



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 2, 2011

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 2, 2011

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Medicine Hat.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

TERRY FOX

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last fall, I helped launch the Parks Canada, Terry Fox Foundation and Fox family competition, "What Terry Fox means to me".

[*Translation*]

Young people from across Canada submitted their ideas for a quote in English and one in French, as well as a design concept for the Mile 0 tribute to commemorate Terry Fox in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

[*English*]

Terry Fox inspired his generation and those who followed with his courageous Marathon of Hope.

Now, these three youth will, in their own way, inspire their generation and those who follow. As proof of Terry's ability to unite a nation, the finalists come from coast to coast. I congratulate Andrew Schulz of Fraser Lake, British Columbia; Alyssa Villeneuve from Rockland, Ontario; and Ashley Murray from Saint John, New Brunswick.

I also applaud the Minister of the Environment and his predecessor, the hon. Jim Prentice, for their steadfast commitment to preserving and enhancing the legacy of one of Canada's greatest heroes.

Terry Fox's legacy lives on.

ELDER ABUSE

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, Canadians were shocked to learn of a case of elder abuse involving a 68-year-old woman with dementia living in an unheated garage.

The minister for seniors responded by saying that these cases were not new. He said that he was familiar with elder abuse from his days as a police official and promised that help was on the way.

This all sounds good but, despite what the minister would have us believe, the Conservatives clearly have no intention of addressing this crime today or ever.

On page 179 of the 2011-12 estimates, the government committed to slash the funding to non-profit organizations working to reduce the incidence of elder abuse and fraud.

That is right, despite the promises of help to prevent elder abuse, the Conservatives plan to cut this funding by a staggering 44%.

Elder abuse is a heinous crime that can and must be stopped.

Talk is not enough. When will the Conservatives start living up to their own promises and start standing up and protecting seniors?

* * *

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

ROMÉO PRONOVOST

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, two days before Valentine's Day, on February 12, 1906, Mr. Pronovost was born and was named Roméo. He was a horticulturalist by training and moved to the Eastern Townships in 1934, where he worked with area farmers. He was the man responsible for the apple trees in Compton and the strawberry and raspberry plants that are the pride of our region.

I was very pleased to be able to celebrate the 105th birthday of the oldest man in Sherbrooke. This political enthusiast has stories to share about the likes of premiers Alexandre Taschereau, Maurice Duplessis and René Lévesque.

The wisdom of this venerable Sherbrooke resident is matched only by his great clarity and unfailing political judgment. Thus, it is no surprise that he is the oldest member of the Bloc Québécois. Although he never knows whether he will make it until his next birthday, he did not hesitate to renew his membership card for three years.

Statements by Members

Mr. Pronovost, on behalf of all of our colleagues, we wish you all the best on your 105th birthday.

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[English]

2014 JUNO AWARDS

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Victoria is a hotbed of creative industries and musical talent. Indie rockers Jets Overhead, violin sensations Timothy and Nikki Chooi, the eclectic Oliver Swain, and the ultra-cool Vince Vaccaro are just a few of the exceptional and inspiring musicians from the capital region of Canada's coolest province.

I am not personally on that list so I will instead use my speaking voice in the House of Commons to boost our community's exciting campaign to bring the Junos to Victoria in 2014.

I have connected the heritage minister with the bid committee which is planning a year-long celebration of Vancouver Island music in advance of the Juno ceremony.

We have the facilities, we have the best March weather in the country and we have extraordinary talent to host a rockin' Juno party in 2014.

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NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Ottawa NDP has an unblemished record when it comes to being soft on crime, and their opposition to Bill S-10 is just the latest example. Bill S-10 would crack down on grow-ops and traffickers but the NDP is standing in the way.

Just this week, two masked men broke into a home in Pitt Meadows looking to rip-off a grow-op. They held the occupants of the home at gun point. There was one problem. They had targeted the wrong house. This is the fear of every family living near a grow-op. Innocent people are put at risk when these criminal operations are allowed to flourish.

I recently received a letter from Mission residents who are living in fear in their own neighbourhood. They told me, "We need to change our laws. These criminals are laughing in our faces. Why can't we support our RCMP, our cities and our citizens?" Those are very good questions.

Our Conservative government will continue to stand up for law-abiding citizens and victims of crime. Why will the Ottawa NDP not do the same?

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[Translation]

MIGUEL GONZALEZ AND LUC PAQUETTE

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 8, 2011, at the Citadel in Quebec City, I had the pleasure and honour to see Miguel Gonzalez, one of my constituents, receive the Star of Courage from the Governor General of Canada. This medal recognizes acts of conspicuous courage in circumstances of great peril.

The ceremony recognized the heroic and courageous actions of Mr. Gonzalez. On October 28, 2008, in Quebec City, Miguel Gonzalez and Luc Paquette jumped into the polluted, frigid waters of the St. Lawrence River to rescue a co-worker and keep him from drowning. The victim accidentally fell into the river and was injured and unconscious.

I would like to again congratulate Mr. Gonzalez and his co-worker, Mr. Paquette, on this great act of bravery and generosity.

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● (1410)

[English]

BAY OF FUNDY

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said in the House last April, the Bay of Fundy is the only Canadian contestant left on the international stage of 28 finalists to become one of the new seven wonders of nature.

The Bay is going head to head with renowned sites such as the Grand Canyon and the Amazon, but with enough votes we can win.

Until recently, votes were only accepted online. Now people can vote as many times as they want from a mobile phone by texting the word FUNDY to 77077. Each vote costs 25¢ and will count as one vote for the Bay.

As Terri McCulloch from the Bay of Fundy Tourism said, "If everyone spent \$1 and voted four times, the Bay would have a terrific chance on the world stage".

I am once again asking all members of the House to support this initiative and to encourage their constituents to vote for the Bay online and by text. Voting will continue until the contest's conclusion in November.

Voting for the Bay is voting for Canada.

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[Translation]

QUEBEC ATHLETES

Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this year's Canada Games wrapped up in Halifax on Sunday, February 27. Quebec's athletes triumphed at the games. They scored a fantastic hat trick by winning the most gold, silver and bronze medals, with a total of 137 medals, beating out Ontario and British Columbia.

We would also like to commend the efforts of Quebec's future athletes who are competing right now at the Quebec winter games, which are being held in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not mention the great victory achieved today by a young cross-country skier from Quebec, Alex Harvey, and his teammate, Devon Kershaw, who, by winning the classic sprint relay, became the first Canadian men ever to win a gold medal in a cross-country world championship race.

Statements by Members

The Bloc Québécois is proud to commend these athletes' excellent achievements in their respective sports, as they showcase, once again, all the brilliant talent that Quebecers possess.

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ALEX HARVEY AND DEVON KERSHAW

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this very morning, two Canadian athletes made cross-country skiing history. In Oslo, Norway, cross-country skiers Alex Harvey from Saint-Ferréol-les-Neiges and Devon Kershaw from Sudbury led Canada to the top of the podium in the men's team sprint at the Nordic world championships. This is Canada's first gold medal in men's competition at the world championships.

We would be remiss in not recognizing the perseverance and years of work it takes to prepare for this level of competition. This morning, two Canadian athletes showed they are among the best in this sport.

[English]

I want to stress the remarkable support for our heroes, their families, the trainers, the technical support and the sponsors.

[Translation]

I want to congratulate Alex Harvey, the son of an engineer, and Devon Kershaw. We wish them much success for the rest of the season and for seasons to come. They are proving that anything is possible when we work together as a team.

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[English]

SHAHBAZ BHATTI

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise with a heavy heart today to pay tribute to the life of Pakistan's minority affairs minister, Shahbaz Bhatti, and to condemn his assassination yesterday.

I recently had the opportunity to meet Mr. Bhatti and to encourage him in his work protecting the rights of minorities in Pakistan.

Today we stand with all who grieve this loss of a voice of reason, compassion and tolerance.

His brother, my friend Peter, has asked me to call on our government to take concrete actions to compel the government of Pakistan to protect minority communities. He has also asked for special consideration for those whose lives are in grave danger seeking refuge in Canada.

Following the assassination of the Punjab governor, Salman Taseer, Mr. Bhatti acknowledged that he would likely be killed but said that forces of violence and extremism would never stop him. We must now ensure that these forces never win.

The Muslims I represent have shown me the beauty of Islam and taught me that Islam espouses respect among all people. With me, they condemn this atrocity and together we pray for the dignity of every human being regardless of race, religion or ethnicity.

FIRST NATIONS FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the House Bill C-575, the First Nations Financial Transparency Act, which will be voted on this evening in the House of Commons at second reading.

This is a serious and important issue. The men and women of first nations reserves across Canada have the right to know what their elected officials are receiving from their bands' bank accounts, just like we all know what other elected officials at the federal, provincial and municipal levels are earning.

Bill C-575 will create legislation to disclose the remuneration paid to councillors and chiefs subject to the Indian Act. By establishing a clear, consistent standard for the financial disclosure of salaries and reimbursement of expenses of elected officials, we will enable citizens to make informed decisions.

First nations citizens deserve to know what their leaders receive in salaries and benefits. I call on all members of the House to vote in favour of this bill and support first nations communities.

* * *

● (1415)

CHILD WELFARE

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week the Canadian Human Rights Commission took the extraordinary step of issuing a public statement rebuking the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.

There has been a two-year delay in hearing the details of a case brought forward by Cindy Blackstock of the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations against the federal government for the underfunding of child welfare agencies on reserves.

This commission said the failure was having a direct impact on the lives of vulnerable children. There are more aboriginal children in foster care now than attended residential schools at the height of that era.

Child welfare advocates across the country have been speaking out about the funding and how it puts aboriginal children at risk: at risk of failure to thrive, at risk of losing attachment to their extended family, at risk of poor health, at risk of poverty, at risk of entering the corrections system at a young age, and at risk, in too many cases, of losing their lives.

I ask all members to join me in demanding better for these vulnerable children. The underfunding of child welfare services on reserves must end.

*Oral Questions***DIGITAL MEDIA HUB**

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to bring to the attention of this House a wonderful project, which is currently under way in Kitchener and is known as the Hub. It is a communtech operation based in Waterloo, operating in Kitchener, which is in fact designed to encourage digital communication across the country and around the world.

This is just an example of the many high-tech operations going on in my riding of Kitchener Centre.

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[*Translation*]

CANADIAN BILINGUALISM

Mr. Roger Gaudet (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to point out to the House the obvious bad faith of the federalists who too often repeat the mantra of Canadian bilingualism.

If Canada were truly bilingual, my colleague from Jeanne-Le Ber would not have fought for years for access to French services at the Montreal office of the Immigration and Refugee Board. The current debate about the bilingualism of Supreme Court justices would not be needed. The Commissioner of Official Languages and the French and English media would not have unanimously criticized the limited amount of French, an official language of the Olympics, at the 2010 Vancouver Games. Francophone employees of Service Canada in Kentville, Nova Scotia, would be allowed to provide services in French to francophones. That shows that, outside of Quebec, French is of no importance.

Canadian bilingualism from coast to coast cannot pass a reality test. In fact, Canadian bilingualism is but a grand federalist illusion.

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[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the International Criminal Court was first established on July 1, 2002, I stated then that it was the most important development in international criminal and humanitarian law since Nuremberg, that it would work to bring war criminals to justice, to combat the culture of impunity, to provide redress for the victims of mass atrocity and to act as a deterrent to further atrocities.

Years later, with all the imperfections that have attended its work, the ICC has nonetheless fulfilled its initial mandate and promise as exemplified in the indictment of President al-Bashir of Sudan for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, and the referral by the UN Security Council, supported by the government, of the cases of Colonel Gadhafi and Libyan leaders to the ICC for prospective investigation and prosecution.

Therefore, it is astonishing that the government would seek to cut financial support for the ICC at a time when it is so crucial to the struggle for international justice. It is astonishing that a government that would expend billions of dollars for the building of megaprisons that are unnecessary, and that would cut funding for the International Criminal Court that is so necessary to the pursuit of justice.

● (1420)

TAXATION

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our party stands alone in its commitment to keep taxes down.

In 2007, this government made the decision to lower taxes on job creators. Thanks to our government, Canada's corporate tax rate today stands at 16.5%.

At the Canadian Federation of Agriculture's general meeting, one of my constituents asked the Liberal leader about the party's current position on job-killing tax hikes. The Liberal leader said, "We've got corporate tax in Canada at 18%".

My constituent gave the Liberals the benefit of the doubt. The Liberals do not understand agriculture. They do not understand business. The opposition has made job-killing tax hikes the centrepiece of their vision for Canada.

Farmers deserve to know if the Liberals are deceiving them on purpose, or whether the Liberal Party, as has been speculated, just does not get agriculture or business.

Agriculture is a business that does not need to be taxed to death.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

PAKISTAN

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I ask the normal round of questions, I want to ask the Prime Minister whether he is prepared to join the member for Don Valley West to express the shock, outrage, and anger of this side of the House at the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti, a friend of Canada and a passionate defender of religious freedom in Pakistan.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question and the member for his statement as well.

I want to also share in that shock and outrage, and also to express our condolences to the friends, family and colleagues of minister Shahbaz Bhatti, who was a courageous defender of human rights. He was recently in my office. He knew that his life was in jeopardy in his fight against the notorious blasphemy laws and his defence of religious freedom.

We call on Pakistani authorities to pursue justice for the killers of minister Bhatti and also to ensure that they continue the fight for religious freedom for both non-Muslims and Muslims alike.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

POLITICAL FINANCING

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Federal Court of Appeal judges agree with Elections Canada and the crown attorney: the Conservatives violated the Canada Elections Act. They have been accused of fraud, and members of the Prime Minister's inner circle may have to serve time in prison. To claim that this is simply a difference of opinion on an administrative matter is an insult to the intelligence of this House and Canadians.

When will the Prime Minister stop defending the indefensible?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the courts rendered different decisions on this issue, which is why we will appeal the most recent decision. Our party's position is to always respect Elections Canada's interpretation of the law and, in fact, we changed our practices in this regard three years ago.

[English]

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this in and out scandal is more than forged invoices. It is more than police raids on Conservative Party headquarters and it is more than just the clique around the Prime Minister facing jail time. This is fundamentally a question about the public character of the Prime Minister, his lust to win at any cost and at any price.

Will he admit that he encouraged his party to break the law, defraud the Canadian taxpayer, and will he have the decency to stand in the House and finally tell Canadians the truth?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, there have been different court decisions on this particular matter, which has gone on for some years. For that reason, we will be appealing the most recent decision.

That said, our position is clear: we respect the interpretations of Elections Canada. In this particular instance, we changed our practices to conform with its new interpretations three years ago.

As for election verdicts, I would encourage the Leader of the Opposition to focus on the economy and the real priority of Canadians.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Federal Court of Appeal confirmed that the Conservatives did not have the right to be reimbursed for fraudulent campaign spending out of taxpayers' money. The Conservatives have been caught stealing from Canadians. The truth is out about their system of electoral fraud.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for to punish his special friends in the Senate who have been charged in this case? Is he waiting until they are behind bars?

[English]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows this is a five-year-old administrative dispute. One court has ruled in favour of the Conservative Party and another court has not. Otherwise, it is the

typical back and forth that one would expect in an administrative dispute of this kind.

That said, the Conservative Party has always followed all of the election rules. We have a strong case and we will continue to defend it.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there will be a lot of people in federal prisons tonight who will think they had an administrative disagreement with the federal government.

The candidates in 67 ridings, the top national organizers and fundraisers of the Conservative Party are all in this up to their necks. They submitted fake invoices for fake expenses. They thought they could fool Elections Canada and the Federal Court of Appeal. Guess what? They cannot.

Therefore, why did that party use illegal money to campaign with dirty money in the last election?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can become excited and animated all he wants. The reality is this continues to be a five-year-old administrative dispute. One court has ruled in favour of the Conservative Party and another has done otherwise.

That being said, we will follow the rules. We have a strong case and we will continue to defend and advance that case in the courts.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Court of Appeal has ruled in favour of Elections Canada, which accused the Conservative Party of falsely allocating expenses to candidates to circumvent the spending limit for the 2005-06 election. Until now, the Conservatives have spread falsehoods and called the Elections Canada accusations "an administrative dispute".

Will the Prime Minister finally admit that the Conservatives violated Elections Canada's rules?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party always respects the interpretations that are in place. At that time, there were different court decisions on the matter. We will continue to defend our position in the courts.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Federal Court of Appeal ruled in favour of Elections Canada, which refused to reimburse the illegal election expenses of some candidates. Sixty-seven candidates participated in the scheme, including the member for Pontiac, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent and the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Can the Prime Minister tell us if the Conservatives will admit they were wrong, accept the Federal Court's ruling and not file an appeal?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the courts have handed down different decisions and we still have the right to appeal. Our party and our candidates acted in good faith. We changed our practices three years ago as a result of changes to Elections Canada interpretations.

Oral Questions

• (1430)

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's parliamentary secretary is saying that the Conservative Party is working with the courts and that it has given Elections Canada all of the documents. That is absolute rubbish. The RCMP had to go into Conservative headquarters with a search warrant to obtain documents proving that the Conservatives tried to pass off national expenses as local ones.

Does that additional falsehood not prove that the Conservatives have no shame about bending the truth, just as they did not hesitate to violate the Canada Elections Act in order to seize power?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question.

The Conservative candidates spent Conservative money on Conservative ads. The national party also transferred funds to its candidates. Elections Canada knows this because we told them. Why not? It is legal, it is ethical and all the parties do it, including the Bloc. We have a very solid case and we will defend it before the courts.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in order to remain in power, the Conservatives are telling more half-truths and are not hesitating to violate the law. Since the Conservatives have been in power, the Access to Information and Privacy Act has been all but ignored and the independence of crown corporations has been all but lost. The Minister of International Cooperation had made false statements in the House and is getting away with it. Some Conservative organizers who orchestrated the circumvention of the Canada Elections Act have even been compensated with Senate appointments.

When will this government stop ignoring the law and the truth?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party has been very clear in court. We have already said that we will launch an appeal. We will wait for the final decision.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservative Party is sinking into a financial scandal, which brings back memories of the Liberal Party's sponsorship scandal, the Prime Minister continues to deny any responsibility for the in and out scandal. Four Conservatives are now facing prison time.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what role these four Conservatives will play in the next election? Will they be coming up with a new way to cheat?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of illegal money; rather it is a question of whether the expenses were local or national.

Our position is clear: we already abided by Election Canada's new interpretations during the 2008 election, which we won again. We will always comply with decisions on this matter.

[*English*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister uses his bagmen, paid for by the taxpayers, because

they are sitting in the Senate, to raise money for his party and invent ways to cheat on election financing laws.

Senator Lavigne was suspended for having a staff member cut some trees on his property. The Prime Minister's senators are facing jail time for multi-million dollar actions against our democracy.

Why are they still sitting in the Senate?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question in dispute is whether election expenses, which were fully reported, are national or local by definition. That has been the dispute for the past five years.

The party respected the interpretations of the law, as it understood it at the time. It has altered those interpretations and its practices in the election of 2008, in which we also wanted to conform with the new interpretations. We will continue to do so in the future, and obviously defend the actions of our people.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister appointed Conservative bagmen to cushy jobs in the Senate. If that was not bad enough, we then find them charged with cheating on the spending limits in elections, which is fundamental to fairness in a democratic system. That is what is going on here.

According to the ad agency, Retail Media, invoices used for the in and out scheme must have been altered by someone. Now we have the doctoring of documents to evade the rules.

Doctoring documents to evade spending limits is no administrative decision. Why does he not at least kick them out of his caucus?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the categorization of this dispute by the leader of the NDP is completely inaccurate. This is a dispute about whether election expenses, which were fully reported, are local or national.

This is a dispute we have had with Elections Canada for five years. Our officials followed the interpretations that were in place at the time. We have altered them since to conform with new interpretations. We will continue to respect all the decisions and rules of Elections Canada.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Federal Court of Appeal eviscerated the flimsy shield that the government has been using to try to justify the in and out scheme and the illegal rebates Conservatives tried to swindle out of taxpayers.

Conservatives call it an administrative dispute. Canadians call it fraud. One MP who signed off on the fraudulent rebate scheme is the current President of the Treasury Board. Ten thousand dollars was funnelled in and out of his riding.

When will taxpayers get back the dirty money that he is sitting on and when will he apologize for his role in this scandal?

Oral Questions

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, this dispute goes back five years. The Conservative Party has won in one court and another court has ruled otherwise. Regardless, we have a very strong case. We will continue to advocate and defend it in a court of law.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's Quebec lieutenant, the Minister of Natural Resources, was also an active participant in the Conservatives' election fraud.

In his riding of Mégantic—L'Érable, he tried to perform a little sleight of hand trick with \$20,000 in false invoices. It did not work, however, since he was caught by Elections Canada. The Conservatives have been caught by the Federal Court of Appeal and the director of public prosecutions.

Will the minister pay back the money owed to the people of Mégantic—L'Érable?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a dispute we have been having with Elections Canada for five years now. We obeyed all of the rules during each election, and therefore, we will continue to advocate and defend our case before the courts.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we take a closer look at the \$1.3 million that was spent illegally by the Conservatives, we can see that no less than a quarter of a million dollars was stolen in Quebec City, in Beauce, in Beauport, Charlesbourg and Lévis, and in Lotbinière, Louis-Hébert, Portneuf, Charlevoix and Louis-Saint-Laurent.

My question for the minister responsible for the Quebec City region is this: would she not agree that voters in the greater Quebec City region all have the right to be outraged and appalled at having been targeted like this by the Conservatives in their huge election scam?

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with the hon. member a quote from a distinguished colleague, who I think will be familiar to the Liberal Party, who said, "What's a national ad, what's a local ad? It's nonsense. It's time we got back to things Canadians care about". That was from an insider and close adviser to the hon. Liberal member for Toronto Centre.

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are facing electoral fraud charges from the 2006 election. Almost \$20,000 in taxpayer dollars were laundered through the riding of Vaughan. The funds that helped elect the Minister of State for Seniors was dirty money. They even doctored invoices.

As a former police officer, the minister swore an oath to uphold the law. Does he now believe he is above the law, or will he get the dirty money from this scheme out of his riding?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party continues to be engaged

in this five-year long administrative dispute. One court has ruled in favour of the Conservative Party and another has done otherwise. This is the normal back and forth that one can expect in a five-year long dispute of this nature.

The Conservative Party continues to have a strong case that we will defend and advance in front of the courts.

* * *

• (1440)

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC CITY ARENA

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, from the very start, the Conservatives, led by the minister responsible for the Quebec City region, have made private funding a requirement for the Quebec City arena project.

At the very moment when interested parties have confirmed they will invest heavily in the project, the Conservatives have flatly refused to take part and are backing out.

Will the minister finally admit that this condition was just a pretext and that from the very start the Conservatives never had any intention of contributing funding to the Quebec City arena?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, by all accounts, the sum invested by the private sector under the agreement concluded between the Quebecor group and Mayor Labeaume is clearly inadequate. That being said, as the Rousseau report indicates, the project has a very significant revitalization component and following conversations with my colleague, Sam Hamad, I can say that we will be delighted to contribute to that important component of the project.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister supposedly responsible for the Quebec City region repeatedly demanded a business plan for the arena.

Less than an hour after the business plan was presented, the minister closed the door on the project.

Either it took her less than an hour to grasp all the ins and outs of the business plan drafted by the mayor of Quebec City and Quebecor, which we doubt, or the Conservatives never had any intention of contributing funding to this project.

Is that not the real story? They never had any intention of funding the project.

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have said many times, the government wanted the private sector to have a significant stake in this project and the agreement concluded between the Quebecor group and Mayor Labeaume falls short of the mark.

I want to take this opportunity to point out to the hon. member for Québec, who called me "supposedly" responsible for the Quebec City region, that I still have my responsibilities, whereas she has been replaced by her colleague from Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord.

*Oral Questions***GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to the 2011-12 estimates, the Conservatives plan to make significant budget cuts, particularly in the areas of environment and culture. Even the contribution to the International Criminal Court has been decreased by 64%. And yet the Conservatives still want the court to look into the actions of the Libyan dictator! This is typical of their ideology. Nevertheless, they do not hesitate to expand prisons. Who knows? Perhaps it is so that they will have somewhere to put Conservative fraudsters.

How can the government claim to be addressing Quebecers' priorities when it is cutting the budgets for environment and culture? These estimates are really not good for Quebec.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the allegations that the government is trying to reduce its obligations to the International Criminal Court are false. Facts are facts and so I would simply ask the hon. member to take a closer look at the funding mechanism. Canada is respecting its obligations to this court.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the tabling of the estimates confirms what the Bloc Québécois has been saying. The Minister of Canadian Heritage has falsely boasted to the media that his government has increased grants for arts and culture. However, a document submitted by his deputy minister to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage shows that the opposite is true: grants and contributions for arts and culture decreased by 7% in 2010-11.

Does the minister realize that, contrary to his claims, funding for arts and culture decreased last year and that, if we are to believe the most recent spending estimates, these ideological cuts will continue next year?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Bloc Québécois critics do not understand the figures presented here in the House of Commons. Canada is the only G8 country that decided not to cut, not to maintain, but to increase its investment in arts and culture across the country.

From the Liberal Party of Canada's last budget in 2005-06 until 2010, we have increased our investments in culture, official languages and festivals by 18.4% across Canada. We are spending more money on culture than any other government in the history of Canada.

* * *

● (1445)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Cooperation has now dodged dozens of questions about her conduct. She has failed to perform even the most basic duty of a minister, to be accountable to Parliament for her actions. Yet she continues to enjoy all the rights, all the privileges and all the entitlements of her office. Her actions and the cover-ups are disgraceful and her refusal to be held accountable is offensive.

The minister has a choice. Will she stand up and answer, or will she stand up and leave?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me tell the member about the work of the Minister of International Cooperation.

She has played not just an important but an instrumental role in helping women and young girls in Afghanistan as we seek to redevelop that country. She has played an outstanding role in dealing with the aftermath of the consequences in Haiti. She has also played an instrumental role in the child and newborn maternal health initiative led by the Prime Minister for this will save the lives of literally millions of women and children in Africa. She has done an outstanding job for Canadians.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to defend the minister. He continues to defend the indefensible. He continues to pay her quarter million dollar salary and her limousine.

The Prime Minister's directive to his ministers states that they must be accountable to Parliament and must answer honestly and accurately about their areas of responsibility.

I will ask again. Will the Minister of International Cooperation stand up, do her job, and answer questions in this House?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact the Minister of International Cooperation has neither a quarter million dollar salary nor a limousine.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister officially asked for over three billion taxpayer dollars in spending for CIDA in the next fiscal year, but we see no real evidence that she is even in charge of this agency.

Will the minister commit now in this House to come before committee to at least answer questions somewhere about her job, or is she just a minister in name only?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that under this government the international assistance is the highest ever in the history of Canada.

This morning I announced help for Haiti in its reconstruction. This means that there will be six hospitals reconstructed, 54,000 Haitians will receive free health care, 500 new health professionals will be trained, 3,000 families will receive housing and 15,000 Haitians will receive water. This is our foreign aid policy. It—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): At last, Mr. Speaker. Now that she is finally on her feet, finally willing to be heard and not just seen, will the minister simply explain herself? Who told her to cut KAIROS' funding? We know it was not CIDA. And why did the funding request sit ignored on her desk for months?

Oral Questions

Will she stand up again, assert her independence from the Prime Minister's control and finally do what is right; tell the truth?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are some interesting facts. Under the Liberals, the world's hungry were shortchanged by tens of thousands of tonnes of promised food. We have made up that shortfall and we fulfilled our promise to the world's hungry.

In 2008, we untied our aid, putting even more food on their plates. Now, as chair of the Food Aid Convention, we are doing what the previous government could not do. We have all members now talking about how to update our aid assistance. In fact, our government will make sure that the world's hungry get the food they need to thrive and—

• (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lévis—Bellechasse.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LIBYA

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, given the violence in Libya and the growing number of people crossing the borders into Egypt and Tunisia, it is obvious that humanitarian aid is required for those affected by the uprising in recent days.

Can the Prime Minister tell the House what measures are being taken to help these victims and to address the situation?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce today that our government will respond immediately to the humanitarian crisis in Libya with up to \$5 million in humanitarian aid for medical care, food and shelter.

[*English*]

Of course, in order to resolve this growing crisis, we will continue to repeat our calls on the Libyan authorities to end their violence and Mr. Gadhafi to renounce his position and authority.

* * *

AIR CANADA

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Air Canada maintenance workers in Winnipeg, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver are worried they will lose their jobs to Central America despite the fact this airline is legislated to maintain these jobs in Canada. It is planning to send our jobs to El Salvador regardless of the legal guarantees in the Air Canada Public Participation Act.

Will the Minister of Finance uphold the law? Is he content to say adios to these jobs?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course Air Canada continues to maintain its overhaul centres in Montreal, Winnipeg and elsewhere, as it is required to under the legislation. What is more, not only before the standing committee but in response to enquiries from my office, it has assured us that there will be no job losses. It will be expected to uphold the letter of the law and the spirit of the law and it has promised that it is going to do exactly that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the minister just said is untrue. He is not even the minister responsible for the act in question; that is the Minister of Finance.

The Conservatives claim that jobs are a priority for them. The law is clear: Air Canada is required to keep all its centres in Canada. Yet Transport Canada has just authorized jobs in Winnipeg, Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal to be outsourced—exported—to El Salvador.

It was his department that authorized this. How does he explain that to the 3,000 families who will lose their jobs?

[*English*]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I explain it like this. There will not be any job losses. Air Canada has said that it is going to maintain the overhaul centres in Winnipeg, Mississauga and in Montreal. It has to do so by legislation. It has promised both before the standing committee of the House and to me in my office that there will not be job losses. No job losses is a good thing.

The nice thing about it is that this government in this economy has created 460,000 new jobs since the lowest part of the recession. No thanks to the NDP, but those jobs are secure both at Air Canada and elsewhere.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since 2007, Air Canada has been trying to export its technical services by handing them off to a separate company called Aveos. This could be finalized by April. But the Air Canada Public Participation Act officially prohibits Air Canada from exporting its operational and overhaul facilities in Montreal, Mississauga and Winnipeg.

Can the Minister of Finance guarantee that he will ensure that the legislation passed in 1985 by the Conservative government is enforced and that Air Canada is prohibited from exporting its operational and overhaul centres?

• (1455)

[*English*]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just answered that question, but I had better go to my briefing notes because it is important that I read it out exactly.

Employees would be given an option of transition to Aveos or remaining with Air Canada; either one. Further discussions would be required with the union, but the employees from Air Canada that elect to transition will receive the same salary, vacation benefits, pension and seniority benefits that they currently are entitled to. Once more, it promises that there will be no job losses.

I wish I could say this in both official languages, but the facts will not change. There are no job losses.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 3,000 jobs, the majority of which are in Quebec, are in jeopardy because Air Canada is transferring its technical services to Aveos, which could then move to El Salvador.

Why is the Minister of Finance not demanding that the letter and the spirit of the legislation be respected and that Air Canada maintain control of its operational and overhaul centres?

[English]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, long before this question hit the floor of the House of Commons and the Bloc finally woke up to this, we have been dealing with Air Canada on this for months. We wanted assurances. Are the jobs going to be secure? Will the maintenance facilities in Mississauga, Winnipeg and Montreal be maintained? Will the employees be saved? Will they have the same pension benefits, entitlements and so on? The answer is yes on all fronts.

To the Bloc, hello, wake up, that is the story. The members are finally cluing into it, but only now the facts come to light. We are way ahead of them on this one.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has been bragging for weeks about what it will accomplish on the environment and climate change. Yesterday we learned what it really meant. The government is gutting support to protect Canadians from pollution and climate change, removing funds for all the new parks it has been promising for years and slashing money to monitor health hazards all to pay for more prisons for first-time offenders.

Will the minister now stand up in the House and admit that the only difference between him and four failed predecessors is that his failure has been in a record short period of time?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I reject outright the outrageous premise of the question, but I thank my colleague because it gives me the opportunity to say that Environment Canada remains committed to initiatives and investments to ensure the health and safety of Canadians and their environment.

Departmental expenditures change from year to year, especially in a regulatory department like Environment Canada where a significant portion of funding is temporary in nature. My colleague will recognize our successful temporary programs like the economic action plan and the home retrofit.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reject outright a Minister of the Environment who has rolled over and surrendered more resources more quickly than any other minister in the history of Canada, some \$800 million in 60 days.

Energy prices are up an average of \$200 in the past year per family, yet the government is cutting 100% of support for the home retrofit program intended to protect families.

Will the Minister of the Environment, who wrote off this program so publicly after two days on the job, now explain to seniors and working families who are trying to make ends meet why they are being abandoned so callously by the government?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot accept the outrageous premise of my colleague's question.

Coming back to our highly successful temporary programs like the economic action plan, like the home retrofit program, or the Retire Your Ride program in my department, which took more than 120,000 older highly polluting vehicles and 4,000 tonnes of emissions off the road before our new greenhouse gas emission regulations came into effect, I would suggest my hon. colleague that he cool his jets and wait for the budget on March 22.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, perhaps we will give the minister another try.

Clearly when it comes to air pollution and climate change, the only thing the government wants to cut is necessary funding. After Environment Canada revealed that the government would achieve only a quarter of its promised greenhouse gas reductions, the same government gutted climate change funding. Despite clear evidence of failed federal action on oil sands impacts, the government eviscerates budgets for clean air and water.

How can the government possibly defend these regressive actions?

● (1500)

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again I cannot accept the premise of the question, but I can thank the member and remind her that we have a plan, unlike the Liberals who for 13 years achieved nothing on remedial action for climate change. Our plan is working.

With regard to the main estimates and our continuing commitment to Canadians and the safety of their environment, I say to the member, too, that she should cool her jets and wait for the budget on March 22.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is entitled to his opinion but not to his own facts.

Under the Conservatives, greenhouse gases are amongst the highest in the world, while spending on green energy solutions has been slashed. Last year the minister killed off the popular home retrofit program and scrapped support for renewable heat and green energy. Yesterday an additional \$600 million was eliminated.

Oral Questions

Meanwhile, the minister really took one for the team, cutting a full 1% from his limo budget. Is the only Conservative plan to fight climate change to have the minister walk a little more?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand the entire context of the member's question.

However, I can tell him that we are well on target to reducing greenhouse gases and meeting our 2020 target of a 17% reduction from our 2005 base year.

I would remind the member that Canada contributes barely 2% of total greenhouse gas emissions every year. We are engaged in encouraging the large emitters to join us in reducing those emissions.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2006, Parliament has passed five straight successful budgets.

In that time our Conservative government has cut taxes for the average Canadian family by \$3,000, rebuilt Canada's infrastructure, brought health care transfers to record highs and much more.

While the Liberal-led coalition wants to force an unnecessary election to impose a \$6 billion tax hike, our government is focused on what really matter to Canadians: jobs and economic growth.

As we approach the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, would the minister inform Canadians when he will present budget 2011?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic growth shows that the economic action plan is working.

Our economy has grown for six consecutive quarters with over 460,000 new jobs created since July 2009. While these are positive signs, the global recovery remains uncertain and there is more to do.

I am pleased to request the designation of an order of the day to present budget 2011, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, on Tuesday, March 22, 2011 at 4 p.m.

* * *

AIR CANADA

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

Thousands of good-quality jobs in Winnipeg, Mississauga and Montreal are at risk. While the Prime Minister is being silent, the act is very clear in terms of Air Canada, and I quote:

—the Corporation shall...maintain operational and overhaul centres in the City of Winnipeg—

including in Mississauga and Montreal.

Why is the Prime Minister not holding Air Canada accountable and making it abide by the law?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to reassure him that

in Mississauga, and in that other place he could not remember, the jobs are secure.

That is why, back in October and November, during the hearings on the future of how they would be structured and the opening of the sites in Mississauga, Winnipeg and Montreal, the assurances we received from Air Canada were that not only were all employees going to continue to be hired but also that they would have the same wages, the same pensions, the same entitlements. They would have the option of staying in Air Canada or going over to Aveos, but more importantly, no jobs would be lost and those maintenance facilities will stay open.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even though the Conservatives promised to be transparent, we have learned that they are quietly trying to amend the rules concerning government contracts to allow the National Capital Commission to award contracts without a tendering process. Each year, tens of millions of dollars' worth of contracts could be awarded without a tendering process, at the whim of NCC executives and the minister responsible.

Does the government plan to make the NCC a Conservative slush fund so that the party can reward friends of the regime here in the Ottawa Valley?

• (1505)

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not at all the case. In fact, I would like to ask my hon. colleague, as well as the members of his coalition, to fast-track the bill that many people in the greater Ottawa Valley area and the greater national capital region have been impatiently awaiting for years. We would like to see it passed as soon as possible.

* * *

[*English*]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, regional economic development agencies are at the forefront in strengthening local economies and fighting the effects of the recession.

However, we learned yesterday that the Conservatives are planning to slash their budgets. These cuts will hurt communities across Canada, but the damage will be the worst in the west. Western Economic Diversification alone is taking a 50% hit to its funding. That is less money for badly needed jobs, less for infrastructure, less for trade and tourism and less for small business.

With families and businesses still struggling, why has the government abandoned job-creating investments in the communities that need them the most?

Points of Order

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were given the responsibility in my department of delivering the key economic action plan initiatives for the west. Through the RInC and CAF programs, we delivered programs in communities in all four provinces. These were temporary projects designed to create jobs through the economic downturn. Since July 2009, we have created 460,000 jobs across the country.

What hurts the west is that party, which voted against our economic action plan.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, crooked immigration consultants are abusing Canada's immigration system.

Today in Halifax the RCMP charged an allegedly crooked immigration consultant for allegedly helping people gain Canadian citizenship illegally.

Can the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration please tell the House the steps the Conservative government is taking to crack down on crooked immigration consultants?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do have the cracking down on crooked consultants act, which is now before the Senate. We encourage the opposition to co-operate in its speedy passage.

The charges today relate to the facilitation of some 1,100 apparent violations of the Citizenship Act. This is where an unscrupulous consultant, for pay, will manufacture evidence of residency in Canada. We require people to live here for three years before they obtain citizenship.

We are taking firm action to defend the integrity of our citizenship law and our citizenship system. Because citizenship in Canada has such a great value, we will defend that value.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it turns out that, in addition to today's robust debate during question period, the Liberal member for Brossard—La Prairie used her Blackberry to take a flash photograph in the direction of a member of cabinet while answering questions in the House, the gallery above us and, in fact, Mr. Speaker, a flash photograph of you while you were busy presiding over the affairs of the House.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, the taking of photos by members in the House is not in order at any time and I would ask that you would remind the member for Brossard—La Prairie of the rules of this place.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): I am really sorry, Mr. Speaker. I was trying to get the windows and the top

of your chair. I will erase them. If you want proof, I will show them to you.

Hon. John Baird: She is covering it up.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: I am not covering anything up.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. Hon. members know that taking photographs in the Chamber is contrary to the rules. There are designated photographers here. Members can come into the Chamber when the House is not sitting and take pictures of the windows, the chair or their seat if they wish to do so. However, when the House is sitting it is not allowed. I would urge the hon. member to delete the photographs from her Blackberry as she has indicated.

I would urge all other hon. members to refrain from taking pictures either of others taking pictures or anything else that is going on in the House.

• (1510)

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order arising out of question period and it is on a more serious note.

I first want to compliment the Prime Minister for having made the decision and the announcement to engage in humanitarian contributions in Libya for those suffering.

However, one of the things that he neglected to tell the House in making his announcement is whether that \$5 million will be attached to contributions by private donors. If that is the case, could he let us know? We would be pleased to receive the information.

The Speaker: It sounds like a supplementary question. I would urge the hon. member to wait until tomorrow's question period and ask it then.

[Translation]

Would the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert also like to raise a point of order about question period?

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Mr. Speaker, having asked a question in the House and heard the response from the Minister of Canadian Heritage concerning arts and culture funding, which keeps decreasing, I would like to seek unanimous consent to table a document given to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage by the Deputy Minister of Canadian Heritage. This document shows that arts and culture funding dropped by \$2.7 million, or 7%, in 2010-11. I would like unanimous consent to table the document that backs up what I am saying.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

Some hon. members: No.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***GOVERNMENT OF CANADA AND THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY TREATY**

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under section 32(2) of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Cooperation Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the European Space Agency” done in Paris on December 15, 2010. An explanatory note is included.

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*[Translation]***OFFICE OF THE EXTRACTIVE SECTOR CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY COUNSELLOR**

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the first annual report on the activities of the Office of the Extractive Sector Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor for the period from October 2009 to October 2010, which was prepared by the Extractive Sector Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor.

* * *

*[English]***EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CANADA**

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2011-2015 Corporate plan summary for Export Development Canada.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, three reports from the Canadian branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, one dealing with the 56th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in September 2010, one dealing with the bilateral visit to the Seychelles in September 2010, and one dealing with the International Parliamentary Governance Seminar in November 2010.

[Translation]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association respecting its bilateral visits to Nigeria, Ghana and Togo, from January 16 to 22, 2011, less than a month and a half ago.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Maxime Ricard, the association's secretary, and Michael Dewing, our analyst, for enabling us to table this report so quickly. It deals with an issue that is still current: the situation in the Ivory Coast.

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● (1515)

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

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in relation to Bill C-17, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (investigative hearing and recognizance with conditions).

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eleventh report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women concerning supplementary estimates (C) 2010-11.

[English]

In accordance with its order of reference of Tuesday, February 8, your committee has considered Vote 95c under Canadian Heritage of the supplementary estimates (C) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011, and reports the same.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 26th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), this report contains a list of items added to the order of precedence that took place on Friday, February 11 under private members' business that should not be designated non-votable.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), this report is deemed concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

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STRENGTHENING THE AERONAUTICS ACT

(Bill C-42. On the Order: Government Orders)

March 1, 2011—Third reading of Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Aeronautics Act—Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities; and of the motion that this question be now put—Minister of State (Transport).

Routine Proceedings

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find unanimous consent of the House for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, the previous question to the motion for third reading of C-42, An Act to amend the Aeronautics Act, be deemed withdrawn and that the question on the motion for third reading of the said bill be deemed put and a recorded division be deemed requested and deferred to the end of government orders today.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, motion that this question be now put withdrawn)

* * *

ENHANCED NEW VETERANS CHARTER ACT

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, after no more than three further speakers from each recognized party have spoken on the second reading motion of Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act and the Pension Act, Bill C-55 shall be deemed read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs provided that any member rising to speak may indicate to the Speaker that he or she will be dividing his or her time with another member.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week we had a bit of a disagreement with our friends in the New Democratic Party. I am happy to say that we have worked very constructively with the New Democratic Party, the House leader, the Liberal House leader and the Bloc Québécois House leader and I am pleased to say that I would like to advise that the allotted day designated for today be instead designated for tomorrow. I would like to advise that it is the intention of the government to call Bill C-55 and Bill C-60 today.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations between the parties and I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move, seconded by the member for Mount Royal, the member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher and the member for Toronto—Danforth:

That this House condemns in the strongest possible terms the recent assassination of Pakistan's Minister of Minorities, Mr.

Shahbaz Bhatti; that the House expresses its sincere condolences to the people of Pakistan and to the family of Mr. Bhatti; that the House [expects] the Government of Pakistan to take immediate action against those who would harm and threaten defenders of religious freedom and human rights; and that this House calls upon the Government of Pakistan to repeal its blasphemy laws.

• (1520)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, if I could just speak for a few moments, perhaps you might be willing to ask the question again.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Maybe the problem is that one word was changed in what was communicated to us. The wording that we have reads, "That this House encourages the government of Pakistan". I believe that is the wording that was agreed to. I would ask the member if he has that understanding.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, the word "encourages" is in my text as well. I may have misspoken earlier.

The Speaker: Perhaps, to clarify the matter, the member could read his motion again and we will see if there is consent.

The member for Joliette.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I want to mention that in the French version the word "encourage" is used. It seems to me that, in order to be consistent, it should—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the English version of the motion here and I encourage everybody to read along with me. I move:

That this House condemns in the strongest terms possible the recent assassination of Pakistan's Minister for Minorities, Mr. Shahbaz Bhatti; that the House expresses its sincere condolences to the people of Pakistan and to the family of Mr. Bhatti; that this House encourages the Government of Pakistan to take immediate action against those who would harm and threaten defenders of religious freedom and human rights; and, that this House calls upon the Government of Pakistan to repeal its blasphemy laws.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again I rise on the issue of employment insurance because, in this particular case, I have constituents, primarily from the areas of Musgravetown, Bloomfield, Bunyan's Cove and King's Cove as well, who wish to express their sincere concern about the elimination of pilot projects, in particular, three pilot projects that provide a great incentive for work in some of the areas that experience high unemployment.

These are primarily seasonal workers, primarily from the fishing sector and from the tourism sector as well, who would like their benefits to be relied upon in a best 14 week scenario, as opposed to the last 14 weeks, which allows them to receive greater benefits. It also works out for the employers because, in the absence of this particular pilot project, employers have a difficult time finding workers in areas highly dependent on seasonal work.

ASBESTOS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first is from citizens throughout Quebec, from Pointe-Claire, Hudson, Kirkland and other communities, calling upon the government to immediately end the subsidy to the export and promotion of asbestos, to pass Bill C-399 that was introduced by myself to ban the mining and export of asbestos in all its forms, and to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam convention.

There are dozens of signatures from petitioners throughout Quebec where the asbestos industry somehow continues to limp along with the government's support.

● (1525)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is one that should encourage all of us. It was put together by Emily and Hannah Rudderham from Prince Rupert and Charles Hays secondary schools. They collected more than 150 signatures from young people in their school calling upon the government to respect the will and wishes of the people of British Columbia.

The undersigned strongly urge that the Government of Canada immediately legislate a ban on bulk oil tanker traffic on B.C.'s north coast in alliance with all the communities along that coast, the first nations municipalities, and representatives from around British Columbia, that strongly support such a ban.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by just over 200 constituents from my riding. They

bring particular attention to the House of Commons about their concerns with regard to the use of the Internet for the exploitation of children and the continuing dissemination of child pornography.

They are requesting that Parliament speedily enact legislation that would strengthen sentences and do everything it can to protect children and deter pedophilia.

FOREIGN AID

Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to present two petitions on behalf of many hundreds of constituents from my riding of Guelph.

The first petition draws to the attention of the Government of Canada the fact that the current CIDA website does not provide sufficient information respecting the effectiveness and efficient use of Canada's annual foreign aid funding. As a democratic country, our government institutions are accountable to its citizens and must fully disclose information to its citizens if we are to strengthen public trust in government, something currently lacking.

For this reason, the petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to implement five key recommendations that will further strengthen accountability, creativity, and transparency to funding commitments through CIDA.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is again on behalf of several hundred constituents in the riding of Guelph and elsewhere.

It is calling on the federal government to bring forward and adopt Bill C-544. I and the petition signatories draw to the attention of the members of the House the fact that Canadian horsemeat products currently being sold for human consumption in domestic and international markets commonly contain drugs that are strictly prohibited from being used in all other food-producing animals destined for the human food supply chain.

Thus, for the security of our food supply and to protect the health and safety of humans, the petitioners are calling on the House to adopt Bill C-544, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act (slaughter of horses for human consumption), to prohibit the importation or exportation of horses, as well as horsemeat products from their slaughter for human consumption.

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to introduce a petition from thousands of Canadians from all across the prairie region, and even Ottawa, Ontario.

S. O. 52

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has never known. They also point out that Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world, dumping nearly 200,000 tonnes of asbestos into third world and developing nations.

They also point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial causes combined and that Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry by sending teams of Department of Justice lawyers gallivanting around the world like globe-trotting propagandists for the industry, blocking international efforts to curb its use, such as the Rotterdam convention.

These petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to ban asbestos in all of its forms and institute a just transition program for asbestos workers and the communities they live in, to end all government subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad, and to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam convention.

• (1530)

ILLEGAL MIGRANTS

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of constituents in Calgary West today who have brought forward a petition regarding the current policy surrounding the arrival of illegal migrants and that it does not reflect the severity of the crime and the wishes of Canadians.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House to adopt legislation providing that vessels containing illegal migrants be turned away at Canadian jurisdictions. Furthermore, that illegal migrants who enter Canadian jurisdiction be deported.

I believe the petitioners were watching what Australia did and want to see us act similarly.

AIR CANADA

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I bring forward a petition from individuals who have expressed a great deal of concern in regard to the Air Canada Public Participation Act.

The petitioners are asking the government to recognize that the intent of the act was to ensure that the overall centres of maintenance in Winnipeg, Mississauga and Montreal will, in fact, be maintained and under ownership of Air Canada. That was the intent of the Air Canada Public Participation Act. It appears to be very clear that this is not the case today.

The people who signed these petitions are calling upon the government and asking the Prime Minister to do the right thing and enforce the law. Let us get Air Canada to obey what was passed by this chamber.

The petitioners look to the government to do the right thing and protect these most valuable aerospace jobs, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 3,000-plus jobs, not only in Winnipeg but other areas of Canada. They ask that the government to do the responsible thing and make sure that Air Canada adheres to the law.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my petition is signed by dozens of Canadians and calls on the Government of Canada to end Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan.

Effective May 2008, Parliament passed a resolution to withdraw our forces by July 2011. The Prime Minister, with help from the Liberal Party, broke his promise to honour the parliamentary motion and furthermore refuses to put it to a parliamentary vote in the House.

Committing 1,000 soldiers to training missions still presents a danger to our troops. It is also an unnecessary expense when our country is faced with a \$56 billion deficit. The military mission has cost Canadians more than \$18 billion so far, and that is on the conservative side. This is money that could have been used to improve health care and seniors pensions right here in Canada.

In fact, polls show that a clear majority of Canadians do not want Canada's military presence to continue after the scheduled removal date of July 2011.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Prime Minister to honour the will of Parliament and bring the troops home now.

* * *

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.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

LIBYA

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the situation in Libya in a state of emergency and flux, some areas have been freed from the Gadhafi regime while the city of Tripoli has become a killing field.

Although the Canadian government attempted to get Canadians out of Libya, there are still Canadians stuck there and they are facing uncertainty and danger.

Government Orders

The Canadian government has committed to a plan of action with respect to Libya and has committed military personnel and equipment. However, the Canadian people, through their elected representatives, want to have their voices heard.

As we move to assist the region in building democracies, we must be engaged here in Canada. Discussion among ourselves as well as with our constituents must start and that is why I am asking for an emergency debate on the situation in Libya.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: The hon. member made this request on Monday and I denied it at that time indicating that I thought we would await further developments. I am going to do the same today, await further developments.

I know the member will probably make another application tomorrow or the next day, and I will certainly consider it.

I note that tomorrow is an opposition day, so we will see what the subject matter of the debate will end up being. I am sure we will hear further on this issue, which is ongoing.

I am not sure that the request meets the demands of the Standing Order at this particular time.

* * *

● (1535)

PRIVILEGE

MAIN ESTIMATES

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh raised a question of privilege concerning the premature publication of information contained in the main estimates that was prior to their transmission to this House via message from His Excellency the Governor General.

I want to thank the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for bringing this matter to the House's attention. Upon review, it appears that some of the information was indeed out in the public domain approximately an hour before I actually tabled the official documentation.

Obviously, any pre-publication of the material in question is not proper and not in keeping with past procedures and practices of this House.

I would also indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, as President of the Treasury Board any inappropriate or untimely release of documents is always taken seriously and steps to prevent that type of thing will continue to be pursued most diligently.

I would also note that on the specific procedural issue of an alleged prima facie case of privilege, I would like to draw your attention to the statements on page 894 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* concerning such matters. This reference points out that in the past similar matters have been treated not as a matter of privilege but rather as a matter of parliamentary convention.

However, as I said earlier, any pre-publication of information of this nature before it was tabled in the House is not proper.

The Speaker: I am sure the member will appreciate the minister's comments on this matter.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ENHANCED NEW VETERANS CHARTER ACT

The House resumed from February 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act and the Pension Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: When this matter was last before the House, the hon. member for Winnipeg North had the floor. I believe there are 15 minutes left in the time allotted for his remarks. I therefore call upon the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I stand today to conclude my remarks on Bill C-55. To be clear on the issue, the Liberal Party recognizes the great value of the legislation.

At every opportunity in the veterans affairs committee reference has been made to Bill C-55. It is in good part due to the fact that we want to ensure we do everything possible to see the bill in committee. I get the sense there is a willingness in the chamber to see this bill move forward. Members of the committee, including me, are anxious to see the bill come before us. I suspect it is only a question of time before it does.

Bill C-55 would address income loss, base salaries and lump sum payments. These are all important issues to our veterans and we owe it to them to do our work as quickly and as diligently as we can.

Some members in debate have nudged others to move forward on the legislation. One of the things I would share with the House is the fact that the Liberal Party does not require any nudging on the bill. We see its value. We have an immense amount of respect for our veterans and we ultimately want to see it pass.

I have had opportunities in the past, as I am sure my colleagues have, to deal with veterans. A number of years ago veterans actually sat right behind us in the Manitoba legislature. I thought it was appropriate. I remember sitting in the chamber, being able to reach back and touch one of the veterans, thinking we were able to have that debate because of our veterans.

We recognize the valuable contributions that our veterans have made to who we are today as a free nation. We need to do whatever we can to extend adequate compensation to them for the sacrifices they have made.

Government Orders

Being on veterans affairs committee, I recognize it is important for us to go even further than what the legislation proposes to do. Compensation is critical, and I cannot emphasize how important it is that we get that compensation to our veterans. However, there are other things which the government should seriously look at doing.

I did not know, and I suspect a good number of members of Parliament would not be aware of this either, that we have in excess of 750,000 veterans in Canada, which is an amazing number. They participate in our society in so many ways. We have to think beyond even what we will pass today.

Bill C-55 would allow for income loss and other forms of compensation so our veterans would be more properly and adequately taken care of, and that is great. However, much like other issues, we need to do more in preventing some of the illnesses and injuries that occur.

● (1540)

We had a psychiatrist, who is a colonel in Australia, on video conference the other day. I was really impressed with what Australia has put into place to assist future veterans so their dependency on compensation, on disability, will not be as high, especially in the area of mental illness.

I will highlight a couple of those points.

Australia is prepared to put in the necessary resources to ensure there are minimal compensation packages after someone leaves the service. That is a direction in which we should move. We should be putting more emphasis on that in our Parliament.

To give members a sense of what Australia does, it looks at the complications and the mind games that take place in today's forces. It has a psychological training component incorporated within its boot camp system for everyone who enters the forces.

Recognizing that not everyone, even from within the boot camp, might be engaged in a situation like Afghanistan or other countries of that nature, where there are all sorts of turmoil, Australia also has developed what it calls a pre-deployment course. Once someone has been deployed to Afghanistan, for example, another training session takes place and there is a psychological component to that training. That, again, is the way to go.

Taking it even a step further, Australia has after-disengagement training. After they have served in a country like Afghanistan and they come back, there is a post-course provided that will assist them in dealing with the issues they had to face while they were in a foreign country.

Equally important, Australia also has a transition course component. When people leave the forces and they go back into civilian life, they are afforded the opportunity to have that course which will, in essence, assist them in better adapting into civilian life.

This is the type of progressive thinking that is necessary in order to meet the needs of future Canadians who make the decision to serve our country. Ultimately, I would encourage the government to seriously look at this.

I posed a question about cost. There should be no doubt. There will be an additional upfront cost in ensuring that we have the right complement of psychiatry and other potential professions within the regular forces so we have those courses and give legitimacy to them.

However, by investing at that end, we are assisting individuals going forward so when they decide to sign on the dotted line, enter our forces and maybe serve in a country like Afghanistan or in another country, come back and ultimately end up back in the civilian life, they will be better able to adjust.

● (1545)

I believe if it is handled appropriately or if there is a plan for investment upfront, then we will prevent many illnesses from occurring in the first place or we will be able to minimize the psychological impact of someone being in a war-torn country where there is civilian unrest and all kinds of horrors that our military personnel often confront.

Ultimately we would have a better equipped force, and this is why it is to relevant to the bill we are passing today. By doing this, future compensation requirements will not be as high. That should be the goal. Minimizing the amount of money that we would ultimately have to pay would not be the primary reason. That would be the secondary reason.

The primary reason will be the impact that it has our soldiers, once they get back into the force and once they are in full retirement. That is the real value and the primary reason why we need to move in that direction.

The secondary reason would be one of finances. I ultimately argue that there would be additional costs upfront, but at the end of the day we would save money in compensation, in terms of the potential income loss that goes up significantly because of the passage of the bill, and justifiably so, and in terms of issues such as the base salaries or the lump sum payments. That is stating the obvious.

There are so many other expenses that governments, and not only the federal government but also provincial governments, have to incur as a direct result of individuals who have been in the forces and once retired become veterans. After all, it is the individual provinces that ultimately deliver our health care services. A part of those health care services is mental health, among other things. Ottawa itself invests billions of dollars annually in public health.

When we are talking about compensation, the type of compensation we are talking about within this bill is fairly specific, but there are many other forms of compensation as well. It is not as easy to say that we have a bill, Bill C-55, and by passing it, all the issues veterans face in terms of overall compensation will be resolved.

I trust and hope that no one here would try to imply that this would be the case. This bill, from my perspective and I believe from the perspective of the Liberal Party, is but a first step in recognizing the value of our veterans and the importance of the House of Commons to adequately and properly compensate those men and women who have sacrificed a portion of their life in order to ensure we have what we have today.

Government Orders

We can do more. I encourage the government, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, the Minister of National Defence, the Prime Minister and others, cabinet and all members, opposition included, to do more to support our vets. It is not just this bill. This bill is a very good first step and we look forward to seeing it in committee, but that is what it is, a first step.

• (1550)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on his presentation on Bill C-55.

The government has made some improvements over the previous Liberal government, but these improvements took a long time coming. As a matter of fact, it was only through the efforts of people like our critic, the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore who basically lives and breathes these issues and fights constantly on behalf of the veterans of this country, that we get improvements from the government.

My concern is that it was a big mistake for us to adopt any form of lump sum payment. The government likes the lump sum because it thinks it can walk away from the liability. We are dealing with a lot of young people who get injured, are under a lot of stress and it is attractive for them to opt for a lump sum. However, when the money is gone, and there are lots of examples of how the money disappeared very quickly, the problem still remains and the government would have to come back at some future point to take care of the problem.

Does the member agree that lump sum payment issues should not be part of this process?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do know that the lump sum payment is an issue. There are individuals who would argue that they should be afforded the choice.

Should someone have the opportunity to say that at a certain point in their life they would rather take the lump sum, or is it more appropriate for the government, as opposed to giving a lump sum, give a monthly amount for a number of years?

I think there is a valid argument for both. I look forward to the bill going to committee. The nice thing about being open-minded in committee is that I trust we will see some amendments brought forward and be able to evaluate them.

I assure the member for Elmwood—Transcona that there was no nudging. This is not a competition between political parties. The Liberal Party is just as strong an advocate as any other political party in this chamber for our veterans.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talks about prevention, but I do not see how we can do effective prevention before our Canadian Forces troops get to a theatre of operations. We can train them all we like, but how can we prepare them for a bomb that explodes next to them and kills two of their best friends? How do we prepare them to be taken prisoner and be tortured? How do we prepare them for such things and ensure that treatment is available for them when they return home? How can we understand them?

He mentioned Australia. I was at the committee meeting and I did not see how Australia was doing more than Canada, which is doing nothing at all. There is no follow-up support for veterans. When people leave the army, there is no follow-up. No one knows where they are or what state of health they are in.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of these statements and what he would propose so we can ensure more consistent follow-up for veterans.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I believe we can learn from individuals who have gone through those experiences in a foreign country. We have the capability and many able-minded individuals within the profession of psychiatry, and more, who are able to develop programs that better enable a person to adapt.

Australia has invested time, energy and resources to pre-deployment courses. There is no statistical evidence because it is still somewhat new, but at least the government in Australia has recognized the value of providing pre-deployment courses. I would like to see more of that done for our troops.

I believe that we can benefit if we equip our people physically and mentally when they go into war-torn countries where there is civil unrest.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this bill is extremely important and I am looking forward to a significant representation at committee of stakeholder groups to deal with these issues. It is very difficult for us here to appreciate the situations that people are in and I encourage the committee to do that.

One issue that comes up from time to time is the type of disabilities we are talking about. Neurological diseases seem to be orphans in this regard. To the extent that a veteran develops ALS, MS or even battle fatigue syndrome, which could very well be a permanent impairment, these are situations that Canadians would like us to look at and address in a fashion which is sensitive to the realities that these people were protecting Canadians' rights.

Does the member think that we need to be open to more suggestions from those involved on how to properly and sensitively address the issue of disabled veterans?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

Veterans Affairs and other presenters have highlighted the need for Canada to do more in terms of tracking. Very little tracking is done. Information is critically important in order to develop and conduct assessments that ultimately allow us to have a better understanding of the depth of the problem. That needs to be dealt with.

When we talk about PTSD and other disorders or injuries, whether they are of a physical or mental nature, we need to get a better assessment of it. There is a great deficiency in the tracking of those issues which has come up at the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Government Orders

•(1600)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Elmwood—Transcona indicated, the NDP will be supporting this bill after the very able work of the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

There are, of course, things that are not in the bill and I would like the member to specifically comment on the situation with agent orange. We know that members of the Canadian Forces at CFB Gagetown were exposed to agent orange in the late 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. There was a very narrow window of opportunity for armed forces personnel to be compensated for that exposure to agent orange and some of the terrible things that happened to their families.

I wonder if the member could comment on whether he thinks it is important that we expand the scope for veterans and their families to receive compensation for exposure to agent orange at CFB Gagetown.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member brings up a good issue. I suspect all are concerned about issues surrounding agent orange. Members will recall that when I addressed the bill itself, I talked about it being a first step. When I say that, I mean in good part that there is a lot more we could and should be doing.

Let us get this bill to committee and see if some amendments can be brought forward to make it a better bill. Even if we want to keep the amendments within the scope of the legislation itself, we are still not going to be able to do all the things we would like to do in order to adequately and better compensate our veterans in general.

We need to acknowledge going into committee that this is not a perfect bill, but it is a step forward and we should all encourage and support it going forward. If we can make amendments at committee that will make it a better bill we should do that, but let us not lose sight of the idea that we owe more to our veterans than just this particular bill. We should look for additional resources, laws, whatever it takes, to make our veterans that much better and safer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member from Québec.

I rise today to debate Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act and the Pension Act. I would first like to inform the House that the Bloc Québécois supports the bill in principle but, as you will see, there is room for improvement.

I hope that this bill will make people aware of the new concept of veterans. Veterans now include those known as modern-day veterans, those returning from the Afghanistan mission who are between 20 and 40 years old. Men and women who embarked on a mission to liberate the Afghan people from the Taliban are returning with physical injuries and are often severely affected psychologically by what they have seen.

Since the beginning of this mission in 2002, 154 Canadian soldiers have lost their lives. Statistics provided by the Department of National Defence indicate that a total of 1,580 Canadian soldiers

had been injured or killed in Afghanistan as of 2008. In 2009, 505 soldiers were injured, on top of the 1,075 injured as of 2008.

Furthermore, as a member of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I saw with my own eyes veterans or their family members who told us about their daily nightmares, what is called post-traumatic stress disorder. These people often have to take very strong medication and undergo rigorous medical follow-up to live and reintegrate into our society.

I wanted to take a few minutes to show you that I am informed about and aware of this type of situation. It should also be noted that the Department of National Defence refuses to disclose the nature and seriousness of injuries. We will have to wait until the end of the current year to obtain the statistics for 2010. The current mission will be over, but other members of the military who have training functions will continue to face the dangers arising from their presence in that country. I am giving the example of the Afghanistan mission as a reminder that the mission of our Canadian military has changed greatly over the past decade.

I would like to point out that we have always been particularly concerned about the well-being of our veterans. As parliamentarians, we may seriously disagree on political decisions or military missions that the public finds controversial. But what is most important is that our veterans should not pay the political price of this debate. They sacrificed much of their safety, their well-being and their health. It goes without saying that injured and disabled veterans deserve nothing but our full gratitude and recognition, and we must give them the support that they need.

Upon reading Bill C-55, we can see that it contains measures that we hope will help veterans. It proposes some important changes: at least \$58,000 per year for seriously wounded or ill veterans, those too injured to return to the workforce; a minimum of \$40,000 per year no matter what the salary when serving in the Canadian Forces for those receiving the monthly earnings loss benefit; an additional monthly payment of \$1,000 for life to help our most seriously wounded veterans who are no longer able to work; and improved access to the permanent impairment allowance and the exceptional incapacity allowance, which will include 3,500 more veterans.

A minimum salary of \$40,000 is not a lot of money. To receive \$58,000 and the additional \$1,000 for life, the individual has to be confined to bed and unable to move. He has to be completely incapacitated. Even that is not much money in exchange for one's health.

The Bloc Québécois is disappointed that the Conservative government did not include measures to pay the monthly pensions. The Minister of Veterans Affairs trumpeted the fact that his department was going to invest \$2 billion to help veterans. That is an impressive figure, but we believe that it is poorly managed and poorly allocated.

Government Orders

I said before that all of the stakeholders are unanimous: they believe that the government should abandon the idea of lump sum payments and bring back the lifetime monthly pension for those who are entitled to it.

If we are not able to convince the Conservative government here in the House, we would like to hear what veterans have to say about what this government is doing when we study Bill C-55 in committee. After all, they are the ones affected by this legislation.

● (1605)

I would like to reiterate that the Bloc Québécois is aware of and sensitive to veterans affairs. Many veterans have had to make significant sacrifices in the defence of liberty and justice. Many veterans experience after-effects and have to live with the physical and emotional injuries they sustained during their years of service. The Bloc Québécois has the utmost respect for military personnel who risk their lives carrying out highly dangerous missions.

This profound respect implies that, since their lives are in danger, we have the responsibility not to expose them to further risk. Once their mission is complete, we have the collective responsibility to offer them all the support they need when they return home.

In its parliamentary work, our party has always been concerned about the support given to veterans and those who proudly wore a uniform. For example, we have always demanded that the government allocate all the resources possible to help soldiers and veterans and meet their health care needs, particularly in the case of individuals suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome.

The government will allocate a \$1,000 taxable supplement to veterans with permanent disabilities who can no longer return to the labour market. It is expected that 500 veterans will benefit from this measure in the first five years after this bill comes into effect.

We believe that, given the nature of the situation, this \$1,000 supplement should be exempt from tax. We are offering this money to veterans who fought and sacrificed their well-being at their government's request. This monthly supplement will be paid to veterans who are unable to hold gainful employment because of their injuries. Not only will they have to live with their injuries for the rest of their lives, but they will also never be able to have a normal financial life because of those injuries. Why penalize them further by making the supplement taxable?

When he appeared before the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, the veterans ombudsman invited parliamentarians to reject a system that would give veterans a choice, as Bill C-55 does. He felt that this option would not do any good because most veterans would choose a lump sum payment. With that in mind, the ombudsman urged parliamentarians to take a tough love approach with veterans.

On top of that, we were also disappointed with the amount in question. The Bloc Québécois would have liked the government to increase the maximum level of compensation. At present, the maximum payout for a disability award is \$276,000. However, if we went back to a lifetime monthly pension, veterans could receive between 15% and 35% more than they are receiving now. Thus, the \$2 billion the government wants to inject simply amounts to payments that it has not made and that it owes our veterans. That money is there for precisely that purpose. The new duties, the new

amount and the new money set out in this bill will serve only to pay small amounts and line the government's pockets.

On behalf of our veterans, I cannot help but wonder why the government did not respond to the concerns of veterans regarding the lump sum payment. A study conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs found that 31% of veterans were happy with what they received, while the minister promised new improvements to the lump sum payment.

Instead, the government merely divided up the payment differently, for example, as a partial lump sum and partial annual payments over any number of years the recipient chooses, or as a single lump sum payment.

In that regard, the Royal Canadian Legion would still like the department to address the amount of the lump sum payment, which currently stands at a maximum of \$276,000. In Canada, disabled workers receive on average \$329,000. Australian service members receive about \$325,000, and British service members receive almost \$1 million. The government is trying to save money on the backs of our veterans, as I said earlier. Everywhere else in the world, veterans receive much higher sums and that money is managed much better than in Canada. Here the government is always trying to save a few pennies to put money elsewhere. The government spent \$1.2 billion on the G8 and G20 summits, and nothing was achieved in those three days. It could have used that money to help our veterans.

● (1610)

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government needs to stop saying that the Bloc Québécois does not support veterans. I have a message for the Conservatives: I am the daughter of a veteran. My father fought in England, as did my uncle and aunt. My father came back with tuberculosis; my uncle, with a leg missing; and my aunt, with only half of her head. It is very important to me that Bill C-55 about veterans be well thought out and well crafted. My father had tuberculosis and received a monthly pension to help him move past the depression, the ordeal and the horror he had gone through in the war.

Why does the government still insist on not providing a monthly pension to those returning from war, those who defend democracy? These are our parents, our brothers, our sisters. I would like to understand why the government is being so stubborn about the monthly disability pension. Why does my colleague think?

Mr. Robert Vincent: Mr. Speaker, the government is giving out lump sum payments just to save a few dollars. We met with people from Veterans Affairs and made projections for someone with a disability assessed at 4% and one at 40%. We looked at the two cases separately. The former payment formula paid more. When we take into account the Pension Act, payments were higher before than the current lump sum payment plus the additional payments.

Government Orders

Why am I concerned about veterans who are injured in a theatre of operations? I used to be a union representative for workers hurt on the job. I have empathy for people who come home injured. Those who are injured in a theatre of operations did not ask for it. They should receive the best possible compensation. Canada owes them that much.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the daughter of a World War II veteran, I have a personal interest in speaking today to Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act and the Pension Act. This bill also amends the new veterans charter introduced in November by the Conservative Minister of Veterans Affairs. I was very active on this issue given that I am an MP from Quebec City and the Valcartier military base is in that region.

I will briefly outline the measures proposed in Bill C-55. The lump sum payment remains the same, as my colleague was saying earlier, but injured soldiers could now spread out the payment or opt for a single payment. They will have the choice between a single payment, a monthly payment or a combination of the two. Nonetheless, the maximum amount of the lump sum is not being increased, and that does not really meet the expectations of the veterans who appeared before the committee. Income for veterans who can no longer work has been set at \$40,000 before taxes, and monthly benefits can range between \$536 and \$1,609. As my colleague was saying earlier, \$40,000 is not very much, and no consideration is given to the salary the individual was earning before being injured or, in many cases, maimed.

Although the minister decided not to increase the amount of the lump sum payment given to veterans who are seriously injured during combat, the Bloc Québécois agrees that the bill should be studied in more depth in committee. We have asked that the families of witnesses and veterans themselves testify to provide us with their insight on all of the new measures tabled by the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Many stakeholders, in particular the Royal Canadian Legion, do not believe that this bill goes far enough. Given the magnitude of the mission in Afghanistan—it is a very high-risk situation in which an increasingly large number of people are being injured—the federal government could have increased its investment. We hope that veterans will be able to come and share their opinions on this bill and testify about their situation.

With regard to the desire of many stakeholders that compensation for injured soldiers be given in the form of a lifetime monthly pension, on October 5, I tabled in the House of Commons a petition signed by 6,000 people asking the federal government to bring back the lump sum payment. That is why I said that I was very interested in this issue and that I had worked on this file. That being said, the impact of the new measures will have to be determined.

I also decided to take some concrete action after meeting with Francine Matteau, a constituent of mine from Quebec City. Her son injured both of his legs in 2007 when he was serving in Afghanistan. He had to have nine surgeries. He has constant pain in his ankles, and one leg is shorter than the other. His ankles are practically immobile. He has lost control, mobility and strength in both of his legs. He has difficulties holding a full-time job and no longer meets

the army's requirements. I know that he dreamed of a career outside the military when he returned from Afghanistan.

If he had been wounded before the adoption of the new charter, he would have received \$5,400 per month, instead of a lump sum payment of \$100,000. Yes, \$100,000 is a lot of money, but when you spread that out, for someone who is 20, 21 or 22, who is returning seriously wounded and can no longer work, that is definitely not enough. The family must pick up the slack, and he becomes dependent.

I have other similar examples.

Elphège Renaud, the president of the Association des anciens combattants du Royal 22^e Régiment de Valcartier, met 19 soldiers who were severely disabled. Most of them were penniless despite having received compensation.

The former veterans ombudsman, Mr. Stogran, has also spoken out about this situation. He has called for the reinstatement of the monthly pension to prevent injured soldiers and their families from falling below the poverty line.

• (1615)

Moving to a lump sum payment means that Canada refuses to recognize as full veterans the soldiers who return from Afghanistan with injuries. This was reported in *La Presse* on September 13, 2010. Again according to Mr. Stogran, the adoption of the new veterans charter created two classes of veterans: those who served in the second world war and in the Korean War, and all the rest. What is also left unsaid is that those who were injured in World War II had to prove that their injuries were actually related to the battles that had taken place.

According to Mr. Stogran, the government is clearly failing to fulfill its obligations towards an entire generation of veterans, and the enhanced new veterans charter makes only one thing possible: to save money at the expense of this new generation.

On August 30, an independent study ordered by the veterans ombudsman and submitted to the Department of Veterans Affairs was made public. It compares the one-time lump sum payment to the guaranteed lifetime pension. It concludes that soldiers injured in combat, veterans and the families of severely disabled members are the losers with the implementation of the enhanced new veterans charter.

As was said earlier, to be entitled to fair compensation you must be severely disabled, and the compensation is not enough given that a severely disabled person requires more individualized health services. For that reason we are asking if it would be possible, in committee, to amend the bill so that it better meets the expectations of those injured in combat.

Government Orders

The Minister of Veterans Affairs always replies that changes were made to the charter on September 19 in order to improve assistance for veterans. This afternoon, I am telling him that it is not enough. The minister should be much more sensitive to what these young veterans really go through when they return home. They often have fairly serious psychological issues. The minister himself admitted, at a press conference, that the new measures he was announcing would not result in a return to a monthly pension rather than a lump sum payment.

This bill no longer imposes a lump sum payment, which is a step in the right direction. As for the single payment option for a lump sum payment, as I said earlier, that is an in-between solution that will not ensure greater stability or the well-being of our younger veterans in the long term, compared to what a lifetime monthly pension could do.

We can draw a parallel with another issue: water contamination in Shannon. A little earlier, an NDP member raised the whole issue of agent orange and the need for a much more in-depth study. Some soldiers were contaminated by chemicals and, in some cases, even developed cancer. I would like to remind the House about the whole issue of water contamination in Shannon. For years, people drank contaminated water from the groundwater that had been contaminated by National Defence. Many veterans, soldiers and civilians lived in this area neighbouring Valcartier. They were contaminated and had a higher than average rate of cancer. A class action lawsuit has been launched against the Department of National Defence and SNC-Lavalin. The residents needed a great deal of money in order to be heard, since neither government—the Liberals, at the time, and now the Conservatives—acted responsibly.

Acting responsibly would have meant, for example, doing what was done in the United States. They tried tracking down all of the soldiers who worked at Camp Lejeune and drank the water. The same thing happened there. The army had contaminated the groundwater and the people, including young cadets, had drunk the contaminated water.

Thus, we would have liked the federal government to do more to show that it cares. They always talk about how proud they are of our soldiers who go and defend democracy overseas on behalf of the Canadian nation. However, it is shameful and appalling to see how the government takes care of these soldiers when they come back.

• (1620)

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the lump sum payment first came in, some people said that the rationale was that if they had their money in the beginning they could invest in a small business, a house or something else and that would be better. However, I am not sure it worked out that way.

I wonder if statistics have been kept on the people who took the lump sum payments, where they were actually successful and where they were able to move ahead. Or, do the stats show that for most of them it has expired and they really need the ongoing pension, that it did not really work out as was originally envisioned?

• (1625)

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the Liberal Party has raised an important issue. Soldiers who returned and received lump sum payments ended up without any money a few years later. Their families had to take them in and support them. We are proposing things to prevent that from ever happening again.

Earlier, an hon. member said that many other countries take better care of their soldiers than Canada does. It is all well and good to give a lump sum payment, but we must also see how the soldiers can carry on in life without living under the poverty line and without putting their families under pressure to support them. When they return home, they need services adapted to their reality. The young man I was talking about earlier, who returned with multiple handicaps and had nine operations on his legs, will never again be physically able to hold down a job.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see a member of the Bloc stand in support of Canada and its military and recognize the great work it does to ensure our safety.

I share the concerns that the member has in regard to how we deal with some of the lump sum payments and other things that are offered and which are clearly presenting problems. Bill C-55 puts forward some solutions and some modifications to the existing plan.

What else would the member like to see? She talked a lot about the concern around the lump sum payment in particular. What would the member's advice be as to what she would like to see done differently?

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, we should assess the monthly amount that injured soldiers could receive, according to the degree of their injuries. The hon. member said she was pleased to see that members of the Bloc support the troops. I started my speech by saying I am the daughter of a veteran of World War II. Within my family, a number of people have served in the Canadian Forces. I will not take her comment personally, but it makes me laugh because many soldiers from Quebec took part in World War II and returned injured, but that is another debate.

We want the bill to be referred to committee so that we can have a serious discussion not about a lump sum payment, but about a monthly benefit, and determine the best amount to pay in various cases. We could come to an equitable decision and still consider granting a lump sum payment. Earlier it was said that with \$100,000 a person could buy a house. Today, \$100,000 will not even buy a business. What can a person do with \$100,000 or \$200,000? It is unrealistic. The maximum payment is \$276,000 and for that the person would have to be almost completely physically disabled and confined to bed. If the person lived for 20 or 30 years, that \$276,000 would be gone in no time, and that puts pressure on the parents and the family, whom we also have to consider.

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the member for Sault Ste. Marie, Poverty.

[English]

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the movement of this bill to committee. The Liberals have supported this all along and feel very strongly about it.

Veterans have told us over and over that they want to see this legislation move forward, not because it is a perfect bill by any means, but because it is at least a step in the right direction. I do want to know why it took so long. Why did some tragic incidents need to occur, such as the ombudsman, Mr. Stogran, who was vilified when he started to show the flaws in the new veterans charter?

It is a pity that had to happen and that we had to wait so long before we saw some of the changes in the new veterans charter. It has been four years and over those four years many veterans have had a lot of problems accessing some of the benefits that they expected to have. It is a pity that it had to take so long but it is better late than never.

This bill is a move in the right direction. We heard the minister himself say that this is a second step, which leads every one of us to hope and believe that there will be a third and fourth step that will incrementally look at the whole issue of veterans and their needs after they have served their country with such valour and such selflessness. After we encourage them and applaud them as they go out to fight for us, they should know that when they come back they will be in safe hands and that no matter what disability or harm they faced when they were at war, they will be taken care of by their nation for as long as they are in need.

There are some problems within this bill that I hope we can look at in committee. Members heard everyone say that.

I have a lot of veterans in my riding. I have many recent veterans in my riding who were in Afghanistan. I want to talk about them because I have been meeting with them. I go to all of their events. I have heard some things that I want to put on the table that I hope we can fix.

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for York West.

I heard about three things that we need to look at during committee stage. One of them is the lump sum payment and the fact that the lump sum payment is capped, as my colleague from the Bloc Québécois said, at \$275,000. In order to get that amount, a veteran would need to be severely disabled.

One could say that a physical disability is going to last for x length of time and that person may need assistance with such things as wheelchair accessibility, renovations to his or home, et cetera. However, the disabilities that defy prediction and prognosis are neurological disabilities. Agent orange was referred to earlier in the House. There are many chemical weapons. Neurological damage can occur in a physical disability. We do not know how these neurological damages will play out.

With a lot of young veterans coming out of Afghanistan, how do we limit them to this amount of money. If they live to be 70 years old, what will their needs be? Will their situation get progressively worse or progressively better? It is not a predictable thing. We should not talk too much about limitations. Whatever our veterans need for as long as they need it, whether it be for a lifetime, six years, six months, or whatever, we should not set limitations on how we deal with injured veterans. That is totally unfair to them.

I wanted to speak to the issue of the lump sum payment as a physician and about the unpredictability of what could happen with a disability, especially a neurological one.

That moves me on to another type of disability which is not a new one. It is just one that nobody ever talks about. I remember meeting with a World War II veteran who said that when he was in the army he was told to soldier on because that is what a soldier did. A soldier never complained. He told me that when they come back they were changed men and women. Their spouses did not know who they were. They know now that they were suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. He told me that they were changed and that many times they were not able to deal with their families in the same way. Post-traumatic stress disorder creates isolation, anger and depression, which affects the whole family.

● (1630)

Now that we know about post-traumatic stress disorder and we understand the nature of post-traumatic stress disorder, I think it is a pity that the bill does not actually refer to it as an entity on its own. For instance, there are no programs at the moment to deal with the rehabilitation and the psychiatry that is needed to help persons with post-traumatic stress disorder.

There is one at UBC, but it is paid for by UBC funds and by the poppy fund. The government has not put any money into dealing with the issue of post-traumatic stress disorder when it is something for which there should be a lot of programs and a lot of centres, and the government should put money into dealing with these issues.

I saw a film of the UBC program. I was moved to tears and the veterans in the room were moved to tears. Many of the old veterans from World War II were saying, "Oh, my God, if I had only had access to this at one point in my life". The men and women who were speaking at this post-traumatic stress disorder clinic were saying, "I feel like a wimp, but my buddy was blown up and the blood was all over me and his brains. I feel if I complain or if it affected me psychologically, that I'm a wimp, that I'm not this macho man".

We are breaking through that to get them to talk about things. We need solid programs for vets to be attended to. I am hoping that will come up at the committee stage and that we will look at this really important issue.

Government Orders

The third thing that I want to talk about that I think needs to be looked at in committee are the current programs and the current service delivery. I have heard from veterans that, in fact, this is very spotty across the country. Some areas have great programs, great ways of accessing them, and others do not. We need to look at how to make this a seamless kind of delivery of services no matter where people live across the country.

For instance, I have heard from veterans that they wait six to eight or nine months just to get the papers processed while they are in pain, while they have a need for all kinds of early interventions. We all know that, with disabilities, the earlier we intervene, the better the chance of recovery. The longer we wait, the more difficult it is to recover from these disabilities, whether they are physical or mental.

We have heard that people have been waiting for a long time, that when they get there, they sometimes face hostility. They feel like they are begging. They feel that they are often accused of lying or they are often accused of overstressing the problem that they have. They have to provide the burden proof that there is something wrong with them. Many of them have said that their physicians have written notes saying that this is what this person has and this is what this person needs, and then they would be told things, such as, "Oh, well, your physician is just lying to help you out".

We are traumatizing the people who went out to fight for us. They come back and they have to face this re-victimization. That is really tough for them.

In fact, I have spoken to many World War II veterans who are in their eighties who cannot deal with it. It is something that just makes them so anxious and upset that they have just left themselves disabled; they have not sought the help that they need.

I just want to take a minute to speak about an individual veteran. This veteran talks very much about her service history. She was in Afghanistan. She talked about the fact that in British Columbia, where she lives, there is no rehabilitation centre, there is no one-stop shopping. She has to go and meet case worker A and then she has to go, for a different thing, to case worker B. She wanders all across the province. Then, when she has a problem, she has to go into the provincial health care system and stay in line with others to get physiotherapy, to get a wheelchair, to get various many other things in order to get the help that she needs. There is no veteran service centre, no rehabilitation centre.

We used to have this in Vancouver. It is no longer there. When she needs things, sometimes she has to call back east to get stuff. And if the weather is bad or if the phones are not working, she may not be able to get somebody back east. The time differences often make it difficult for her.

She is suggesting that we look at the delivery of service, make it seamless, make it national, ensure that there are three centres, one in the east, one in the centre of Canada, and one in the west, so that veterans do not have to spend a lot of time and energy trying to get the help they need.

I think we are going to support this bill, obviously. It is a step in the right direction. However, I hope we look at these three issues when we get to committee.

• (1635)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment my colleague. Clearly, her role as a medical doctor and her many meetings with veterans across the country has helped.

I am vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and we are doing a study on suicide in our veterans community. One of the presenters this afternoon was a professor from UBC who talked about a program called "Veterans Transition". I do not know if the member is aware of it, but he certainly spoke very highly of this wonderful program. It does not receive and has not to date been able to receive federal funding. It is receiving its funding through the Royal Canadian Legion.

I would like to hear some comments from the hon. member. Has she made interventions on behalf of this group, or is she aware of this veterans transition organization?

• (1640)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, actually I did mention the UBC program. I have seen some of the films that were made and have met with some of the doctors there who have been dealing with this program. The member is absolutely right. They get money from UBC and the poppy fund, which is the Legion; but they do not get a penny from the federal government.

This is a very small program and they are not able to expand it. The work they are doing is very labour intensive. It is sometimes literally one-on-one counselling and a one-on-one workshops that they have to do. This is to deal with post-traumatic stress disorder.

They have pleaded with me to come and speak to this issue here today, bring it to the attention of the veterans committee, and our party, so that we can talk about this very important issue. Speaking as a physician, the issue of post-traumatic stress disorder is a very longstanding and deep-rooted issue that can last a whole lifetime.

We have many young men that have returned from Afghanistan. For example, the unfortunate young man, Trevor Greene from the Seaforth Highlanders, who had an axe in his head. We could look at how to honour this man by setting up a new rehabilitation centre, of which we have none at the moment in B.C., and call it the Trevor Greene centre.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think that we can speak of a culture of protecting veterans, particularly in Europe. Some members will probably say that Europeans have seen so much war that they have had time to develop that kind of culture.

I would like to ask my colleague if she thinks that it would be good if the committee, during discussions about Bill C-55, drew on that culture in general. I am not only talking about physical things or regulations or the way in which laws are created. Veterans are cared for differently in Europe than they are here.

We could basically say that this type of culture does not exist here. Here there are people who want to forget them. I would like to hear her thoughts about proposing that to the committee.

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, I think that is an excellent suggestion made by my colleague. This is what I meant by the system not being a national one of service and programs.

In many provinces, like mine, veterans have to go to the provincial health care system and wait in line. One of the things they talked about was having a culture that recognizes and respects our veterans.

They suggest that in many countries veterans actually work within these rehabilitation centres. Veterans actually work within the system because they know what it is they need to do to manipulate their way through the system. They feel that is a way to use veterans, who have come back, to get them into the system, to create a culture of respect and understanding of the issues veterans face, and the hoops they have to jump through.

I think it is important for us to look at that system and at how we can deal with our veterans in a holistic way.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to add my 10 minutes to this very important debate today on Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act and the Pension Act. It is a very long title for an important bill.

Before I continue, I want to take moment and pay special tribute to the thousands of current and former military service people, their families, and most especially to all those who have paid the ultimate price for the freedoms that we all enjoy today.

In the words of my colleague from Etobicoke North, the life experiences of our veterans:

—affect me and all Canadians deeply, and remind us that we owe them a debt of gratitude we can never repay. Instead of trying to repay our obligation, we let them down on so many issues. For example, too many injured veterans go without the care they need. Too many veterans do not receive the support they have earned. Too many veterans have nowhere safe to sleep at night.

This must change and we have the power to change it. Bill C-55 is a step in the right direction.

As the vice-chair of the veterans committee and as an elected member, whenever I am called upon to speak or to vote on these matters, I remember the spirit that inspired these brave men and women to serve our country, and I try to conduct myself in accordance with their example.

As someone who grew up on Canada's east coast, I have seen firsthand that spirit, how it lived in the people of our communities and what it felt like each time a ship put out to sea with a crew of our finest young men and women.

I have also witnessed firsthand the challenges that are too often faced by that same crew upon their return home from the horrors of combat. The need for effective rehabilitation, services, and compensation are at the heart of why we are here today and, as we deliberate, I would certainly hope that all members of this House would remember that basic guiding ideal.

Let us right these past wrongs. Let us make Bill C-55 serve the people who need it the most.

We have all heard stories of elderly veterans who can no longer make ends meet. They are forced to give up their possessions, their independence and, ironically enough, they are forced to relinquish their personal freedom, all because they cannot access the appropriate services and supports they might need to truly return home.

We have all heard the terrible stories of young men and women battling marital breakdown, financial ruin, and even criminal implications prompted by battle-induced PTSD. What we do not often admit is that these things are actually avoidable.

National media headlines like “Veterans wanted dead, not alive, ombudsman charges” and “Canada's treatment of war veterans 'a national embarrassment'” tell a story of tragic failure on the part of the government.

Just this past July, the *Toronto Star* ran the story of John Sheardown. According to the article, Mr. Sheardown is an 85-year-old former bomber pilot. He is suffering from Alzheimer's and recovering from a broken hip.

Despite his distinguished service to Canada, Mr. Sheardon was left to languish in hospital, facing a wait of up to 18 months for a bed in a veterans long-term home in Ottawa. Now I ask, how is that okay? How is this appropriate treatment for a Canadian hero?

Our veterans deserve our help. They heroically stood for Canada and for Canadians, and now we need to stand with them, no exceptions.

What has brought us to this point? How is it that even after the implementation of the new veterans charter in 2006, we still have veterans falling through the cracks?

The Minister of Veterans Affairs tabled Bill C-55, Enhanced New Veterans Charter Act on November 17. The legislation consolidated several smaller announcements the minister made the previous fall, and it would make further minor changes to the new veterans charter, as called for by several veterans organizations including the Royal Canadian Legion.

Bill C-55 also proposes to introduce changes to the administration of the lump sum disability award, something we have heard a lot about at the committee level. Specifically, Bill C-55 would amend parts 1 to 3 of the new veterans charter, as well part IV of the Pension Act.

●(1645)

Despite all of this, on behalf of the veterans and in concert with many of my colleagues on this side of the House, I must ask why the government waited four years to propose any change to the new veterans charter.

Government Orders

Conservatives have suggested that the veterans charter is a living document or, as they call it, a work in progress that would be continually adapted to meet the changing needs of veterans, but I see very little evidence of this. How can they say this with a straight face when so many of our veterans have been left out of the government's plan?

Some on the other side of the House might say that I am being unfair with my criticism and so, as an example, I would ask why Veterans Affairs Canada did not live up to its 2006 commitment to review lump sum awards versus disability pension within two years. It would have saved an enormous amount of anguish for an awful lot of people if that had already been done, as was required in the original charter. I do not think it is an unfair question. It is a fair one that deserves an answer.

The former veterans ombudsman explained to the Senate Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs that such examples of lack of timely action undermine the sincerity of the chorus of loyalty to our veterans. With this in mind, Liberals have no intention of holding up this bill. We will work in the best interests of veterans and Canadian Forces members and, most importantly, to ensure that this bill rightfully addresses their needs.

However, to do this effectively, we are going to have to move fast. Canada, unfortunately, is now facing the possibility of an election. Again, when will the government get serious about the passage of Bill C-55 and its extra support for veterans? It will not happen if there is another election.

There is no real doubt that change is needed. A study by the minister's own department found that 31% of veterans are unhappy with what they are currently receiving. Yet, rather than making the necessary changes immediately, the government opted for a lesser approach. It simply divided the payment up differently.

Rather than fix the underlying problem, the government is proposing to permit the recipient to collect a partial lump sum and partial annual payments over any number of years or as a single lump payment. This is nothing more than bean counting and does very little to actually address the challenges already being identified by Canada's veterans.

I must point out that the Royal Canadian Legion would still like the department to address the overall amount of the lump sum payment, which currently stands at \$276,000. In Canada, disabled workers receive on average \$329,000. In Australia, service members receive about \$325,000 and service members from the U.K. receive almost \$1 million.

On a personal note, I would agree with the legion when it suggests that Canadian veterans have every right to expect at least what their civilian counterparts might expect to receive. I would even go one step further. Perhaps Canadian veterans should expect even more given what they have done for us.

This is but one example of what is lacking with the government. Whether we are talking about the government's lack of action on the agent orange file, the atomic veterans' concerns or the matter of PTSD most recently raised by the committee, the government has consistently failed to take a proactive approach to supporting veterans.

As I have also raised, the government has turned a blind eye to the changing demographics associated with our veterans. Canada's first contingents of regular Canadian troops arrived in Afghanistan in January 2002. Since then, thousands of our young men and women have served in what has been some of the most horrific and trying battle conditions seen in years.

In addition to the actual loss of life, Canada's newest returning heroes are facing a host of medical and psychological challenges: PTSD, heightened rates of suicide, marital breakdown, homelessness and even, according to some studies, higher rates of diseases such as ALS.

This is the new reality faced by Canadian veterans and as the former critic for Veterans Affairs, as the vice-chair of the veterans committee today and as an MP who thinks our war heroes deserve better, I am here to say that I think the government is simply not doing enough. The government has been quick to deploy and keen to arm, but very slow and lethargic to prepare for the human consequences of its actions and policies.

Liberals will be supporting Bill C-55. We look forward to it going to committee, an opportunity to try to improve a bill that does some things but clearly does not do enough.

• (1650)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to compliment the member as the champion in Parliament for pension reform in the special debate she had on November 23. I want to use my comment time to emphasize the point that for the reservist veterans there is a technical point where they fall through the crack. Whereas other public servants and Canadian Forces people working full time have to work six months to get the pension, reservists very seldom work longer than six months at a shot. They serve for two or three months, then they go back to their job and so they do not get any pensionable time. Most, if not all, reservists are being robbed of pensions that they rightfully should have for their great defence of our country. I hope the member would support me in trying to get that changed, maybe down to two months' service at least, so that reservists could get the pensions that all other service people get.

• (1655)

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member as someone who has done an amazing amount of work when it comes to representing his constituents.

When we get into the area of pensions there are many inequities. He raised one particular area when it comes to the reservists that needs to be reviewed and some of these things need to be corrected.

I recently put out a white paper with 27 recommendations on a variety of things that need to change to bring ourselves into the 21st century and to ensure that we are treating people fairly. Reservists give us an awful lot and ask for very little back. The least we should be able to do is ensure that they have access to some pensionable earnings.

Government Orders

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take my hat off to my colleague who has been a champion for so many things, especially with veterans when she was the critic and now that she is on the committee.

Veterans have spoken to me over and over. We have all agreed on the lump sum and we have all talked about post-traumatic stress disorder, but I have heard from veterans that the system, per se, that is supposed to serve them is not working. I am speaking as a British Columbian now and what we have found that the veterans have no call centres in British Columbia. So if they have to phone back east and if there is a weather problem that they cannot get through because lines are down, they do not know what to do. They wait until things are better. They have no facility. The closest facility for rehabilitation is in Alberta. They jump through hoops all the time.

Does the member feel, as suggested earlier by our colleagues from the Bloc, that the system and how it works to serve veterans is something that her committee can look at?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I have to say in the two years that I have been on this committee, we have heard from so many different people about their frustrations, whether it is with the Veterans Appeal Board or whatever, when it comes to getting a chance to have a hearing, how many cases are overturned and how they have difficulty accessing it. We have had the officials from the department before our committee countless times.

Our committee works in a very non-partisan way, which I think is a tribute to the people and to the veterans society. Clearly, the people who work for Veterans Canada have a tremendous interest in actually being able to solve the problems. However, we continue to hear those problems and we continue to have the bureaucracy come before us to answer to us, to listen to the concerns that are raised.

Clearly, in British Columbia, there are probably a lot more issues because of the fact of distance and time, as my hon. colleague mentioned. There is still a lot of work to do.

We have a new group of what we call veterans who are very young, who are looking for service and for help. It is up to us to make improvements so that they get the recognition and support that they clearly deserve.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am most grateful for the opportunity to take part in this debate concerning the courageous men and women who serve and have served in the military.

When our country was in danger during World War I, World War II and Korea, or when our country called upon them to be peacekeepers in places far from home, like Somalia, Bosnia, Lebanon, Cypress, East Timor, Suez and now in Afghanistan, when they were sent to serve in NATO, or when our country asked them to help communities jeopardized by floods, earthquakes, ice storms, forest fires, our courageous men and women did not hesitate. They did what they were asked to do. They did their duty in World War I, World War II, Korea and a multitude of deployments since.

In the course of that duty our country made a covenant with them. Canada made promises that the men and women of the armed forces would not be forgotten. Our governments made and continue to make promises assuring these men and women that they would be

remembered and honoured by a grateful nation. That is a wonderful sentiment.

I know without a shadow of a doubt that the people of Canada are grateful and that they truly remember and honour our servicemen and women in the Canadian Forces and the RCMP. I see it every day from my constituents in London—Fanshawe.

Sadly however, what has become painfully obvious is that the government neither honours our veterans, peacekeepers and those currently serving, nor is it willing to unconditionally provide the services, pensions, programs and special care to which these veterans, the members of the armed forces and their families are entitled.

I am extremely disappointed that after four years the government was unable to incorporate more substantial changes to the veterans charter. The changes proposed in Bill C-55 are merely cosmetic and do not go far enough.

Bill C-55 states that the minister may provide career transition services; may provide rehabilitation services and vocational assistance to veterans' survivors; may on application pay a permanent allowance to a veteran. "May" is not good enough. The word must be "shall".

Veterans have waited long enough. The Government of Canada has an obligation to ensure that after veterans have put their lives on the line they are treated with dignity, honour and respect.

Sadly, Bill C-55 is a lost opportunity. The act itself is full of equivocations. We have report after report that show the total inadequacies of an overly complex and ineffective Veterans Affairs program.

The government ignored the vast majority of recommendations regarding changes to the veterans charter, the lion's share of which came from the Gerontological Advisory Council as well as the former veterans ombudsman and the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, all of whom produced significant studies on the veterans charter.

I would like to highlight some of the problems that this new legislation ignores.

I am sure members know about the pension clawbacks that retired members of the Canadian Forces face when they reach age 65. In 1966, when the CPP was introduced, it was integrated with the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the RCMP Superannuation Act. Members of the Canadian Forces were unaware that there would consequently be reductions to their pensions.

During their working years, CF members face health hazards, long periods of time away from family and frequent moves. The negative impact of these stresses are often felt most acutely in later life. Cancelling the clawback is the best way to acknowledge the commitment and service of veterans. The government has however not been receptive to this imperative.

Government Orders

When a veteran dies, his or her spouse is allowed only 50% of the pension of the deceased. Many of these spouses face real hardship and as a result, legions across the country have tried to make up for what the government takes away. Legion sponsored funds attempt to support widows and widowers and their families as well as possible. The legion has fundraisers with raffles and poppy sales, dinners and hall rentals, but the legion too is falling on hard times. Its members are aging. Its numbers are in decline and it is having difficulty making ends meet.

Legions have recommended that survivor pensions be two-thirds of the original pension. That would be a tremendous help to spouses, many of whom are elderly women.

• (1700)

Unfortunately, the government is not interested in such a change. Even worse, if a veteran marries after age 60, the widow or widower is entitled to nothing. The Canadian Forces Superannuation Act calls them gold diggers and refuses to recognize any entitlement, refusing to recognize the importance of the love and comfort they gave to their partners. It is a sign of disrespect.

Nowhere is such disrespect more evident than in the situation faced by many ex-forces members if injuries sustained during service do not fully manifest themselves until after retirement.

Just this fall I had an extended conversation with a master sergeant. While serving overseas, he sustained injuries from a significant fall in a training exercise. He was hospitalized with a spinal fracture, and after he recovered he returned to active duty. Now some 30 years later, he suffers from neck pain caused by the fracture. He survives on expensive medications not covered by his benefits. When he asked Veterans Affairs for help, he was denied. The reason given was that he had not been injured in combat. In other words, despite medical records showing injuries from a serious accident during his service career, his veracity and the value of his service were called into question and he was refused benefits.

Bill C-55 does not provide a remedy for this injustice. The corporate insurance mentality of those administering the program within Veterans Affairs hurts those who have served their country, and hurts their families too. That mentality has to go.

Did members know there is a homeless shelter for military veterans and a food bank in Calgary set up specifically for veterans?

Last April, the Prime Minister visited that food bank, had a media photo op and talked about how wonderful it was that the community was helping veterans. Well, it was, except that a research study conducted by London based researchers, Susan Ray and Cheryl Forchuk, shows that in southwestern Ontario alone there are dozens of homeless veterans. I wonder if it occurred to the Prime Minister that it is an outrage that the people we pledged to honour and remember are homeless and forced to survive by going to a food bank.

Even with Bill C-55, veterans and retired CF personnel still face reduced pension, may have pension benefits denied and are not entitled to help for non-service-related injuries. The experience of homelessness and hunger among veterans is a common occurrence.

It certainly does not seem like a grateful government or a responsible Department of Veterans Affairs.

Finally, I want to talk about the situation at Parkwood Hospital in my riding. Parkwood was at one time the regional veterans hospital. I can remember visiting my uncles, both veterans of World War II, at Parkwood whenever they were hospitalized. Parkwood was also a long-term care facility for veterans whose injuries were so serious they would never live independently or with their families again.

Back in 1979, Parkwood and veterans hospitals across the country were turned over to the provinces and Veterans Affairs contracted for beds and care for the World War I, World War II and Korean War vets. The agreement entered into with the province contained no provisions for modern day veterans or the estimated 200,000 peacekeepers who have served on missions since Korea. Many of these retired or soon to be retired Canadian Forces members feel they have been overlooked by their country. While there are private care homes available to them, many feel they should receive the same level of care and have the same access to hospitals like Parkwood that previous generations had. Unfortunately, the beds at veterans hospitals will close as World War II and Korean War veterans pass away. Once these beds are gone, they will not re-open.

The Government of Canada should change the mandate of veterans hospitals and allow those coming back from Afghanistan and the aging post-Korean service personnel to have access to federally supported beds. I say this because the care of veterans is a federal responsibility, a part of the covenant that I talked about at the beginning of my remarks.

These veterans have earned their pensions, their benefits, their services and programs and they have earned the right to expect their government to fulfill all of the promises made. It is time for the government to go back to the drawing board. Bill C-55 does not fix the problems with the veterans charter. The bill needs extensive amendments.

Our veterans deserve much better than what they are receiving. Let us honour them with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Government Orders

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's comments and I found that her judgment was too harsh. We are in the process of making significant changes to support our veterans, particularly our modern-day veterans who may come back from Afghanistan wounded.

We are in the process of implementing three measures that will help them in their lives. If they participate in a rehabilitation program, they will receive \$40,000 per year for the duration of the program. In addition, if they are seriously wounded and are unable to return to work, they will receive a minimum of \$58,000 per year plus the lump sum payment that, with the new changes, can reach up to \$285,000 depending on the extent of the veteran's injuries. They can receive this money in cash or spread it over the desired number of years; they have the choice.

There was a unanimous vote in this regard in 2005. Our soldiers are still in the Canadian army for two or three years after they return from Afghanistan, during which time they receive their full salary. It is only in the past few years that we discovered weaknesses in the system. That is why we are proceeding in this fashion now; we are going to improve things for them.

The Royal Canadian Legion and the other seven veterans organizations that we consulted think that we are on the right path and that we have set the right priorities. Does the hon. member not think that we are doing something really good for veterans?

• (1710)

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for his question. I do, however, have to go back to Bill C-55.

I am very disappointed it is so very weak. Clause after clause indicates that the minister "may" provide support, not "shall" but "may". To me, this equivocation means that veterans are once again going to be put at risk.

The minister is quite right in terms of the living document that appeared in this House four years ago. Unfortunately, I feel that it took far too long for the needed changes to even be proposed.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the announcement made a couple of weeks ago by the Minister of National Defence, in which he talked about five places where veterans could go in order to have the services and support they need. While it is an important step in the right direction, I would suggest that only five centres spread across this huge country are not enough.

A great many of the veterans that I come in contact with are unsure and need support, and they could never manage to get to one of these centres. I am pleased to see that the centres have been brought forward. Establishing them was one of the NDP suggestions that we fought very hard for for a very long time.

Again, however, veterans need more.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have two quick points to make that I raised on November 23 in the debate on pensions. I have not heard back from the government, so I just want to make these points again.

The first one is that the public service superannuation plan used to be administered by the Yukon government for federal employees in the Yukon. They moved it to New Brunswick with disastrous results, with waits of four or five month sometimes. It is just not working, and I hope the government has moved on that since my request on November 23.

The second thing is that I wonder if the member has heard what I have heard from military members and reservists, that they wait months to have their requests to buy back pension time. They can buy back certain pension time in a particular role or job, but of course they need to know how much it is to be calculated. They are waiting months for that type of service.

Is that the type of administrative service our veterans should be getting? Does that show that the government is making the administration of benefits to veterans a priority?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, my colleague underscores what I am most concerned about, that there will only be five centres available for veterans if they need help and support. His point about the problems caused by services being moved to a distant area also underscores the situation we are facing.

Many of the veterans who come to talk to me about their situation are extremely fragile. They have depended on the military for most of their adult lives in their decision-making and they find it very difficult when things get complicated or complex. Many of their needs are significant. As we know, the pay received by the average Canadian Forces person is not significant, and he or she cannot wait months and months for a buyback or some kind of financial support. We can do far better. We promised this.

When I made my remarks, I talked about the covenant between our service personnel and RCMP and this country. We ask them to do terrifying and important things for their country. They have stood and done those things, and we owe them the respect and dignity due by making sure that whatever they need will be provided. Unfortunately, Bill C-55 does not do that, at least not in its present state, and I am hoping that we can amend it to make it stronger and make it work because we are far past the point where we can tolerate any more wasted time.

• (1715)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, when the minister made his presentation on the bill some time ago, he indicated the changes to be brought about by the bill but insisted that the lump sum provisions would be kept as an option. The NDP's argument has been that when we are dealing with injured people, particularly younger injured people, they have a great temptation to take a lump sum payment.

Government Orders

Not only has the federal government presented this option but also the Conservative government in Manitoba a number of years ago brought in the same option for workers' compensation. It was basically a way for it to walk away from the problem. If people signed off on a lump sum payment, the government avoided liability at a very low cost, because while the lump sum looks like very big amount of money, the reality is that disability lasts a lifetime. These are young people who are going to live many years.

The government is deluding itself if it feels that somehow it is solving the problem by offering lump sum payments because at the end of day, when all of that money is spent, and in a lot of cases it will be spent very quickly, the people who are disabled are going to feel shortchanged by the government and will come back and ask for more.

Therefore, I do not think we should be offering a lump sum, whether for workers' compensation or this situation here.

I would like to ask the member if she has any comments in that regard, because I sense that the Liberals and the government want to keep the option of a lump sum.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, the lump sum payment is certainly a significant issue. My colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore and I have discussed this.

When it comes to older veterans, the lump sum may well make a good deal of sense, inasmuch as they may wish to retire soon or may have expenditures to make, such as paying off their mortgages or their children's educations. In these cases, the lump sum payment might make sense. If their health is good, that is an option that should be available.

However, as my colleague has pointed out, younger veterans have a whole lifetime ahead of them. They have families to support, they may have medical challenges to deal with and physiotherapy and expensive drugs to pay for, as the young master sergeant explained to me. For those people, the lump sum does not make sense: they need a secure pension. The former ombudsman, Mr. Stogran, pointed that out quite clearly.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to participate in the debate on Bill C-55.

From the outset, I want to point out that I support Bill C-55, as the son of a World War II veteran who served at D-Day and went through the battle of the Falaise Gap and Caen. My father came home with shrapnel in his legs and that was there until the day he died. He lost hearing in one ear. I know what it is like to live with a veteran who had to seek services from Veterans Affairs. I know what it is like for someone who, through no fault of his own, did not come back the same person as when he left for the war. Yet my father would say every day that he would do it again.

At the end of World War II, no country treated their veterans better than Canada, bar none.

As the vice-chair of the national defence committee and the vice-chair of the Afghan committee, I have had the opportunity to visit Afghanistan on three occasions and meet with our soldiers in the field. I have had the opportunity to meet with veterans here. As a member of the Royal Canadian Legion in Richmond Hill, Branch

375, I have talked to veterans. All they want and deserve are services that will respond effectively to their needs.

When a veteran, in his eighties, needs a new pair of eyeglasses and it takes months to get a response, that is unacceptable. When a veteran needs a new hearing aid and it takes months, that is unacceptable.

Whether these amendments are made or not, the charter still does not deal with the issue of customer service. We need to respond more effectively and efficiently to the needs of veterans. As more and more people come home from Afghanistan, we will have a larger number of veterans. The defence committee last year did a post traumatic stress disorder study. We found that there was a discrepancy in the country between east and west in terms of the services available for veterans.

I wrote the Minister of Veterans Affairs on October 25 about the \$4,100 currently paid for burial. That is about 70% less than a normal burial in our country and one-third of what it would be if one was killed in action in Afghanistan. That is unacceptable. Some families do not have the money to cover full burial costs and the government only provides \$4,100. I hope the minister will respond effectively on that issue.

There is no question that the bill before the House tries to address some of the issues. We know that the Royal Canadian Legion, for example, is supportive of these changes. Our party has no intention of holding up the bill. We want to ensure we move forward as fast as possible.

The charter was passed in 2005, and this is a living document. It is too bad that it has taken four years to come to this point. We need to act quickly to deal with some of the issues that are before the House and get this done.

One of the issues the government did not deal with effectively was on the lump-sum payment. That is surprising, given the minister's departmental study found that 31% of veterans were unhappy with the lump-sum payment. Although the minister said that he would improve the system, under this legislation, all the minister has really done is divide up the payment differently. Veterans have not been asking for that. That is not what that study showed.

Clearly dealing with the issue of partial payments over a number of years for recipients or a single lump-sum payment still does not address the issue that many veterans have articulated. That should have been addressed in the legislation. Again, the minister has had four years and nothing has really been done to address it.

In fact, if we look at Australia, the Australian veterans receive an average of \$329,000, whereas the British receive up to \$1 million. We need to address this kind of issue for our veterans.

Routine Proceedings

● (1720)

Pieces of the legislation address the concerns of a number of people and a number of associations, such as the proposed legislation dealing with \$58,000 per year for seriously wounded or ill veterans, an improvement, and for those too injured to return to the workforce, a minimum of \$40,000 per year no matter what the salary was when serving in the Canadian Forces for those receiving the monthly earnings loss benefit. Again, that is an important change.

These changes are necessary but, again, it is the ability of veterans to access these changes. It is the ability of veterans to get the services they need in a prompt and efficient manner.

A larger disability award is needed in line with what is provided in Australia, which is also provided to disabled civilian veterans who also receive assistance. Again, these are things we could do. I mentioned burial costs, again things we could address.

In the House we always say how important veterans are, yet when it comes to action, we have waited four years for changes, which, again, particularly because of pressure from all opposition parties, now almost at the eleventh we get this.

The new veterans charter advisory group and the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs have indicated, insistently, the need for changes and for those changes to happen quickly. Again, it is disappointing that we have waited.

On the issue of homeless veterans, it is absolutely shocking in our country that we have veterans who are homeless, who are on the streets, who have come back to a lack of support. Again, it is a national disgrace that we have homeless veterans.

Only now are the media, members of Parliament and others actually looking at this, not only as a social issue but also as a moral issue. We have a responsibility to deal with those individuals. Again, I find it very sad that we have what I call homeless heroes on the street who have no ability to deal effectively with finding work, health benefits, et cetera. We have to deal with that.

It is encouraging that many national veterans' organizations are in support of this. It is encouraging to note we are moving forward with the legislation. Some people are talking about an election. I guess that will up to the government. It only governs by the will of Parliament and hopefully maintains the confidence of Parliament. If the government is really serious, hopefully we will be able to address these issues, both now and in the upcoming budget, which the Minister of Finance has announced will be presented on March 22.

It is important that we not only respond in this way, but also that we provide more people in the field, in terms of caseworkers who deal with our veterans. We are going to see a significant increase in the numbers of veterans coming home, because of Afghanistan, and that is going to have an impact.

The number of psychiatrists and psychologists in the Canadian Forces is actually low. In fact, the services are much lower and much less effective in eastern Canada because many of those bases are further away from some of the major cities versus those in western Canada. We need to address that problem.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is not something that is always discovered on a veteran's return home, or three months later or two years later; it can be up to five years later. Again, are we ready to respond to that?

From our studies at the defence committee, the answer is clearly no. We are not ready to respond to that. On that point, I plead to the government to put the resources in to ensure we can attract the professionals to help in that regard and to help the families of those individuals.

About 10 years we did a quality of life study at the defence committee. It really responded to many of the key issues on wages, housing conditions and benefits for people. It is time we started another review and respond in terms of updating the quality of life. We ask people to go overseas and put their lives on the line, while their families are here. Do the families have the right support while those people are away? Do those people have the right support when they come home?

The answer is we do not. We have fallen a long way since the end of the Second World War when we provided the best benefits to veterans coming home after that war.

● (1725)

I was part of a Parliament that addressed these issues and addressed them effectively for future generations. Although we talk a lot about our responsibility to veterans, I would hope that we really show it to them, not only financially but in the other ways that I have pointed out.

I trust we can move this legislation along very quickly. Although some people have reservations, the reality is not only do we have to act at least on those changes that have been made, but we have to keep pushing on the others as well. If we do not, it will be another four years before we see any action.

Our party has pledged to do that. We are party that brought in the charter. We are the party that said it was a living document. It is too bad that it sat on the shelf for four years. Ultimately we are all collectively responsible for ensuring our veterans have the best.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1730)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

The House resumed from March 1 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Call in the members.

• (1810)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 189)

YEAS

Members

André	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Beaudin
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bennett	Bevington
Bigras	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brison
Brunelle	Byrne
Cardin	Carrier
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Coady
Coderre	Comartin
Cotler	Crombie
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Donnelly	Dorion
Dosanjh	Dryden
Duceppe	Dufour
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Faille
Folco	Foote
Freeman	Fry
Gagnon	Gameau
Gaudet	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Guarnieri	Guay
Harris (St. John's East)	Hughes
Hyer	Jennings
Kania	Karygiannis
Kennedy	Laframboise
Lamoureux	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Leslie	Lévesque
MacAulay	Malhi
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
McCallum	McGuinty
McTeague	Ménard
Mendes	Minna
Mourani	Mulcair
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Neville	Oliphant
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Patry
Pearson	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Proulx
Rae	Rafferty
Ratansi	Regan
Rodriguez	Rota

Russell
Savoie
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Routine Proceedings

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Scarpaleggia
Siksay
Simson
Stoffer
Thi Lac
Tonks
Valerioté
Volpe
Wrzesnewskyj

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Arthur
Ashfield	Baird
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boucher	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Brunooge
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guergis
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenny (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Paradis	Payne
Petit	Poilevre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Reid
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Scheer	Schellenberger
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	

*Government Orders*Wong
YelichWoodworth
Young— 136

PAIRED

Members

Allison	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Laforest
Lalonde	Lessard
MacKay (Central Nova)	Smith— 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

STRENGTHENING AVIATION SECURITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Aeronautics Act, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier today the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the third reading stage of Bill C-42.

● (1820)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 190)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
André	Andrews
Armstrong	Arthur
Ashfield	Asselin
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Beaudin	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Bigras
Blackburn	Blais
Blaney	Block
Bonsant	Bouchard
Boucher	Boughen
Bourgeois	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinoooge
Brunelle	Byrne
Cadman	Calandra
Calkins	Cannon (Pontiac)
Cardin	Carrie
Carrier	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Coderre	Cotler
Crombie	Cummins
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davidson	Day
DeBellefeuille	Dechert
Del Mastro	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Devolin	Dhaliwal

Dhalla	Dion
Dorion	Dosanjh
Dreeshen	Dryden
Duceppe	Dufour
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Faillie	Fantino
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Freeman	Fry
Gagnon	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Gaudet	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guarnieri	Guay
Guergis	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Jean
Jennings	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kania	Karygiannis
Kenney	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laframboise	Lake
Lamoureux	Lauzon
Lavallée	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Lemieux
Lévesque	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKenzie	Malhi
Malo	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinity
McLeod	McTeague
Ménard	Mendes
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Mourani	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Nadeau	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Ouellet
Pacetti	Paillet (Hochelaga)
Paillet (Louis-Hébert)	Paquette
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Plamondon
Poillievre	Pomerleau
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Regan	Reid
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Rodriguez
Rota	Russell
Savage	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schellenberger	Sgro
Shea	Shiple
Shory	Simms
Simson	Sopuck
Sorenson	St-Cyr
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thi Lac
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trudeau	Tweed
Uppal	Valeriote
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Vincent	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin

Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wong
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilfert
Woodworth
Yelich
Zarac— 246

NAYS

Members

Angus
Atamanenko
Charlton
Christopherson
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dewar
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Gravelle
Hughes
Layton
Maloway
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Mulcair
Savoie
Stoffer

Ashton
Bevington
Chow
Comartin
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Donnelly
Godin
Harris (St. John's East)
Hyer
Leslie
Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Rafferty
Siksay
Thibeault— 34

PAIRED

Members

Allison
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Lalonde
MacKay (Central Nova)

Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Les Basques)
Haute-Côte-Nord)
Lalonde
Smith— 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

The House resumed from February 17 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 559 under private members' business in the name of Mr. Baird.

• (1825)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 191)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Anders
André
Angus
Arthur
Ashton
Atamanenko
Bagnell

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Ambrose
Anderson
Andrews
Armstrong
Ashfield
Asselin
Bachand
Bains

Baird
Bélanger
Bennett
Bernier
Bezan
Blackburn
Blaney
Bonsant
Boucher
Bourgeois
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Brunelle
Cadman
Calkins
Cardin
Carrier
Charlton
Chow
Clarke
Coady
Comartin
Crombie
Cullen
Cuzner
Davidson
Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille
Del Mastro
Deschamps
Devolin
Dhaliwal
Dion
Dorion
Dreeshen
Duceppe
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra
Eyking
Fantino
Finley
Fletcher
Foote
Fry
Galipeau
Gameau
Généreux
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Guay
Harris (St. John's East)
Hawn
Hoback
Holder
Hyer
Jennings
Kania
Kennedy
Kent
Komarnicki
Laframboise
Lamoureux
Lavallée
Lebel
Lee
Lemieux
Lévesque
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKenzie
Malo
Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Mayes
McColeman
McLeod
Ménard
Menzies
Miller

Private Members' Business

Beaudin
Bellavance
Benoit
Bevington
Bigras
Blais
Block
Bouchard
Boughen
Braid
Brison
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Byrne
Calandra
Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie
Casson
Chong
Christopherson
Clement
Coderre
Cotler
Crowder
Cummins
D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dechert
Demers
Desnoyers
Dewar
Dhalla
Donnelly
Dosanjh
Dryden
Dufour
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Faille
Fast
Flaherty
Folco
Freeman
Gagnon
Gallant
Gaudet
Glover
Goldring
Goodyear
Gravelle
Guarnieri
Guergis
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoepfner
Hughes
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake
Lauzon
Layton
LeBlanc
Lemay
Leslie
Lobb
Lunn
MacAulay
Malhi
Maloway
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
McCallum
McGuinty
McTeague
Mendes
Merrifield
Minna

Private Members' Business

Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Mourani
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
 Murray
 Neville
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Oda
 Ouellet
 Paillé (Hochelaga)
 Paquette
 Patry
 Pearson
 Plamondon
 Pomerleau
 Proulx
 Rafferty
 Rajotte
 Regan
 Richards
 Ritz
 Rota
 Savage
 Saxton
 Scheer
 Sgro
 Shipley
 Siksay
 Simson
 Sorenson
 Stanton
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Thi Lac
 Thompson
 Toews
 Trudeau
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Vincent
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Wilfert
 Woodworth
 Yelich
 Zarac — 281

Mulcair
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Nadeau
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Obhrai
 Oliphant
 Pacetti
 Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
 Paradis
 Payne
 Petit
 Poilievre
 Preston
 Rae
 Raitt
 Ratansi
 Reid
 Rickford
 Rodriguez
 Russell
 Savoie
 Scarpaleggia
 Schellenberger
 Shea
 Shory
 Simms
 Sopuck
 St-Cyr
 Stoffer
 Strahl
 Szabo
 Thibeault
 Tilson
 Tonks
 Tweed
 Valeriote
 Van Loan
 Verner
 Volpe
 Warawa
 Watson

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Allison
 Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
 Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Lalonde
 MacKay (Central Nova)

Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Laforest
 Lessard
 Smith — 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[English]

FREE PUBLIC TRANSIT FOR SENIORS ACT

The House resumed from February 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-449, An Act regarding free public transit for seniors, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-449 under private member's business.

● (1835)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 192)

YEAS

Members

Andrews
 Arthur
 Atamanenko
 Bains
 Bennett
 Brison
 Charlton
 Christopherson
 Coderre
 Cotler
 Crowder
 Cuzner
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Dewar
 Dhalla
 Donnelly
 Dryden
 Easter
 Folco
 Fry
 Godin
 Gravelle
 Guergis
 Hughes
 Jennings
 Karygiannis
 Lamoureux
 LeBlanc
 Leslie
 Malhi
 Marston
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Masse
 McCallum
 McTeague
 Minna
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
 Murray
 Oliphant
 Patry
 Proulx
 Rafferty
 Regan
 Rota
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Siksay
 Simson
 Szabo
 Tonks
 Valeriote
 Wilfert
 Zarac — 105

Angus
 Ashton
 Bagnell
 Bélanger
 Bevington
 Byrne
 Chow
 Coady
 Comartin
 Crombie
 Cullen
 D'Amours
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Dhaliwal
 Dion
 Dosanjh
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Eyking
 Foote
 Gameau
 Goodale
 Guarnieri
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hyer
 Kania
 Kennedy
 Layton
 Lee
 MacAulay
 Maloway
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 Mathysen
 McGuinty
 Mendes
 Mulcair
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Neville
 Pacetti
 Pearson
 Rae
 Ratansi
 Rodriguez
 Russell
 Savoie
 Sgro
 Simms
 Stoffer
 Thibeault
 Trudeau
 Volpe
 Wrzesnewskyj

NAYS

Members

Abbott
 Aglukkaq
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Anders
 André
 Ashfield
 Baird
 Bellavance
 Bernier
 Bigras
 Blais
 Block
 Bouchard

Ablonczy
 Albrecht
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Armstrong
 Bachand
 Beaudin
 Benoit
 Bezan
 Blackburn
 Blaney
 Bonsant
 Boucher

Private Members' Business

Boughen
 Braid
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Brunelle
 Calandra
 Cannon (Pontiac)
 Carrie
 Casson
 Clarke
 Cummins
 Day
 Dechert
 Demers
 Desnoyers
 Dorion
 Duceppe
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Faille
 Fast
 Flaherty
 Freeman
 Galipeau
 Gaudet
 Glover
 Goodyear
 Grewal
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert
 Hoepfner
 Jean
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lake
 Lavallée
 Lemay
 Lévesque
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 Malo
 McColeman
 Ménard
 Merrifield
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Mourani
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Obhrai
 Ouellet
 Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
 Paradis
 Petit
 Poilievre
 Preston
 Rajotte
 Richards
 Ritz
 Scheer
 Shea
 Shory
 Sorenson
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Thi Lac
 Tilson
 Tweed
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Vincent
 Warawa
 Watson
 Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Woodworth
 Young— 175

Bourgeois
 Breitzkreuz
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooge
 Cadman
 Calkins
 Cardin
 Carrier
 Chong
 Clement
 Davidson
 DeBellefeuille
 Del Mastro
 Deschamps
 Devolin
 Dreeshen
 Dufour
 Dykstra
 Fantino
 Finley
 Fletcher
 Gagnon
 Gallant
 Généreux
 Goldring
 Gourde
 Guay
 Hawn
 Hoback
 Holder
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Laframboise
 Lauzon
 Lebel
 Lemieux
 Lobb
 Lunn
 MacKenzie
 Mayes
 McLeod
 Menzies
 Miller
 Nadeau
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Oda
 Paillé (Hochelaga)
 Paquette
 Payne
 Plamondon
 Pomerleau
 Raitt
 Reid
 Rickford
 Saxton
 Schellenberger
 Shipley
 Sopuck
 St-Cyr
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Thompson
 Toews
 Uppal
 Van Loan
 Verner
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
 Wong
 Yelich

PAIRED

Members

Allison

Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)

Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
 Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's) Laforest
 Lalonde Lessard
 MacKay (Central Nova) Smith— 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[English]

FIRST NATIONS FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY ACT

The House resumed from February 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-575, An Act respecting the accountability and enhanced financial transparency of elected officials of First Nations communities, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-575 under private members' business.

● (1845)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 193)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
 Aglukkaq
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Anders
 Andrews
 Arthur
 Baird
 Bernier
 Blackburn
 Block
 Boughen
 Breitzkreuz
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Cadman
 Calkins
 Carrie
 Chong
 Clement
 D'Amours
 Day
 Del Mastro
 Dhalla
 Dreeshen
 Dykstra
 Fast
 Flaherty
 Galipeau
 Généreux
 Goldring
 Gourde
 Guarnieri
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert
 Hoepfner
 Jean
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 Lemieux
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 McColeman
 Menzies

Ablonczy
 Albrecht
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Armstrong
 Ashfield
 Benoit
 Bezan
 Blaney
 Boucher
 Braid
 Brisson
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooge
 Calandra
 Cannon (Pontiac)
 Casson
 Clarke
 Cummins
 Davidson
 Dechert
 Devolin
 Dion
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Fantino
 Finley
 Fletcher
 Gallant
 Glover
 Goodyear
 Grewal
 Guergis
 Hawn
 Hoback
 Holder
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Lebel
 Lobb
 Lunn
 MacKenzie
 Mayes
 McLeod
 Merrifield

Private Members' Business

Miller
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Obhrai
 Oliphant
 Payne
 Poilievre
 Raitt
 Regan
 Richards
 Ritz
 Savage
 Scheer
 Shea
 Shory
 Simson
 Sorenson
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Tilson
 Tweed
 Valeriotte
 Van Loan
 Verner
 Warawa
 Watson
 Sky Country
 Weston (Saint John)
 Woodworth
 Young— 151

Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Oda
 Paradis
 Petit
 Preston
 Rajotte
 Reid
 Rickford
 Rodriguez
 Saxton
 Schellenberger
 Shipley
 Simms
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Thompson
 Toews
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
 Wong
 Yelich

Neville
 Pacetti
 Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
 Patry
 Plamondon
 Proulx
 Rafferty
 Rota
 Savoie
 Sgro
 St-Cyr
 Szabo
 Thibeault
 Trudeau
 Volpe
 Wrzesnewskij

Ouellet
 Paillé (Hochelaga)
 Paquette
 Pearson
 Pomerleau
 Rae
 Ratansi
 Russell
 Scarpaleggia
 Siksay
 Stoffer
 Thi Lac
 Tonks
 Vincent
 Wilfert
 Zarac— 128

PAIRED

Members

Allison
 Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
 Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Lalonde
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Laforest
 Lessard
 Smith— 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

NATIONAL TREE DAY

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion, as amended, standing in the name of the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans.

The House resumed from March 1 consideration of the motion, as amended.

● (1855)

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

(Division No. 194)

YEAS

Members

André
 Ashton
 Atamanenko
 Bagnell
 Beaudin
 Bellavance
 Bevington
 Blais
 Bouchard
 Brunelle
 Cardin
 Charlton
 Christopherson
 Coderre
 Cotler
 Crowder
 Cuzner
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Demers
 Desnoyers
 Dhaliwal
 Dorion
 Dryden
 Dufour
 Easter
 Faille
 Foote
 Fry
 Garneau
 Godin
 Guay
 Hughes
 Jennings
 Karygiannis
 Laframboise
 Layton
 Lee
 Leslie
 MacAulay
 Malo
 Marston
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 Mathysen
 McGuinty
 Ménard
 Minna
 Mulcair
 Murray

Angus
 Asselin
 Bachand
 Bains
 Bélanger
 Bennett
 Bigras
 Bonsant
 Bourgeois
 Byrne
 Carrier
 Chow
 Coady
 Comartin
 Crombie
 Cullen
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 DeBellefeuille
 Deschamps
 Dewar
 Donnelly
 Dosanjh
 Duceppe
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Eyking
 Folco
 Freeman
 Gagnon
 Gaudet
 Gravelle
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hyer
 Kania
 Kennedy
 Lavallée
 LeBlanc
 Lemay
 Lévesque
 Malhi
 Maloway
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Masse
 McCallum
 McTeague
 Mendes
 Mourani
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
 Nadeau

Abbott
 Aglukkaq
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Anders
 André
 Angus
 Arthur
 Ashton
 Atamanenko
 Bagnell
 Baird
 Bélanger
 Bennett
 Bernier
 Bezan
 Blackburn
 Blaney
 Bonsant
 Boucher
 Bourgeois
 Breitzkreuz
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Brunelle

Ablonczy
 Albrecht
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Andrews
 Armstrong
 Ashfield
 Asselin
 Bachand
 Bains
 Beaudin
 Bellavance
 Benoit
 Bevington
 Bigras
 Blais
 Block
 Bouchard
 Boughen
 Braid
 Brisson
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Brunoogoe
 Byrne

Private Members' Business

Cadman
 Calkins
 Cardin
 Carrier
 Charlton
 Chow
 Clarke
 Coady
 Comartin
 Crombie
 Cullen
 Cuzner
 Davidson
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 DeBellefeuille
 Del Mastro
 Deschamps
 Devolin
 Dhaliwal
 Donnelly
 Dosanjh
 Duceppe
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Dykstra
 Eyking
 Fantino
 Finley
 Fletcher
 Foote
 Gagnon
 Gallant
 Gaudet
 Glover
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Gravelle
 Guarnieri
 Guergis
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert
 Hoepfner
 Hughes
 Jean
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Karygiannis
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lake
 Lauzon
 Layton
 LeBlanc
 Lemay
 Leslie
 Lobb
 Lunn
 MacKenzie
 Malo
 Marston
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Masse
 Mayes
 McColeman
 McLeod
 Ménard
 Menzies
 Miller
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Mulcair
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Nadeau
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Oda
 Ouellet
 Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
 Paradis
 Payne
 Plamondon
 Pomerleau
 Proulx
 Rafferty
 Rajotte
 Richards

Calandra
 Cannon (Pontiac)
 Carrie
 Casson
 Chong
 Christopherson
 Clement
 Coderre
 Cotler
 Crowder
 Cummins
 D'Amours
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Day
 Dechert
 Demers
 Desnoyers
 Dewar
 Dhalla
 Dorion
 Dreeshen
 Dufour
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Easter
 Faille
 Fast
 Flaherty
 Folco
 Freeman
 Galipeau
 Garneau
 Gagnéux
 Godin
 Goodale
 Gourde
 Grewal
 Guay
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hawn
 Hoback
 Holder
 Hyer
 Jennings
 Kania
 Kennedy
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Laframboise
 Lamoureux
 Lavallée
 Lebel
 Lee
 Lemieux
 Lévesque
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 Malhi
 Maloway
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 Mathysen
 McCallum
 McGuinty
 McTeague
 Mendes
 Merrifield
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Mourani
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
 Murray
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Obhrai
 Oliphant
 Paillé (Hochelaga)
 Paquette
 Patry
 Petit
 Poilievre
 Preston
 Rae
 Raitt
 Reid
 Rickford

Ritz
 Rota
 Savoie
 Scarpaleggia
 Schellenberger
 Shea
 Shory
 Simms
 Sopuck
 St-Cyr
 Stoffer
 Strahl
 Szabo
 Thibeault
 Tilson
 Tonks
 Tweed
 Valeriote
 Van Loan
 Verner
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Wilfert
 Woodworth
 Yelich
 Zarac — 269

Rodriguez
 Savage
 Saxton
 Scheer
 Sgro
 Shipley
 Siksay
 Simson
 Sorenson
 Stanton
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Thi Lac
 Thompson
 Toews
 Trudeau
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Vincent
 Warawa
 Watson

Wong
 Wrzesnewskij
 Young

NAYS

Members

Pacetti

PAIRED

Members

Allison Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
 Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's) Laforest
 Lalonde Lessard
 MacKay (Central Nova) Smith — 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Order, please. It being 6:55 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

PROTECTION OF INSIGNIA OF MILITARY ORDERS, DECORATIONS AND MEDALS ACT

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC) moved that Bill C-473, An Act to protect insignia of military orders and military decorations and medals that are of cultural significance for future generations, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to speak in support of Bill C-473.

I first want to thank the hon. member for Perth—Wellington for bringing this matter forward. I also want to thank the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs for its efforts. The committee has improved and strengthened the bill to make it as effective as possible on filling the gap in existing measures to protect military medals.

It would be useful to draw the attention of the hon. members to some of the improvements that have been made to the bill through amendments adopted in committee.

Private Members' Business

First, I want to note that the objective of the hon. member for Perth—Wellington in introducing Bill C-473 was to try to ensure that important modern medals, that is those not already protected under the existing cultural property legislation, stay in Canada. Keeping these medals in Canada, whenever possible, is good for Canadians and for Canada's heritage.

Thanks to the committee's amendments, this central objective is now clearer. The bill, as tabled, referred to the transfer of insignia to non-residents. However, this could have been a little confusing, after all, someone's residency status and his or her physical location could be two different things. As a result of this, the bill now clearly refers to export. Before people can export one of these insignia to someone other than a close relative, they must first offer it for sale to one of the public institutions named in the bill. A very clear requirement and one that would bring Bill C-473 closer to mirroring existing protection for medals under the Cultural Property Export and Import Act.

The committee also recognized the possibility of future overlap and confusion with existing export controls for medals. Bill C-473 refers to insignia awarded by Her Majesty in Right of Canada, which means modern medals awarded after 1967. However, the existing act covers objects that are at least 50 years old. So, the committee concluded that once the medals covered by Bill C-473 became more than 50 years old, the same medals would be covered by two sets of rules, and that was a conflict that needed to be eliminated. The bill was amended to cover insignia awarded by Her Majesty in Right of Canada while they are less than 50 years old. After that point, they would fall under the existing export controls of the Cultural Property Export and Import Act.

A further concern that arose during the committee's study was that only the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Canadian War Museum and the Department of Canadian Heritage would be given the right of first refusal to purchase insignia so that they would remain in Canada.

There is a network of more than 60 accredited Canadian Forces museums across the country and it would be entirely appropriate for those museums to be able to acquire medals under the terms of this act. As amended, Bill C-473 also includes the Canadian Forces in the list of federal entities to which an offer to sell can be made when one of these medals is destined for export. This would clear the way for medals related to a regiment to find their way into a Canadian Forces museum dedicated to that regiment.

I spoke earlier about the fact that exports to close family members are exempt from the requirements of Bill C-473. However, in second reading and during the committee's review of the bill, it was pointed out that spouses had not been included in what would be understood as a close family member. Members will now be pleased to note that this issue has been addressed by the committee's amendments. Bill C-473 now also include spouses and common-law partners and children of spouses or common-law partners among the list of people to whom insignia may be freely exported.

Additional improvements were made to the bill by the committee to clarify certain details and to ensure there would be no overlap or conflict with existing laws and regulations.

● (1900)

Bill C-473 addresses an important gap in the laws that protect Canada's heritage. With the amendments made to it in committee, it is even stronger.

The amended bill was clear. It would be effective in keeping important aspects of Canada's military heritage in the country, in public collections where it will be preserved for all Canadians. It is consistent and complementary to existing cultural property legislation and continues to strike a balance between protecting Canada's heritage and recognizing the rights of veterans and their families to determine what happens to these medals that signify the extraordinary contributions made by individuals on our behalf.

I know these objects are private property, but they are private property that has a significance and importance to all of us and future generations of Canadians. These are emotional issues and the committee has done, in my view, an even-handed job at steering its way through.

I support Bill C-473, as amended, and I encourage all members to do the same.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak for the second time to Bill C-473.

There has been an evolution of thought and understanding about the bill since I spoke last April. The process that happened at committee was very enlightening. It reminded me that it is important for us to take seriously that when we pass a bill at second reading and send it to committee for study, it is exactly for that. It is to study a bill, to hear from witnesses, interest groups, stakeholders, Canadians from every walk of life and to ensure their testimony is taken seriously. Committee members heard that testimony and that testimony has convinced me we should not support the bill.

I want to congratulate the member for Perth—Wellington for fostering an important discussion in bringing the bill forward. We have had an interesting discussion with respect to the nature of honours, orders, military insignia and medals. We also had the opportunity to look at the difference between a public story and a private story.

The Royal Canadian Legion, in particular, offered some important testimony that needs to be understood in the House.

Ms. Patricia Varga, who is the president of the Royal Canadian Legion, said, on behalf of a number of groups, that it had serious concerns about the bill. Those groups included the Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans Association, the Canadian Naval Air Group, the Royal Canadian Naval Association, the Naval Officers Association of Canada, the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Veterans Association, the National Aboriginal Veterans Association, the Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping and, finally, the Gulf War Veterans Association.

Private Members' Business

As a result of their testimony, my caucus colleagues are concerned about the bill. We think it is an inadequate bill, which will not actually deal with the problems at hand.

Ms. Varga pointed out two problems with this bill.

First, enacting Bill C-473 would infringe on the rights of Canadians to own and dispose of their private property as they see fit. This is a right that should not be trampled on lightly. This right is already restricted to a degree by the Cultural Property Export and Import Act. If it is not sufficient to retain historically and culturally significant orders, decorations and medals within Canada, then that specific act needs to be amended. Additional overlapping legislation is not the answer.

Second, there is a concern that the bill will simply not be effective. In order for legislation such as this to work, the barn door needs to be fully closed. The bill would leave it partially open so significant orders, decorations and medals would still be able to leave Canada. If enacted, Bill C-473 will likely drive the sale of significant orders, decorations and medals underground and all visibility of transactions will be lost. They will be bought and sold as they are every day in large quantities and in international markets. This can be verified by checking eBay, which tends to handle the run of the mill lots and not the high end items.

A significant number of other problems have been reported and were part of the testimony heard at committee. They have been identified in various forms and they should be addressed in a future bill that would actually be more effective.

There is a problem in the bill with respect to terminology. In common parlance, only orders have insignia. Decorations, such as the Victoria Cross, and medals are simply referred to as medals. We should be discussing orders, decorations and medals.

There is a concern that the government has not been responsive to the interest groups, to the veterans associations themselves, about amendments that they wanted to put forward. Those amendments included the definition of "near relatives", the transfer of medals "outside of Canada", the expansion of the list of museums and organizations that awards and medals could be offered to and the addition of the maximum amount for any penalty imposed. There does not appear to have been any follow up to the recommendations of the Royal Canadian Legion.

● (1905)

They also expressed a concern about acceptable museums to receive these awards. Only the Canadian War Museum, the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Department of Canadian Heritage are deemed to be acceptable recipients of ODM. This overlooks a large number of provincial, regional and local museums as well as military museums and commands and branches of the Royal Canadian Legion. Other museums or veterans' organizations might very well be interested in acquiring, by purchase or otherwise, such medals falling within the limits of the bill.

There is a concern that even if we were able to do that, the museums have very limited funding for acquiring such medals. To be effective, the bill would need to ensure that there would be a well-funded national medals acquisition budget. Otherwise, medals

offered for sale might well leave Canada because there were simply no funds to purchase them anyway.

Most, if not all, museums have limited storage and display space. Just because an offered medal or made available and is historically of cultural significance, a museum should not be obligated to purchase it if it does not fit into its collecting mandate.

There is a perception that such awards and medals do not have much value and therefore would not be affected by legislation such as this. This is incorrect. Should they come into the open market, modern medal groups, especially those with gallantry awards from Afghanistan, would command high prices. This is a concern. It is an observation that has been made to the committee. If this is correct, then the act needs to be changed to reflect this.

In conclusion, despite the merits and now the drawbacks of the bill, the larger discussion that needs to be had is why in fact some veterans may be forced to put such medals on the market. Why has the government failed, or is failing, to ensure an appropriate system of compensation for veterans so they do not need to sell awards or medals and instead can simply pass them on to the family as cherished items?

A concern we constantly have on this side of the House is that food banks for veterans still prevail. One can go to Calgary and find one. One can go to a drop-in centre in Calgary and meet homeless veterans who sleep there by night. My concern is the government constantly does not fulfill its obligations to ensure that no veteran faces poverty.

● (1910)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak at third reading on Bill C-473, An Act to protect insignia of military orders and military decorations and medals that are of cultural significance for future generations.

When the member for Perth—Wellington introduced this bill, the Bloc decided to support it at second reading, so that it could be studied more carefully by the members of the committee.

We had a number of questions about this bill and we thought carefully about whether we would support it, since it would preserve a piece of Canadian heritage.

All governments must do what is necessary to protect the culture and history of their peoples. Military history is an integral part of the history of a people. Thus, the federal government must preserve that history to the best of its abilities.

However, when we studied this bill in committee, we listened carefully to the witnesses who spoke out against it. I believe that a committee studying a bill must consult the people affected by the bill, the experts on enforcement of such legislation.

Private Members' Business

According to the amended bill, only the Canadian War Museum, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canadian Forces can purchase the medals. That excludes a good number of Quebec, provincial and local museums. Other museums or veterans' organizations could very well be interested in purchasing medals.

The bill has limitations. To be effective, the museums will need enough money to buy the medals. Based on what we saw in committee, most if not all museums have very limited acquisition budgets. The Director General of the Canadian War Museum told the committee that most of the medals acquired by the Canadian War Museum have been donated and that it lacks public funds for that purpose. The Canadian War Museum has very rarely purchased medals for its collection.

If this bill were passed, the museum might need additional funding in order to purchase medals. However, there is no guarantee that the museum will be able to obtain additional funds. This is obviously the case for all museums.

This criticism was repeated by representatives of the Royal Canadian Legion when they appeared before the Committee on Veterans Affairs on October 19, 2010. The legion believes that the bill has limitations because, to be effective, the museums require adequate funding, which is not the case. To be effective, there should have been at least a provision for an acquisition budget, but that is not in the bill.

In addition, and this is an important factor, the Royal Canadian Legion, which includes veterans and others who made an essential contribution to these military missions, stated that the bill would not effectively restrict the transfer of military insignia, decorations, orders and medals.

In short, we gave medals to these people and this bill now imposes conditions on the disposal of these medals, after the recipient's death, for example.

Let us not forget that the aim of Bill C-473 is to preserve Canadian military medals, orders and insignia of cultural and historical importance.

• (1915)

We give a medal to commend an individual for acts of honour in the theatre of operations and then, several years later, we take it upon ourselves to decide what that individual can do with it. When I am given something, if no conditions are imposed at the outset, I believe I have the right to do what I like with that object. This bill sets out a legislative framework for soldiers who received medals for the bravery they demonstrated during their military service. We cannot allow the House to impose legislation on people who received medals, orders and decorations for military service.

Representatives from the Royal Canadian Legion said they were concerned that this bill will not close all the loopholes and that important medals could leave Canada, which could possibly lead to the underground sale of these medals.

There is also the issue of property rights. Royal Canadian Legion representatives said that Bill C-473 would violate Canadians' rights

to own and dispose of their own private property as they see fit. This is a right that should not be taken lightly.

I am very much aware of the arguments raised by some people, for example, that medals, certain medals, should not have any monetary or commercial value.

Veterans have sacrificed much of their safety, their well-being and their health. We must ensure the well-being of veterans who were wounded or disabled. The Bloc Québécois has always defended this principle. In its parliamentary work, the Bloc has always been concerned about the support given to veterans and it will continue to demonstrate that concern.

We are voting against this bill because many witnesses spoke out against it. We are voting against this bill out of respect for veterans.

[English]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to debate this important initiative put forward by my friend from Perth—Wellington. Through the luck of the draw, his private member's bill came up and I am glad to be able to speak on it.

Some may know that I have had a bill, although not similar but more advanced than this one, Bill C-208, as well as Bill C-210 and Bill C-415. I have introduced the same bill for many years.

However, let us talk about what the point really is here, that these very significant artifacts have been given to the heroes of Canada.

I have heard the argument about private property rights since I entered the House in 1997. I agree that private property rights are an important issue. However, if military or RCMP members receive medals to wear on their left sides, they cannot sell those medals if they are still serving. They cannot give them away; the medals are still the property of the state. A medal only becomes the person's property when he or she leaves the military or the RCMP. Once he or she leaves, under current laws he or she can do whatever they want with them.

I have held the firm belief as long as I can remember, long before I got into politics, that the medals the men and women wear are much more than ribbons and a pieces of metal. The medals that men and women wear are not currency hanging from their chests. These medals, in my opinion, should never be sold. In fact, I believe that no other generation should financially profit from the valour of others.

Every single one of us who has seen members of the military, the RCMP, or anyone for that matter, and even firefighters who wear their medals on their left sides, has seen that their chests are a little bigger and that they stand a little taller because they are so proud of what has been given to them by their country. It is a way for their country to thank them for their significant efforts on its behalf.

The reason men and women wear medals is not because they are nice, shiny objects. They wear them not just for honour and service and valour and duty, but the number one reason men and women wear their medals on their left sides is in remembrance of the 118,000 men and women of the military and RCMP who no longer get to wear theirs, because they have either died in the service of their country or have crossed the bar due to old age or sickness.

Every single Remembrance Day, when we attend our local legions, ANAVETS halls or cenotaphs right across this country, we see the men and women sharing a drink with their buddies and families, remembering the days when they served or remembering those who are still serving.

The significance of this particular bill is that the hon. member is trying to protect those very significant historical aspects for Canada, and to allow the museums the right of first refusal in the event the medals cannot be sold, so that they do not leave the country and end up in collections outside the country. It is a significant effort.

I understand that the legion and other veterans groups are saying that they do not support this initiative. I respectfully disagree with the Royal Canadian Legion and others. They, including Mr. Brad White, say that it is a private property right, that it is veterans' right to do what they want with their medals. I disagree with him, but I respect his opinion on this issue. Certain things in life should not be turned into a mercantile system; they should never be turned into cash. This is not currency they have hanging from their chests.

I find it objectionable that one can go on eBay right now and probably find hundreds of medals for sale. One can go to garage sales across the country and see medals for sale. One can go on Kijiji or similar websites on the Internet and buy medals.

● (1920)

Individuals do not have to earn those medals. They never have to serve their country. All they needed to get these things was cash. I find that despicable, that in our country, which honours our heroes with a significant award, a medal that they wear can eventually be turned into cash.

I have advised families for many, many years on what to do with the medals when an individual passes on. I have advised them to put the medals in a shadow box with a picture of the individual who wore them, a story of the individual, a description of each medal, and hang it in a room. They should honour their relative or friend. If, for whatever reason, they do not want to do that, there are lots of schools, museums, Legion halls, chambers of commerce, and businesses that would be honoured to display the medals of these heroes. The offices of members of Parliament, all of us, have room to display these medals from our heroes.

There are two schools in Nova Scotia that do just that. Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School has a tremendous display in cases of all the medals and all the history of those who served in that area. The families have donated the medals to that school and it has a wall of honour. Inverness High School in Cape Breton has the same thing. It has a long hallway. The school volunteered to make a beautiful cabinet, which has all the medals with descriptions of who wore them and where they served.

We know that on Remembrance Day we all pause to remember and reflect, but for those who served, Remembrance Day is every day. The students in those two schools walk by those medal cases every single school day, and one cannot help but be moved by seeing the odd student stop to read it, and understand what previous and current generations have done for our country.

The hon. member for Perth—Wellington is attempting to preserve and protect a bit of our cultural history. He should be congratulated

Private Members' Business

for that. He should be thanked for his effort in bringing that forward. I understand the criticisms from various areas regarding it, but the effort is there and he should be supported.

I would like to tell the hon. member, as I have privately and publicly before, that we in the NDP will be supporting the initiative to move forward. We think it is an important initiative. My own bill would completely outlaw and ban the sale of any medals or insignia of that kind that are worn on the left side. The hon. member has not gone that far and I respect that, but he is taking the right step forward and deserves our credit for that.

At the end of the day, although it is a private property discussion, certain things in life should never be sold. Agencies and museums in Canada could have first dibs on medals and insignia.

One of the problems I have with the bill is the fact that somebody would have to actually buy these medals or insignia, and I think that aspect of it, turning them into the mercantile or transaction cash system is fundamentally wrong. At the end of the day I would hope that family members could understand that the member who received the medal or insignia did not get cash for it. Family members, relatives and other people down the road should not try to financially profit from the valour of others.

I would hope they would do the honourable thing and if they no longer wish to have it, they should move it to a place of significance where it can be displayed for many years for many future generations, so we can all understand the significance of what happened.

I am proud to stand up on this issue. I was born in Holland and my parents were liberated by the heroes of this country. The fact is, the hon. member for Perth—Wellington is honouring that sacrifice as well by moving this forward and he should be congratulated.

● (1925)

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-473 and the important steps it proposes to increase the protection of Canada's military heritage.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Perth—Wellington for his hard work here in this House, the work he does on his committee, certainly the work he does in his great southern Ontario riding, and for bringing this matter forward to remind ourselves of the importance of honouring the courage and sacrifice of Canadians.

“Service before self”, “extreme devotion to duty”, “distinguished and valiant service in the presence of the enemy”, “conspicuous merit”, and “exceptional service”, these are all words inscribed or used to describe the military conduct that is recognized by the Modern Honours of Canada.

Private Members' Business

The declarations, medals and orders that we have established are to recognize heroism and acts that to many of us seem almost unimaginable. These declarations, medals and orders are touchstones for the recipient, their families, and for all of us. They form the basis for telling the story of ordinary Canadians undertaking extraordinary challenges. They remind us that Canada's armed forces have faced and continue to face those challenges far from home.

Korea, Kuwait, Somalia, Southwest Asia, and Afghanistan are names of places in Canada's military heritage that echo other names: Vimy, Passchendaele, Dieppe, Normandy, Ortona, and Hong Kong. Canadians know these names. They are names that are synonymous with courage, sacrifice and, yes, with loss and sorrow.

The government has taken many steps to preserve and honour these stories, and memories of the courage and sacrifice of Canadians in the name of a greater good. There are hundreds of memorials all over the world where Canada remembers her war dead and their sacrifice.

More than 116,000 have given their lives in the wars of the past century and their final resting places are located in more than 75 countries. Monuments have been created to honour Canadians in locations such as Beaumont-Hamel, France, where, on July 1, 1916, the Newfoundland Regiment fought its first engagement of World War I; its costliest of the war. In locations such as Sai Wan Bay, where just recently the Prime Minister paid his respects to those 228 Canadians who died so far from home in defence of Hong Kong during the second world war.

Canada's military heritage is also preserved in museums and archives across Canada. Library Archives Canada preserves military service files, war diaries, and other documents from the 1800s through both world wars. Canada's national museums preserve military material of all kinds, from aircraft to uniforms to medals. The Canadian Museum of Civilization and the Canadian War Museum alone have more than 1,000 medals, including at least 28 Victoria Crosses, Canada's highest military honour.

A network of Canadian Forces museums across the country tell the story of individual regiments like the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, founded at the outbreak of World War I, and which continues to distinguish itself to the present day in Afghanistan. The Royal 22nd Regiment's museum collection, housed at the Citadel of Quebec, spans more than 300 years of history.

The courage and sacrifice of Canada's armed forces lives not just in the history books, not just in museums, it lives nightly on the television news. Medals continue to be awarded to Canadians for military service and for sacrifice.

Last year we saw the first presentation of the sacrifice medal, created to recognize members of the Canadian armed forces and those who work with them who have been wounded or killed by hostile action, and to Canadian Forces members who died as a result of their service.

The sacrifice of these 46 Canadians, who received this new medal, include members of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and the Royal 22nd Regiments. This is no less important than the sacrifice of those Canadians who lie in the Sai Wan Bay cemetery in Hong Kong. The medals, orders and decorations now being

bestowed on deserving Canadians should enjoy the same respect and protection as those awarded for courage at the Somme and Ypres.

● (1930)

The estimated 450,000 Modern Honours of Canada that have been awarded since 1967 and that Bill C-473 seeks to protect deserve that protection. Bill C-473 affirms that the modern Victoria Cross will deserve the same protection as those awarded over the past two centuries.

Existing federal legislation protects military medals, orders and decorations, and it does so by intervening at the point of export to create opportunities for Canadian museums to acquire these objects, so that they may remain in Canada when they would otherwise be lost to foreign owners.

Bill C-473 will complement this existing mechanism by affording similar protection to modern medals. It will ensure that if a significant modern medal, order or decoration is in danger of permanently leaving Canada, an opportunity will be created for acquisition by a museum collection where it will be preserved and shared with the public.

In order to make the bill dovetail with existing legislation and avoid overlap with it, the standing committee noted that the Cultural Property Export and Import Act protects medals from the point where they are 50 years old, and amended the bill to clarify that it protects medals that are less than 50 years old.

Another amendment to the bill that was adopted in committee was an expansion of the list of federal entities to whom an offer to sell must be made when an important medal will be exported.

In addition to the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the Canadian War Museum, and the Department of Canadian Heritage, the list now includes the Canadian Forces. This amendment was done specifically so that the family of more than 60 accredited Canadian Forces museums across Canada will have a chance to acquire these important medals.

It recognizes the close relationship between members of the armed forces, their regiments, and the communities that play host to those regiments. It is only right that some of these medals find their way into the collections of local regimental museums.

In this way, Bill C-473 will allow museums to continue to educate the public about the long legacy of Canada's military heritage, and the contribution it has made and continues to make to our country.

To honour the brave Canadians who receive these honours, it is our responsibility to preserve that legacy. I support the amendments that have been made to Bill C-473 because they make the bill stronger and more consistent with the existing protection of historic medals.

I support Bill C-473 and encourage all members of this House to do the same.

Private Members' Business

●(1935)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-473 today, having spoken to it once before at second reading. I realize that the bill has now gone through the committee process and amendments that were contemplated at the time have been resolved. So, we are at the point now where we have to make a decision as to whether we support it at third reading and send it off to the Senate.

It appears, so far anyway, that the Bloc and the Liberals are deciding against supporting the bill primarily because the legions have shown concerns about it, primarily over the issue of private property rights. I have to say that I have several very active legions in my constituency, and I regularly attend each and every event they invite me to. I have not heard any concern from them about this particular issue.

For all the reasons that the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore gave in his argument, I would support his arguments 100%. In some ways we feel the bill does not go far enough because if the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore had his way, Bill C-208, would be much tougher and would basically outlaw the practice. However, this bill that the member for Perth—Wellington has introduced is a very nice compromise. I do not see why the NDP caucus would have any problem supporting it. Essentially, as I understand it, we are basically allowing the military museums in this country the first right of refusal, which they should have, to buy the medals and to put the medals on display. Only if they do not want to purchase the medals, then the family, or individual, would have the option of doing what they wish with them.

I know we are very limited in time today, but I really did want to deal for a few minutes with a very important case, that of Tommy Prince, who is one of the most decorated aboriginal war heroes, having served in World War II and the Korean War. This man became so famous after his death, and I will read a list of the various streets and awards that have been named after him since his death.

However, the fact is that he was not treated that well in his life when he left the services. Reading about his activities during the conflicts and during the wars that he was involved in, this man was a number one soldier. He did things that are pretty hard to believe, such as operating in sort of a black ops capacity behind enemy lines and doing some pretty spectacular things. After getting out of the forces and going back to civilian life he was treated very poorly, to the point where his medals, I believe there were 10 of them, ended up being sold.

A number of years later, his family went on a fundraising drive in order to buy the medals back. The medals were purchased at auction for around \$72,000 and are now being displayed in the Manitoba Museum in Winnipeg where people can see them.

Tommy Prince was, as I indicated, one of Canada's most decorated aboriginal war heroes. He served in World War II and the Korean War. He was a member of the Royal Canadian Engineers, the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion and the First Special Service Force, consisting of Canadian and American troops trained at Fort Harrison near Helena, Montana, to form what became known as the famous Devil's Brigade.

●(1940)

Prince and other men in his unit were chosen for their rugged outdoor background and received the most vigorous training schedule under live fire ever undertaken by an army unit. All members of the elite squad, similar to the American Green Berets started in the 1960s, were trained to be paratroopers and received intense instruction in stealth tactics, hand-to-hand combat, the use of explosives for demolition, amphibious warfare, rock climbing, mountain fighting and as ski troops. They are described as the best small force of fighting men ever assembled. As a member of the Devil's Brigade, Prince was involved in fierce combat duty and numerous dangerous missions in Italy and France.

Some of the honours that have been bestowed on him since his death in 1977 include: Sergeant Tommy Prince Street in Winnipeg; Tommy Prince Barracks at Canadian Forces Base Petawawa, Ontario; Tommy Prince Drill Hall at the Land Force Western Area Training Centre in Wainwright, Alberta; Government of Canada Sergeant Tommy Prince Army Training Initiative for aboriginal recruiting; the Tommy Prince award, an Assembly of First Nations scholarship.

To my friend the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie, I point out that there is a Tommy Prince scholarship at Sault College, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, which is given out on an annual basis and will be given out in the next few months.

There is a school named after him at Brokenhead Reserve. There is a mural on the wall at 1083 Selkirk Avenue in Winnipeg; the Tommy Prince Cadet Corps in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and the Tommy Prince Veterans' Park also in Winnipeg.

Adam Beach is going to star in a movie to be made about Tommy Prince's life. Adam Beach and members of his family are friends of my family and are known to us in Winnipeg. They are a very successful family. He has made a number of movies in Hollywood.

I would like to briefly detail one or two examples of the type of activities that Tommy Prince did behind enemy lines.

In Italy he set up in an abandoned farmhouse about 200 metres from the enemy assembly area, well behind the enemy lines, with 1,400 metres of telephone wire connecting him to the force. He had a clear view of the enemy emplacements and he was reporting on them so the force could shoot at the guns. Artillery duel followed as the allies attempted to knock out the guns reported by Prince. While he was reporting they were shooting at him. One of those rounds cut the telephone wire. When the duel died down, Prince donned civilian clothing, grabbed a hoe and in full view of the German soldiers pretended to be a farmer weeding his crops. He slowly inched his way along the line until he found where the line was damaged and, pretending to tie his shoelaces, rejoined the wires together. After finishing the repairs he made a show of shaking his fist at the enemy and then toward the allied lines, returned to his lookout where he continued giving reports over the telephone line for the next 24 hours while the allies were knocking the German batteries out of action. He spent three days behind enemy lines and for his actions he was awarded the military medal and citation. Medals were given to him by the president of the United States and King George VI.

Adjournment Proceedings

We are talking about somebody who was right at the top of his game. There are other examples that I could give during the Korean conflict of similar acts of bravery on the part of this individual.

When he was honourably discharged on June 15, 1945 he went back to his reserve but life was not good. All the adulation he had received and the success he had in the army did not follow him into his private life. He had some kind of business with a truck that did not pan out in the long run. The point is the man died having to sell his medals. The family had to eventually buy them back for \$75,000.

We support the bill. It is a good—

● (1945)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Perth—Wellington for his right of reply.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak today to my private member's bill, Bill C-473, An Act to protect insignia of military orders and military decorations and medals that are of cultural significance for future generations.

I also want to thank the members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs for the steps they have taken to strengthen the bill.

As I have said at each reading of Bill C-473, and will now say again, it is time for our modern medals to receive the same protection accorded to our historic medals. This bill is about continuity and ensuring protection for modern military insignia.

Thanks to amendments adopted at committee, the bill will clearly protect those military orders, decorations and medals that are less than 50 years old. This and other amendments made to the bill would ensure that together it and the existing act work in concert to provide comprehensive protection for our military heritage.

I also respect the right of recipients to decide for themselves what to do with the medals, decorations and other honours that have been awarded to them. This is one of the difficult issues that the committee grappled with during its consideration of the bill. These insignia are given to recipients and they belong to them.

If recipients give away or sell any of their possessions, from a house to a car, that is perfectly legal. There are thousands of medal collectors in Canada and around the world. There is a legal domestic and international market for military insignia. Countless medals and other military items are bought and sold daily. Much of our military history would have been lost without medal collectors and dealers.

As the committee heard from witnesses, many collectors, in fact, are veterans who are driven by the honourable desire to protect heritage rather than collecting for financial gain. They have saved thousands of medals from being discarded. They have traced their history and they have carefully safeguarded them.

The committee took the approach of addressing the need to keep these important medals in Canada while still respecting the rights of recipients and their families. The bill now refers to export instead of transfers to non-residents. It continues to exempt transactions among close family members from its provisions while amending it to include spouses, common-law partners, and the children's spouses and common-law partners, which had not been included in the bill as

originally drafted. It continues to have no effect on the transfer of medals that takes place inside Canada.

We should ensure that we are protecting the history we are making today as a proud nation sharing the struggle for international freedom and democracy with others on the world stage.

My inspiration for this bill comes from the veterans and future veterans from my riding who serve or have served our country. This bill will ensure that the accolades for their acts of bravery will remain on Canadian soil and will continue to honour them as part of our Canadian heritage.

● (1950)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The time provided for debate has expired.

[*Translation*]

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 yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Pursuant to Standing Order 98, a recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred until Wednesday, March 9, 2011, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

POVERTY

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to expand on a question that I have asked the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development in the House on a number of occasions over the last couple of years.

Adjournment Proceedings

We continue to get answers that are not satisfactory, which indicates that either the minister or the government does not really understand the depth and the breadth of poverty that exists in our country and does not understand that report after report has been delivered by reputable agencies studying these kinds of matters. These reports have been tabled in Ottawa for the federal government to see. Yet the government refuses to acknowledge there is a problem and work with others to do something about it.

A day before I asked that specific question, a report had been by Campaign 2000. It noted that poverty had a direct cost to health care, criminal justice, social services, lost productivity and lost opportunities in our country. The Food Banks of Canada report, which came out only a couple of years ago, indicated that the cost of poverty to the economy of Canada was upwards of \$90 billion a year.

All I am asking the government to do is indicate to me, given that six provinces are already moving on their own anti-poverty strategies, what it proposes to do to fix this very glaring and obvious problem and take care of those who it has a fundamental responsibility for, those who are most at risk and marginalized in our communities and across our country.

We have had a further report in the last month or so from Food Banks of Canada called "HungerCount 2010". The statistics it keeps of who comes in, how many times and who they may be show that, on all accounts, the numbers are up across the board. People are now having to turn to food banks to supplement their dietary needs. No longer are people getting the kind of assistance they need, whether it is through a job or some government program, to feed themselves and their children and to do it in an efficient fashion so they might take advantage of opportunities to better themselves.

We have just been through one of the most difficult recessions I have experienced in my lifetime. Before the recession 2008, we had a significant number of poor people. We have had an onslaught of poor people since then and there are no new programs to directly speak to the specific needs of that group of people. This group of people is growing.

In the middle of all that, we discovered that we now have hundreds of thousands of people, and a lot of them are new immigrants to our country living in places like Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal and cities across the country, who are working full-time, year-round, on minimum wage and who are still living in desperate poverty because there is not enough affordable housing available.

People who have looked at the question of poverty and who have taken the time to look at what we might do to make a huge difference in that area are calling for is a national housing strategy. The Standing Committee on Human Resources tabled a report with the government last June. We are expecting a response by the middle of March.

Could the parliamentary secretary tell us what might be in the government's response that would indicate it understands the depth and the breadth of the problem and will it actually do something about it?

● (1955)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am happy to speak to this important issue this evening.

Our government is very interested in helping working Canadians and their families. We are very much interested in providing them with a government that facilitates a healthy and growing economy, which, in turn, provides jobs and prosperity to all Canadians. We have a record of action that we will be glad to stand on.

The member opposite and his party have different ideas, obviously, but our Conservative government believes the best way to fight poverty is to get Canadians working. Thanks to the actions we have taken, that is exactly what is happening. Since July 2009, over 460,000 jobs have been created.

We have said these things before but I will gladly say them again. We made unprecedented investments in skills training, which has helped over 1.2 million Canadians just in the last year. It has helped them to transition into new jobs.

We have introduced the working income tax benefit to make work pay for Canadians who are trying to get over the welfare wall. One million low-income Canadians benefited in the first year of that initiative alone and Canadians who need it will continue to benefit from it.

We have introduced the historic registered disability savings plan in order to help Canadians save for the long-term financial security of a child with a disability.

We continue to pursue our low tax plan so that Canadians have more money in their own pockets to spend on what is important to them and to their families and so that businesses can be more productive, create more jobs and hire more Canadians. Provinces now have access to predictable and growing funding from our government as well.

Our actions have helped Canadians. The actions of the member opposite and his party, on the other hand, have not been helpful. They need to become part of the solution.

Where we introduced help for Canadians who are working or looking for work, the NDP and the member opposite voted against that help. Where we helped students through grants, summer jobs, better tax treatment and improved infrastructure, the NDP once again voted against that help.

Where we improved the tax treatment, increased support multiple times and funded stimulus building projects for our seniors, the NDP voted against that as well. The NDP voted against the working income tax benefit, against our universal child care plan, against increasing help to single-earner families and against the RDSP.

Adjournment Proceedings

The NDP voted against help during the recession for older workers, for long-tenured workers and against expanded work-sharing measures protecting the jobs of over 270,000 Canadian workers. The member opposite and the NDP in this place have proposed reckless and destructive taxes, spending that will stifle job growth, kill existing jobs, repel investment, lower productivity and increase the very problems that the member opposite says that he wants to fix.

Our Conservative government has and will continue to propose actions that will help Canadians, that will lower taxes, that will attract investment, increase productivity, boost job growth and lower poverty. However, all the NDP seems to want to do is vote against that help time and time again. The NDP needs to begin to treat this seriously and not politically.

I would ask the member and his party to, instead, support our Conservative government's plans which are getting Canadians working and helping them become more prosperous. The NDP really should stop voting against these measures. This is how we will successfully address these issues.

• (2000)

Mr. Tony Martin: Madam Speaker, we all wish it were as simple as the Conservatives lay it out to be.

We again heard the list of initiatives that the government claims have been put in place to help those who are most at risk and in need in our communities. We in the NDP know from the reports that are coming out subsequent to those initiatives, however minimal they might be, indicate that they are not doing the job, that more people are falling further and further behind and that more people are having to turn to food banks, for example, to supplement their food intake in any given month.

The member suggested in his answer that if we could somehow get more people working and put in place a labour market strategy, that would deal with the many complicated and difficult challenges of those living in poverty. We know that is just not true. It is too simple an approach. It is certainly part of the answer. A comprehensive national anti-poverty strategy is what we should be looking at but it will not do the trick.

I suggested earlier that we are now discovering that literally hundreds of thousands of working men and women in this country, working year round, full time and collecting minimum wage, are still living in poverty and having to turn to food banks for their food. The government needs to and can do better.

There is a report on the table that was approved by all parties in the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. It needs to look at that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, I hope the member misspoke when he said that he thinks it is too simple that we just create jobs and that is how we help Canadians, because that is exactly how we intend to help Canadians.

Thanks to our Conservative government, more Canadians are working. Hundreds of thousands of Canadian families are paying less in taxes and have more money in their pockets. Vulnerable Canadians are benefiting from the significant investments that we have made in areas like skills training and housing persons with disabilities, among others.

The member opposite and his party have consistently proposed what are clearly fiscally reckless and economically destructive spending and policies that would damage our economy and harm Canadian families in many ways and yet they turn around and consistently vote against measure after measure that our government proposes and ultimately passes to help Canadians and our economy.

Our Conservative government will continue to make investments that make a positive difference in the lives of Canadians and their families. I would urge the member opposite and his party to begin to support those efforts instead of continually opposing them.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:04 p.m.)

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