapore while he was posted there, they could not transmit Canadian citizenship to their children because their jobs had taken them abroad as well. Their children will therefore not be Canadian citizens.

It is important for Canada to recognize the services provided by its public servants, be they diplomats or soldiers, and even if it is our provinces that send them abroad to carry out certain duties on behalf of their government. They should be covered, and we have to make it possible for them to transmit Canadian citizenship to their children.

The goal of this bill is very reasonable, and we can amend it to make it even more relevant. I think that Bill C-467 deserves our full support, and I believe that we can count on the government's support for this.

[*English*]

The member for Ottawa—Vanier introduced Bill C-443 which addresses the broader issue of Canadians overseas. It deals with the fact that there are a number of Canadian citizens working abroad for the United Nations or its agencies and for NGOs and, heaven knows, we fund them through CIDA, so it would perhaps be a good idea to eventually look at their circumstances when they have children abroad and how their citizenship could be transmitted to their children in the future.

I commend my colleague from Vancouver South for bringing this forth and hope that we can count on the support of the House to pass it.

• (1730)

**Mr. Tim Uppal (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to add to the debate on Bill C-467 brought forward by the hon. member for Vancouver South. This private member's bill stems from the passage two years ago of an act to amend the Citizenship Act.

The government supports the intentions of Bill C-467, which would treat children born abroad or overseas by crown servants, including Canadian Forces personnel, like children born in Canada so they would be able to pass citizenship on to any children they may have or adopt outside of Canada.

We do have concerns with the bill as it is currently drafted, as it does not achieve its intended objective and would have unintended consequences. However, we are looking forward to working in committee to make a few changes that will be needed to ensure the bill achieves its desired objective.

*Private Members' Business*

As the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism has said, few things in this world are more precious to Canadians than their citizenship. However, over the past several years we have heard from people who thought they were proud Canadian citizens, only to discover that their citizenship did not exist in law due to inconsistencies in citizenship legislation. When they applied for a passport, they were told that they were not Canadian citizens. People who lived or worked here for years without Canadian citizenship could be denied benefits, such as pensions and health care.

The Government of Canada took this matter very seriously. These were unfair situations due to outdated legislation and so we corrected the mistakes of the past and righted a series of wrongs.

As hon. members are aware, amendments to the Citizenship Act have restored Canadian citizenship to those who ceased to be citizens under the 1947 act. These changes gave citizenship to those who never had it but were born of a Canadian, such as the so-called border babies. These were people whose families live close to the Canada-U.S. border and for whom the closest hospital in which to give birth was in the United States.

We can only imagine how difficult it had to be for someone to believe that they were Canadian, only to discover later that their citizenship was not valid all along. We owe a debt of gratitude to the men and women who came forward and testified before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. They told heart-wrenching stories of how this loss of citizenship had affected them personally.

We also amended the Citizenship Act to support Canadian parents who adopt children from other countries. Such parents no longer have to apply for permanent resident status for their children before he or she is eligible for Canadian citizenship.

The goal of fixing imperfect legislation with the passage of previous amendments was essentially to bring stability, clarity and consistency to Canadian citizenship laws.

Previous amendments to the Citizenship Act also protected the value of Canadian citizenship by ensuring that our citizens would have a real connection to this country.

Along with the hon. members, I agree that the private member's bill before us today is certainly well-intentioned. However, while Bill C-467 does not achieve its objective in its current form, we are prepared to work together to amend the bill. To that end, we will be supporting the bill's passage at this stage so that it can be considered by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, of which I am now a member.

However, I would like to reiterate some of the concerns with the bill as it is written right now. The intent of Bill C-467 is to enable children of crown servants born abroad, including the children of Canadian Forces members, to pass their Canadian citizenship on to any children they may have or adopt outside Canada. However, as drafted, the bill fails to do this.

• (1735)

The bill would also have the unintended consequence of denying citizenship for children of crown servants in situations where the crown servant was born abroad to a Canadian parent. That is because

Bill C-467 would remove the right, under section 3.5 of the act, which allows crown servants to pass citizenship on to any children they have while serving abroad.

Bill C-467 proposes to confer citizenship automatically to children adopted abroad by crown servants who were born or naturalized in Canada. The current act already allows anyone who was born abroad and adopted by a Canadian parent who was born in Canada, whether or not that parent is a crown servant, to apply for a grant of citizenship.

The criteria for such a grant respect international obligations that are there to protect the best interests of the child and that respect the provincial jurisdiction on adoptions.

It is true that under Bill C-467, children adopted abroad by crown servants would no longer have to apply for a grant of citizenship, but they would also not be subject to the safeguards aimed at protecting their best interests. The bill would not treat these children the same as those born in Canada. I am sure all members would agree that we should not penalize the children of crown servants who are not able to pass on the citizenship as a direct result of their parent's service abroad in the name of Canada.

The intent of Bill C-467 could be achieved by expanding the exception that exists in the current act to ensure that the children of crown servants and Canadian Forces personnel, like children born in Canada, would be able to pass citizenship on to any children they have or adopt outside of Canada.

We are already working with the hon. member for Vancouver South to ensure the bill achieves its objectives and will continue that co-operation at committee stage.

As my grandfather said, "You can lose your possessions, but never your pride". It is a pride he always felt in knowing we are and always will remain proud Canadian citizens.

I congratulate the hon. member for proposing this bill and I look forward to working with him to amend it.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-467.

I have had the privilege of working with the member for St. Catharines on the citizenship and immigration committee since I was elected. He has been a spectacular leader and I have learned a lot from him. I have also worked with the minister who has brought forward a number of changes and has a passion for this portfolio that has been unmatched by many others. It has been one of my great pleasures since I have been here to be able to do that.

Bill C-467, as was mentioned by my colleague, stems from Bill C-37, an act to amend the Citizenship Act. Because of the demonstrated need for stability, simplicity and consistency in citizenship status, the 39th Parliament passed Bill C-37 which restored Canadians citizenship to individuals who fell into different categories.

*Private Members' Business*

For example: they may have lost their Canadian citizenship by becoming citizens of another country either as an adult or a minor; they may have lost their citizenship when they took an oath of citizenship in another country which included a clause that renounced any other citizenship; or, they were born abroad and lost their Canadian citizenship under the 1947 act because they were living outside of Canada on their 24th birthday and failed to take steps to keep it.

The so-called border babies born under 1947 citizenship act had to take steps to register as a Canadian citizen and, if they failed to do so, they never became Canadian citizens.

Bill C-37 protected citizenship for the future by limiting citizenship by descent to the first generation born abroad. That was as a result of consultations that we had heard across the country. What that means is that subsequent generations born abroad would no longer be given Canadian citizenship automatically. This was to end the practice of passing citizenship on endlessly to generations even if they had no real connection to Canada. The goal of fixing imperfect legislation is essentially to simplify the complex rules around citizenship.

Today, Bill C-467 calls on the government to treat children born or adopted overseas by crown servants and Canadian Forces personnel as children born in Canada, such that they would be able to pass citizenship on to any children they may have or adopt outside of Canada.

The government supports the intention of Bill C-467 but, as we have said, we have concerns with the bill in its current form as it does not achieve its intended objective and would have unintended consequences.

We have a bill before us that, if passed, would no longer enable children of crown servants, including the military serving overseas, to pass citizenship on to any children they may have or adopt outside of Canada. Bill C-467 would remove the right to citizenship under section 35 of the act which allows crown servants to pass citizenship on to children they have while serving abroad.

Effectively, this would strip citizenship from children of crown servants born or adopted abroad where the crown servant had been born abroad to a Canadian parent. Bill C-467 proposes to confer citizenship automatically to children adopted abroad by crown servants who were born or naturalized in Canada.

The current act already allows anyone who is born abroad and adopted by Canadian parents who were born in Canada, whether or not the parent is a crown servant, to apply for a grant of citizenship. The criteria for such a grant respects international obligations that are there to protect the best interests of the child, including protection from trafficking and respects provincial jurisdiction on adoptions.

It is true that under Bill C-467, children adopted abroad by crown servants and the military would no longer have to apply for a grant of citizenship but they would also not be subject to the safeguards aimed at protecting the best interests of the child.

As a result, the bill fails to meet its objectives. The government is confident that the intent of Bill C-467 could be achieved if we expand the current exception that exists in the current act to ensure

that children of crown servants, including Canadian Forces personnel, like children born in Canada, would be able to pass citizenship on to any children they have or adopt outside of Canada.

● (1740)

We obviously want to continue to work with our friends opposite and make this Parliament work. We have shown clear indications since we returned and since we were elected that we are willing to do what it takes to make Parliament work to get results for Canadians, whether it is on the economy, whether it is seeking the best for our Canadian armed forces, or whether it is on our justice system.

Of course, we have seen dramatic changes with respect to Canada's refugee protection system. They were brought in by the minister and ushered through committee by our parliamentary secretary from St. Catharines. We did that in a spirit of cooperation that we could all be proud of. It was one of the most satisfying days I have had in the House. It was prior to the end of the last adjournment for the summer break. All parties stood in the House and congratulated the minister, the parliamentary secretary, and each other for a job well done with respect to refugee reform.

This is another opportunity for the citizenship and immigration committee to again work together in the best interests of Canadians and the best interests of the people the bill seeks to help. I am confident that by working together and by allowing this to get to committee, where we can make the amendments that I am hopeful and confident the hon. member who introduced the bill agrees are needed, we can come up with a bill that works for all Canadians, and we can continue to be proud.

In my riding of Oak Ridges—Markham I represent one of the most diverse communities in all of Canada. We have people from all over the world, and I have been extraordinarily proud to represent them. I have heard what they are saying. We see what needs they have. We can appreciate all that new Canadians do for this country. One of the things they tell me they like best about Canada is that they understand that Canada realizes that its strength is its diversity. That is something that this government has focused on. We will continue to do what is best for new Canadians and what is best for immigrants, and hopefully we can work together to get a proper bill through on this.

● (1745)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Resuming debate. There being no other members rising, I will turn to the hon. member for Vancouver South for his five-minute right of reply.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am actually pleased with the response from the House. I do not want to waste any more time. I believe that the bill should go to the committee. I am looking forward to the constructive amendments the government has promised, and we can deal with all those issues before the committee.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**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:** On division.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

---

## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

### HEALTH

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the poverty that exists in Canada is staggering. In fact, 3.4 million Canadians live in poverty, which is equal to one in ten Canadians. This poverty is making people sick. It is having long-lasting effects on our economy and on our education and health systems.

The Canada Health Act guarantees universal access to health care, but that universal access does not actually exist for people living in poverty in Canada. This is also an issue of equality rights. Poverty disproportionately affects women, as well as children, seniors, first nations, aboriginals, people with disabilities and newcomers.

Food bank use in Canada is skyrocketing, pharmaceutical costs are rising and 30% of Canadians live in inadequate or unaffordable housing. This situation is untenable for our health outcomes.

Before being elected the member of Parliament for Halifax, I worked as a community legal worker and poverty activist in Halifax. I worked with people whose health outcomes were negatively impacted every day by the fact that they lived in poverty. I cannot tell members the number of times my clients would say to me that they wanted to eat good food and nutritious food like fruits and vegetables or drink milk. However, the reality was that pop was less expensive and that was what people were forced to buy.

It is shocking to me that in 2010 the federal government still does not have a poverty reduction or a poverty elimination strategy. The Conservatives, like the Liberals before them, have failed. We need a poverty reduction strategy now.

After the last recession, it took eight years for the job rate to bounce back, but it took fourteen years for the poverty rate to come back to where it was. We need to act quickly to help people living in poverty to recover from this recession.

We cannot just keep reacting in the short term, when the government's hand is forced. We need a long-term, consistent approach to poverty reduction. This is why the NDP, led by our poverty critic, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, has introduced a comprehensive national poverty elimination strategy. I commend the member for Sault Ste. Marie for bringing this bill forward and for the

fact that he worked so closely with community groups and people living in poverty and poverty advocates to ensure that he got the bill right, to ensure that it was strong and comprehensive as possible.

The bill would address many of the root causes of poverty by taking income security, housing and social exclusion and unique responses for urban and rural communities and making them core priorities.

The bill recognizes that rural poverty exists, something that we often forget about in Ottawa. The bill includes a strong human rights framework and addresses gender-based inequalities and the poverty experienced by seniors and those living with disabilities.

Not addressing poverty would be more costly for our country in the long run. Eliminating poverty would make our communities and our economy stronger through a healthier and more equal workforce.

Will the government recognize the link between poverty and health, live up to the principles of the Canada Health Act and support the NDP's proposal for a national poverty elimination bill?

● (1750)

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of affordable access to medications as part of a quality health care system that meets the needs of all Canadians, including those who are poor and the homeless.

In the area of health, the Government of Canada's role includes setting and administering national principles for the health care system through the Canada Health Act. This includes providing financial support to provinces and territories through the Canada health transfer, which is the key federal vehicle for supporting health care for the delivery of health care services. This arrangement provides provincial and territorial governments the flexibility and the autonomy they need to respond to their respective health care priorities and pressures with regard to poverty.

Budget 2010 confirmed there would be no cuts to major transfers to other orders of government and that transfers were projected to grow at current legislated rates over the forecast period.

The funding of hospitals and remuneration of providers is a matter of provincial and territorial jurisdiction. It is the prerogative of the provinces and territories to develop health services structures and programs that are responsive to the needs of the poor and to deliver those services to those folks in need, wherever they are.

The Government of Canada continues to work with the provinces and territories, with health care providers and with Canadians to make real improvements in the health care system for all Canadians, including those who are affected by poverty.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

It is simply not correct to say that universal access to health care services does not exist for the poor in Canada. The Canada Health Act continues to be the cornerstone of this health system and ensures that all eligible residents of Canada have reasonable access to medically necessary insured services without charges related to the provision of those services.

In terms of access to things like drug coverage, provinces and territories possess all the flexibility they need to develop and implement drug coverage programs for specific segments of their population, including the poor and the homeless.

The Government of Canada has worked, and will continue to work, closely with provincial and territorial governments and stakeholders to develop national approaches on these health system issues and poverty and to promote the pan-Canadian adoption of best practices that would benefit all Canadians.

To achieve lasting results in providing a quality health care system to Canadians when they need it, wherever and however they live in Canada, requires willingness from all jurisdictions and stakeholders to collaborate toward a common goal. This government is doing just that.

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, contrary what the parliamentary secretary would have us believe, there is a federal role in health. Let us look at the tools the federal government has at its disposal to help eliminate poverty. We have the Canada social transfer. We have old age security, income security programs, employment insurance, and the working income tax benefit. There is a federal role.

Further, let us take a look at the recent decision of the federal government to scrap the long form census. Health organizations such as the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Nurses Association, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and health units across the country all rely on the long form census to do their jobs addressing health and the social determinants of health in our country.

Maintaining the long form census is integral to any poverty strategy, and it is integral to any serious effort to better the health of Canadians. When the government has no poverty reduction strategy and is scrapping the census, which is an important tool for public policy, how does it explain these failures to Canadians?

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that my colleague has gotten off track. As we were discussing earlier, we have talked about the long form census today. We heard from witnesses at committee that it does not have to be a mandatory census. We do not have to threaten Canadians to get the information the government and others need to set up their programs.

I want to point out that we actually have put \$25 billion in total transfers toward health care. That is 6% more than last year. Government obviously recognizes the importance of affordable access to health care and to drugs, but we also recognize and support and respect the role of provincial and territorial governments. We have continued to honour the 2004 health accord, which provides \$40 billion in additional funding to provinces and territories.

One of the frustrating things, actually, with respect to the initiatives we have taken is that her party has virtually opposed every one of them. We would call on them to work with us to

provide better health care services across the country for all Canadians.

• (1755)

## TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in May of this year, I raised a question with the Minister of Transport regarding the electrification of trains that will be running through my riding of Davenport.

Residents of my riding of Davenport, as well as many others who live in this area of Toronto, face the prospect of having to contend with literally hundreds of diesel trains travelling through the neighbourhood each day along the Georgetown corridor.

I share the concerns of the residents of the West Toronto Diamond community who have, to their credit, consistently made their concerns known on this troubling issue. These residents support public transit, but what is being proposed here is simply beyond anything even reasonably acceptable.

Any initiative like this must be an environmentally friendly undertaking that respects the quality of life of those who live along the route. Beyond environmental considerations, this is also a health issue for residents. Families live, work, and play along this train route, and there are clearly going to be health impacts if hundreds of diesel trains are permitted to run alongside these homes every day.

Since the spring of 2009, I have been working with and advocating for my constituents and other concerned community leaders in this area. I have repeatedly approached the agencies involved on issues ranging from the unbearable noise of pile drivers to the potential impact of using diesel trains instead of electric vehicles.

I have spoken and written to officials at the Canadian Transportation Agency, Metrolinx, and provincial counterparts to find an acceptable solution for affected residents.

It is essential that we deal now with the issue of which trains will be running along these lines. Postponing this decision is not a solution. In fact, it is the problem.

I join with many residents in my community in demanding that electric trains be used along this line. Across the world in urban communities, from Europe to Asia, electric trains are being used, because they are the best method at every level.

People in my constituency and in communities across the region are deeply concerned about this issue, as am I.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Let me say again that public transit is a priority for all those living in the greater Toronto area, but these transit options must operate in a way that does not destroy communities and threaten the health of those who live there. That is why it is absolutely necessary that this project be created for use with electric trains. The downtown-to-airport corridor is important, but it is no more important than the health of families who live along the route.

Now is the time to electrify this line, not at some later date, when even more expense will be involved and after communities have been negatively impacted for years. Now is the time.

For this reason, community leaders and elected officials from across Toronto and from all levels of government have signed the Clean Train Pledge to press for electrification of this line.

I am proud to sign this pledge, and I will continue to advocate for the residents of my community at all levels of government involved in the funding of this project to ensure that electrification of the corridor is the method chosen to operate along this line.

What specifically is the government prepared to do to assist public agencies and the Government of Ontario to ensure that this line uses electrified trains?

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back.

The government has taken many steps towards funding important infrastructure investments, including public transit. On the infrastructure programming, it is clear that public transit is in fact a priority that is approaching one third of the infrastructure funding through funds such as the Canada strategic infrastructure fund and the building Canada fund.

We work in close coordination with municipal and provincial governments in making these funding decisions, but ultimately we are merely a funding partner. It is up to those levels of governments, the ones that actually operate the systems, to decide on how best to use infrastructure funding from the federal government.

Public transit is clearly within the jurisdiction of municipal and provincial governments. It is not the federal government's role to get involved in their day-to-day operational decision-making or to tell them, for example, where to lay the roads or the tracks. What we should be doing, and what this government has been doing, is listening to our partners and investing where those governments indicate the highest priorities are.

I know that in a particular case that affects the riding of my hon. colleague opposite, the provincial Ministry of the Environment has mandated the use of high-efficiency trains that are designed to reduce pollutants by 90% over today's locomotives. I also know that Metrolinx is committed to looking at an electrification strategy for its entire rail network. I think we need to see the results of that study before there are any discussions regarding the best use of available federal funds.

Let me be clear that this government's significant contributions have gone to projects that encourage more public transit in Toronto and less single vehicle use. For example, the federal government is contributing nearly \$700 million towards the Toronto-York Spadina

subway extension. The government has invested in two programs supporting GO Transit totalling almost \$650 million in federal assistance. Then there is the FLOW initiative, which supports transit systems in Brampton, Mississauga, York and Durham regions, with investments in these communities of over \$265 million. The federal government is putting another \$133 million towards the revitalization of Union Station and an additional \$333 million towards the Sheppard light rail transit system. Toronto is also receiving up to \$400 million by 2010 and approximately \$160 million per year after that through the gas tax fund. I think we can see that the federal government is into Toronto transit in a big way.

• (1800)

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments, but the federal government is still providing a significant portion of the funding for this project. For this reason, it is essential that the government actively pursue the electrification of trains along this corridor and it is the Conservative government that has the means to ensure this happens.

In the previous Liberal government, the then Prime Minister made public transit a cornerstone of the new deal for cities. What is the Conservative government prepared to do to continue to make safe, environmentally friendly public transportation a priority for projects such as this one in Toronto?

When the member speaks on behalf of the government and talks about the electrification project, is the government also prepared to provide funding and have a mechanism in place? When we have the ability to in fact electrify the line, will the Government of Canada be a partner in the electrification of this line?

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, my last answer talked about the partnership and commitment the government has towards these projects already. However, I need to state, as I did before, that it is not the role of the federal government to insert itself into provincial or municipal matters.

We are listening and we have heard that residents in big cities such as Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary are fed up with congestion and they want some alternatives. That is why the Conservative government is investing in public transit projects across the country. Those investments will encourage people to leave their cars at home and use public transit, which in turn will reduce the growth of greenhouse gas emissions.

I could talk a lot about the specifics of this, but I think the funding initiatives that I laid out earlier really indicate and demonstrate the commitment this government has toward public transit across the country and in the riding of the member opposite.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of taking part in the late show that arises from a question on the Arctic environment that I asked in the House last May. In my question, I challenged the Minister of Natural Resources to explain the benefits of a relief well, which, under the best of drilling conditions in an area like the Gulf of Mexico, would take 70 to 80 days or more to complete.

The Prime Minister this spring described the recent BP Gulf of Mexico blowout as a “horrific environmental catastrophe”. If such a thing were to happen in our northern waters, can anyone imagine what our pristine Arctic would look like after a three month wait to drill a relief well?

I remember asking him about drilling in the Arctic, where conditions are far from ideal and winds and ice floes are just a few of the environmental challenges. Even getting to the proposed well location can be a challenge in itself.

Without offering any substance to his answer, the Minister of Natural Resources replied to my question by saying:

Canadian regulations require operators to employ the best technology, equipment and training techniques available, and we will not accept any weakening of these requirements. No drilling will proceed until this government is convinced that the safety of the workers and the environment is protected. Canadians expect nothing less.

Last night I told the House that since 2006 the government has spent a total of approximately \$10.25 million on research and development on methods to deal with offshore blowouts and offshore spills, including possible events in Arctic waters.

Given this insufficient sum, the minister must agree that when it comes to the environment and Arctic waters, Canadians expect considerably more from the government by way of meaningful research and development spending and preparation for large oil spills, like the one in the gulf or the one with the *Exxon Valdez*. The government should be prepared to raise its standards to new levels of accountability and standards for drilling in Arctic waters. Canadians expect nothing less.

In correspondence with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I raised the prospect of Canada having to address an oil spill that might originate in international waters. The minister acknowledged the prospect of drilling activity off the coast of Greenland adjacent to Canadian waters. His letter informed me that the government views protecting our Arctic waters as a high priority and integral to asserting our sovereignty in the Arctic region. He went so far as to state that the Prime Minister recently informed the House that Canada has strong rules in place and will continue to enforce these environmental standards in the Arctic.

Under Greenland law, proponents applying for exploration licences are required to accompany their applications with a feasibility study, an environmental impact assessment and a strategic impact assessment. Canada does not have these stringent regulations for explorations.

It is disappointing that the government does not have much to say about how it will clean up oil spills in the pristine Arctic, a topic that northerners have expressed so much concern about. Liberals raised

this with government ministers on more than nine occasions last spring and we are still waiting for meaningful answers.

• (1805)

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all Canadians are concerned by the devastating environmental and economic impact of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

It is good to take a look at our own situation and ask tough questions about safety and security, and we have been doing that.

However, what we see here today is the member actually trying to change the channel. He is trying to change the channel on the fact that he has failed to represent his constituents. He is trying to move to a different issue.

Last week, the member was in the House and failed to represent his constituents. He failed to keep the commitment that he had made to them. It is not only myself who holds him accountable for that, but his own people back home are extremely dismayed, which is probably a mild term, at his actions, including his premier. We have information that both Premier Fentie and other Yukon MLAs have accused the member opposite of going against the interests of Yukoners by voting to maintain the controversial gun registry.

On May 15, 2009, the member opposite actually voted in favour of scrapping the long gun registry. When it came around this time, he decided that he would not do that. His premier, talking about himself and his own colleagues, said this about him:

We don't change our mind, like the Liberals, on the long-gun registry. We didn't hide from our verbal commitments to Yukoners. We backed it up with action. It is about trust and the Liberals are all in it together. Yukoners cannot trust them.

The Klondike Yukon Party MLA, Steve Nordick, presented a motion demanding that the member opposite return to the legislature to explain his actions.

When the member gets up today trying to represent his people, he needs to be accountable for some things. Steve Nordick said that the member opposite should tell his constituents “why he chose to follow the dictates of the Liberal Party leader...and breach his commitment with Yukoners by voting to save the long gun registry”.

The premier later accused the member opposite of making a commitment to Yukoners “when soliciting their votes” but then later changing his position. The premier's line was “Obviously, once he's received the paycheck, [he] has entirely changed his mind”.

Even the Liberal leader in the Yukon said that territorial Liberals have always opposed the long gun registry.

It is okay for the member to be here today to talk a bit about the oil spill issue, but the reality is that he has been trying to change the channel. He needs to be accountable to his constituents. He needs to stand up and explain to them why he broke his word.



*Adjournment Proceedings*

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians watched last spring in horror as oil spilled out into the Gulf of Mexico, the worst environmental disaster in North American history. They wondered if their government had any plans to deal with it here.

The parliamentary secretary has just totally embarrassed his government by having absolutely no answer to that. We have been asking for six months now. One would think that in six months they could come up with an answer. He had nothing about relief wells, about oil spills in the ice, or about cleanup equipment, nothing to protect Canada's pristine Arctic. Canadians will be very disturbed at the government's total lack of preparation.

The parliamentary secretary has also embarrassed the minister, because the minister was asked nine times. The parliamentary secretary has a minute left and might be able to at least say that the minister and the government now have a plan to clean up what could be the worst disaster in North American history if it actually occurred in Canada.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member wants to speculate about what might be, but I want to talk about what actually is. He can talk about thousands of people standing and watching. Thousands of people watched last week while he stood up and voted against the issues and concerns of his own constituents.

We actually want to talk about his credibility today, which has been completely damaged by his position last week. If we want to protect the pristine Arctic, the best thing we could do is change the hon. member for Yukon.

● (1810)

**The Deputy Speaker:** 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.

(The House adjourned at 6:10 p.m.)

---



# CONTENTS

Tuesday, September 28, 2010

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### Seniors CPI Protection Act

Mr. Marston .....	4459
Bill C-564. Introduction and first reading .....	4459
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	4459

### Petitions

#### Passport Fees

Mr. Maloway .....	4459
-------------------	------

#### Animal Welfare

Ms. Minna .....	4459
-----------------	------

#### Bus Drivers

Mr. Allen (Welland) .....	4459
---------------------------	------

#### Animal Welfare

Mr. Wrzesnewskyj .....	4460
------------------------	------

### KAIROS

Ms. Leslie .....	4460
------------------	------

#### Unsolicited Mail

Ms. Leslie .....	4460
------------------	------

#### Oil and Gas Prices

Mr. Rafferty .....	4460
--------------------	------

### Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lukiwski .....	4460
--------------------	------

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### Business of Supply

#### Opposition Motion—Long Form Census

Mr. Garneau .....	4460
Motion .....	4460
Mr. Murphy (Charlottetown) .....	4462
Mr. Blaney .....	4462
Ms. Bennett .....	4462
Mr. Lunney .....	4464
Mrs. Mourani .....	4464
Mr. Clement .....	4464
Ms. Murray .....	4467
Mr. Hyer .....	4467
Mr. St-Cyr .....	4467
Mrs. Yelich .....	4468
Mr. Garneau .....	4468
Mr. Bouchard .....	4468
Mr. Szabo .....	4470
Mr. Blaney .....	4470
Mr. Masse .....	4470
Mr. Carrier .....	4471
Mr. Masse .....	4471
Mr. Murphy (Charlottetown) .....	4472
Mr. Maloway .....	4473
Mr. Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte) .....	4473
Mr. Rafferty .....	4473
Mr. Szabo .....	4474

Mr. Savage .....	4474
Mr. Oliphant .....	4476
Mr. Oliphant .....	4477
Mr. Maloway .....	4478
Mr. Tilson .....	4478
Mr. McKay .....	4479
Mr. Lake .....	4479
Mr. Easter .....	4481
Mr. McKay .....	4481
Mr. Maloway .....	4482
Ms. Neville .....	4482
Mr. Del Mastro .....	4483
Mr. Scarpaleggia .....	4484
Mr. Easter .....	4484
Mr. Lake .....	4485
Mr. Nadeau .....	4486
Ms. Minna .....	4486
Mr. Cardin .....	4486
Mr. Szabo .....	4487
Mr. Nadeau .....	4488
Mr. Murphy (Charlottetown) .....	4489
Mr. Del Mastro .....	4489
Mr. McTeague .....	4490

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Bowen Shares

Mr. Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country) .....	4491
---	------

### Baha'i Community in Iran

Mr. Murphy (Charlottetown) .....	4492
----------------------------------	------

### Quatre Lieux History and Genealogy Society

Mr. Vincent .....	4492
-------------------	------

### Niagara Food Festival

Mr. Allen (Welland) .....	4492
---------------------------	------

### Seniors

Mr. Watson .....	4492
------------------	------

### Status of Women

Ms. Folco .....	4493
-----------------	------

### Public Safety

Mr. Sorenson .....	4493
--------------------	------

### Louise Bellemare

Mr. Bigras .....	4493
------------------	------

### Canadian Forces

Mr. Richards .....	4493
--------------------	------

### Pierre Elliott Trudeau

Mr. LeBlanc .....	4493
-------------------	------

### Canada's Economic Action Plan

Mr. Saxton .....	4494
------------------	------

<b>Disaster Relief</b>	
Ms. Crowder .....	4494
<b>Aerospace Industry</b>	
Mr. Petit .....	4494
<b>Quebec</b>	
Ms. Gagnon .....	4494
<b>Mario Laguë</b>	
Mr. Ignatieff .....	4494
<b>Mario Laguë</b>	
Mr. Galipeau .....	4495

## ORAL QUESTIONS

<b>Government Spending</b>	
Mr. Ignatieff .....	4495
Mr. Harper .....	4495
Mr. Ignatieff .....	4495
Mr. Harper .....	4495
Mr. Ignatieff .....	4495
Mr. Harper .....	4495
<b>G8 and G20 Summits</b>	
Mr. Holland .....	4496
Mr. Toews .....	4496
Mr. Holland .....	4496
Mr. Toews .....	4496
<b>Census</b>	
Mr. Duceppe .....	4496
Mr. Harper .....	4496
Mr. Duceppe .....	4496
Mr. Harper .....	4496
Mr. Nadeau .....	4496
Mr. Clement .....	4496
Mr. Lemay .....	4496
Mr. Clement .....	4497
<b>Oil and Gas Industry</b>	
Mr. Layton .....	4497
Mr. Harper .....	4497
Mr. Layton .....	4497
Mr. Harper .....	4497
Mr. Layton .....	4497
Mr. Paradis .....	4497
<b>Census</b>	
Mrs. Jennings .....	4497
Mr. Clement .....	4497
Mrs. Jennings .....	4498
Mr. Clement .....	4498
Ms. Bennett .....	4498
Mr. Clement .....	4498
Ms. Bennett .....	4498
Mr. Clement .....	4498
<b>Infrastructure</b>	
Mr. Paquette .....	4498
Mr. Merrifield .....	4498
Mr. Laframboise .....	4498
Mr. Merrifield .....	4498

Mr. Bouchard .....	4498
Mr. Lebel .....	4499
Mr. Paillé (Louis-Hébert) .....	4499
Mr. Lebel .....	4499
<b>Aboriginal Affairs</b>	
Ms. Neville .....	4499
Mr. Duncan (Vancouver Island North) .....	4499
<b>Post-Secondary Education</b>	
Mr. Cuzner .....	4499
Ms. Finley .....	4499
<b>Arts and Culture</b>	
Mr. Rodriguez .....	4499
Mr. Toews .....	4499
<b>Public Safety</b>	
Mr. Valeriote .....	4500
Mr. Toews .....	4500
<b>National Defence</b>	
Mr. Braid .....	4500
Mr. MacKay .....	4500
<b>The Environment</b>	
Mr. Donnelly .....	4500
Mrs. Shea .....	4500
Mr. Donnelly .....	4500
Mrs. Shea .....	4500
<b>Government Spending</b>	
Mr. Bachand .....	4500
Mr. Lebel .....	4500
Mr. Bachand .....	4501
Mr. Lebel .....	4501
<b>Infrastructure</b>	
Mr. McCallum .....	4501
Mr. Merrifield .....	4501
Mr. McCallum .....	4501
Mr. Merrifield .....	4501
<b>Health</b>	
Ms. Leslie .....	4501
Mrs. Aglukkaq .....	4501
Ms. Leslie .....	4501
Mrs. Aglukkaq .....	4501
<b>Firearms Registry</b>	
Mr. McColeman .....	4501
Mr. Toews .....	4502
<b>Employment Insurance</b>	
Mr. Andrews .....	4502
Ms. Finley .....	4502
<b>Securities</b>	
Mr. Carrier .....	4502
Mr. Flaherty .....	4502
<b>Status of Women</b>	
Ms. Mathysen .....	4502
Ms. Ambrose .....	4502

<b>The Economy</b>	
Mrs. Davidson .....	4502
Ms. Ambrose .....	4502
<b>Employment Insurance</b>	
Mr. Andrews .....	4503
Ms. Finley .....	4503
<b>Presence in Gallery</b>	
The Speaker .....	4503
The Speaker .....	4503
<b>Ways and Means</b>	
<b>Notice of Motion</b>	
Mr. Flaherty .....	4503

### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

<b>Business of Supply</b>	
<b>Opposition Motion—Long form census</b>	
Motion .....	4503
Mr. Sweet .....	4503
Mr. Szabo .....	4504
Mr. Bélanger .....	4504
Mr. Gravelle .....	4505
Mr. Anderson .....	4505
Mr. Wallace .....	4506
Mr. Savage .....	4508
Mr. Gravelle .....	4509
Mr. Preston .....	4509
Mr. Brison .....	4510
Mr. McCallum .....	4510
Mr. Stanton .....	4511
Mr. Julian .....	4511
Mrs. Crombie .....	4512
Mr. Anderson .....	4513
Mr. Marston .....	4514

Mr. Godin .....	4514
Mr. Szabo .....	4515
Mr. Clarke .....	4516
Mr. Martin (Sault Ste. Marie) .....	4516
Mr. Savage .....	4517
Mr. Wallace .....	4518
Mr. Lukiwski .....	4518
Mr. Regan .....	4519
Mr. Ouellet .....	4520
Mr. Gravelle .....	4520
Division on motion deferred .....	4520

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

<b>Citizenship Act</b>	
Bill C-467. Second reading .....	4521
Mr. Siksay .....	4521
Mrs. Mendes .....	4522
Mr. Uppal .....	4522
Mr. Calandra .....	4523
Mr. Dosanjh .....	4524
(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee) .....	4525

### ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

<b>Health</b>	
Ms. Leslie .....	4525
Mr. Anderson .....	4525
<b>Transportation</b>	
Mr. Silva .....	4526
Mr. Anderson .....	4527
<b>The Environment</b>	
Mr. Bagnell .....	4528
Mr. Anderson .....	4528

**MAIL  POSTE**

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

**Lettermail**

**Poste-lettre**

**1782711  
Ottawa**

*If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:*  
Publishing and Depository Services  
Public Works and Government Services Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

*En cas de non-livraison,  
retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :*  
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt  
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada  
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

Published under the authority of the Speaker of  
the House of Commons

### **SPEAKER'S PERMISSION**

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and  
Depository Services  
Public Works and Government Services Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5  
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943  
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757  
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca  
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the  
following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité  
du Président de la Chambre des communes

### **PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT**

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les  
Éditions et Services de dépôt  
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada  
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5  
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943  
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757  
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca  
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à  
l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>