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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, November 1, 2011

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 1, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

COMMISSIONER OF LOBBYING

The Speaker: Pursuant to section 10.5 of the Lobbying Act, it is my duty to present to the House four reports on investigations from the Commissioner of Lobbying.

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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 three petitions.

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NATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY STRATEGY ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-340, An Act respecting a National Strategy to Encourage the Development of Renewable Energy Sources.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce an act respecting a national strategy to encourage the development of renewable energy sources.

This is a special bill. It is a product of a contest I held in my riding where high school students proposed their ideas for legislation that would make Canada a better place.

This year's winners are Grihalakshmi Soundarapandian and Maria Gladkikh. These two bright and caring young women proposed to move Canada toward a sustainable future by legislating a greater ratio of renewable power sources to non-renewable ones.

Their bill calls on the government to develop a national strategy to ensure that the majority of electricity in Canada comes from renewable sources, such as solar, wind, or biomass. It mandates that 90% of this power come from sustainable sources by 2030. It encourages Canadians to take an active role themselves by installing green energy generators in their homes.

Young Canadians know that a healthy, sustainable, prosperous future depends on moving away from our dependence on carbon-burning energy production. It is time that we follow their lead and develop a national strategy for renewable energy sources.

I thank Lakshmi and Maria for their creativity, energy and commitment to Canada.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-341, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (tax credit — new graduates working in designated regions).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House to introduce a bill that is important to Quebec and its regions. This bill was previously introduced by my colleague Robert Bouchard, who, unfortunately, is no longer a member of Parliament. Mr. Bouchard had the opportunity to visit every corner of Quebec and to learn about the realities there, realities that also exist in other regions of Canada.

The purpose of my bill is to encourage young people to settle in designated regions—resource regions—primarily to curb the labour shortage in certain regions and to bring young people back to their regions.

In short, the bill would give a tax credit to new graduates who return to their region or who settle in a region. This tax credit would equal 40% of their salary for the first year, up to a maximum of \$8,000. This is strategic, important assistance to recognize the regions' contributions to our dynamic economy, particularly in Quebec. We must understand that some regions in Quebec are short on skilled labour and it is important that we fix that.

This bill is a response to the very compelling situation in Quebec. We hope that it will move through all the stages, as was the case when it made it to the Senate. We hope to have the co-operation of all parties in this House to pass this bill as quickly as possible.

Routine Proceedings

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

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a motion, seconded by my colleague from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

This is a motion on the atrocities that are happening to the people in Syria under the regime of Bashar al-Assad. I seek unanimous consent for this motion, which reads: That this House condemn the brutal attacks on members of the Syrian movement for democratic change and accountable government by the Bashar al-Assad regime; call on the Bashar al-Assad regime to meet the Arab League 15-day deadline to enact a cease-fire and to begin a dialogue between government officials and opposition representatives; accept the United Nations Human Rights Council's commission of inquiry into the violence in Syria to find out exactly what happened and to put an end to civilian deaths; and, ensure that all the perpetrators of these attacks are brought to justice and bear the full weight of the law.

• (1010)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not necessarily object to the content of the motion, but we have not seen it before. We have established a protocol among the parties by which we would discuss these in advance. For example, the last time the hon. member brought a similar motion, we had the opportunity, through discussion, to beef it up on this side of the House. We would like to have a chance to review the motion. It may come back.

The Speaker: I thank the government House leader for that clarification.

* * *

PETITIONS

ASBESTOS

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that petitions continue to pour in about an issue that I wrote about in my local newspaper, the Hamilton Mountain News, over three months ago.

Momentum just keeps building on the lead-up to tonight's vote on our NDP motion to ban asbestos. There is overwhelming support for a ban on asbestos in all its forms and for a just transition program for asbestos workers and the communities in which they work.

We know that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known. It is banned for use in our country, and yet Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos. It is more than ironic that we are taking asbestos out of the Parliament Buildings because of its deadly nature, and yet we continue to export asbestos to other countries in the world.

As the petitioners rightly point out, Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry, which the signators refer to as “corporate welfare for corporate serial killers”.

It is time Canada started acting with integrity on this issue.

The petitioners call upon the government to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

The rules of the House do not allow me to endorse this petition, but I will conclude by saying that for the first time I find myself agreeing with former Conservative cabinet minister Chuck Strahl, who is now joining the chorus of Canadians urging the Prime Minister to move on chrysotile asbestos.

VISITOR VISAS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are literally hundreds if not thousands of individuals who have applied to come to Canada through visitor visas. This petition calls upon the government to support the idea of allowing more people to be issued these visas. They are calling the process into question.

When we look at the backlog, especially with regard to parents and grandparents, it would bode well if we could come up with a way to authorize more multi-year and multi-entry visas.

The petitioners call upon the government to move forward on reuniting more families here in Canada by issuing these types of visas.

This petition is well worth the government taking a serious look at.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 136 will be answered today.

[*Text*]

Question No. 136—**Mr. Romeo Saganash:**

With regard to Natural Resources Canada and the oil and gas sector in Canada: (a) what does Natural Resources Canada's economic modelling show about the effect of a carbon price on natural gas consumption in Canada, relative to business as usual; (b) what recent analysis has Natural Resources Canada performed concerning the structure and use of groundwater resources in Canada; (c) what analysis, if any, has Natural Resources Canada performed concerning the effect of natural gas prices on potential shale gas expansion; (d) what analysis has Natural Resources Canada done concerning the cost per tonne of carbon capture and storage for natural gas processing plants; (e) what analysis has Natural Resources Canada done of changes to disclosure rules concerning gas development in other jurisdictions, and what is Natural Resources Canada's position on those proposals; (f) what analysis has Natural Resources Canada done of “pauses” or moratoria on gas development in other jurisdictions, and what is Natural Resources Canada's position on those proposals; and (g) what analysis, if any, has Natural Resources Canada done on the role of switching to natural gas in reaching Canada's 2020 greenhouse gas emission target?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), Natural Resources Canada, NRCan, has not undertaken economic modelling of the effect of a carbon price on natural gas consumption in Canada.

With regard to (b), NRCan, in its lead role on groundwater, focuses on developing and publicly disseminating information and tools that assist and support water managers in the relevant jurisdictions as they design and implement water management frameworks. The NRCan groundwater program develops novel approaches to characterize aquifers in terms of location, size and dynamics, and collaborates with partners on the assessment of key regional aquifers. These assessments and the underlying methodologies can be used to inform sustainable water policies and practices throughout the country, including in areas of potential interest for shale gas development. NRCan is not, however, directly involved in groundwater projects specifically related to use of groundwater.

For further information, members may visit the program's website at http://ess.nrcan.gc.ca/gm/index_e.php.

Publications are available through GEOSCAN at http://geoscan.ess.nrcan.gc.ca/starweb/geoscan/servlet.starweb?path=geoscan/geoscan_e.web.

With regard to (c), the Oil and Gas Policy and Regulatory Affairs Division's annual working paper, "Canadian Crude Oil, Natural Gas and Petroleum Products: Review of 2009 & Outlook to 2030", found at <http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/eneene/sources/crubru/revrev/index-eng.php>, includes NRCan's most recently published natural gas price and production consensus forecasts.

With regard to (d), analysts at NRCan monitor intelligence and analysis on the state of carbon capture and storage, CCS, costs for natural gas processing. Natural gas processing facilities separate and capture CO₂ from raw natural gas as part of the normal gas processing process, enabling cost-effective high-purity streams of CO₂ to be available for CCS. From a cost perspective, as separation of CO₂ is already part of natural gas processing operations, there are no incremental costs associated with CO₂ capture. Since capture is the largest component of the total CCS cost, additional expenditures associated with CO₂ compression, transport and storage result in much lower overall CCS costs for natural gas processing.

Globally, CCS at natural gas processing has also been identified as a low-cost opportunity. For example, in the International Energy Agency's Technology Roadmaps—Carbon Capture and Storage, costs of CCS at natural gas processing facilities were cited at a range of approximately \$15-\$25 USD/ton CO₂ avoided. In addition, the Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute recently published costs in the same range, \$19/ton CO₂ avoided, with the explanation that such industrial processes already include a CO₂ separation/capture process in their base operation.

With regard to (e), section 92 of the Constitution Act of 1982 dictates that the provinces have ownership over the natural resources that lie within their boundaries and are responsible for the regulation of resource development. As such, NRCan does not take a formal position on changes to disclosure rules, since they do not fall under the purview of our jurisdiction.

With regard to (f), as noted in the response to question (e), it is the provinces, not NRCan, that have jurisdictional authority over hydrocarbon resources—e.g., natural gas—contained within provincial borders. As a result, NRCan does not take a formal position on "pauses" or moratoria, other than that the department respects the decisions made by the provinces. NRCan's role is to contribute scientific information used in making exploration, resource management and environmental protection decisions by the provinces.

With regard to (g), while NRCan provides expertise and support to Environment Canada on climate change issues related to the oil and gas sector, including natural gas, NRCan has not considered the role of natural gas in reaching the government's greenhouse gas target.

The department has supported internal and external analyses on natural gas in vehicles, natural gas for electricity production in lieu of coal-fired generation in the North America context, and the potential to export natural gas globally.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 123 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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[Text]

Question No. 123—**Mr. Don Davies:**

With respect to federal funding for agencies and organizations providing immigrant settlement services: (a) for each of the fiscal years from 2001-2002 to 2011-2012, what was the total amount of federal funding allocated (i) across Canada as a whole, (ii) by province and territory, (iii) by municipality, (iv) by electoral district; (b) for each of the fiscal years from 2001-2002 to 2011-2012, what is the total number of agencies and organizations that applied for federal funding (i) across Canada as a whole, (ii) broken down by province and territory, (iii) broken down by municipality, (iv) broken down by electoral district; (c) for each of the fiscal years from 2001-2002 to 2011-2012, what was the total number of agencies and organizations to which federal funding was allocated (i) across Canada as a whole, (ii) broken down by province and territory, (iii) broken down by municipality, (iv) broken down by electoral district; (d) for each of the fiscal years from 2001-2002 to 2011-2012, what was the total number of agencies and organizations whose applications for federal funding were rejected, (i) across Canada as a whole, (ii) broken down by province and territory, (iii) broken down by municipality, (iv) broken down by electoral district; (e) of those agencies receiving funding per the parameters in (c), what are all agencies that received funding in any fiscal year which was less than the total funding received by that agency in the previous fiscal year, including, for each such agency, (i) the name of the agency, (ii) the provincial, municipal and electoral district location of the agency, (iii) the total amount of funding allocated to the agency in each fiscal year from 2001-2002 to 2011-2012; (f) of those agencies whose applications for funding were rejected per the parameters in (d), what are all agencies that had received funding in a previous fiscal year, including, for each such agency, (i) the name of the agency, (ii) the provincial, municipal and electoral district location of the agency, (iii) the total amount of funding allocated to the agency in each fiscal year from 2001-2002 to 2011-2012; (g) what are the criteria used by the government to evaluate applications for funding by agencies and organizations providing immigrant settlement services; (h) how have the criteria listed in response to (g) changed since 2006; (i) what is the process by which applications for funding are evaluated; and (j) how has the process listed in response to (i) changed since 2006?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SYRIA

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe now we can find consensus in the House to adopt my motion for a take note debate on what is happening in Syria.

It looks like the Arab Spring, which all of us from all sides of the House looked upon with great anticipation, is turning into an Arab deep freeze in the Middle East. In Syria, the regime of Bashar al-Assad is killing its own people. Tanks are on the streets.

As we did with the question of a take note debate on what is happening in Ukraine and Egypt, I am asking you, Mr. Speaker, to allow us to have an emergency debate on what is happening in Syria. This House could probably move in that direction.

The Speaker: I regret to inform the hon. member that I do not feel that this meets the requirements for an emergency debate at this time.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House Leader.

●(1015)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my friend opposite knows full well, the motion that he is trying to pass in the House and the idea that he is trying to promote may not necessarily be opposed by any member in the House. However, it has been a custom and a tradition, which he knows full well, that these types of issues are discussed at the House leaders' meetings that are held once every week. I would strongly suggest that he put this forward to his own House leader, who can bring it to our House leaders' meeting, which will be held today at 3:15 this afternoon, at which time we can discuss it. We may in fact find some commonality between all parties on this, but that is the proper procedure to follow.

The Speaker: We are under applications for emergency debates and the member has informed the Chair of his request to raise it, which is why we are dealing with it now. However, I am sure he will take up the parliamentary secretary's offer to discuss this for, perhaps, a take note debate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ENDING THE LONG-GUN REGISTRY ACT

The House resumed from October 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-19, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to speak to the government legislation to end the gun registry.

This could be a serious policy matter for legislators to address were it not for the politics of the Conservative government and the mess made with the registry by the previous Liberal government. We could have a discussion on community safety; we could listen to our police; we could pay attention to the concerns and situations of all Canadians, including our rural communities and aboriginal people, but we have not.

The government is now bent not only on ending the registry but on returning this country to a place worse than when the registry was introduced. The government is bent on the destruction of the data collected for the registry that the police and the provinces want kept. The government that screams about the money wasted on the registry by the previous Liberal government is prepared to spend billions on a bonfire to destroy the records.

This law and order government will not listen to the police. The government that talks about respecting provincial rights and provincial jurisdiction will not listen to the provinces who want to keep the data.

All of this is because of an ideology that has nothing to do with community safety or the rights of our citizens.

Let us be clear about the legislation and all it does beyond ending the gun registry.

The legislation eliminates the requirement to register non-restricted firearms and destroys existing records of the long gun registry.

As a registration certificate will no longer be required to possess a non-restricted firearm, certain offences in the Firearms Act are being amended or repealed. The Criminal Code is also being amended so that the failure to hold a registration certificate for a non-restricted firearm does not give rise to any of the offences relating to unauthorized possession of a firearm and does not allow police to seize firearms.

Previous versions of the government's bill to dismantle the registry had a requirement for people to check that the person to whom they were selling or giving a long gun was a licensed firearm owner. Earlier versions also allowed for businesses to keep records of the sale of long guns as was the practice prior to the registry. The bill contains neither provision.

As New Democrats, we have made it clear that there is a better way to proceed. We can have good gun control laws and also address the problems of the registry.

In 2010 the NDP put forward a number of suggestions to address problems with the registry while maintaining its value as a public safety tool. The proposals included: decriminalizing first time non-registration of long guns, making a one-time offence a non-criminal ticket; enshrine in legislation that gun owners will never be charged for registration; prevent the release of identifying information about gun owners, except to protect public safety by court order or by law; and, create a legal guarantee for aboriginal treaty rights.

For the Conservative Party, which is now the government, the long gun registry has been all about politics and fundraising. For five years as government it never introduced government legislation to do away with the registry it hated. Instead, it used its opposition to the registry to raise funds for the party.

Despite campaigning to abolish the registration of long guns in the 2006 general election, the Conservative government never actually brought a bill before the House of Commons for a vote. Instead, it preferred to simply fan the flames of division between urban and rural Canadians.

As a resident of northern Ontario, I know of the significant criticisms from rural and aboriginal Canadians for the registry. Under the Liberal government's management, the implementation of the long gun registry was marred by long delays, fees for registration and significant cost overruns. It was not properly introduced or managed.

●(1020)

Our party's former leader, Jack Layton, understood the north and those concerns. In August 2010, building consensus across the country in cities in rural Canada, he said:

Stopping gun violence has been a priority for rural and urban Canadians. There's no good reason why we shouldn't be able to sit down with good will and open minds. There's no good reason why we shouldn't be able to build solutions that bring us together. But that sense of shared purpose has been the silent victim of the gun registry debate.

[The Prime Minister] has been no help at all. Instead of driving for solutions, he has used this issue to drive wedges between Canadians.... [The Conservatives] are stoking resentments as a fundraising tool to fill their election war chest. [The Prime

Government Orders

Minister] is pitting Canadian region against Canadian region with his "all or nothing show-down". This is un-Canadian.

This kind of divisiveness, pitting one group against another is the poisonous politics of the United States. Not the nation-building politics of Canada.

No matter our views on the registry, the government needs to get its head out of the sand and recognize some facts. We know how many times the registry is used. As of September 30, 2011, the Canadian firearms registry is accessed 17,402 times per day. We know there is value related to this registry that must be retained.

While there are significant cost overruns in the initial phase of registry set-up, as highlighted by the Auditor General's 2006 report which revealed that the cost of the Canadian firearms program had hit \$946 million by 2005, by 2010 the cost of the registry was stabilized at about \$4 million.

Some provinces want to keep the registry data and some do not. Let us allow each province to decide for itself. If Quebec wants the registry data, it should be Quebec's right to keep it. If Saskatchewan does not, Saskatchewan should be making that decision, not Ottawa. Yet the Conservative government that loves to preach about letting provinces decide now wants Ottawa to dictate that decision. What a strange day for a party that was born of Reform and Canadian Alliance parents who hated Ottawa doing just what the Conservatives are now doing to the provinces and regions.

I have received well over 600 emails over the last couple of days about the gun registry. I will quote from an email that I received from Michael:

[This government] has no right to destroy the Long Gun Registry. This information has been bought and paid for by Canadian Taxpayer[s].

Destroying it would be disrespectful to Canadian the Tax Payer, not that respecting the Canadian Tax Payer matters much to [this] government.

Barbara wrote in an email:

I hope all NDP members fight 2 save Registry Data. Data was collected by provinces and does not belong to the Federal Government. Take it to the Courts if needed; 60% of Canadians stand with you!

I received an email from Richard who wrote:

I agree that the long gun registry needs to be fixed but not abolished. There are people in the community that are informed and like gun laws.

●(1025)

[*Translation*]

Here is another email, this one from Jacques. He says:

The government has done three things that I am uncomfortable with:

1. Abolishing the gun registry even though police officers are asking that it be maintained. How can they justify allowing the free circulation of firearms?

I will not list the other two points that make this man uncomfortable since they have nothing to do with the gun registry.

As I said earlier, I have received hundreds and hundreds of emails, and I would like the government to reconsider keeping the gun registry data.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to the costs of implementing the gun registry. I thought maybe he would take some shots at the Liberal Party.

My concern is that many outside professional groups have seen the value of the gun registry. We like to believe that governments make decisions based on information and facts and that it applies some common sense.

I can assure the member that typically this is what we have done as a party. We look to the member to provide some comment as to the direction in which he would be taking us if the NDP were in government. Would the NDP commit to reinstate the gun registry?

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is we are not in government; we are in opposition.

What the government is going to do in the short term is get rid of the data that has been collected for the gun registry for the last 15 to 20 years. Some provinces want this data and some provinces do not. The government should allow the provinces to decide for themselves what to do with this data.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know the member opposite is passionate about the issue, but much of his information is very misleading. I cannot see how it is going to cost the federal government \$2 billion to destroy the records.

Also, those records actually belong to the federal government and not to the provinces. This was federal government legislation and therefore belongs to the federal government. The Privacy Act says that the federal government cannot pass that information on.

Does the hon. member understand that particular aspect of this matter?

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Madam Speaker, I never said that destroying this data was going to cost a billion dollars.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Nickel Belt about recent press coverage which suggests that the long gun registry was protecting us from more than the legal long guns used by hunters and by first nations, but also applied to such things as the semi-automatic self-loading Ruger Mini-14 and the Steyr Mannlicher HS50, a .50 calibre sniper rifle that can pierce armour.

These are weapons that have been used in the commission of crimes, such as the Norwegian bloodbath which occurred in the summer. I am wondering if the hon. member can speak to the increased risk to public safety from these weapons becoming delisted.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Madam Speaker, there is a great risk to all Canadians if this gun registry is disbanded.

While I have the time, I want to read from another email that I received. Jason wrote:

I am writing you this letter in regards to vote to continue debate over [the long gun registry]. I am asking that you vote to continue the debate, and give yourself more time to hear the comments from your constituents.

I consulted with my constituents in all parts of my riding. The member for Portage—Lisgar was in my riding, in a hotbed of

hunters in Cache Bay for a meeting on the long gun registry. Eighteen people showed up. This is a gun registry hotbed. Seven people were for the gun registry, two were my people, and that leaves 11 people.

What happened after this debate is that my polling numbers went up. The member came back a second time to my riding, to Sudbury, for the same thing. Again, my polling numbers went up. At the end of the day I beat my nearest opponent, the Conservative candidate, by 50%. I am very proud of the fact that I voted to keep the gun registry.

• (1030)

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the members for Portage—Lisgar and Yorkton—Melville for their work on this important issue. Their efforts have helped ensure that the government could bring forward Bill C-19 and finally rid Canadians of the failed and ineffective long gun registry.

As a retired member of the RCMP, I would like to relate what I saw as someone who was on the street for 20 years. Before I do that, I would like to speak to the amount of money that has been wasted on this registry and provide a different view on what that money could have been spent on. We know that when the long gun registry was introduced, the previous Liberal government indicated that it would only cost about \$2 million. Yet, we hear that number is as high as \$2 billion to date. If that money had been invested in crime prevention programs, such as youth or women at risk programs, they would not only have assisted police in their day-to-day investigations but provided opportunities for those in high risk environments.

This is also money that could have been spent on better investigational tools for the RCMP to investigate complex cases. It could have gone toward surveillance equipment, more police vehicles, a number of things to deal with day-to-day operations or more front line police officers. One thing that I have heard from the opposition is that there is not enough money for new police officers on the ground. In fact, the cost for a member in the RCMP is approximately \$130,000 a year. That includes wages and equipment.

That would have equated to a total of 1,538 new members on the road since this gun registry was enacted if we base it on \$2 billion. That in itself would have benefited all Canadians. Instead, the previous Liberal government persisted in building and maintaining a gun registry which did nothing to prevent crime and was not a viable tool for law enforcement.

I would now like to speak to my experience as a police officer. We have heard a great deal from the opposition about what a useful tool the long gun registry is for law enforcement. My own experiences do not support that. The point I want to emphasize the most is that whenever I investigated murders, domestic disputes, robberies, break and enters or any other crime, I always assumed there was a firearm involved. It is simply better to be safe than sorry. Gun instincts will serve police officers much better than relying on computer entry data. I want to provide a couple of examples of that.

Government Orders

When police officers approach vehicles during routine stops, they will have done the computer checks to determine who the vehicle belongs to, et cetera, but what they do not know is if there are firearms in the vehicles. Therefore, when officers approach vehicles, they will approach close to and behind the driver's side door, making sure the driver of the vehicle has to look back at them. If police officers walk straight to the door, they leave themselves very vulnerable. That is why police officers will always make the driver look back at them.

Another example is when police officers approach residences. They will always stand to the side of the door before knocking. Why? Because if a bullet is coming through the door, it will not hit them. That is just common sense.

Drug investigations are a different breed altogether. Having been involved in drug investigations for three years, more often than not when we found firearms, they were stolen and not registered. For the most part, criminals do not register their guns and I will explain why. It is due to the fact that when and if criminals apply for firearms licences, they are refused. That is because gun owners must undergo a rigorous police background check as part of the licensing system. Criminals work outside the system, just as they work outside the law.

I would also like to talk about a major flaw in the long gun registry that no one talks about. In fact, I have not heard it once in the debate from either side. In my experience, the system itself is completely unorganized.

• (1035)

Say, for example, that someone owns a long gun which is produced without a serial number, such as a Cooney .22 and there are many others. The process would be to register the firearm and then the sticker would be mailed, which would be attached to the long gun as the serial number. Sometimes, the owner would receive two stickers with two different serial numbers. This happens a lot. Members can imagine the confusion that this creates and also the lack of confidence it brings in the efficiency of the long gun registry. That is why, in my experience, it is simply not a viable tool to prevent crime or help law enforcement.

One of the most compelling things that this government is doing to fight crime in this country is the introduction of Bill C-10, safe streets and communities act. That is what I am hearing from police officers in my riding and across the country. The safe streets and communities act would deliver greater accountability for offenders, better justice for victims of terrorism, and would eliminate house arrest for serious crimes. It would eliminate pardons for serious criminals and sex offenders. It would strengthen penalties for drug crimes, especially for those that target kids, and it would produce better protection for children against sexual predators.

This is real tangible action that would give those on the front line the confidence that we as politicians are doing our job. It demonstrates that we as a government are working to give police the tools they need to get their jobs done. That was a commitment we made during the last election and it is a commitment we are delivering on.

Another commitment our government very clearly made was to scrap the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry. It is something

that Canadians across the country have spoken out against. It is something we received a clear mandate to do on May 2 and it is something we fully intend to deliver on.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Madam Speaker, New Democrats have been saying for many years that we need to find a way to address the problems with the registry, while further strengthening gun controls. Our position is clear. We want to see the legitimate concerns of rural and aboriginal Canadians addressed, while ensuring that police have the tools they need to keep our streets safe.

I was listening to my colleague and he talked about how much we need more police officers on the street. I should remind him, and he can comment on this, why the Conservative government backtracked on its pledge to add 2,500 police officers on Canadian streets. Here we have a colleague who is saying that we need more police officers on the street but his government does not even believe in doing that. There are police officers across Canada who are saying that the gun registry is the proper tool to enable them to continue doing their job. Maybe he would like to comment on why the government, when it had the funding to do so, backtracked on providing 2,500 police officers. That was the Conservatives' promise.

• (1040)

Mr. David Wilks: Madam Speaker, the Conservative government has fulfilled this promise to provide more police officers across Canada and, if we had possessed an extra \$2 billion, as a result of this gun registry, we could have done a lot more.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Government of Quebec has given a very clear indication that it would like to have some form of a registry and it is looking to Ottawa to support its initiative. The government in Ottawa, on the other hand, says it would rather press the delete button than surrender any sort of information to the Province of Quebec. As a result, that means that if the Province of Quebec is going to move forward, it is going to have to spend millions of dollars in order to recreate something on which the government is choosing to hit the delete button because it does not want to share the information with Quebec.

Would the member not agree that, by sharing the information with Quebec, the citizens of Quebec would benefit if the government was moving ahead because now the government would have extra money to invest in community policing, outreach and so forth? That is common sense. Would the member not agree with common sense?

Mr. David Wilks: Madam Speaker, yes, I completely agree in common sense. However having said that, each province has its own prerogative as to whether it wants to open up its own registry. The information collected by the gun registry is under federal jurisdiction and I would encourage any province that wants to open it to go ahead.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his great service to the people of Canada. In my area I am privileged to work with the regional police services which offer a great service.

Government Orders

One of the misconceptions, which my colleague commented briefly on, is that police officers use the registry thousands and thousands of times a day or even an hour. We know that when they access those records, it is not always to check whether or not a gun is present.

The other comment the member made is that any police officer in any police service across the country would not assume simply because there is no gun registered that there may not actually be one there. I wonder if he could reiterate that and perhaps expand on his experience, and the fact that one always has to assume that there could be a firearm present in a scene where the police have been called to act.

Mr. David Wilks: Madam Speaker, with regard to police officers who are attuned to ensure that their safety comes first, the best example that I can provide to hon. members is when a police officer approaches a vehicle. This is probably the toughest time for police officers because they utilize CPIC or NCIC which are the two databanks available to them. When they query CPIC, it automatically goes to the long gun registry. It is an automatic hit. It automatically happens. It is not necessarily that I have to personally do it. It is unbeknownst to me that it is going there. It checks against the driver and only the driver, not any passengers in the vehicle. If the driver of that vehicle is not the registered owner that becomes problematic. I believe it always comes down to a police officer's gut feeling.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today on my own behalf, on behalf of Quebeckers and on behalf of my constituents in Alfred-Pellan in particular, to speak about government Bill C-19.

Today, I would like to begin by speaking about the gun registry from my heart and from personal experience.

I come from a Quebec family of hunters who have been hunting for many generations. And for the past two generations, there have been female hunters in my family as well. My older cousin was the first female hunter in the family, and I was the first on my father's side. I am proud of that. I began about four years ago, when my father decided to introduce me to hunting. There is an introductory program for new hunters who use rifles. This program allows anyone who has never had a hunting licence to get one and go hunting with an experienced hunter, who will show the new person the basics. This licence allows the holder to participate in any kind of hunting throughout the year. I began with deer hunting four years ago and fell in love with it. I loved being in the woods, walking, being there in the fall, feeling the wind and seeing how hunting works. I loved the experience.

The following year, I decided to take classes in order to get my hunting certificate. So that is what I did and now I have had my hunting certificate for two years. When my father explained to me how it all worked, he felt like a real mentor. He taught me with the help of my cousins, my uncles and that one female cousin. He taught me that safety is very important, that a firearm could not only hurt someone, but could even kill someone automatically, and that one must be very careful. He also told me how much he valued the

firearms registry and how important it is. And he explained how easy it is to register a firearm in Canada.

In my family we are hunters and we all must register our firearms. We have to go through quite a process to prove that they are legal. It does take several weeks to register one's firearms, but that does not bother us. We do so quite willingly.

I am lucky to have been born and raised, and to still live, in the riding of Alfred-Pellan. Above all, I am lucky to represent the people of that community. Alfred-Pellan is a rather unique riding. It is located on Laval Island. Some 80% of its surface area is agricultural land, where there is nothing but fields and farmers working the land. However, the rest of the area is densely populated, with many young families moving there. There are lots of apartment buildings, some low-income housing and many condos. Two different worlds can be found there: one urban and one rural. It is rather unique. We are also fortunate to be very close to Montreal Island. We are lucky to have the best of both worlds.

When I learned that we were going to be debating Bill C-19, I went to speak with the people of Alfred-Pellan to hear what they think. I live in the part that is mainly agricultural. I know many of my neighbours, for I used to play in their fields when I was growing up. They were the first ones to come and see me when the discussions began. They told me that they were very conscious of just how important it is to keep the firearms registry. They are hunters and farmers themselves, and yet they want to keep it.

The people who live in the more urban area of my riding said the same thing. The people living in Alfred-Pellan are almost unanimous: they say it is critical to keep the firearms registry. Unfortunately, Bill C-19, which was introduced by the government, will eliminate the federal firearms registry.

What we are asking, and we are not the only ones, is that the data from the firearms registry be kept. Last week, the Quebec National Assembly voted unanimously to demand that the data be kept so that Quebec can create its own firearms registry.

● (1045)

It makes complete sense. As the Conservative member just said, if the provinces want to create their own firearms registry, they should go ahead and do it. Thus, the government is acting in extremely bad faith when it says that it plans to destroy the registry data, which cost \$2 billion, that it is going to destroy all the data, and that the provinces will just have to make do. It will cost millions of dollars to recover all that data and it will be an extremely long process. I find it very sad to think that we cannot work as a team, all together, so that the provinces that want to keep the firearms registry are able to do so and those that do not want to keep it do not have to.

I live in a riding that includes both rural and urban areas. I am there every day. I am very close by. I also find it sad that the Conservatives are seeking to separate these two worlds. They are trying to divide Canadians on this issue. I find it very sad.

Government Orders

The NDP is trying to respond to the concerns of aboriginal and rural communities. At the same time, we also want to ensure that the police have the tools they need to keep our communities safe. The members opposite talk a lot about their bill, which seeks to make our streets and communities safe, but they also need to listen to what we have to say on the subject.

This bill was previously introduced in 2010 by a member, not by the government. At that time, we proposed a certain number of ways to resolve the various problems with the registry, since we are indeed aware that the registry is not perfect. However, rather than destroying all the data and destroying the registry, it is more important to improve it. So much money has been invested in the registry that the least we can do is try to improve it.

I will mention some suggestions made at the time. It was suggested that failing to register a gun be decriminalized for a first offence and that the person involved be fined instead. This would be a good way to decriminalize the registration of firearms. We could write into the law that long gun owners would not have to absorb the registration costs. It was also suggested that information about gun owners not be divulged, except when required to protect the public or when ordered by a court or the act. There was also the creation of a legal guarantee to protect aboriginal treaty rights. Members did suggest these different things.

I would also like to talk a little about the province of Quebec. Quebecers unanimously declared that they want to keep the gun registry data. The politicians and the people want the registry and it is a tool that the police use every day. I know a number of police officers in my riding who have told me that they never enter a house without consulting the gun registry. Who knows how many times this has helped them before they have gone inside. It is very important for the safety of the police and the public.

What I have mainly been hearing from my constituents is that, right now, they are angry with the Conservative government. They are very disappointed and angry about what the Conservatives are proposing. What I hear people say most often is that we paid for the gun registry, we paid for the data. People are wondering why the government wants to destroy the data that taxpayers paid for.

As I mentioned earlier, the Liberals invested \$2 billion in this gun registry. It has already cost a great deal more than what it was supposed to. Now it will cost another \$2 billion to destroy it. It is unthinkable that a government that is trying to save money would destroy it. My suggestion is that the provinces be allowed to decide and that that the gun registry data be retained.

• (1050)

[English]

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member opposite for her comments on the government's promise made, promise kept to abolish the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

My hon. colleague opposite said that police officers would not enter buildings if they did not know that there were registered guns inside the building. I have had police officers, unsolicited, approach me to say that they were front line and the registry was useless. They said that they had to be prepared for anything when they responded

to a call. I find it astonishing that she heard that from a front-line police officer.

Is the member opposite and her party committed to keeping the long gun registry if the Quebec government wants to have a registry? Also, if her party were ever to form a national government, would its position be to reinstate the long gun registry?

• (1055)

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, the member opposite just asked an excellent question. We do see a duality within our country. As I was saying, it is not for nothing that Quebecers want to keep the firearms registry. Quebec police officers consult the registry 17,000 times a day and they are asking that it be kept. Police officers in my riding have come to see me in person to say that they consult the registry. The Quebec National Assembly wants to keep the data from this registry because police officers want to consult it. The answer to the question is clear: Quebec wants to keep the registry and the data must be preserved because police officers in my province use it.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Madam Speaker, before asking my question, I would like to read from an email I received from Andréanne Joly from Kapuskasing:

Gun control works. Public health and safety experts have shown that tough legislation on firearms has reduced the rate of death by firearms. Issuing licences to owners and registering firearms are standard practices around the world. Abolishing the long gun registry will diminish our capacity to respect our international commitments on combatting trafficking in firearms.

In light of this email and the fact that over the past 10 years, 71% of spousal homicides were committed with a firearm and that 76% of those homicides were committed with a long gun, I support what my colleague is saying.

The Government of Quebec has asked that we keep the data. The Government of Canada says it wants to get rid of it. Can the hon. member perhaps compare this request and the government's response to with issue of the census? If I am not mistaken, the government did not get rid of the data from past censuses. The data are still available to help people make policy decisions.

Government Orders

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, my colleague on this side of the House raised an excellent point. I liked her comments very much when she said that since the creation of the gun registry, we have seen a decrease in crime. The fact that long guns are often used in domestic disputes is also very important, as well as the fact that they are one of the main means of committing suicide. Police officers intervene and must enter a house in the case of a dispute, a suicide attempt or something like that. It is very important to keep the registry to protect the public and the lives of the police officers who keep our streets safe. I would like to reiterate that the Quebec government has asked that this information be kept. I hope that the government on the other side of the House will listen to the urgent demands from the province to keep this information, so that we do not end up spending millions of dollars more to put a gun registry back in place.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very proud to stand today to speak in favour of Bill C-19, the ending the long-gun registry act.

On May 2, Canadians gave our government a strong mandate to end this wasteful and ineffective long gun registry once and for all. That is exactly what we will do.

For the past seven years I have heard concerns from my constituents about the effectiveness of this registry and the fact that it targets law-abiding citizens and not criminals. My constituents want effective solutions that keep their streets and communities safe. That is why our government has taken concrete steps to improve our justice system. We have put forward tough new sentences to keep dangerous criminals where they belong: behind bars. We have also made major investments in crime prevention.

This is how we keep Canadians safe: tough sentences and smart crime prevention funding. It is not by promoting a measure that is essentially a glorified list of non-criminals that has cost billions of dollars and focuses on people who are already, by nature, law-abiding citizens. Targeting people like hunters, farmers and sport shooters is not going to stop crime, and in fact it has not.

I would like to focus my remarks today on the dictatorial legislation that is the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

As I have already stated, the registry is a collection of data regarding law-abiding hunters, farmers and sport shooters that is held by the Government of Canada. These data had been collected with a gun to our heads, so to speak, and under the threat of extreme punishment, including serious jail time. In our view and my view, this is simply wrong.

I am one of those individuals who reluctantly registered my long guns under this threat. I waited until the very last minute in 2003 to register my rifles and shotguns. I was the mayor of my municipality at the time, a role that I took just as seriously as my role as a member of Parliament. I feared that should some overzealous conservation officer or policeman charge me for owning an unregistered gun that had been legal for all my life, it would give me a criminal record that would disqualify me from holding public office, including as a member of Parliament.

Registering my long rifles, many of which are family keepsakes, was one of the toughest decisions I have ever had to make. I was made to feel like a common criminal if I did not comply, and it still sticks in my craw.

The previous Liberal government foisted this measure on law-abiding Canadians under the guise of preventing tragedies perpetrated by individuals who use firearms for criminal purposes. However, there is absolutely no evidence that the long gun registry has prevented a single crime or saved a single life.

I have heard the arguments from the opposition members, whose misguided view is that since Canadians must register cars, boats, ice shacks and so forth, then something as potentially dangerous as a shotgun or a rifle must also be registered. The key discrepancy shows, at best, a fundamental misunderstanding of the difference between administrative and criminal law or, at worst, a deliberate effort to muddy an important issue of fundamental liberty.

Guns do not kill people. Bad people with guns kill people.

If someone does not register their car, they will face a small fine, determined by the province in which they reside; if someone does not register their shotgun, they face the prospect of a criminal record or serious jail time or both. As Conservatives and as individuals who care about the protection of fundamental freedoms, we must stand up to say it is wrong to put people in jail for what amounts to paperwork errors.

My family, by nature, consists of law-abiding members of our community. My father, who is now 79, still hunts with me, my four brothers and many of his grandsons, including two of my sons. In fact, we will all be doing some deer hunting next week, which is an annual fall tradition. It is not just about the hunt or the kill; it is a family thing that has been going on for years in our family, and it will continue.

My dad also reluctantly registered his rifles and shotguns. He was issued a possession-only licence, or a POL, and was able to purchase ammunition for five years until his POL expired. Now, under the long gun registry, he is made to sneak around like a criminal and ask me or someone else with a valid POL or PAL to buy ammunition for his rifles, some of which he has owned since he was a teenager. This is just simply not right.

• (1100)

Bill C-19 is just a starting point. Bill C-19 does what we said we would do, eliminate the long gun registry.

As I said earlier, a person will still require a licence to own or purchase guns and ammunition. Further legislation will be required to make further improvements to this farce that the Liberals created. In my opinion, we need to merge the PAL and POL, so that there is one licence, and extend its duration from five years to ten. Also, anyone like my father, and thousands more across this country who, like him, have had a valid PAL or POL or a legal hunting licence in the past should be grandfathered into the system so that they do not have to prove again what they proved years ago, which is that they can safely operate a firearm.

Government Orders

Another change that I will push for is the creation of a prohibitive offenders registry. This registry would target people who have committed and are convicted of a firearms crime, the very people who give law-abiding gun owners a bad name. As I stated earlier, the gun registry is simply not an effective way to reduce crime.

As the hon. Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism so succinctly stated, “We measure results, not intent”. The results simply are that there is no correlation between crimes committed with long guns and the implementation of a measure that needlessly targets law-abiding hunters, farmers and sport shooters.

I would also like to discuss a portion of the bill that has received significant attention from both the media and the opposition, and that is the destruction of the records contained in the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

The fact of the matter is that on May 2, and for the last five years, we have told Canadians we would get rid of the long gun registry once and for all if given the opportunity, and Canadians can take that promise to the bank. Let us examine what that means.

The registry is composed of a few components. It is compelled by the force of criminal law to collect the personal information and data of law-abiding gun owners. We will end that. It is also the retention of records of law-abiding gun owners. Obviously, when we said we would scrap the long gun registry, destroying those records was implicit. I might add that it should also include the records of individuals who buy ammunition. I license my truck, but when I buy brake pads or tires for my truck, I do not need to show my driver's licence. Neither should someone have to show a gun licence to buy ammunition. I will work hard to change that.

The registry is the records and the records are the registry. I realize the NDP and the Liberals would have us hang on to those records so that they could more easily recreate a backdoor registry should they ever have the chance to do so. Our government will not allow for that.

As the Minister of Public Safety said, claiming you want to scrap the registry but keep the records is like a farmer saying he will sell you his farm as long as he can keep the land. That is the way some of the opposition members think on this.

Frankly, it comes down to a single imperative. We made a commitment to Canadians that we will no longer target law-abiding hunters, farmers, and sport shooters through the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry, and this is exactly what we will do. We believe, as I stated earlier, that Canadians should be able to trust their politicians. When they promise to do something or vote for something, there should be no question and no second thought.

On that note, I would like to remind the members from Skeena—Bulkley Valley and the Western Arctic, who have recently decided to turn their backs on the wishes of their constituents and turn their backs on the commitments that they made on May 2, that they are breaking their election promise to their constituents. The memories of voters are long, especially on this important issue. Several of my new colleagues on this side of the House know this very well. The members from Yukon, Nipissing—Timiskaming, Sault Ste. Marie, and Ajax—Pickering are here in large part because their precedes-

sors forgot that they are supposed to represent their constituents to the government, not the other way around.

I hope that members opposite will listen to the views of Canadians and vote to end the nearly 17-year-old legacy of waste that is the long gun registry. In closing, as deer hunters in my riding, including myself, head to the bush next week, they can take solace that the government is finally getting rid of this hated, useless long gun registry.

• (1105)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments. I do need to let him know that with respect to the last vote on the registry, the first place I went to was Wawa. It was the middle of hunting season, and a hunter came up to me and said, “Are you the one who voted to keep the registry?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “I want to tell you that you did the right thing, because registering my gun has never prevented me from going hunting.”

I also want to talk to my friend here about the statistics on domestic violence. One in three Canadian women who are killed by their spouses are shot. Eighty-eight percent of firearms are rifles and shotguns. Use of guns during these events has often resulted in multiple victims, and many times it is the children.

When a gun is involved, the chance of a woman's death increases by 12 times compared to other forms of violence. Even if guns are not directly fired on the women, they are often used as a tool of intimidation in rape or physical or psychological violence.

Finally, let us look at the statistics: there has been a 50% decrease in spousal homicides since.

Prior to the registry, businesses were required to keep records of the sale of non-restricted firearms. This bill makes no provision for reverting to that process. Why does the government want to reduce accountability and tracking of firearms beyond the repeal of the registry?

• (1110)

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her misguided question, or the misguided information before her question.

She represents a very beautiful riding; in fact, my family has had a hunting camp on Manitoulin Island for years. I am not sure if I am going to be able to join them, but my brothers and my dad will be heading up there in mid-November.

If anybody should be voting for this bill to get rid of the registry, this member should be. She mentioned a number of things. Domestic violence is a sad mark on any community and on life in general, but if we are going to concentrate on all things that contribute to domestic violence, are we going to ban kitchen knives, baseball bats, cast iron frying pans and whatever else? Let us be realistic.

We want to punish people who commit violent crimes. If the member is so concerned about violent crime, as she pretends she is, then she will be supporting our crime bill. That is the best way to deal with this.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, we will never eliminate violence in our society. It is too bad, but it is a reality. We have to admit that and do other things to try to prevent those kinds of things.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a quick question for the member: what does he have to hide? What is the big deal about registering a gun? What does the member have to hide? If he has nothing to hide, then who is he protecting?

The member mentioned the fact that he has to show a gun licence to get ammunition. What is the big deal? What does he have to hide?

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question, I think.

The way the member asked the question clearly spells out the difference between urban and rural in this country. I mean no offence, but this member, who I have a lot of respect for in this House, just does not get it. People are made to feel like criminals. If I let my car licence or my truck licence lapse, I am not a criminal. I do not have a criminal record. With this gun registry, I would have one.

As we said, it is about licensing people, not licensing guns. Guns themselves do not kill people; bad people with guns do. What we need to do is bring in some measures, as we already have and will continue to do. We have to look at the importation of illegal guns crossing our borders. We have to look at having more border security and issues like that. We do not need to target law-abiding hunters.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Madam Speaker, last spring, Canadians elected a government that was listening and keeping its promises. They told us they wanted a government that would make keeping their children and communities safe a priority. As promised, within the first 100 days of Parliament, we introduced Bill C-10.

My constituents spoke of wanting a strong and stable economy. Again, we delivered with the budget implementation act, making job growth and strengthening families a priority.

Farmers in my riding told me that they wanted freedom to market their own wheat and barley. Again, we delivered by introducing Bill C-18.

Finally, I regularly hear how wasteful the long gun registry is. I am very pleased that this government has now introduced Bill C-19 to end this discrimination against law-abiding citizens. We have listened and we are acting.

I am also very pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of Bill C-19. This has been a long time coming. Certainly there are some members on this side of the House who have been dealing with this issue, debating it for approximately 17 years, and I am honoured to be among those who will rise in the House to debate this important legislation.

To be clear, there is no debate about the fact that we need effective ways of dealing with gun crime. That is not the issue. The issue is that the long gun registry does not deal with gun crime. It is wasteful, ineffective and does nothing to keep guns out of the hands of criminals. The simple fact is that long guns are not the weapon of choice for criminals. For the most part, criminals use handguns and the registration requirement for handguns is not going anywhere.

What we are doing is ensuring that law-abiding hunters, sports shooters and farmers are no longer being treated like criminals simply because they own a rifle or a shotgun. We are doing this because it is the right thing and because our constituents have told us for years that it is what they want.

Since taking office in 2006, our government has taken decisive action to put the rights of victims and law-abiding Canadians ahead of the rights of criminals. We have taken decisive action to make our streets and communities safer, to crack down on criminals and prevent crimes before they happen. Ending the long gun registry act is about ensuring that we continue to preserve and enhance those measures that do work to reduce crime and protect Canadians. It is also about ensuring that we do not unnecessarily penalize millions of honest and law-abiding citizens with rules that have little effect on crime prevention or on reducing gun crime.

As members have heard in the House, Bill C-19, first and foremost, would remove the need to register non-restricted firearms such as rifles and shotguns. Today, such non-restricted firearms are primarily used by farmers, hunters and residents of rural Canada to protect their livestock, hunt wild game or to otherwise earn a living.

Bill C-19 would not do away with the need to properly license all owners of firearms. In fact, it would retain not only the licensing system but also the strict system of controlling restricted and prohibited firearms. Nor would it do away with the need for the owners of restricted and prohibited firearms to obtain a registration certificate as well as a licence. Registration of restricted and prohibited firearms, including all handguns, would continue to be maintained by the RCMP firearms program. Our government has invested \$7 million per year to strengthen the licensing process by enhancing front-end screening of first-time firearms-licence applicants. This funding allows officials to screen an additional 20,000 applicants per year, including all applicants for restricted licences.

Under Bill C-19, farmers, duck hunters, target shooters and other law-abiding Canadians would still need to go through a licensing procedure. The bill would not change those measures. In determining eligibility to hold a licence, a person's criminal record, history of treatment for mental illness associated with violence or history of violent behaviour against another person would still be examined.

● (1115)

Therefore, for those who have the misconception that we are somehow easing all of the checks and balances when it comes to gun ownership, as we can see, that is not the case. Rather, what is proposed are changes that would do away with the need to register long guns. The registry is wasteful, ineffective and unfairly targets law-abiding hunters and farmers.

Government Orders

I know I have said this before, but it is important to repeat because some of my colleagues across the aisle just do not get it. By scrapping this wasteful and ineffective long gun registry, we can, instead, focus our efforts and resources on measures that actually tackle crime and make our communities safer. This is why Bill C-19 has the support of our government, as well as millions of Canadians. It is also why many hon. members on the other side of the House have voted to support similar legislation in previous Parliaments.

Our government's main priority is keeping our streets and communities safe. We will do that through programs and initiatives that work. That is why we moved quickly to reintroduce and pass the Safe Streets and Communities Act, which contains many important measures to protect families, stands up for victims and holds criminals accountable.

We have also introduced and passed mandatory prison sentences for serious gun crimes and we have passed legislation to initiate reforms to the pardons system. A lot of changes have taken place over the last five years that go a long way to keeping Canadians safe, changes that work, changes that make sense and changes that Canadians want. Personally, this is an issue I hear about from my constituents all the time. It is something they speak to me about at town halls, on the street and at meetings. They call, write letters and send emails, and I know my colleagues have experienced the same thing.

During the last election, we heard over and over again on doorsteps that it was time to scrap the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry. I am very proud that we can move forward in doing away with the Liberal legacy of waste and ineffectiveness. It is time for a new chapter. It is time to stop treating law-abiding Canadians like criminals. It is time to focus on measures that actually prevent crime. It is time for the opposition to support the bill.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about being wasteful. I would like to know what they consider to be wasteful. Billions of dollars were given to the oil companies and spent on the G8 meeting. The government is still spending billions of dollars on the war in Afghanistan that is going nowhere. Do the Conservatives consider that wasteful? Do we think of it in terms of billions of dollars, or simply the fact that the gun registry costs about 10¢ per Canadian?

Toronto's Chief of Police, William Blair, said that the gun registry gives officers information that keeps them safe, and that if it were abolished, police officers might be able to guess, but they could not be certain. Similarly, Chief Daniel Parkinson, the president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, said that eliminating the federal gun registry would put our officers at risk and undermine their ability to prevent and solve crimes.

I do not think we can talk about waste when talking about the gun registry. What I consider to be wasteful can be attributed to the Conservatives. Is keeping the public safe considered wasteful?

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, on May 2, Canadians gave us a strong mandate to deliver on this campaign commitment.

Our government has always been very clear. We support the repealing of the long gun registry because it unfairly targets law-abiding farmers and hunters, not criminals. That is wasteful.

On this side of the House we support gun control measures that actually work, measures that stop crime and keep guns out of the hands of criminals. That is not wasteful.

The long gun registry does neither. It does not deter criminals from using guns, protect Canadians from gun violence, nor protect front-line officers in the line of duty. It is simply a list of law-abiding gun owners, and it is bad policy.

I would urge all members in this place to support the bill.

• (1125)

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, for her spot-on comments on this.

I would like to go back to some of the comments that were made by the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, when he talked about registration and how people said that they had to register their vehicle, so why not register their guns? It is crazy. If I choose not to drive my car, I do not have to register it. If I choose to be a collector of long guns, or I store them or I inherit a family heirloom but will never use it, this is an intrusive type of difference in the long gun registry bill, which is just one aspect of why this is so crazy and why it is important for us to get rid of it.

Could she comment on what the bill would do to protect the infringement on the rights of people to collect and inherit family heirlooms without being imprisoned, for example?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I recognize that the hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac has worked long and hard, trying to see that this type of legislation gets passed in the House.

Since 2006, our government has introduced three bills to repeal the long guns registry. We introduced a bill in 2006, again in 2007 and again in April 2009. We did this for the very reasons my colleague raised. Some individuals collect guns and feel like criminals if they do not want to register them. That is truly one of the issues we have heard over and over again from constituents.

By introducing Bill C-19, we are following through on our government's commitment to eliminate this wasteful and ineffective long gun registry. We are following through on a commitment that Canadians want.

Government Orders

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, more than 20 years ago, the funeral of nine young women took place at Montreal's main cathedral. Along with five others, they were killed in what became known as the Montreal massacre. The murders devastated our country. The massacre changed the lives of students at school, women around the country and all Canadians and their families. We went to vigils. We walked the street in Take Back the Night marches. We said "never again".

As a result, both Canada's police chiefs and victims groups supported the creation of the long gun registry. The law was passed in 1995 and went into effect in 2001. I will share some of the data: firearms registered as of September 2011, 7,865,000; non-restricted firearms, 7,137,000; firearms per 100,000 population, Prince Edward Island has the lowest rate at 18,000 and Yukon has the highest at 87,000.

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. It takes place in the home, on the streets, in schools, in the workplace and in farm fields, et cetera. Violence against women is a \$4 billion tragedy in Canada.

Every year, 100,000 women and children leave their homes fleeing violence and abuse. Almost 20,000 women go to 31 YWCA shelters across Canada looking for safety.

Among service providers working to end violence against women there is no rural-urban divide on the registry. YWCA, Canada's national network of shelters, is urban and rural, and in every province and territory this shelter and transition house associations support the long gun registry.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women requires that countries party to the convention take all appropriate steps to end violence. Why then would Canada destroy the long gun registry that protects women and girls, particularly with Canada leading the global effort for an international day of the girl?

Most women who are murdered are killed by their husbands, partners or ex-partners. Many are killed in rages. The man finds his hunting gun. Since the introduction of stricter gun laws in 1991, there has been a 65% reduction in homicides by long guns. From 1995 to 2010, there was a 41% reduction in homicides by long guns. The number of women killed with shotguns has fallen every year.

Sue O'Sullivan, the federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, issued a statement saying that most victims groups want the registry maintained:

Our position on this matter is clear. Canada must do all it can to prevent further tragedies from happening, including using the tools we have to help keep communities safe, like the long gun registry.

The YWCA wrote:

Women have told us that the guns used here [in the North] predominantly for hunting—that is, long guns—are also used to intimidate, subdue and control them. We hear this over and over again, in small communities without RCMP and in larger communities with RCMP. Women do not want these guns to be unregistered, but do not feel safe expressing this opinion other than in whispers to people who may be able to voice these 'unpopular' opinions and who may be heard.

The government ignores the evidence of decreasing long gun deaths associated with the creation of the registry and it ignores

women's voices. Instead, it argues that many of the firearms used to commit murder are never registered. It uses a Statistics Canada report that said that, of 253 firearms used to commit murder between 2005 and 2009, almost 70% had never been registered. What the government does not share is that the same report also said that, of 179 homicides using firearms in 2009, 24% were committed using rifles and shotguns.

• (1130)

Despite the government's attempt to change the subject, the reality is that the gun registry saves lives. The registry reduces the human costs but it also reduces economic costs. I will explain.

While we acknowledge that the cost of establishing the registry was more than \$1 billion, the total annual cost of firearm-related injuries in Canada was \$6.6 billion. The annual cost of operating the registry is thought to be \$4 million, a pittance when compared to the cost of firearm-related injuries.

Interpersonal violence refers to violence between family members and intimate partners and violence between acquaintances and strangers that is not intended to further the aims of any formally defined group or cause. Interpersonal violence is expensive. Gun violence, which includes suicides, has alone been calculated at over \$100 billion in the United States.

In Canada, the cost of gunshot wounds per survivor admitted to hospital is \$435,000. Evidence shows that the public sector and not society in general bears much of the economic burden of interpersonal violence. Economic studies show that preventive interventions to stop interpersonal violence save more than they cost and, in some cases, by several orders of magnitude.

We repeatedly hear from the government that it is committed to ensuring hard-earned taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. If that is the case, why will the government not keep the long gun registry that saves lives and reduces economic costs?

Now the government says that it intends to destroy all the information about long gun owners that has been collected. Why would the government destroy gun registry information that is used by police across Canada more than 17,000 times per day?

Government Orders

Canadians should know that of the last 18 police officers, the people who put their lives on the line for Canada each day, 14 of them or 78% were killed by long guns. The government claims that it cannot help because the Privacy Act forbids collecting personal data for one purpose and then transferring it to be used for another purpose. Perhaps the real reason is that it wants to erase the data to prevent future federal governments from ever reviving the registry.

Some provinces might want to create their own registries if the bill is passed. The Quebec government has already sent a letter asking Ottawa to let it keep the data from the federal long gun registry. The provincial legislature passed a unanimous motion only for the fourth time since 2006 asking Ottawa to keep the registry.

Police agencies had specifically requested that they be able to continue to consult the database. Our leader has said:

The data collected over the last 16 years must be preserved, so that provinces can salvage this important policing tool.

The Minister of Public Safety responded by saying that the government has made it very clear that, “We will not participate in the recreation of the long-gun registry, and therefore the records that have been created under that long-gun registry will be destroyed”.

I do not support this bill, which would destroy the long gun registry and its data, jeopardize the health of Canadians, particularly that of women, and cost society billions. What is at stake is not a piece of paper or a requirement that people have. What is at stake are people's lives.

● (1135)

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have heard the same thing repeated over and over by the NDP and the Liberals on this issue.

I have discussed this with members of some of the groups the member cites as supporting the retention of the gun registry. I have found that they do not even understand the connection between the gun registry and some of the things that are being cited as reasons to continue to support it.

Most people do not realize that laying a piece of paper beside a gun is what the gun registry is all about. It does not control what happens with the firearm, who is using it or any of those kinds of things. In fact, what the member is suggesting defies common sense. When I explain to these people what the registry is, they have to admit that it has no connection.

The statistics that the member quotes are irrelevant to this. The decline in firearms deaths began in the 1970s. It had nothing to do with the registry, which began in 1995. Over half the guns in the country are still not registered. The fact that these statistics are somehow quoted as being connected to the registry shows how completely out of touch the member is with the reality of the situation. I wish I could explain more—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I must give the hon. member time to respond.

The hon. member for Etobicoke North.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, as a scientist, I find it incredible that statistics would be irrelevant.

The member mentioned people he had talked to. A group of mothers who lost sons and daughters to gun violence penned an open letter to Canadians to save the gun registry. The letter was signed by Elaine Lumley; Karen Vanscoy whose daughter, Jasmine, was killed in 1996; Suzanne Laplante-Edward, mother of Anne-Marie, killed at École Polytechnique in December 1989; Louise Hevey, mother of Anastasia, killed at Dawson College in September 2006. These mothers understand.

The mothers wrote that at least six public inquests have emphasized the importance of licensing gun owners and registering all firearms: “a small inconvenience for the privilege of owning a gun”.

They further wrote:

There will be no turning back if they are successful.... This will be a terrible waste of the money that was spent in building the system.

How would the hon. member respond to those mothers?

● (1140)

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the heartfelt comments of the member opposite. I know she feels strongly about this but heartfelt does not replace common sense.

The member quoted statistics about what happened after 1995 on the decline in gun deaths, which my hon. colleague on this side correctly pointed out started in 1971. Why was there no increase in the rate of decrease of gun deaths in 1995? Why did it just continue? If the long gun registry had such an effect, why was there no change in that slope and it just continued? It is because it had started 25 years before.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, if we look at the statistics, I was very clear in what I presented during my speech on how the numbers have gone down in the various years.

On another point, I would like to demonstrate the power of the registry from an incident found in the Canadian firearms program report.

Family members contacted the local police because the father was in a depressed state and they wanted the police to remove all of the firearms from their home. Family members told the police what firearms were in the house and then the police checked the registry. The Canadian Firearms Registry online query by local police indicated that there were 21 additional long guns in the home that the other family members knew nothing about. A warrant was obtained and all firearms were removed by police preventing a potential firearms tragedy. Without the registry, there would not have been any knowledge of the additional 21 firearms.

Hon. Peter Penashue (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of Bill C-19, ending the long-gun registry act.

Government Orders

It is a subject that is of real importance to the good people of my riding in Labrador. In fact, it is an issue that people from across Newfoundland and Labrador feel strongly about. I am proud to stand here today and ensure that their perspective is heard.

As members know, Labrador is one of the more rural ridings in Canada. That is a source of real pride for us. It is also one with an unavoidable reality.

In Labrador many people rely on hunting. That does not mean they do it from time to time. It is part of their way of life. It is part of putting food on the table for their families. It is the way people make ends meet. It is the way of life in Labrador. We enjoy that life.

This may seem unusual for those members who live in urban areas. Maybe those members would find many things unusual about daily life in the north.

For example, one would not expect to see a bear in the city when putting out garbage in the morning. In the city people are not expected to have killed and skinned the animal they would be serving their families that same evening. That is what makes Canada great. We are a country made up of distinct regions and cultures.

Canada is a strong country because we stand up for and respect each other's differences. That is part of why the long gun registry is so particularly offensive to the people of Labrador. Not only does it question the way of life that has been part of Labrador for generations but it criminalizes people who have as much right to their way of life as any other Canadian across the country.

I will begin with one of many stories I know from the people of Labrador who are firmly against the long gun registry.

I am proud to say that I have been a responsible long gun owner for many years. I was raised by my grandfather, Matthew, and from a very young age I was taught how to use a long gun as a hunting tool. I was taught to respect it as well.

Every year from September until December and April until June we would spend time in the country out on the land. Managing our long guns in a safe and responsible manner was essential to our survival and maintaining our way of life.

There is a respect and discipline that comes with responsible firearm ownership. It is something that is not discussed enough in the debate surrounding this issue. I often find that the critics who are the most vocal about long guns are also the ones who least understand the issues.

Like other members in the House, I will admit that I own unregistered long guns. Like many Canadians across the country, I did start the process of registering my guns.

• (1145)

There are those who say that the process of registering a long gun is easy and straightforward. My own experience and the experience of many millions of others suggests that this is not always the case. The process is confusing and complex. On top of that, the only available help that is provided for people who live in the north is a telephone number. That telephone number can be called multiple times and it will ring and ring some more, but there will be no one to pick up the phone at the other end.

I know I am not alone on this issue. I have spoken to many others who have found the same thing. In addition to this, I know that many of my constituents do not speak English or French. The situation is the same for many first nations, Métis and Inuit in ridings across the north. These are hard-working people who have lived their way of life for generations. On top of that, they are being made to comply with regulations that cast them as potential criminals. They have to contend with the language barrier which makes the process even more confusing.

There we are, at the mercy of a process that makes us criminals if we do not comply. But by virtue of who we are and where we come from, we find it virtually impossible to obey the law. In effect, we are being set up to fail, to be criminalized, and to be on the wrong side of the law.

Why, one may ask? It is because who we are and where we come from is fundamentally misunderstood by the people who created this law. In fact, it is clear that either they did not understand or they did not care. The result is the same.

Which brings me to another point that I want to bring up behalf of all northerners. The long gun registry was set up because the Liberal government of the day was trying to respond to a terrible crime that had happened. Indeed it was terrible. We still mourn that tragedy today.

However, the long gun registry was put in place because those who created it said it would help prevent gun crimes. I believe what this debate over the past few days has shown is that the long gun registry does nothing to stop crime. It does nothing to stop criminals from using guns to harm innocent people. It was intended to be a solution against crime, but all it does is target those who live off the land and make their living by hunting while it does nothing to deliver an actual solution to a problem.

Yet, for too many years, it has been acceptable to other governments to pretend that one problem is being addressed while completely ignoring the impact that the problem is creating on millions of Canadians across the country.

It has been our government and our government alone that has consistently stood against this fundamental miscarriage of justice. It is our government that has stood for the law-abiding hunters and farmers. That is why, today, I will be voting with my fellow members on this side of the House to abolish the long gun registry.

• (1150)

I will also take the opportunity to point out to members from the other parties who sit on the fence that the people of Labrador spoke clearly on this issue in the past election. They wanted the long gun registry eliminated and placed their vote with the party they knew would deliver.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. minister can complete his intervention during questions and comments.

The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing.

Government Orders

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech and he talked about the fact that the people of Labrador spoke very clearly on this issue. Maybe I could remind him that there was certainly a big change across Canada in the last election. On this issue, for example, four out of six candidates talked about moving the bill to committee for discussion and after the study was conducted, decided it was best not to get rid of the gun registry. Four out of six members in the NDP subsequently increased their total vote margin in their victories in this spring's election over their 2008 results. I want to ensure the member is clear on the fact that there were other issues that changed the demographic of politics.

I want to point out to him that it only cost 10¢ per Canadian to put the registry in place. It is a program that police say is safe and one of the best tools. They do not use it every day. It is like their guns, which they do not use every day.

I would like to ask my colleague a question. Since I was elected three years ago, I have only had four calls for interventions on the gun registry. Since he was elected, how many calls has he had?

Hon. Peter Penashue: Madam Speaker, I have had the opportunity to meet many Labradorians during the election campaign and in my travels it was made quite clear to me that people did not appreciate the long gun registry, nor did they appreciate the commitment that was broken by the previous member for my riding, who had agreed to abolish the gun registry and subsequently changed his mind. Of course, there was a 30% change in the vote, which tells me and others that the people of Labrador were absolutely opposed to the gun registry and their votes indicated that decision.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member opposite a question. Many people are concerned about maintaining the gun registry. For example, last week, Quebec's National Assembly—which represents the province as a whole—voted in favour of a motion stating that if the registry were abolished at the federal level, the province would create a new one. The province feels the registry is so important that it would like to create a provincial one. The people of Quebec will have to pay twice for the same registry because they want to use and keep this information so that police officers can use it for public safety reasons.

How can the government justify the fact that Quebec will have to create a second registry if this bill is passed?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Penashue: Madam Speaker, it is fair and fitting to make the point that the process that has been abolished at this point is a definite commitment to Canadians who voted for change. Our government has no intention of transferring the information that it has in its offices to the provinces, nor will it make available that same information to be used by future governments to be re-enacted or brought back in the future.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to debate Bill C-19, the ending the long gun registry bill.

Many of my hon. colleagues on both sides of the House have spoken on this topic. I am glad there has been such robust debate happening over this important issue. In fact, we know this is a topic that evokes strong emotions in the hearts and minds of Canadians from coast to coast to coast. For my part, it was certainly an issue that I heard a great deal about as I went door to door during the most recent election campaign. I am very glad, therefore, to have the opportunity to speak about it today. This is a very important issue in my riding in British Columbia, where many farmers and hunters live.

As members know, Canadians gave our government a strong mandate to deliver on our law and order agenda. We have been clear that we will pursue tough on crime measures that work and that protect law-abiding Canadian families.

We were also clear, completely clear, about our government's position on ending the failed long gun registry. For many years now, we have said that we disagree with it on principle, that it is wasteful and ineffective, and that there is no evidence that it prevents crime or protects front-line police officers.

Bill C-19, the ending the long gun registry bill, is the manifestation of an ongoing promise on which, as Conservatives, we have been working to deliver for many years now. We have been working to end the registry because it simply is not working. For example, the registry is quite incomplete and the information is inaccurate. We have heard from many front-line police officers who are simply not confident in this information. This means that as a tool, it could do more harm than good.

In addition to being incomplete and inaccurate, we do not have any statistical evidence that the long gun registry has made a difference to crime rates. We hear from some hon. members that there is a decline in the crime rate as a result of the long gun registry. In fact, when we look at the numbers, the long-term trend in firearm-related homicide has nothing to do with the long gun registry. In fact, it has been in steady decline since the 1970s.

In addition, the overall rate of firearm-related violent crime was driven primarily by the use of handguns. Long guns do not factor heavily into crimes. In the instances where they do, there is absolutely no evidence that the registration of a long gun as part of the registry program has any impact on combatting crime.

Government Orders

In terms of how police officers use the data, for too long, all Canadians were led to believe that the long gun registry would help make us safer. We were told that it is a tool our police depend upon. This is simply not accurate. For example, we have heard numbers quoted that police use the long gun registry up to 11,000 times a day. The reality is that when a police officer accesses the Canadian Police Information Centre, or CPIC, for any reason, including a simple address check, an automatic hit to the registry is generated. This hit will always be generated whether the information from it is desired or not.

In addition, the long gun registry does not enhance public safety because it does not put the focus on stopping real crime. The emphasis is not placed on stopping criminals from using firearms to commit crimes. In fact, the emphasis is placed on ensuring we have a list of law-abiding long gun owners. This does not prevent criminals from obtaining firearms.

In Canada a person should not be deemed a criminal if he or she owns a long gun. Bill C-19 would end this unfortunate episode of penalizing law-abiding hunters and farmers, such as those I have come to know in my riding, and would help us continue our government's focus on action that would actually help to prevent crime.

On that note, let me take a moment to review what Bill C-19 would actually do, as we have seen a lot of hysteria from the members of the opposition which does not accurately reflect what this legislation would accomplish.

First, the ending the long gun registry bill would do just what it says it would do. It would end the failed long gun registry.

● (1200)

In ending the registry, the bill would also make provisions for the destruction of the records that were collected as part of the long gun registry. That means the names and information collected from law-abiding long gun owners would not be shared, stored or sealed. The information would be destroyed and would not be held in the event that a new registry or a renewed registry could be created at any time, either soon or years down the road.

We have certainly heard a great deal from the opposition on this issue. Hon. members want to know why we will not share this information with the provinces. As the Minister of Public Safety quite rightly pointed out, we made a commitment to Canadians that we would scrap the long gun registry. This means that in destroying the registry, we would destroy the data as well. Ending the registry but then sharing the data would be akin to selling the farm but keeping the land. We will fulfill the promise that we made and that includes doing the right thing and ensuring that no other government could use the information to resurrect the failed long gun registry.

I also want to note, as several of my hon. colleagues on this side of the House have noted as well, that Bill C-19 would not alter existing registration rules for restricted and prohibited firearms. The same rules and regulations would apply concerning handguns, semi-automatic or any other currently restricted and prohibited firearms. The application for ownership of these types of firearms is much more vigorous, even more so for those which are prohibited. Police would still have access to all of this information to ensure they know

who owns a handgun or a semi-automatic firearm, as well as where they live. Police would still have access to the licensing data of any type of firearm should this bill pass.

However, Bill C-19 would finally put an end to an expensive bureaucracy that criminalizes the honest, that does nothing to deter those who commit gun crime, and that simply does not do what it was supposed to do.

I have heard from countless Canadians especially in my riding of Delta—Richmond East that the long gun registry is simply not worth it. It has always been the focus of this government to take concrete action for the safety of Canadians. That is always uppermost in our minds. We have a proven record of delivering measures that not only crack down on criminals but also protect victims and give law enforcement the tools it needs to get its very important job done.

From our Tackling Violent Crime Act in 2006, which created longer mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes and drive-by shootings, to delivering initiatives that help prevent crime before it happens, such as the youth gang prevention fund, this government is serious about tackling gun crime the right way.

A government's job is to enact policy that works. As we stand here today, for far too long it has been clear that the long gun registry does not work. It is time to end this registry once and for all.

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if I understood correctly, if someone buys or is in possession of a restricted weapon, a collector's gun, a semi-automatic weapon, etc., a licence is required. But if someone wants to buy a shotgun or a long gun, a hunting rifle, no licence is required. Is that correct? Have I understood correctly?

[*English*]

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, no, that is not correct. There are still licensing provisions. We are not tampering with those. What we are changing and what we are committed to doing is to end the long gun registry and the data associated with it.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just need to make a comment on the last question from the other side. A common mistake that people make is they confuse licensing with the registry.

I want to point out that 92% of front-line officers had no use for the gun registry. That is from a survey which was done only a couple of years ago. I often hear people on the other side say that the police support this. That is not true.

Government Orders

My main comment is in regard to the quotation from the other side that somehow all these people who represent victim groups support the registry. In conversation with them, they do not understand that the registry is simply a piece of paper lying beside a gun. It has no connection to preventing crime from occurring.

I ask the member, if we had used that billion dollars or the tens of millions of dollars that are now being spent on the registry to target the root causes of crime and violence in our society, would that be a better and more effective use of our resources?

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, our approach to crime in Canada has always been holistic. We do look at crime prevention in all aspects. As I mentioned in my speech, we have a youth crime prevention fund and other initiatives.

There are many areas in which this money could have been put to better use to deal with victims of crime, to help those who perhaps at an early age get involved in crime and to prevent them from becoming more serious criminals. There are so many ways this money could have been better spent.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member.

Past government bills regarding the elimination of the gun registry required owners who wished to sell their guns or give them away to ensure that the new owner actually held a hunting or owner's licence. But this bill does not contain a similar measure.

How can the government be sure that weapons will be transferred solely to people who possess a valid licence?

[English]

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I am not entirely sure I understood my colleague's question. What I can say is that we made a commitment, our commitment was clear, and we are following through on that commitment.

In terms of being sure as to what weapons may be part of this, there is not going to be a registry, and whether a gun was part of that will no longer be relevant. The licensing portions are still in place. There are still checks and balances. This is very targeted legislation, thoroughly thought out. It will go a long way toward decriminalizing law-abiding Canadians and making sure we go after those who hurt law-abiding Canadians.

• (1210)

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as with other rural MPs, there has been a lot of pressure on me to support abolition of the gun registry. Since 2004, however, I have supported the registry. It has been a divisive issue in communities, but nevertheless, I have been able to win three elections because I believe the majority of my constituents support retention of the registry.

People contact my office and want to hear my position. I will quote a bit from some of the letters I send out. I say in one letter that my position is basically this, "If there is some evidence that the registry helps police in their work, if there is some evidence, then it would be wrong to scrap it. I am personally prepared, for example, to keep my rifles registered if this in any way keeps our country safe".

The other thing that I have been saying is that I understand that the powerful American National Rifle Association would like us to scrap all existing gun laws. I find this unacceptable.

Interestingly enough, according to the RCMP's Canadian firearms program, long guns are the most common type of firearms used in spousal homicide. There is some evidence that gun registration may be working. Between 1991 and 2007, the murder rate of women by firearms dropped by 67%, while the total murder rate by rifles and shotguns declined by 76%. Total firearms death in Canada decreased by 57%.

Of course there are those who would say that these statistics do not mean anything, that they are irrelevant, but I will come back to my main point. If there is some evidence that it works, why scrap it? Why not try to modify the registry and ensure that it is acceptable to all Canadians?

The other thing I would like to mention is that there is a train of thought circulating on the Internet and among some associations that somehow this registry is an affront to our liberty, that we have the right to have arms and we should not have to register them because if they are registered, then a fascist government could somehow get into power and seize all our weapons. It cites the example of Nazi Germany and all of that kind of stuff. Actually, I was going to ask my colleague who spoke before me if she subscribed to that philosophy, which I believe is pure rubbish.

My personal experience with the process of obtaining and renewing a PAL, as we call it, as well as with registering my rifles, has been very smooth. Both before and since being elected, and over the four years and more since I first took office, I have listened to different people and groups within the riding. There are conflicting views, but I have made a decision that, once again, if there is some evidence that it works, why do we not just retain it.

I have a press release in *The Globe and Mail* of May 6, 2010, and I would like to quote Mr. Charles Momy, president of the Canadian Police Association. In the article he says that he wants to make it clear that his members stand shoulder to shoulder with their chiefs on the issue. Two weeks after Conservative MPs derided the police leadership as a cult that pretended the long gun registry saved lives. Mr. Momy said:

—front-line cops disagree with their chiefs on a number of issues, but while they support the Conservative government's law-and-order policies, the gun-registry is a different matter. We're going there together to show a united front....We want to make it clear to Canadians and politicians and everyone else that we are not divided among the various groups

According to Mr. Momy, police can use the gun registry to help solve gun crimes, prevent suicide and find out about potential dangers when they enter a house or approach a suspect. He said, "the Conservative government's approach is like taking away a police officer's sidearm or baton because he or she hasn't had to use them".

Government Orders

Once again, if a number of people on the front line are saying it works, and some say it does not, why get rid of it? Why risk the chance of putting the lives of our police officers in danger or endanger other Canadians?

●(1215)

The RCMP defends the registry. For example, the RCMP officer in charge of the National Gun Registry, and this is from the *Winnipeg Free Press*, on May 5, 2010, said, “it is a misconception that only people who do not register guns ever use them for deadly purposes”.

RCMP chief superintendent and former director general of the Canadian firearms program, Marty Cheliak, said, “No legislation or regulation will ever prevent all crimes”. He went on to say, “However the...program does serve a very real purpose and contributes to police officer safety and the safety of all Canadians”. According to Cheliak, “40 per cent of the guns police traced back to an owner in 2009 were registered, non-restricted long guns—or 1,600 of the 4,000 recovered that year. Those guns would no longer need to be registered” if the current bill were passed.

I want to make a slight diversion here to touch on the whole crime policy in general that the government is presenting. I would like to quote from the *Red Deer Advocate*, a publication in Alberta, which as we know is no hotbed of socialist left-wing thought. In its editorial it says:

It's been said that if you're in the United States and have an urge to commit a crime, steer clear of Texas, which is reputed to be America's toughest crimefighting state. But apparently that's not really the case. Texas has seen the light. By spending more money on rehabilitative programs—not more jails and tougher laws—the state has helped turn offenders into constructive citizens. Costs to taxpayers have fallen and so has the crime rate.

To that end, Texas officials took the unusual step earlier this week of warning [our] Prime Minister...that...Bill C-10 to get tough on criminals will fail. And a coalition of experts in Washington, D.C., said tougher laws are counterproductive. Costs will skyrocket, there's little hope for rehabilitation and the streets won't be safer.

The article goes on to say:

The Tories want more prisons, longer jail terms, mandatory minimum sentences and the power to tell judges how to do their job. A justice system that strives to be fair and flexible could be seriously eroded.

I want to highlight the fallacies of the whole crime agenda that the government is forcing upon Canadians. To make an analogy with the gun registry, in Canada we have a system of justice that works. Our crime rate has been going down. It is much safer to live in Vancouver than in Detroit or any other major American city and yet we want to take more people and put them into prisons.

We have a gun registry that cost many billions of dollars, but now runs at around \$4 million a year. Even if we do not register long guns, the cost will still be the same because of other arms that have to be registered. Therefore, a system that is basically in place, instead of tweaking it or calling for the decriminalization of this, as we are calling for as a party, we need to abolish it, not only abolish it, but the government is saying to destroy all records so that other provinces such as the province of Quebec, even if it chooses to do so because it is the will of the people, cannot use the gun registry. This does not make any sense.

As the Canadian Association of Police Boards says:

It may be that the Firearms Registry is not perfect. If so, let us improve, not dismantle it.

It may be that there are people in your community who have legitimate concerns about certain aspects of the Registry. If so, let us work together to address those legitimate concerns.

That is what my party has been saying ever since these bills were introduced, including the private member's bill during the last Parliament. It may be that there is need for better public awareness in parts of Canada, including other constituencies. If so, let us work together to create that awareness instead of dividing our country as the Prime Minister and the government have done on this question. Let us not be complicit in doing one thing, and that is destroy a basically good safeguard that works in the public interest.

There are some myths that the firearms registry is a financial boondoggle and costs billions to run. In 2009 it cost \$4.1 million to operate the long gun registry.

●(1220)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a registered long gun can be legally in the possession of a different individual at a different location so long as the other person possesses a POL or a PAL, just like a car can be loaned to someone else so long as that person possesses a licence.

How can the member opposite say that law enforcement officers are assisted by the long gun registry in knowing where firearms are stored when this is not even a requirement of the long gun registry?

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned cars. A stolen car can often be used to kill somebody, and that does happen.

I am not the one who is saying this. The people on the front lines are saying that it is possible that the gun registry helps them in their job. If that small possibility exists, why throw it out? Why not improve it? Why not modify it? Why not make it workable for everybody instead of doing what the government is doing? The government is throwing everything out. When we look at the consequences in 10 or 20 years, we might think we should have kept the registry.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House we discussed cancer-causing asbestos and the only members who seemed to believe that asbestos did not cause cancer were Conservative members. Today we are discussing the registry and it seems like the only people who think the gun registry is useless, that it costs billions of dollars, that the police do not agree with it, are Conservative members.

Could the hon. member tell me where the Conservative ideology comes from? Why are the Conservatives so hypocritical about the gun registry and asbestos?

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Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I really do not know how decisions are made by members across the aisle. It does not make any sense to take asbestos out of our buildings to make our country safer, yet continue to export it to other countries. It is almost as if we do not care about people in other parts of the world, so we get an apology that somehow it is fine.

When representatives of our law enforcement officers are saying that the registry should be modified instead of being done away with, it does not make sense that the government continues with this ideological move. When people in the legal profession are questioning the government's whole crime agenda, from lawyers and people in the United States, who are saying it is not working, it does not make any sense that the government continues to do this.

I have absolutely no idea as to why the Conservatives have this ideological train of thought.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since my hon. colleague likes to quote former president of the CPA Charles Momy, here is what the Canadian Police Association is saying:

[The Minister of Public Safety] consulted regularly with our Association and our members to ensure that any changes would have minimal impact on public safety.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Minister to find effective tools and resources to keep guns off our streets, and out of the hands of criminals.

Does the member agree with the CPA's position now since he is so inclined to quote the previous president?

• (1225)

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, there are many positions out there. Since I have been here, I have noticed that members will stand up for the interests of farmers, for example, or other organizations and then when they get pressure from the government and other groups, they suddenly change their position. They seem to think that if they do not change their position, it will be harder to work with the government even though it might contradict their position.

I would like to spend some time with that gentleman, face to face, to find out what went on to make this change of statement.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to add my voice to this important debate on Bill C-19, Ending the Long-gun Registry Act, which would finally put an end to what was an unnecessary, wasteful and ineffective long gun registry. It is a bill that has been a long time coming.

For too long, the failed long gun registry has been in place making criminals of law-abiding hunters and farmers, while doing nothing to prevent gun crime in Canada. The majority of homicides committed in Canada do not involve long guns at all. Statistics have shown that rifles and shotguns are not the problem because they are not the weapon of choice for criminals.

There seems to be a misconception that keeping the long gun registry will somehow prevent gun crimes with illicit handguns from happening. The truth is that those gun crimes have happened despite the long gun registry being in place.

The long gun registry is a waste of taxpayer money and it is ineffective. One of the responsibilities of government is to put in place programs that are cost-effective and which actually work. The

long gun registry accomplishes neither. For many years, we have seen ongoing discussions in the media, in government and by the Auditor General of just how wasteful and ineffective the long gun registry actually is.

With costs reaching as high as \$2 billion and no tangible evidence that a long gun registry does anything to reduce crime, there have been continuous calls to end this boondoggle. Despite the attempts of long gun registry supporters to convince Canadians that the long gun registry is saving lives, there is simply no scientific data to back this up. It is clear to many millions of Canadians that the long gun registry is both wasteful and ineffective. It is for these reasons that our government has worked, since taking office, to end the long gun registry.

Over the last several days of the debate, we have heard a great deal of hyperbole from members of the opposition about what the scrapping of the long gun registry will actually mean. The way some members have been talking, one would think that this bill would remove all restrictions on firearms. This is misleading and it is wrong.

Bill C-19 is about ending the long gun registry and destroying the records that make up the long gun registry. Other tools and controls on firearms will remain in place. To lawfully possess a firearm, every Canadian must be in possession of a valid firearms licence, and anyone who wants to acquire a firearm must undergo the required Canadian firearms safety course. This is a comprehensive 10-hour classroom course that gives students a working knowledge of safe firearms handling and it ensures that they are familiar with the laws and procedures regarding the ownership of firearms.

As part of this licence application, all individuals are also screened. They are screened to ensure that there is no reason to believe that the public will be in danger if that individual gains a licence. This includes checking the people's criminal record to see if they have been prohibited by law to own a gun or if they pose a danger to society. Once individuals do acquire a licence, they must renew it regularly.

As noted, none of that will change with the legislation that is being discussed today. In fact, to strengthen the components of the licensing system that actually work, we have invested \$7 million annually to improve the screening process for first-time firearms licensees, and we believe there is help keeping firearms out of the hands of people who should not have them.

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Our second area of focus is the work we have done to strengthen the punishment for gun crimes. We passed legislation that sets out mandatory prison sentences for serious gun crimes, as well as reversed bail provisions for serious offences. We have put in place laws that target drive-by and other intentional shootings that demonstrate a reckless disregard for safety of others.

There is now a mandatory minimum sentence of 4 years in prison, up to a maximum of 14 years for these crimes, and minimum sentences go up to 5 years if the individual committed the act on behalf of a criminal organization or using a restricted or prohibited hand gun or automatic weapon. These are tough measures that send a strong message. They send a strong message that those who commit violent crimes will face serious consequences.

• (1230)

We have also taken decisive action to boost the number of police officers on the ground to combat crimes in our communities. We have invested significant funds into helping prevent crime through programs like the youth gang prevention fund and the national crime prevention strategy.

In addition, we are taking real action to strengthen our borders. These borders are strengthened to stem the flood of illegally smuggled firearms from the United States. Our efforts to crack down on this illegal activity have taken many forms, including the deployment of integrated border enforcement teams at strategic points along the border, as well as making key improvements to border infrastructure, which improves the way that travellers are screened.

I have listened to the opposition question what lessons we have learned from the tragic events of Polytechnique and Dawson College if we scrap the long gun registry.

I will quote Darrell Scott, whose daughter Rachel was killed at Columbine, the first high school tragedy shootings in 1999, as he testified before a House judiciary subcommittee on firearms legislation. He stated:

In the days that followed the Columbine tragedy, I was amazed at how quickly fingers began to be pointed at groups such as the NRA. I am not a member of the NRA. I am not a hunter. I do not even own a gun. I am not here to represent or defend the NRA - because I don't believe that they are responsible for my daughters death.

Mr. Scott went on to state:

And when something as terrible...politicians immediately look for a scapegoat such as the NRA. They immediately seek to pass more restrictive laws that continue to erode away our personal and private liberties. We do not need more restrictive laws.

He continued:

Eric and Dylan would not have been stopped by metal detectors. No amount of gun laws can stop someone who spends months planning this type of massacre. The real villain lies within our OWN hearts. Political posturing and restrictive legislation are not the answers. The young people of our nation hold the key.

In light of what we know about the long gun registry, our government is making the responsible choice. We know the long gun registry is wasteful. We know it is ineffective against real crime. We know that we have a strong mandate from Canadians to pursue law and order measures that really work. That is why our government is

choosing to deliver on our promise to scrap the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry once and for all.

The long gun registry has cost Canadian taxpayers an exorbitant amount of money. We hear from front-line police officers that the long gun registry is not reliable, is full of errors and has done nothing to help the officers who it was meant to protect.

There is no statistic showing us that the long gun registry has had any impact in terms of saving lives or deterring individuals from committing violent gun-related crimes.

This is a matter of common sense, and our government has a strong mandate to deliver measures that work and that protect law-abiding Canadians. The long gun registry does neither.

I ask all hon. members to vote according to the facts and end the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry today.

• (1235)

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a law is only good if it accomplishes what it sets out to do. Clearly, the firearms registry does not do that. I say that as a former police officer. I have never gone to the scene of a crime and seen a circumstance where the registry would have had an effect. I have looked down the barrel of a gun the wrong way. The registry is not an asset.

I have been at a number of domestic calls where one must always assume the worst. One can never prepare. The registry has never helped. I have said that to many of my colleagues across the country and they have repeated that, yet I hear the opposition members bringing a general testament that it is of assistance.

Could the hon. minister give us the exact circumstances she has heard from the opposition that shows the many occasions where it has been effective? Are there any?

Hon. Lynne Yelich: No, Mr. Speaker. I know that some members were elected on that issue going way back in time, including in Saskatchewan where a Liberal MP has not been elected since the long gun registry in 1993, aside from the member for Wascana. However, he does not listen to his constituents, as we well know. I guess Regina did not send him for that reason.

That is the reason I quoted the father who lost his daughter in the Columbine tragedy, one of the worst tragedies. What he said hits home. It is what is in people's hearts. It is the person behind the gun who will commit the murder, not the gun. The gun involved in the Dawson shooting was registered, and it did not make a difference. Those young people are dead today because of the person behind the gun, not because of the gun.

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[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, and as we have repeated over and over again on this side of the House, the Quebec provincial government and the National Assembly have unanimously decided that they want to keep the data from the current Canadian firearms registry. The Conservative member for Kootenay—Columbia even said earlier today that if the provinces want to create their own firearms registries, they could simply go ahead and do so.

I wonder if my hon. colleague across the floor could share her thoughts on that. Destroying the registry, only for the provinces to turn around and create new ones, that is fine, but the government does not want to share the existing data. Why would the government make the provinces spend more money, when they are simply asking for the data from the firearms registry?

[*English*]

Hon. Lynne Yelich: Actually, Mr. Speaker, this legislation has nothing to do with penalizing provinces. We are ending the long gun registry. The long gun registry is a database of long guns. If the provinces really wanted that data, they should have collected it themselves and helped in this debate, instead of challenging us for that information. They can perhaps take care of that themselves.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is ironic that the member is saying that the provinces should have collected that data themselves. The data already exists and there is an opportunity to ensure that the provinces that believe in this registry can obtain it. There was a comment earlier by a colleague on the other side who used to be a police officer. I can tell the House that not every police officer supports his point of view.

How many times did the minister's office need to do interventions to assist people with the gun registry? I can say that in the three years I have been the MP in my riding, I have had four. That does not account for wanting to get rid of the registry. I am not talking about complaints to get rid of the registry. I am talking about complaints where people needed her help in order to address issues of the gun registry.

Hon. Lynne Yelich: Mr. Speaker, I guess I should not have said the provinces. They can do what they want. We want to end the gun registry and that is what we are doing. I am not interested in pursuing that part of the argument.

On how many calls have come into my office, when we were elected, I would venture to say that 99.9% of my votes were what mandated us to end the gun registry alone. That is how many calls I received. People told us to get rid of the gun registry now that we had a majority government. They said that that they had sent us to Ottawa to get rid of it and that if we did not, they would start their own party and get rid of it.

● (1240)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as members are aware, I am rising to speak to Bill C-19, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act.

In this very emotional debate, we have had members from all sides of the House rise and quote from either families of victims, police officers, or from other organizations that are for or against the

registry. I think that the kind of debate we have heard in the House emphasizes how divisive this particular issue is in this country. No matter which side of the issue, people have passion when speaking to their beliefs on the matter.

I will address one aspect of that belief. I come from the riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, a very beautiful riding, but I think it epitomizes the divide in this country around this particular issue.

My riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan is an urban-rural riding and members can imagine the kind of discussion that has taken place there on the registry. I would have one group of constituents come before me to say that I absolutely must vote to get rid of the gun registry. Then I would have an equally passionate group of people coming from exactly the opposing point of view. However, I have heard members in the House say that the reason they are here in the House is because people in their riding voted to send them here based on their position on the gun registry, either pro or con.

I think many of us sometimes face very difficult decisions when we have a riding that is just not that clear cut. What do we do? I have had people, whether they voted for or against me, say that I have to represent their views here in the House. With an individual who says that to me, I always raise this question. There are roughly 127,000 people who live in my riding, it is 4,000-plus square kilometres and I could conceivably have 127,000 different points of view on any particular issue. So how do I best represent my constituents?

It is incumbent upon us, when we are talking about representing our constituents, to look at the country as a whole. Right now we have before us an issue that is dividing our country. It is dividing the urban versus the rural. It is pitting the hunters and farmers against some of the city dwellers and sometimes against people whose families have suffered as a result of gun violence.

It would be far more useful if we could talk about gun control rather than the gun registry. If we want to keep our communities, family members and officers safe, that may be the best way to tackle it. However, instead of having that conversation, we are having a deeply divisive conversation about the gun registry.

I want to quote the late Jack Layton. Jack, in this House and in other places, has said that one of the roles of a national leader is to look for ways to bridge those divides in our country. One of the roles of a national leader is to take those deeply divisive issues and ask where we can find common ground so that we are not beating up on each other over issues.

Years ago when I was doing work on conflict resolution and mediation, one of the things that some of the professors used to say about this issue is to be hard on the problem and soft on the people. However, I find in this House that we are being very hard on the people, but not dealing with the problem.

I want to read into the record parts of a speech that Jack gave on August 20, 2010. Jack said:

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I've heard from countless gun-owners who say the registry treats them like criminals. Discounts their way of life...their regional roots. I've heard from Canadians who hate what the registry seems to represent — another city-driven idea that forgot rural reality. I've spoken to First Nations hunters who resent hearing they should "just get over it" and register their rifles. They talk about respect, and treaty rights, and slippery slopes.

The concerns of rural, northern and aboriginal Canadians are real and honest. But I've also heard from countless citizens, equally impassioned, who take a different view. Emergency Room doctors, victim service workers, police officers and their unions, parents, teachers, Members of Parliament, ordinary women & men in cities like Montreal, Winnipeg, and Vancouver.

Many agree that the way the registry was implemented was deeply flawed, but they ask a compelling question: Shouldn't we Canadians do anything in our power that might reduce gun violence? Stopping gun violence has been a priority for rural and urban Canadians. There is no good reason why we shouldn't be able to build solutions that bring us together, but that sense of shared purpose had been the silent victim of the gun registry debate.

● (1245)

He goes on and, I think, very ably outlines in that speech the very difficult decision facing our country, but I only have 10 minutes.

I know from my own riding that, although the gun registry has been an issue either for or against, is not the number one issue that people come in to my riding office to talk about. They want to know how come they cannot get their employment insurance claim cheque because of delays in processing. They want to know where is the national housing strategy because my riding has a situation where there are very few rental units that have been built over the last 10, 15, 20 years. They want to know what is happening with health care because they cannot get a family doctor. They want to know what is happening with the roads and all of those other day-to-day things that people face in my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan. The gun registry is not the number one issue that they say we should be spending our time and energy in this House debating.

Now, Jack and the New Democrats did have some proposals around this deeply divisive issue. This included things like decriminalizing first time non-registration of long guns and making a one time offence a non-criminal ticket, enshrining in legislation that gun owners will never be charged for registration, preventing the release of identifying information about gun owners except to protect public safety by court order or by law, and creating a legal guarantee for aboriginal treaty rights.

I know that as a former aboriginal affairs critic I did hear many times from first nations about their concerns around the possible abrogation of treaty rights in this piece of gun registry legislation. I know the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, myself and others in this House have talked very passionately about the need to consider aboriginal treaty rights in the context of gun registry or gun control, whichever way we are looking at it.

As in many pieces of legislation, there are often opportunities for unintended consequences. We have seen this in legislation that has been before this House before. I was talking earlier to a member of the press about the former voter identification registration, where the initial piece of legislation disenfranchised nearly a million Canadians because the House did not get it right. It did not do its due diligence.

An article in the November 1 Toronto *Star* begins with "Tory gun bill delists sniper rifles, semi-automatics". In here some concerns have been raised about some, one can imagine, unintended consequences of the bill because I am sure nobody would actually

want this to happen. I am going to read from the article about some of the weapons that are affected. It states:

They are all weapons that will soon be declassified under the Conservatives' bill to kill the long-gun registry and freed from binding controls that now see them listed with the RCMP-run database.

They fall under the class of "non-restricted" weapons and they are about to become unregistered. Restricted or prohibited firearms such automatic assault rifles, sawed-off shotguns or handguns are not affected by the bill and would remain under current controls.

But under Bill C-19, the law would no longer require a licensed gun owner to hold a registration certificate for "non-restricted" weapons.

It further states:

The [Coalition for Gun Control] is still analyzing the legislation. But in information sent to the *Star*, its researchers point out that under the Conservative bill the Ruger Mini-14, the .50-calibre sniper rifle...a sniper rifle that can pierce light armour from a distance of up to 1.5 km—and [another] Long Range Sniper Rifle, which can accurately hit a target 2 kilometres away will no longer require registration certificates.

I am sure most Canadians would not want this to happen. It would seem important that what we do is take a step back, think about the divisions that this is creating in our country, and think about what Canadians actually want when they are talking about gun registry versus gun control.

I would urge all members in this House to vote against the bill because the bill simply does not address some of the key issues that are facing our communities, our police officers, and families of victims of gun violence.

● (1250)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does the hon. member think there is any such thing as a law-abiding sniper? Because that is exactly what this legislation will create. The government goes on endlessly about criminalizing the activities of otherwise law-abiding citizens. Of course, this is a nonsense argument. The effect of the bill will be that we will now be able to have law-abiding snipers because they will not have to register their sniper rifles.

On a more serious note, the chief of police of Toronto, Bill Blair, has come out very vigorously in preserving this. I was in personal conversation with him and he sees it as simply a matter of officer safety, aside from all of the other benefits, that this is purely and simply a matter of officer safety. The officers use and rely on this registry. It gives them intelligence in advance of going into a situation where they may or may not know what the situation is.

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I would be interested in the member's comments on both of those issues.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for those two very good questions. I ran out of time to quote from the *Star* article, but further on down in that article, dealing with issues around snipers, it pointed out that in the past businesses used to have to do the registration. Of course, that was done away with, with the long gun registry in 1995.

There is a quote here from the president of Quebec's municipal police federation. He said:

Without the long-gun registry, the government must re-establish the requirement that merchants keep records of gun purchasers, and the same requirement must be imposed upon gun owners who give, transfer or sell their firearms.

We are not doing away with some of the requirements. We still need an ability to find out who has these guns and when they may be used in an offence.

The other issue around officer safety is very interesting. The Conservatives, with their law and order agenda, are actually not looking for ways that they can continue to put in place measures that would support the safety and well-being of police officers in this country.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her impassioned speech. She spoke about what our previous leader, Jack Layton, had said in his speech. It really touches on the point that there are differing opinions and as members of Parliament our job is not to divide but to actually unite. So we need to do our research and we need to make a decision. Even in my riding, people are divided on this issue. It is not easy, but we have to look at their perspective.

There was a speech on the Conservative side a few minutes ago and during the speech the member talked about the NRA. I wonder if my colleague would like to comment on the fact that the Conservatives quote the NRA on certain issues.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, any of us who have done any travelling in the world, whether to the United States or other countries, recognize very quickly that Canada is a culturally different country. Therefore, when we start looking elsewhere for quotes and comments, this is really one of these cases where it should be a made in Canada solution. Because our country has evolved differently than the United States, we really do need to look for solutions that are going to respect the different provincial and territorial approaches to this, as well as first nations and Inuit rights, with their treaties. First nations and Inuit have been treated very differently in this country as well.

This is an issue that must be made in Canada. We must look to Canadians for a solution. We must look to rural and urban Canadians and first nations, Inuit and Métis. Therefore, I urge the government to withdraw this piece of legislation and go back to the drawing board.

• (1255)

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to join in the debate on Bill C-19, Ending the Long-gun Registry Act. This is

an important issue that has been very important in my riding of Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley.

Last fall I presented a petition before this House signed by thousands of members of my riding, all of whom wanted the government to scrap the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry. I also want to note that our office did a survey on this very issue within our riding, and again the constituents of Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley spoke loudly and clearly. Of the 2,600 people who responded to the survey, 2,200 said they wanted the long gun registry scrapped, so when I speak today, I feel I am honestly and fairly representing the views and wishes of my constituents.

I wonder if the hon. members across the floor who represent rural ridings can say the same. I will come back to that point a little later.

Let me tell members a bit about Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, the area that I am so proud to represent. It is a beautiful part of northern Nova Scotia. It is a rural riding; the largest community is 12,000 people. Families there have a wonderful tradition of enjoying Canada's outdoor heritage.

Members may know that as an educator by profession, I spent many years working to help young people become responsible citizens and lead healthy and rewarding lives. I am happy to say that thousands of young people in the riding enjoy hunting and fishing as part of healthy outdoor living. Being close to nature is one of the great benefits of living in the rural parts of our country, and those are also activities that families enjoy together as part of growing up in these rural communities.

That is one of the reasons that there is so much opposition to the long gun registry in communities that I represent. Law-abiding hunters, farmers and fishermen for whom responsible long gun ownership is the norm are being made to feel that there is some questionable aspect to their lifestyle simply because they own a firearm. They feel that they are being penalized for a way of life by a far-off threat of illegal handguns in urban areas. This is both wrong and unfair. It is something I hear about on a daily basis from those who live and work in my riding.

I also hear a great deal about the wastefulness of the long gun registry, something I have spoken about in the past and something I will continue to speak about in the future. As a Conservative and a taxpayer, I find the cost of the long gun registry to be unacceptable. When this measure was first introduced by the previous Liberal government, Canadians were told the cost would not be more than \$2 million; today we are looking at costs as high as \$2 billion. Canadians have been made to bear the cost of this bureaucratic exercise, yet it delivers no tangible benefits to prevent crime or help front-line officer safety. In fact, there is a fundamental disconnect between what the long gun registry was created to do and what it actually does.

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We know the long gun registry was set up with the intention of preventing gun crime, yet we know that by their very nature, criminals do not follow the rule of law, and they certainly do not register their firearms. In the years during which it has been in effect, the long gun registry has failed to do anything to prevent criminals from picking up a firearm and using it in a crime. It has no preventative capacity whatsoever. Despite hearing many of my hon. colleagues across the floor express their belief that the long gun registry saves lives, I do not believe we have been presented with any evidence that it helps in this manner.

The result over the years has been a large, wasteful and ineffective exercise that has done nothing to prevent crimes but has done a great deal to burden law-abiding hunters, farmers and sport shooters. It is bad policy, which is why our government is moving to scrap the long gun registry once and for all.

Let me be clear about what Bill C-19 would do and what it would not do.

The ending the long-gun registry act would remove the requirement for law-abiding hunters, farmers and sport shooters to register their unrestricted long guns. We would also ensure that the data collected as part of this registry would be destroyed and would not be available to create another long gun registry. Our government has made a commitment to scrap the long gun registry, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Throughout this debate, I have seen many of the members opposite try to confuse this issue. Many members have incorrectly suggested that by ending the long gun registry, we would somehow weaken gun control in Canada. There is simply no evidence to back up that claim. The long gun registry has nothing to do with licensing or the control of restricted and prohibited firearms. The rules and regulations surrounding those types of firearms would remain unchanged.

To close, let me remind the hon. members that November is the start of hunting season. For many years and throughout many hunting seasons, members of constituencies like mine have waited patiently for the end of the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry. Thousands of Canadians, both in my riding and across the country, are waiting for action from their members of Parliament on this issue. Specifically, they are waiting to see how members on both sides of the House will vote on this legislation.

• (1300)

That is why I am calling on members of the House who come from constituencies like mine to do the right thing and vote in support of Bill C-19. When we vote on this issue, I will be voting on behalf of the constituents of my riding. I have a responsibility to those who elected me and I hope that all other hon. members will respect those who elected them and do the same.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciated the speech given by my colleague opposite, especially the part about the cost of the firearms registry. As everyone now knows, the firearms registry was originally supposed to cost only \$2 million. In the end, it cost \$2 billion to create. I am not sure if my colleague opposite is aware, but today the firearms

registry costs about 10¢ a day per voter. That is less than the cost of a cup of coffee a day to keep it. If he wants to scrap it, as he is so fond of saying, it will cost us another \$2 billion.

Does the member not think this would be a lot more expensive than just keeping the information so the provinces can reuse it?

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of rhetoric before on the cost of the long gun registry. When the long gun registry was created, the creator of it was Allan Rock. He said:

Let us not hear that the registration system will cost us \$100 per firearm. Let us not hear that it is a prelude to confiscation by the government of hunting rifles and shotguns. Let us not contend that it will cost \$1.5 billion to put in place. That is the way to distort the discussion. That is the way to frighten people.

Allan Rock said it would cost \$2 million, and when the accusation that it would cost \$1.5 billion was levelled against him, he said that was ridiculous.

He was right; it did not cost \$1.5 billion. It cost the Canadian taxpayers \$2 billion.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the hon. member was speaking about waste. I would like him to comment on this Conservative waste: ongoing \$2 billion subsidy to the oil patch; \$2 billion for the G8 summit for a fake lake, gazebos, sidewalks that go nowhere and an arena that was never used; \$3 billion of stimulus money put into the Treasury Board for discretionary funds; and the Conservatives spent \$130 million of taxpayers' money to advertise.

Could the hon. member comment on this type of waste?

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, our focus as a government is on jobs and growth. We have invested millions and billions of dollars from one end of the country to the other to make sure that we escaped from the largest recession since the Great Depression. I stand in favour of those investments because they have led Canada to be the strongest nation in the world when it comes to debt to GDP ratio.

Before the NDP members criticize this government for the way we are tackling jobs and growth in this country, they should first look at some of their own initiatives, such as increasing taxes on job creators across this country. Their tax increases would destroy the future of this economy.

On the long gun registry, all the member has to do is ask the NDP government of Manitoba, which stands solidly behind the elimination of the long gun registry.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the hon. member mentioned Manitoba. With this legislation, Conservatives are going to destroy all of the data. Why would the government not let provinces like Quebec and Manitoba use that data to form their own gun registry, instead of wasting \$2 billion to destroy it? That is real tax waste.

Government Orders

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, many people in this country believe that the long gun registry is only a step in the path to eliminate private ownership of firearms. Many people believe that. Let me quote what Allan Rock said on April 25, 1994: “I came to Ottawa with a firm belief that the only people in this country who should have guns are police officers and soldiers”.

That is what the long gun registry could lead to. That is what many people in this country fear.

Also, for people in rural parts of this nation, Liberal Senator Sharon Carstairs said that registering hunting rifles is the first step to social re-engineering of Canadians.

Thanks very much. We do not need someone like her to re-engineer us in rural parts of this country.

● (1305)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in Bill C-19, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act.

The NDP recognizes that there were improvements to be made to the firearms registry from the moment it was implemented. In fact, our party has proposed a number of changes to improve this registry and make it a more effective tool that does not interfere with the rights of the public. What is more, our late leader, Jack Layton, introduced a very positive proposal, which included decriminalizing the failure to register one's firearm when it was the first failure to do so. His proposal also allowed the benefits of this registration program to be maintained. As my colleague mentioned a little earlier today, the registration fees would also be dropped under this proposal.

Instead of bringing people together, finding solutions, bridging the divides between the various positions and trying to reach a general consensus, as advocated by the NDP, the Conservatives are once again imposing their vision and their ideology just for the sake of keeping their election promises, without any consideration for the thoughts and concerns of all the groups in society that are saying they are against abolishing the firearms registry. The Conservatives are moving ahead without listening and without considering the countless police officers who use the firearms registry every day in every region of Canada.

The Conservatives prefer to take a step backwards, waste taxpayers' money and erase any trace of progress. The Conservatives want to eliminate all the data at all costs, regardless of how useful it is and regardless of the estimated 2,100 lives that have been saved because of this registry.

In Quebec, we recognize the importance of such a registry in protecting the public and reducing violence against women—women who live in abusive situations under constant threat.

After the Polytechnique massacre and the Dawson College violence—we bring this up every day because these events left their mark on Quebec—women's groups said that it was important to keep the gun registry to better track licence holders and to help police locate criminals, even murderers. This is unfortunately still the reality in 2011. The gun registry is a tool that allows us to verify the

licences of gun owners and to run checks on these people. If the government abolishes the registry, it will remove the obligation to verify information about licence holders or those who buy and sell guns, which runs the risk of weakening the usefulness of a licence.

In addition—we have said this a number of times but it bears repeating—the National Assembly of Quebec, the elected officials who represent all Quebecers, last week voted unanimously to keep part of the gun registry.

However, the Conservatives are ignoring the will of Quebec's National Assembly and are telling Quebec that if it wants to create its own registry it should go ahead, but without the federal data. Once again, it is a question of public safety. The Conservatives want to tax the provinces as much as they can.

Instead of wasting the money of Quebec taxpayers, who funded the registry, why not act in good faith, in a positive and constructive manner, and give them access to the data and the information, which, I would remind members, saves lives. Furthermore, on the issue of public safety, the Conservatives are really contradicting themselves with this bill.

For example, in my riding of Beauharnois—Salaberry, which is on the U.S.-Ontario border, we know that there is definitely a problem with the trafficking of guns, drugs and cigarettes. An increasing number of issues that people find to be worrisome and alarming are being raised.

● (1310)

Just last Friday, I met with the mayor of Dundee, who spoke to me about a growing problem: for the past year at least, landowners have been feeling more and more intimidated every day because RCMP and Sûreté du Québec police surveillance has diminished. An excellent pilot project was implemented west of the Franklin border crossing in Venise-en-Québec. However, between Franklin and Dundee, there is a section of the border where surveillance is lacking and crime is on the rise.

I have a very real example. Last winter, the home of a person who was not involved in crime in any way was set on fire by criminal groups that have not yet been identified. People are terrified by the idea that other homes may also be burned down. People are being intimidated but they do not dare to report the crimes that are being committed around them, on their property or against them.

In June, the Minister of Public Safety himself went to Dundee to determine the extent of the problem. He met with the mayor of Dundee. He assessed the situation and acknowledged that action needed to be taken to make the community safer. Yet to date, the mayor of Dundee has not received any information and the government has not followed up on the situation.

People want an increased police presence to increase surveillance, whether it be ground or maritime surveillance, as my riding borders Lake St. Francis.

Government Orders

Could RCMP officers not form a task force in co-operation with the Ontario Provincial Police, police on the Akwesasne Mohawk reserve and the Sûreté du Québec? Is it too much to ask the Conservative government to make sure that these areas are safe? The various jurisdictions could work together to break up these crime networks, which have not stopped growing since security was increased west of the Franklin border crossing.

With respect to the Franklin border post, I will say the same thing. The post was closed in April. This is a factor that reduces public safety in my riding, given that the customs officers who watched over that post no longer work there, so there is no longer any surveillance at that location on the Canadian side. On the American side, however, they have strengthened security. Is what has happened not absurd? We have tried to work with the Conservatives to reinstate this border crossing, but have been unsuccessful to date. We still have hope.

Instead of spending time tearing down what we have managed to build up over the years, why not think about concrete solutions to concrete problems of public safety that are increasingly of concern not just for the people in my riding, but also for people in Ontario and Akwesasne and the Americans?

There is a glaring problem in terms of the firearms registry and the borders. The Canada Border Services Agency does not exchange information with the people in charge of the registry when it comes to long arms imported under a licence to operate a business. As a result, some firearms have turned up on the black market.

My time is running short, so I would like to give two very quick examples. In British Columbia in 2007 an RCMP report explained how some firearms had turned up on the black market. Some film production companies had claimed that they needed firearms in their films and so were allowed to bring the weapons in legally. The weapons then turned up on the black market, sold to the highest bidder.

The second example is something that happened as recently as October 25, last week. The RCMP had to conduct raids at gun shops because some replica AK-47s had been imported from China in shipments of goods where they were recorded as being mere toys. The RCMP then realized that the firearms could easily be converted and that by changing no more than two or three parts, they would become deadly weapons, so they all had to be recalled. It is unbelievable that this could have happened.

• (1315)

I will conclude by saying that the registry is consulted by police more than 17,000 times a day. Is this useful information? I think it is. There is no consensus on this bill, and it must be rejected so that it can be reworked to take all opinions into consideration.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on her presentation. In Quebec, particularly in rural communities—the hon. member for Alfred-Pellan spoke about this earlier—many of our ridings include both rural and urban areas. This is also true of ridings elsewhere in Canada.

Why is it important to listen to advocacy groups for women, aboriginal communities, police forces and the RCMP who all want

to keep the firearms registry? Why is it important to listen to these groups?

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his very relevant question. I live in a riding that is both rural and urban and that is home to the Mohawk community of Akwesasne. Demands in my riding vary greatly. However, everyone agrees that public safety is of the utmost importance. Yes, there are hunters and people who use firearms responsibly, but we need closer monitoring for no other reason than to prevent crime. A statistic from 2009 shows that 7,000 registration certificates were revoked for public safety reasons. Thus, the firearms registry is useful.

[*English*]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no, that is not the issue I am going to talk about today.

I am not sure if the member is aware of how much impact this issue has had on people who are no longer in the House of Commons. There is a good reason for that. The reason is that there is broad support for getting rid of the long gun registry. It does not work. It does not make our society any safer. It has nothing to do with crime.

The member made a comment and I am quite shocked that kind of comment is still being made by members of the opposition. The comment was that public safety is the number one issue and we need better gun control to avoid crime. The member has to know that criminals certainly do not register their firearms. If criminals have registered firearms, they are highly unlikely to register the ones they use to commit crimes.

The argument does not make any sense. Why would the member still make an argument like that? It is quite shocking, really.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, I will make no apologies for the argument I am making about the firearms registry. If all weapons were registered, it would allow us to monitor firearms more closely and there would be fewer weapons on the black market and thus fewer untraceable weapons readily available to criminals. We need greater control to prevent situations like the one that occurred in British Columbia in 2007—as mentioned in the RCMP report—and the one that occurred on October 25 with the replica AK-47s imported from China from happening again. We need all these tools so that police can intervene in a correct and appropriate manner.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry. Is the government standing up for victims by doing what it is doing right now? We know that a number of victims' groups want to keep the firearms registry. By acting this way, is this government living up to its claims that it always stands up for victims?

Government Orders

• (1320)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question. On the contrary, I think that with this bill, the Conservatives are simply trying to keep a promise without any consideration for the thoughts and concerns of the victims' groups, the police forces, the public, or for public safety. This is truly an unwillingness to listen and to work together with all parties to advance matters in a constructive manner.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak in favour of the ending the long gun registry bill.

It has been nearly 17 years since the previous Liberal government imposed the wasteful, ineffective long gun registry on Canadians, which is ironic.

In March 2008, I was the first active RCMP officer to be elected to the House of Commons. It is also ironic that I was also the first Conservative first nations member to be elected to the House of Commons.

My riding is entirely in northern Saskatchewan, and is actually two-thirds of the province. Obviously, many of the communities are very remote. As a result, firearms are a way of life where I come from, and in my daily life in the RCMP, I saw firearms being used in a legal way. There are those who make their living as farmers and use a shotgun to protect their crops and livestock, and there are those who are first nations, Métis or non-aboriginal who use a rifle to hunt for sustenance. However, these facts seem to have evaded the previous Liberal government.

When the long gun registry was established as part of Bill C-68, it was done with the intention of protecting Canadians from gun crime.

I had five or six years' service when the gun registry was being imposed and I recall listening to my fellow RCMP members, the constables, the corporals and the sergeants. I heard them say that the long gun registry would be ineffective, that \$2 million would not be substantial enough and that there would be lots of cost overruns. Obviously, it was ill conceived as its fundamental focus is on those who are predisposed to follow laws, regulations and rules.

It is abundantly clear that adding needless red tape to every long gun owned by a person in Meadow Lake, La Ronge and La Loche does nothing to stop criminals from getting their hands on guns in cities. The real way to ensure that we can keep our streets and communities safe is through smart investments in crime prevention and establishing tough, effective sentences for those who break the law.

It reminds me of one incident that took place. I was on patrol in a first nations community and saw someone drive a pickup truck down a road, turn to an approach and then turn its lights off. I proceeded to follow. Upon entering the residential lot, I saw an offender pointing a rifle at a residence with individuals inside. I exited the vehicle and he nearly turned his gun on me.

It is kind of ironic that less than a year later we had to investigate a murder in which this individual, in a rage of anger, had thrown his young infant son against a door frame. If the proper sentencing had

been in place to deal with this offender, I believe that this offence would not have been committed and one more young child would have become an adult.

Through these measures we can ensure that crimes do not happen in the first place and that dangerous criminals who insist on harming others are kept behind bars where they belong.

Over the past five years our government has taken concrete steps in both these areas. Then as now, we are committed to keeping Canadians safe and not increasing needless bureaucracy.

Frankly, front-line police officers agree that the long gun registry is not a tool that is useful in day-to-day operations.

I served as an RCMP sergeant. I can say from experience that decisions that my colleagues and I made regarding our safety were not based on information we obtained from the long gun registry. Every complaint was always treated as a firearm complaint. Even when we were serving a summons or a subpoena, we treated the residence as if there were a firearm inside and took the necessary precautions.

Members opposite, specifically the NDP member for York South—Weston, frequently suggest that eliminating the long gun registry will lead to the death of police officers.

• (1325)

I have another personal experience. At 9:25 p.m. on July 7, 2006, in Spiritwood, Saskatchewan, I was on duty and on patrol. A domestic assault occurred in which the mother and sister were assaulted by Curt Dagenais. Subsequently, a pursuit ensued in which chase was given down remote grid roads. As a result, two members were shot and mortally wounded. The members' names were Marc Bourdages and Robin Cameron. One week later, they died from their wounds. This is something I remember every day. Was the gun registered? Yes.

I think there is more of an underlying issue there. The individual had continuous run-ins with people in authority, from transport police to the RCMP to anyone in authority. The individual also faked his own death.

Under our omnibus crime bill, if that individual were charged today, we would still have those two members here working and serving our country.

Any time police officers go into a potentially volatile situation, they do so knowing that there is always a chance someone will have a firearm or other weapon. There was a time when I would leave home knowing the risks of putting on the uniform and knowing that it might be the last time I would see my family.

A list of all weapons, not to mention a list that is well known to be inaccurate, is not a reliable tool. To say that a vote to scrap the long gun registry is a vote against the safety of police officers is simply not accurate.

I want to be clear. The NDP and the Liberals claim to be standing up for law enforcement, when, in reality, it is only our government that has consistently delivered to our men and women in uniform.

Government Orders

Every time a measure comes to the House to give police the tools they need to do their jobs, be it tougher laws, better investments or more funding, police officers from coast to coast to coast count on the opposition to obstruct, delay or oppose them, which is why I find it strange that members opposite are all of a sudden best friends of those in uniform.

When I look at our Conservative caucus, I see 11 members who have all served our country. We have all taken the risks to serve our country. At one point or another, all of us have had to make a decision to go into volatile situations where our lives were deeply at risk.

I was a police officer and I did not find the long gun registry to be a useful tool to prevent crime. Last Friday, I sat with six members from Prince Albert and all of them said that we should get rid of the long gun registry.

First, as a police officer, I can tell members of this House that the long gun registry is not a tool to prevent crime or to keep Canadians safe. In fact, the Canadian Police Association stated:

The Government received a clear mandate from the last election to proceed with their proposed changes to the long-gun registry.

We respect the message that voters have sent on this issue.

...any changes would have minimal impact on public safety.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Minister to find effective tools and resources to keep guns off our streets....

We're quite satisfied with the efforts this government has made to work on behalf of front-line police officers, specifically with respect to the comprehensive justice legislation that has been a priority since the last election.

I challenge any member who votes to keep a \$2 billion boondoggle to show me a single statistic that empirically proves we are safer with these measures.

Second, the long gun registry targets the wrong people, the northerners, the first nations, the Métis and law-abiding duck hunters.

I call on all members of this House to support this very important legislation and to ensure its speedy passage.

● (1330)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciated the hon. member's speech, especially when he spoke about the police officers in his region who told him that no one was using the registry and that it was absolutely useless. In my province, police officers consult the registry every time they are called to intervene at a home or elsewhere.

I would like to ask the hon. member why this government is so set on not wanting to transfer the firearms registry data to Quebec, when the National Assembly is unanimous in asking it to do so and police officers use that data every time they answer a call. I would like to hear what he has to say about that.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the one issue that stands out is the privacy issue. It is a federally run system and to provide it to another jurisdiction would be wrong.

The member talked about executing duties. Every time I stopped a vehicle on the side of the road, I would run a licence plate. However, I would be out of the vehicle before I received that information. I would not know whether that person had a weapon. Therefore, every complaint must be treated as if a weapon is involved, whether it be a long gun, a restricted weapon or a knife. It is always about officer safety and using common sense.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to the fact that the National Assembly of Quebec has asked for the firearms registry data. I find there is a great deal of stubbornness on the other side of the House on this. The Conservatives say they were elected on the promise to abolish the firearms registry and they add that if the provinces want to create a firearms registry, then they can go ahead. We know full well that the Canadian firearms registry cost the Canadian taxpayers \$2 billion. Our constituents are saying they paid for this registry and they want to keep the data.

I would like to know what the hon. member is thinking of telling these constituents who want to get their money's worth and who, in Quebec for example, want to recover the data.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the data is three years old, only seven million guns were registered and it cost over \$2 billion.

My colleague, speaking on behalf of Quebec, wants to take information on western Canadians, Ontarians and east coast people for Quebec to use. That will not happen. If Quebec really wants it, it can come up with \$2 billion and pay for the registry itself.

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, being a front-line officer, my colleague can speak with a degree of certainty and experience that no one else in the House can claim, unless they are former police officers.

Would the member expand on why front-line officers say that they cannot depend on the data in the long gun registry? When police officers go on a call and the registry indicates that there are two firearms in that residence, do those officers actually believe there are only two firearms? What is the procedure when officers go into a situation and want to ensure that all weapons, whether they are firearms, knives or bats, are cleared out of the situation? Could my colleague please explain that for us?

● (1335)

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, it comes down to basic simple investigational tools. A lot of the information on the registry is three years old. If a person has one or two guns, there is no doubt that he or she will have four, five, six or seven guns. I have experienced a situation where a person had over 100 guns. He was a gun collector and many of those weapons were registered.

It also comes down to common sense investigations. Officers make neighbourhood inquiries. They ask the family. They gather all the information, collect the data and then make the proper judgment from there. It is always about officer safety and about looking after communities and their safety.

Government Orders

Police officers always treat every complaint as if a weapon is involved. That is where some of the mistakes are made. We call it tombstone courage. Some officers are being harmed because they trust this data when it is in default.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was never a police officer but I was the justice critic for a number of years in the province of Manitoba. This provided me with the opportunity to meet with numerous police officers over the years. The gun registry was one of many issues on which we had a great deal of dialogue because it has been around for a good number of years.

This is where it is a bit unbalanced, if I can put it that way, in terms of a Conservative member who proclaims that he was an officer of the law and that he does not support the gun registry.

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River was a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. He is not proclaiming to be a police officer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I think the issue is a matter of debate. It is not really a point of order. We will go back to the member for Winnipeg North.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I detect a little sensitivity on this issue. The reality of the situation is that there is no unanimous opinion coming from our police forces, whether it is the RCMP or the local police.

Many would argue that a vast majority of people serving in our police forces, our RCMP included, support the gun registry. If members were to talk to many of them, they would hear that this is just one of many tools that they have access to. It does not necessarily mean that they do not consider whether there will be a gun when they approach a door. They will always take that into consideration. However, it is one of many tools that the police have been using now for a number of years.

I have found that the government, more than most governments that I have witnessed in my tenure as an elected official, tends to exaggerate the truth or maybe be a little tricky in terms of what it says to the public. A good example of that is the previous speaker talking about over \$2 billion. We all know that is completely fictitious. It is not true. However, the Conservatives continue to play on that issue even though they know it is not true. Our national auditor has indicated that is not the case. The Conservatives try to give the opinion that the cost of the gun registry is hundreds of millions of dollars and huge expenses going forward from today. Again, we know that is not true. We know that the annual cost is somewhere between \$2 million to \$4 million.

Providing straightforward information and facts is missing from this debate. I would suggest to members that it is something that is often missing from debate when we talk about government legislation that is before us, and it is somewhat shameful. If we were actually listening to what people had to say about the gun registry, not a small percentage, members would find that the information quite often somewhat contradicts what members are saying inside this chamber in regard to this particular bill.

● (1340)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I would just remind hon. members, in the course of debate in respect to these subjects, one has to be somewhat careful that one does not impute motive with respect to the truthfulness of subjects that are mentioned in the House. I know the hon. member is somewhat close to that and I would just caution him to take some care in the way in which these ideas are expressed.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, many individuals, such as members of the NRA, often try to take advantage by using misinformation in order to espouse a specific side.

We need to treat issues of this nature fairly. When police officers and members of police chief associations, emergency response teams, paramedics, ambulance attendants, firefighters and first-time responders from across the country say that there is great value to the gun registry, at the very least we need to listen and respect that.

Part of respecting that is to ensure there are actual facts brought to the debate. Facts have been lacking and I would encourage that we look at what is the most responsible thing to do in this debate.

I have risen in regard to the cost factor for the province of Quebec. I have raised that because it speaks volumes in terms of to what degree the government has chosen to sabotage and completely kill the gun registry. Whether it is good or bad is truly irrelevant to the government. It has chosen to kill it at any cost.

I believe the Quebec example is a great example to use in terms of how the government sometimes fails to recognize common sense. I will explain.

The government has said that it wants nothing to do with the gun registry and is killing it. The registry has a database. The Conservatives say how much they believe it costs. In reality, we know it is substantially less. However, the data bank is there and is in place. They want to destroy the data bank. They want to hit the delete button. They want the shredders working overtime to ensure there is nothing out there to show there is a gun that is registered in Canada. They are determined to do that.

The province of Quebec is saying that the government should wait. People in the province believe that having a gun registry makes sense. They want to listen to what members of our law enforcement agencies and many different advocates, such as women's groups and other groups, are saying. They are saying that it has true value. In fact, it is one of the many tools that law enforcement officers can access. They recognize its value and they want to have it. Therefore, they contacted the government and asked to have the information in that data bank, which makes sense.

Government Orders

The government came up with some lame excuse. It said that it could not provide the data bank due to privacy. Prior to that it said that it did not care if it were provincially or federally administered it wanted nothing to do with it. Therefore, the Conservatives are prepared to waste tens of millions of dollars. They would rather have the province of Quebec re-establish the data bank at a substantial cost. By forcing Quebec to do that, the government is causing it to use valuable tax dollars that could be spent on community policing, an outreach office, capital infrastructure programs to have youth more involved in positive activities or a litany of other initiatives.

Whether one is for or against the gun registry, anyone looking at that would say that is plain dumb and a stupid policy of the government.

• (1345)

The government should be looking at what it is saying. When it talks about building federal-provincial relationships, how can it sit at the table and say that it does not want to give provinces the information in the data bank and that they have to create their own, causing the provincial government to spend tens of millions of dollars when it is in fact not necessary?

The bottom line is the gun registry has had a lot of proponents over the years. If the government is going to do something with it, as we continue to go through the debate, in a very limited way I must say, it should at least respect the facts and stop trying to feed misinformation which we know is just not true. It does not add to the debate. If anything, it adds to the anger and resentment that government cannot be honest.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member opposite. He stressed the importance of basing a decision on fact. I admit that in this place it really is rare when there is a lot of fact in debate. If the member actually believes this decision should be based on fact, there is one fact, and that is there is no evidence that one life has been saved because of the long gun registry being in place. That is a fact.

Beyond that, I admit there is not a lot of fact and much of it is perspective. For example, with regard to the Wheat Board debate, there are farmers who believe the monopoly will help to protect them. It is not necessarily based on fact but perspective.

The member should pay attention to what happened to more than a dozen MPs in the last election, who lost because they did not support getting rid of the long gun registry. I would encourage the member to consider that as he goes ahead with this debate. Members do not necessarily base a position on whether they will be re-elected or not, but the reason—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I am sure other hon. members may have questions and we have to get to them.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would welcome a debate based on facts. It would be nice to hear the government provide the rationale, not the ideological reason, for why it wants to get rid of it. It has been said that there were several hundred suicides. There were presentations in committee with regard to the value of the gun registry and the impact it had on the number of suicides that could have taken place.

I do not want to claim to be an expert, because I am far from it, but I listen to what people have to say and respect the need to make good decisions based on facts. I do not believe the government has made a good decision based on facts in this case.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing from the government side that MPs in the opposition were defeated because of the gun registry. I predicted, after the last vote on the gun registry, that the Conservatives would lose a lot of Quebec MPs, especially women MPs. In the House today there are no more Conservative women MPs from Quebec.

Could the hon. member for Winnipeg North comment on the fact that there are less Conservative Quebec MPs and that the numbers went up for MPs who supported the gun registry in the last election? Could he explain that to me?

• (1350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting observation about the province of Quebec. I would suggest that there is a wide variety of reasons why people choose to vote for the Conservatives, the Liberals or New Democrats. For a number of reasons, all sorts of factors, the numbers came in the way they did. Did the gun registry play a role? I suspect it might have played a role in some constituencies and in others not as much. At the end of the day, I look at it this way. As opposed to basing a decision strictly on electoral success, we should base decisions on what makes sense and fact.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the members across the way wants to talk about evidence, I sat in on the hearings and there was only one person, the police chief from Calgary, who said that maybe this should be a provincial responsibility and that there should be no cost. That was the only thing we heard against the gun registry. Every other group, whether police chiefs, police association of Canada, mental health experts, one after another said that it served a purpose. They all supported the gun registry.

Does he believe the government is doing a great disservice when it says that this will not stop gangland gun offences. No one said it would, but it would stop domestics, it would have an impact on suicide, it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Winnipeg North, a 30 second response only please.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has raised an excellent issue. At the end of the day, Canadians want to see a government that will be tough on the causes of crime. We want to prevent crimes from happening. The gun registry has been something on which the government has long been too focused. If it really wants to do Canadians a service, it should listen to what the stakeholders actually have to say and start to take action so we can prevent some of these crimes from taking place in the first place.

Government Orders

There are so many other things we could be doing and I suggest the government would do well by listening to my colleague.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to stand and add my voice to the debate on this important piece of legislation, the ending of the long-gun registry act.

Today we are speaking on behalf of Canadians in rural and remote parts of our country who have been unfairly targeted for the simple and legal act of owning a long gun. I want to talk to that issue briefly.

I grew up in a city and probably would not have understood this issue, but in my mid-twenties I moved to a rural community, and my understanding became much more robust. I hit a deer on the road, and a hunter was able to put the deer down. My children played, but there were cougars in the area, and we came to count on these tools. I also came to appreciate how important this issue was for the farmers and hunters.

Who are these Canadians? They are our friends and family members. They are responsible, law-abiding individuals who use rifles and shotguns to legally hunt for sport or sustenance or both. They are athletes who participate in sharpshooting events, such as biathlons and skeet shooting, and who are internationally recognized for their impressive conditioning and skills. They are hard-working farmers protecting their livestock and their livelihood in the same manner as those who worked to settle in the west did for generations before us. For many of these individuals, their rifles and shotguns are simply the everyday tools of their trade.

Each of these firearm owners has had to undergo proper steps to obtain a firearm licence before acquiring their gun. The wasteful and ineffective long gun registry simply adds another layer of red tape to this process. It also carries with it the uncomfortable stigma that makes these long gun owners feel like criminals. In fact, it is putting more burden onto legal long gun owners while having zero impact on criminals.

Are we really to believe that violent criminals are going to register their long guns and firearms? It is not likely. Therefore, we are left to draw the obvious conclusion: the long gun registry is a waste of time and money.

I will take a moment to say that our government is not against investing in effective measures that take the bite out of crime. It is entirely the opposite. For example, we are proud of our efforts to augment and strengthen our police forces. We have committed \$400 million for the police officer recruitment fund to assist provinces and territories in hiring additional officers and in addressing their unique public safety priorities and policing needs. This is a significant federal contribution to policing costs over a five-year period, and it is helping the provinces and territories in their efforts to recruit new police officers and make their communities safer. In this way, since just 2009, our government has contributed to the addition of over 1,800 police officers across Canada.

We are also investing in policing through other partnerships with the provinces and territories and the first nations policing program. To help encourage new recruits, our government has also provided crucial funding for RCMP cadet allowances and for improvement to

infrastructure at the RCMP training academy, depot division. These are all worthy investments in our front-line law enforcement.

Another key piece on reducing crime, and another area worthy of investment, is our effort to prevent crime before it happens. This includes supporting community-based crime prevention programs that help at-risk youth make smart choices and avoid criminal activities. Last year alone, our government funded 160 community-based crime prevention programs through the national crime prevention strategy, which had an impact on the lives of nearly 10,000 youth at risk.

We are proud that the next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes \$7.5 million annually towards the youth gang prevention fund. These are investments that are making a tangible difference in the lives of at-risk youth. We are proud to support efforts to steer them in the right direction. Every youth who decides to go to school instead of joining a gang has taken a positive step in the direction of success instead of violence and guns.

We make no apologies for these investments because we know that the cost of crime to victims and to society is far higher. According to the Department of Justice, the cost of crime, including everything from property damage to the emotional impact on families and victims, totals nearly \$100 billion every year. In the face of this statistic, we stand firmly behind our decision to invest in effective crime prevention and appropriate reforms to law and justice sectors.

● (1355)

What we will not do is allow our scarce resources to continue to be funnelled into an ineffective long gun registry. We will not focus our efforts on laws that are not having an impact on reducing gun crime.

We know that most homicides committed in Canada do not involve rifles or shotguns. We know that in 2006 alone, three times as many homicide victims were killed with handguns than with rifles or shotguns. In 2009, we saw that two-thirds of homicides committed with a firearm were carried out with handguns, not rifles or shotguns.

It is obvious that the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry is not worth the billions of dollars already spent on it. It is nothing more than a bureaucratic database with questionable benefits. In a time of a fragile economic recovery, that money could be diverted to more effective programs that prevent gun crime and protect our police officers. That money could better be utilized in our efforts to strengthen our border enforcement and crack down on illegal smuggling of firearms across the U.S. border, which is where most of the firearms that are illegally smuggled into Canada come from. To those who argue that ending the long gun registry will weaken our gun control legislation, I reply that it does nothing of the kind; rather, it will free up resources to reinvest in programs that actually work.

Statements by Members

We will also ensure that all data currently contained in the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry is destroyed. We will not stand for the creation of backdoor registries.

Equally as important as what the bill will do is what it will not do: it will not remove the requirements for Canadians to have a licence in order to use long guns; it will not undo the requirement to pass a background check and complete a safety training course. In addition, Bill C-19 will not make changes to the current requirement for owners of restricted and prohibited firearms to register these firearms through the Canadian firearms program.

These are reasonable and fair measures. I therefore call on all hon. members to support the speedy passage of Bill C-19.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

INSURANCE INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today members of the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association are in Ottawa to meet with parliamentarians to discuss critical issues such as pensions and health care. These issues impact the lives of all Canadians.

In my riding Equitable Life, Sun Life, Manulife and FaithLife Financial are major employers and boost our local economy. They are also strong and dynamic partners that give back to the community through volunteer and public service contributions.

Across Canada the insurance industry plays a vital role in our economy and our society, providing financial protection and security to over 26 million Canadians. They also provide leadership on social issues, demonstrating a commitment to enhancing the well-being of families and communities.

The Canadian life and health insurance industry is a solid and successful partner in our strong financial system, and I thank it for contributing to our prosperity.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BENOIT SIMARD

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I had the honour to officially present the Commander-in-Chief Unit Commendation insignia to a very courageous man, Corporal Benoit Simard.

The unit commendation is awarded in recognition of an extraordinary deed or activity performed in extremely hazardous circumstances. The 1st Battalion Royal 22e Régiment Battle Group, of which Corporal Simard was a member, received this commendation for opening the airport in the besieged city of Sarajevo in July 1992. Surrounded by warring parties, with fire coming from all directions, the members of the battle group were able to help flights bringing humanitarian assistance land so that essential aid could be distributed to the people of Sarajevo affected by the war.

The battle group's extraordinary efforts also contributed to promoting the United Nations as a vital force in maintaining peace and security throughout the world.

I am both pleased and proud to pay tribute today to the bravery of Corporal Benoit Simard.

* * *

[*English*]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over 17 years ago the government of the day was promoting gun control in the form of Bill C-68.

After receiving a challenge from my constituents to look at the facts, I realized that the legislation did nothing to stop crime and protect Canadians.

To date, the long gun registry has cost taxpayers over \$1 billion. This money could have been, and should have been, used to crack down on real criminals, not law-abiding Canadians. The long gun registry unfairly targets farmers, hunters and sport shooters, not criminals.

I am very proud to be part of a government that, after working for so long on this important issue, is making good on its commitment to end the long gun registry. Bill C-19 would reward those law-abiding citizens who have been patient and supportive. This legislation is a step in the right direction as we bring a bit more common sense to our laws.

We thank the thousands of Canadians who took the time to share their stories and their opinions that the registry should be scrapped. It has been a long haul, but in the end they have made a difference. Bill C-19 is proof of that.

* * *

FOOD BANKS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Food Banks Canada released its annual hunger count today. It is clear that the economic recovery has left far too many Canadians behind. Food bank usage has gone up 26% since 2008. Each month, 851,000 people use a food bank. Of those, 322,000 are kids.

Even people with jobs are having difficulty. One in five working families uses a food bank.

In my own province of Prince Edward Island, poverty and food bank usage are also on the rise.

We can do better. We need to invest in affordable housing so that Canadians do not have to decide between paying the rent and feeding their families. We need to modernize employment insurance to better support older workers who have lost permanent jobs. We can no longer pretend that all is well. We need a national poverty reduction strategy, as suggested by both the Senate and a House study last year. We need government to show some leadership, because so far, we have seen little.

ASSOCIATION OF CONSULTING ENGINEERING COMPANIES

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, members of Parliament on both sides of the House, today I rise to greet the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies of Canada, which is here today in Ottawa for the annual Parliament Hill Day and Awards Gala. It will be presenting awards for the best engineering projects in Canada over the past year to some outstanding engineers.

Whether it is a bridge or a building, if people have been on it or in it, it is probably designed by one of the finest engineers in world. These are Canadian engineers. Tonight they will be honouring the best of the best.

It is absolutely wonderful that we in Canada have some of the best professional engineers in the entire country. Those in the past built this country. Those today are building this country. What they are asking is that all parliamentarians work together to improve the infrastructure fund past 2014 so that these engineers can do what they do best—that is, build the best country in the entire world.

* * *

• (1405)

WINNIPEG CHINESE COMMUNITY

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Winnipeg Chinese Cultural and Community Centre is celebrating an exciting event. The community centre will be unveiling significant renovations to its kitchen and boardroom facilities, as well as officially launching a commemorative book entitled *Celebrating 100 Years—A Remarkable Achievement*.

This book was commissioned by the community centre in 2009 to commemorate Winnipeg's Chinatown's centennial year. After much hard work by the dedicated late editor, Philip Chang, and a group of community authors, it is finally off to the press.

Renovations to the centre will ensure that it remains a vibrant cornerstone of the Chinese community. By investing in projects like this, our government is following through on the commitment to fully implement our infrastructure stimulus package. These investments are creating jobs now, when they are needed most, and are positioning Canada for long-term growth and prosperity.

I ask the House to join me in applauding the community centre on its achievements and hard work in support of Winnipeg's vibrant Chinese community.

* * *

VETERANS

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this first day of the eleventh month, as we prepare our hearts for the eleventh hour of its eleventh day, I would like to share a story of remembrance.

Ray Hoffman is 87 years old and lives in Cochrane in my riding of Wild Rose. He was still a teen when he went overseas to defend Canadian freedoms in World War II. Mr. Hoffman was an infantry machine gunner with the Calgary Highlanders. Once, while running supplies to the forward positions, his driver was killed in a German

Statements by Members

ambush that he survived by shooting his way out. He was in the Highlanders' final battle of the Second World War in Oldenburg on VE Day in 1945.

Last month, Mr. Hoffman returned for the first time to tour the battlefields where he so valiantly fought. He revisited the places that he remembers, where his friends and comrades died.

This month and at all times, our debt to veterans like Ray Hoffman demands that Canadians remember the great sacrifices made for our freedoms.

* * *

PRICE OF PEACE

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we pause today to reflect on the price of peace. Since Confederation, two million Canadians have served in uniform, 115,000 have paid with their lives, and hundreds of thousands have suffered lifelong grievous injuries to self and soul.

In Ortona's Piazza del Plebiscito is a poignant memorial of two soldiers, one lying dead and one bent over in grief, created by Ottawa artist Robert Surette.

Entitled "The Price of Peace", it speaks of the supreme toll in the "Stalingrad of Italy", the battle for Ortona, and for all who have faced their soul in the finality of the theatre of war.

Flowers are laid daily by citizens who know too well the price paid by Canada for their peace. Fourteen hundred sons of Canada rest in nearby Moro River Canadian War Cemetery, never to return home.

The price of peace is paid in war. We ought never to forget those that serve, those who truly pay the price of peace.

* * *

[Translation]

ALGERIAN WAR

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great emotion that I rise today to commemorate the date of November 1, 1954. Today, in many countries, including Canada, Algerians are remembering and paying tribute to fallen heroes. November 1 is not a celebration so much as the commemoration of a day that marked the beginning of the last Algerian war, which was a heartbreaking conflict that would last eight years.

A few minutes ago, at the Algerian embassy, two colleagues and I took a moment and paused to remember. Canadians of Algerian origin are proud to be Canadian, proud to be part of the cultural mosaic we live in and proud of their contribution to Canada. They are also grateful to those who welcomed them. In the election on May 2, 2011, Canadians chose three Algerian-Canadians to represent them in this House.

I invite all members to join me in recognizing this important date in Algeria's history.

Statements by Members

●(1410)

[English]

ABORIGINAL VETERANS

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, aboriginal Canadians have demonstrated time and again their great service and sacrifice for our country through their participation in Canada's military, particularly during times of conflict.

As Veterans' Week approaches, we are reminded of the many aboriginal Canadians, including my grandmother, who joined in the fight to protect the values and freedoms we enjoy today. First nations, Inuit, Métis and non-status aboriginal people served in the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War.

That proud tradition of service continues today. Their courage, sacrifices and accomplishments are a source of pride for their families, their communities and all Canadians.

This Veterans' Week, we honour their legacy. This Veterans' Week, we remember.

* * *

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the first day of November.

It is the day that many of our significant others dread as thousands of men across Canada grow a mo. Movember is a campaign in which men grow moustaches throughout November to raise awareness about prostate cancer and to raise funds for research.

This year the New De-mo-crats are looking forward to doing their part in changing the face of men's health, so every time we see a man with a mo, we should think about a man in our lives and encourage him to get his prostate checked.

Last year New De-mo-crats raised close to \$16,000 for movember and this year we will surpass that number.

I encourage every MP to give, and I suggest \$228.11, which represents the 22nd day of the 8th month of 2011, the day we lost one of the most iconic mo's in this House. It is a way for us to pay tribute to Jack Layton, who fought this disease.

With Jack's spirit among us, let us change the face of men's health so we no longer lose the faces of men we know and love.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to address all the glaring factual inaccuracies that the NDP has been spewing recently in the *Toronto Star*, but let me try.

The NDP has claimed that we are delisting and declassifying firearms. This is completely false. Bill C-19 does not address the process in which firearms are classified as non-restricted.

The process in which firearms are determined to be non-registered was laid out by the previous Liberal government of 1995. Our government has made no changes to that process since coming into office.

Let me be clear: the ending of the long gun registry act does exactly what that title suggests. We are putting an end to the wasteful, ineffective system that has not prevented one single crime. We promised to end the long gun registry, and rather than flip-flopping like the NDP, we are keeping our promise to Canadians.

I would like to call on the NDP to stop its false and misleading statements, get on board and support Bill C-19 when it comes to a vote right here in just a few short hours.

* * *

ATLANTIC AGRICULTURAL HALL OF FAME

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize William Cairns of Freetown, Prince Edward Island, on his recent induction into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Mr. Cairns has made outstanding contributions to the Island farming community, among them being a member of Junior Farmers of P.E.I., vice-president of the Federation of Agriculture, member of Dunk River Dairy Company, and being the lone surviving attendee who pushed ahead with Amalgamated Dairies Limited.

In 1952 Mr. Cairns became the first Islander to be accepted as a Nuffield Scholar, which fosters agriculture leadership through international study. As a result, he became a Canadian pioneer in adapting innovations for the dairy industry.

Mr. Cairns and his son continue to operate Willscott Farm Ltd., which has been in the family since 1852, and is a seventh-generation farm.

Our sincere congratulations to Mr. Cairns. We thank him for his lifelong dedication to agriculture, to P.E.I., and to Canada.

* * *

INDIA

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 27 years ago today, following the assassination of Indira Gandhi, thousands of innocent Sikh men, women and children were mercilessly killed in the streets of Delhi and other parts of India.

During this violence, at great risk to themselves, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others sheltered and rescued their Sikh neighbours from the mobs.

As Prime Minister Singh stated in his apology on behalf of the nation in 2005, "what took place in 1984 is the negation of the concept of nationhood enshrined in our Constitution...I bow my head in shame that such a thing took place".

Last year during his trip to Canada, Prime Minister Singh also stated that the perpetrators of these crimes need to be brought to justice, and I agree.

Like Canada, India is a highly pluralistic society known for its tolerance and democratic values. These shared values and our strong people-to-people bonds underpin a strong and vibrant relationship between our two countries.

* * *

●(1415)

[Translation]

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a growing number of people oppose the fact that this government, which is completely out of touch with reality, continues to support Canada's deadly asbestos industry. Scientists, miners and ordinary Canadians are calling for a formal ban on asbestos. Even more important is the dissension that exists within the governing party. A former Conservative cabinet minister has come out strongly against the government's position. Chuck Strahl said that for thousands of Canadians, working with asbestos in the past has set them on a deadly course without their even knowing it.

We know that Mr. Strahl is not the only Conservative to take this point of view. Any Conservative members who oppose asbestos have an opportunity here today to support the NDP motion to ban the substance. The Prime Minister should not be muzzling his members and forcing them to protect asbestos, thereby damaging Canada's reputation even further.

* * *

WHITE-COLLAR CRIME

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned about crime, and that is why they gave the government a strong mandate to make our streets and our communities safe. Today, Bill C-21, the standing up for victims of white collar crime act, comes into effect.

The effects of fraud resulting from such crimes as Ponzi schemes, insider trading and accounting fraud are devastating. Bill C-21 will ensure that fraudsters are given sentences in keeping with the severity of their crimes, including a mandatory minimum sentence of two years for fraud over \$1 million. The bill adds new aggravating factors that the court may apply to increase sentences, such as the impact on victims and the fraudster's conduct.

We are determined to do everything in our power to ensure that fraudsters face the consequences of their actions and that victims are taken seriously by the judicial system.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are seeing some absurd situations as a result of the Conservatives' irresponsibility when it comes to the firearms registry. For example, owners will no longer be required to register the semi-automatic Ruger Mini-14. The Ruger Mini-14 is the weapon that

Oral Questions

was used in Norway this past summer. It is also the weapon that was used at the École Polytechnique.

If the Prime Minister were a police officer, I would think that before walking into a building, he would want to know whether there was a Ruger Mini-14 inside.

Why destroy all the data? Why endanger our police officers?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the firearms classification system has been around for a long time. We are following the process that was set out a long time ago. There are no changes to that in our bill.

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know where the Conservatives stand. They would rather destroy the data and put the police and the public at risk, but we do not understand why.

Say that in a house there is an armour-piercing gun, a Steyr HS .50, an L115A3 long-range rifle and a TAR-21 assault rifle, but the police do not know because the Prime Minister decided to destroy that data.

Abdicating his responsibilities is one thing, but why refuse to give the provinces the existing data?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government committed to eliminating the ineffective long gun registry and we do not intend to help other levels of government create registries.

●(1420)

[English]

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me quote the Conservatives' Associate Minister of National Defence:

A very obvious concern to us in policing is that I want my police officers to know where there are firearms when they respond to calls, especially those that very often entail dangerous situations.

Does the Prime Minister agree that the semi-automatic weapon used at École Polytechnique is dangerous?

Does he agree with his Associate Minister of National Defence that it is an obvious concern for our police officers to know where these guns are when they respond to a dangerous situation?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the system for the classification of firearms was established long ago. The government follows the process. It is not changed in any way by the bill.

The government has been clear. It favours the elimination of the long gun registry. The government will not do anything to support the creation of a registry by other levels of government.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under the legislation, semi-automatics and armour-piercing sniper rifles, even those capable of dropping a target two kilometres away, will no longer need to be registered. The government is making it easier for these dangerous firearms to fall into the wrong hands.

The government likes to talk about hunters, but the last time I checked, hunters were not going after armoured targets one and one-half kilometres away.

Oral Questions

How is the government's decision to remove the last line of defence against these high-powered rifles in the interest of public safety?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the members opposite are relying on a very misleading *Toronto Star* story for their research.

Claims that our government has changed the process for classification of firearms are simply not correct. In fact, the current process was put in place by the former Liberal government and that process continues.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they are required to be registered now.

The Ruger Mini-14 semi-automatic rifle was the weapon used by Marc Lepine in Canada's worst-ever mass shooting in Montreal. Now the government wants to remove restrictions from this weapon and others like it.

As if trashing years of valuable registry records in spite of victims' pleas was not enough, now the government is removing controls over high-powered rifles.

Why is the government making it harder to track who has these dangerous weapons? Why has it not learned from the past?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very unfortunate the member engages in that type of fearmongering that is misleading. He knows it is misleading.

Claims that our government has changed the process for classification of firearms are simply not correct. The fact is that the current process was put in place by the former Liberal government. That process is continuing.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in light of the alarming economic news with respect to the decision on the part of the government of Greece to call a referendum and the impact that is having on uncertainty in the world, I wonder if the Prime Minister would reconsider the government's refusal so far to do two very simple things.

First, will the Prime Minister postpone the increase in employment insurance premiums which will cost at least \$1.2 billion to the economy? Second, will he make sure that all of the tax credits which are being put forward by the government become refundable so that the lowest income Canadians, the poorest Canadians, could take advantage of those tax credits?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the events in Europe over the past couple of days have once again increased uncertainty and have highlighted the fragility that does exist in the global economy.

That is why this government has an economic action plan and has measures before the House that would give important tax breaks to families and to small businesses to help people out and to help create jobs. I would encourage the Liberal Party to stop finding excuses and instead to support those important initiatives.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we urge the Prime Minister to examine the impact of these measures on the poorest families. There are families who do not earn enough money to pay taxes. Why not give these families the same benefits as families that pay taxes? That is the situation.

Employment insurance premiums result in job losses. I am not the only one to think that; so does the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Why does the government not change its strategy in order to give the poorest families a chance?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every time this government proposes tax cuts for families and SMEs to Parliament, the Liberal Party does not support them. That is an irresponsible position. There are other measures before this Parliament. I encourage the Liberal Party to change its position and support these measures, which are important for our families and our businesses.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Prime Minister has not heard us. We are encouraging the Prime Minister to go further with respect to providing some degree of stability for ordinary Canadians going through a difficult time. That is exactly what we are proposing. I do not know why the Prime Minister is being so intensely ideological in refusing to get to grips on this thing because it is so important.

Speaking of ideology, when is the Prime Minister going to come to grips with the true cost of the F-35 contract? At the same time as he is talking about cuts elsewhere in the economy, why does he not do something to ensure that there is real fairness and real competition with a contract that everybody knows the price is—

The Speaker: Order. The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only ideological position here is that of the Liberal Party, which opposes every single tax break this government brings forward for families, which opposes every single tax break this government brings forward for small- and medium-size business in this country, and which in some bizarre proposal is now suggesting that we would be somehow helping the economy by cancelling aerospace contracts with 65 Canadian companies.

The government has no intention of doing any of those irresponsible things. We call on the Liberal Party to start to support the Canadian economy.

*Oral Questions***POVERTY**

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learned today just how badly the government is failing families. A whopping 851,000 Canadians used food banks in March 2011 alone, the second highest number ever. The Conservatives boast about their recession fighting skills, but food bank use has jumped 26% since 2008. Fighting a recession means helping families recover, not just giving big corporations tax breaks.

Why is the government letting struggling families rely on food banks? Why is it leaving them out in the cold?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that tackling this problem requires a plan, and we have a plan.

The best way to fight poverty is to get Canadians working. The economic action plan is doing just that by helping grow our economy and by creating 650,000 net new jobs since July 2009.

Every action we are taking is to help Canadians and their families become independent and help them to contribute to the economy and to their communities.

Whether it be the working income tax benefit or helping lower income families get over the welfare wall, we have a plan and we are implementing it.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about working families who have jobs, but they still cannot afford to pay their bills and feed their kids. Food banks say that working families—I am talking working families here—are being left to struggle thanks to part-time low-wage work. The IMF and Mark Carney both say we should be worried about our economy. How much more proof does the government need?

When will the government stop relying on misleading job numbers and come up with a real plan to kickstart job creation for families in need?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just mentioned, the best way to fight poverty is to get Canadians working. The economic action plan is doing exactly that with over 650,000 net new jobs since July 2009. Every action we are taking is to help Canadian families, allow them to become independent and help them to contribute to the economy and their communities.

Why are the members of the NDP not voting for these initiatives to make sure that Canadians can have a successful job and a successful future?

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[*Translation*]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that it is difficult to live with a disability, physical or intellectual. It seriously compromises a person's ability to make a living. Canada has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This government must fulfill its commitment and take real action to help persons with disabilities.

The government has clear responsibilities towards all Canadians. What does it intend to do to discharge those responsibilities?

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no government has done more to support Canadians with disabilities than our Conservative government has done. Our government is removing barriers to participation in the economy and communities because the participation of Canadians with disabilities in our economy means that they are successful and we as a nation are successful.

• (1430)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a dramatic increase in the number of people visiting food banks for help. One in seven of them is someone with a disability. People with disabilities are not being hired, including in the public service. According to the president of the Public Service Commission, the situation just keeps getting worse.

Why will the government not do more to fix this embarrassing situation and encourage the hiring of people living with disabilities?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we thank the president of the Public Service Commission for her work. Certainly we see that some of the measures we put in place are indeed working in terms of the diversity of the public service workforce and ensuring that it is a robust public service that is reflective of our community. We will continue to work in that regard.

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SENIORS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the guaranteed income supplement was put in place 40 years ago to address seniors' poverty in Canada, but because of the government's failure to keep up with the times, seniors are falling behind. Costs are rising on everything from food to home heating. Once again, seniors are being left out in the cold. We learned today that the number of seniors using food banks has escalated over the past decade.

What is the government's plan to help impoverished Canadian seniors?

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take no lesson from an opposition party which has voted against all of our measures to help seniors. Canada's seniors have—

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of State has the floor.

Hon. Alice Wong: Mr. Speaker, I will take no lesson from the opposition party, which has voted against all of our measures on behalf of seniors.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, of course we voted against it, because the government's so-called plan left too many seniors at the food banks' doors.

We could act on seniors' poverty right now. New Democrats have put forward a practical, affordable plan to increase the GIS and lift every senior in this country out of poverty. We have the blueprint. All the government has to do is act.

Could the government explain its inaction on seniors' poverty?

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian retirement security is a priority of the government. That is why our government continues to take strong action to support seniors. Since 2006 the government has provided billions in annual tax relief for seniors and pensioners, removed hundreds of thousands of seniors from the tax rolls completely, introduced the largest GIS increase in a quarter century and made significant investments in affordable housing for low income seniors.

* * *

[Translation]

POVERTY

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 2008, the number of Quebecers turning to food banks has jumped by 22%. Poverty is affecting an increasing number of people, but the government continues to turn a blind eye. The Conservatives are so out of touch with reality that they chose to put an end to government stimulus measures. That is completely unacceptable.

What real steps will the government take to stimulate the economy and create jobs?

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I feel a bit like I am in the movie *Groundhog Day*. I am up again to say exactly the same thing: the best way to fight poverty is to get Canadians working. The economic action plan has created 650,000 net new jobs since July 2009.

The best way to fight poverty is not the NDP's approach of increasing taxes; it is about providing people with jobs.

• (1435)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we keep asking the same questions because the government does not understand.

More than 60% of the Quebecers who use food banks have exhausted all of their resources and are now living on social assistance. They are stretched to the limit, but the government keeps saying that all is well.

What will this government do to give them a hand up? What is the government waiting for to help them find affordable housing and return to work?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will try to say it again, once and for all, so that the NDP really understands what we have done to reduce the tax burden on families.

We proposed a new children's arts tax credit, but the NDP voted against it. We proposed a new family caregiver tax credit. What did the NDP do? They voted against it. We proposed a new and improved medical expense tax credit. What did they do? They voted against it. The list goes on.

[English]

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has to stop hiding in gopher holes. Food bank use is up 80% since 2008 in our northern communities, and that does not even tell the whole story. Families in many of our remote communities do not even have access to food banks. We are entering another cold winter. Why is the government allowing northern families to be left behind? When will it create an anti-poverty strategy that helps northerners who cannot afford to feed their families?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us go through some of the things that this government has put forward that the NDP has voted against: the working income tax benefit, to help make work pay and help low-income families get over the welfare wall; tax cuts, which mean over a million low-income Canadians do not pay income taxes at all anymore; enhancing the national child benefit, and the child tax benefit. These are all things we have put forward as a government to help Canadian families, and the NDP has voted against them all.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, open democracy allows for proper debate and differing opinions. First the Conservative government ignored the farmer-held plebiscite favouring the single desk, then it refused to hold its own plebiscite, then it limited debate in the House on Bill C-18 to three days. Now the Conservative-dominated committee is giving only three short evenings for consideration of the death of this iconic institution and small farms across the Prairies.

Conservatives closed their minds and they closed the doors. Why is the government closing opportunities for farmers to be heard?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the committee met last night and agreed that it would meet tonight. It is going to meet tomorrow night and the night after. We are going to put 16 hours of meetings into this one bill, and I think most Canadians would find that to be adequate.

Farmers in western Canada need certainty. We are not sure why opposition members continue to stand in the way of their having certainty for marketing their grain next year. We would ask them to join with us and support Bill C-18. Let us strengthen the western Canadian economy together.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his testimony today Quebec justice minister Jean-Marc Fournier regretted that the government, in its Youth Criminal Justice Act, proposed the incarceration model—this as opposed to the rehabilitative model, which has brought about the lowest recidivism rate in Canada.

Will the Minister of Justice be open to revisiting the bill and incorporating the amendments that justice minister Jean-Marc Fournier proposed, but which are not now part of the bill, which regrettably promises greater cost, more incarceration and less justice?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, certainly we have made a number of modifications to that bill. I invite hon. members to continue their study of it and to have a look at them. These are very reasonable. The bill balances rehabilitation with the legitimate interest of protecting the public. I think we strike that balance and I hope the hon. member would allow the committee to continue to do its good work.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Jean-Marc Fournier, who speaks on behalf of Quebec, the National Assembly of Quebec, the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, and the Association des centres jeunesse du Québec have said loud and clear that they do not want this automatic imprisonment system. They have also said that Quebec is not prepared to pay for it.

Given that the Minister of Public Safety misled the House when he said that all the provinces support this bill, what is the government waiting for to scrap the bill and do its homework?

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. member and I find it very difficult. This bill targets some of the most dangerous criminals and Canadians, meaning the people who sexually exploit children and the people in the business of drug trafficking.

I have to say we have had wonderful support from across this country. I notice, for instance, that Leger Marketing recently

published a survey showing that the majority of Quebecers think criminals should serve sentences that reflect the severity of their crimes. On that count, we are completely on board with Quebecers. We agree with them.

* * *

OMAR KHADR

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a year ago the Conservative government made a clear commitment to respect the agreement between Omar Khadr and the U.S. government. It promised to bring him back this year to face justice in Canada. Now the government is going back on its word and saying it could take up to 18 months if the permit is returned at all.

Why is the government misleading our allies and retreating on its commitments?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Khadr, in fact, did face justice. He pleaded guilty to very serious crimes, including the murder of an American medic.

Decisions regarding the international transfer of offenders are made by me in my capacity as Minister of Public Safety, and at all times I put the safety of Canadians first. A decision will be made on this file, as on all applications, in due course.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, clearly, the entire process currently under way in Guantanamo does not in any way comply with Canadian, American or international human rights standards. The Supreme Court's decision is clear and this House was clear: Omar Khadr must be returned home to face justice here.

Why is the government now questioning the repatriation of Omar Khadr?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have great faith in the rule of law, including the application of law by the United States supreme court. Mr. Khadr pleaded guilty to very serious crimes. He murdered an American medic and he voluntarily pleaded guilty to that charge.

Decisions made regarding the transfer of a criminal like Mr. Khadr are made under the International Transfer of Offenders Act, and my concern in that context is ensuring that public safety is maintained.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the F-35 procurement plan is continuing on its downward spiral. Test flights for the F-35 in the United States could be grounded. Why? Because too many questions remain regarding safety. The F-35s are experiencing three times more in-flight problems than what is generally considered acceptable. We are not making this up; that is what the Pentagon's weapons officials have said.

Oral Questions

How can the minister still maintain that the F-35s are essential to the safety of our soldiers and our pilots, when our neighbours to the south are saying precisely the opposite?

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we believe in giving our brave men and women in uniform the best. With the F-35, we are getting the latest technology, some of which is still in the final development stage. As a result, we are giving Canadian industry the chance to become world leaders in manufacturing.

The opposition would prefer that we bought 30-year-old technology and not help Canadian industry lead the world. We disagree.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not surprising that the Americans are following the example of Australia, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Denmark and ordering fewer F-35s than originally planned—55% fewer, to be exact.

All of those countries have reduced their orders—all but Canada. In spite of those facts, only this government continues to blindly support the F-35 program, which is going to cost us billions of dollars and is bound to fail.

When will the Minister of National Defence admit his mistake and launch a competitive public process?

• (1445)

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only blindness around here is in those who are blind to the truth.

Let me clear on the choice being offered. Our government has decided that our men and women in uniform need the best technology available to get their job done and to keep them safe. We are doing this in a way that would give Canadian industry access to billions of dollars in work and create thousands of good jobs.

The opposition would slam the door on these contracts, throw those workers out of jobs and delay replacing the CF-18 by years, the very aircraft that is—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kitchener—Waterloo.

* * *

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first the placeholder NDP leader, in a speech to her old public sector union, falsely claimed that unemployment was on the rise; in fact, Canada has created over 650,000 net new jobs since July 2009. Then, yesterday, the NDP made a wild accusation about this government's funding of the world-class Perimeter Institute in Waterloo using bogus data.

Could the minister of state for science and technology please update the House on the facts?

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for South-

ern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's concern on this issue. I again call on the NDP to check the public accounts and apologize to Canadians.

The Perimeter Institute is a world-leading centre for physics research. We support it because its discoveries will create the jobs of the future and strengthen our economy. That is what we are focused on.

I invite the NDP to get on side and join us to help Canadians. I invite it stop misleading Canadians, to stop these cheap political games, to apologize, and to let us move on with helping the country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is strange to see that most of the time, science comes from this side of the House. I would like to point out to the President of the Treasury Board that the facts are simple, they are clear and, thanks to the NDP, they are now known.

The maximum spending authorized for the Perimeter Institute was \$50 million over five years. But in 2009-10 alone, according to government documents, we can see that spending was \$127 million, which is 10 times higher than the authorized annual spending, and the institute did not even receive the money.

The government is talking about a technical error. Are \$117 million technical errors common at the Treasury Board? Where did the money go?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for South-ern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure that the member supports the kind of science that suggests pigs can fly.

The fact is that the NDP members are absolutely wrong. I invite them to check the public accounts, clear their facts with Canadians and apologize.

The Perimeter Institute is the world leader on theoretical physics. We support it because it leads to better jobs in the economy. I ask the NDP to stop purposely misleading the House and Canadians and to apologize.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we will never apologize for revealing errors and this government's mismanagement. It is pathetic to hear answers that are cheap shots designed to distract us from the facts. The Perimeter Institute does excellent work and we salute them. Personally, I love the study of particles and especially the superstring theory. However, what we are talking about here is that the President of the Treasury Board is responsible for estimates. We know that he has a talent for discreetly transferring money to secret funds.

What is he going to do to make sure these errors do not happen again?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like, once again, to refer the NDP to the proper records. It is very simple. It is the public accounts for 2010 which show in fact that the NDP is misleading Canadians. I have the records here and I would be happy to table them at the end of today.

Even the Liberal MP for St. Paul's shares our concerns about the credibility of the House when she said, "When we make false accusations, and we're just not sure about this Perimeter Institute thing, we as parliamentarians lose...credibility."

* * *

● (1450)

G8 SUMMIT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the latest release of emails about the Muskoka minister's involvement in the summit centre boondoggle, he made some disturbing comments about his intention to personally intervene in the spending process.

He wrote to the mayor, "I'm going through Treasury Board to flow funds....I should have the money for you within three weeks. I know your credit card is maxed."

This is not how it is supposed to be done. Where is the paper trail? Where were the bureaucrats? If this were really arm's length, why would he be sending Blackberry messages promising to get cash in person?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the height of the economic downturn, the government has supported some 23,000 public infrastructure projects in every corner of the country. The good news is that some 650,000 net new jobs have been created.

The Auditor General has looked at that initiative and, by and large, has been quite satisfied with it. When it comes to the G8 legacy fund, she has given some very thoughtful observations on how we can be more open and more transparent to Parliament, and we have completely accepted that advice.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to say that, after 145 days of practice, big bad John has done a pretty good imitation of the Muskoka minister.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I would ask the hon. member to refrain from using proper names and to stick to titles or ridings.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, the member has done, after 145 days, an excellent job of imitating the President of the Treasury Board but, unfortunately, it was the Muskoka minister who made the promise to get the money. It was the Muskoka minister who said that he would go around the spending processes.

If the government is to have any transparency and credibility left, I would ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs if he would push his colleague to stand up and take accountability for what he pulled off in Huntsville.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, such name calling is really beneath the member opposite. It has also hurt my feelings.

Hon. Tony Clement: Which is not easy to do.

Hon. John Baird: Which is not easy to do, as the President of the Treasury Board said.

I know the member for Timmins—James Bay will be excited that tomorrow at 3:30 he will finally be able to ask the President of the Treasury Board a lot of questions. I look forward as well to being there to support the government in any way I can. At 3:30 tomorrow we will see him there.

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*[Translation]***FIREARMS REGISTRY**

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, because of the decision to eliminate the gun registry, dangerous weapons will be circulating freely in our society. Owners of the powerful Ruger Mini-14, the weapon used by Marc Lépine and in Norway last summer, will not have to declare their weapons. The same applies to sniper rifles with bullets that can rip through armour from 1.5 kilometres away. These weapons are used for intimidation; they are not used by farmers.

Why are the Conservatives allowing these dangerous weapons to go unmonitored?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is not getting rid of the licensing provisions. It is getting rid of the long gun registry. It is unfortunate that the member is relying on a very misleading *Toronto Star* story for his research.

Claims that the government has changed the process for the classification of firearms are simply not correct. The fact is that the current process was put in place by the member's government, the former Liberal government.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more than 40% of first nations homes without running water are located in St. Theresa Point, Wasagamack, Red Sucker Lake and Garden Hill. These are the very communities that were devastated by H1N1 and are still victims of the lack of federal leadership and commitment that leaves their communities at high risk to this day.

Will the minister take responsibility and immediately commit to provide running water and safe waste water management into the Island Lake community, and will the minister tell us when 100% of first nation homes will have safe running water and waste water management?

Oral Questions

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is strongly committed to the health and safety of all Canadians.

We have made important and strategic infrastructure investments to support first nations in operating their water systems and have committed to introducing legislation to ensure first nations have the same safe water that all other Canadians have.

We are working with Island Lake First Nations to address the needs of their community, including safe water.

* * *

•(1455)

[Translation]

AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's candidate for the position of Auditor General appeared in committee, and this has left several unanswered questions, particularly concerning the recruitment process. The selection criteria were very clear and although the Conservatives are trying to downplay the importance of the language criterion in its selection, the candidate chosen does not meet one of the essential requirements.

Can someone from this government confirm that the firm hired to find candidates was mandated to find a bilingual candidate, yes or no?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said in this House, the government looked for bilingual candidates and followed a very rigorous process. The best-qualified candidate was chosen. Mr. Ferguson said yesterday in committee that it was important to learn French.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not an answer. We still do not know if the headhunting firm hired by this government was instructed to find a bilingual candidate. The job posting clearly lists the following requirement: proficiency in both official languages is essential. It became clear yesterday that this is not the case for the candidate proposed by the Conservatives.

My question for the government is simple: was the firm mandated to find a bilingual auditor general, yes or no? Respecting Canada's two official languages is not difficult. Yes or no?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I already said that the government did seek bilingual candidates, but at the end of the day, it is very important to have the most qualified candidate, the person with the most qualifications, and that is who we looked for.

[English]

Mr. Ferguson is supported by Ms. Fraser, the former Auditor General, by the Liberal leader in the province of New Brunswick and by the premier of the province of New Brunswick who have all dealt with him for years.

He is the right candidate for this position.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the benefits of marketing freedom are already being enjoyed by western Canadian grain farmers.

Today the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food joined Rahr Malting in Alix, Alberta, in introducing a \$6 million expansion to their malt plant that will increase or triple its storage capacity.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board please explain to this House the benefits of marketing freedom?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is more exciting news of new investments just waiting for Bill C-18 to pass. Our government remains committed to giving western Canadian grain farmers the marketing freedom they deserve. As seen by today's announcement, an open market will attract investment, encourage innovation and create value-added jobs across western Canada.

What is more, this investment consists of 100% private money.

I call on the opposition to work with us to ensure the timely passage of Bill C-18 so western Canadian farmers can continue to build the Canadian economy.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government took 13 months to even start acting on its own rail service review.

What it has started is yet another review, with no deadline for actually doing anything. This process is in never-never land, while shippers of everything from grain to forest products, minerals and chemicals continue to suffer costly substandard rail service.

The Conservatives quickly slapped closure on farmers. Why not a little closure on the railways, after 13 months of lost time and who knows how many more months yet to come? Why do the Conservatives side with the railways?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, after 13 long years, Canadians called for closure on a Liberal government. One of the reasons they did that is that the Liberals refused to do anything with rail for 13 long years.

Our government has worked with great success with stakeholders to improve the supply chain of shipments for everyone involved in the economy, from the railways to marketing facilitators. With regard to the facilitator, an announcement will be made shortly.

• (1500)

[Translation]

VETERANS

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in four days, Pascal Lacoste will begin a hunger strike in front of the office of the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Mr. Lacoste served his country in Bosnia, but for the past 11 years, the department has completely abandoned him. Other veterans are adding their voices to his in order to denounce the red tape, the extremely long wait times and the lack of health specialists within the department.

Will all our veterans have to resort to such extreme tactics to get the minister's attention?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her question.

When our brave soldiers are deployed to theatres of operation, such as Rwanda or Bosnia, they may suffer serious injuries. That is why we are implementing specific and effective programs and services that are based on the most recent scientific data. When we implemented improvements to the new veterans charter, it was specifically to help veterans who had the most serious injuries or illnesses.

As soon as I was made aware of this situation, I asked the officials in my department to take the necessary measures.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning our government became aware of reports that Mr. Ahmed, his wife, and two young children have been released from detention in Saudi Arabia.

We know that the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs and her consular team work incredibly hard to support Canadians in distress in the region, as they do across the globe.

Would the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs please tell this House about the excellent consular assistance provided to and on behalf of this family that assisted in their release?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to once again be able to advise that other Canadians have now been released from detention abroad—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. minister of state has the floor.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, the Ahmed family has been freed in Saudi Arabia. I know it has been a very difficult time for the Ahmeds and for their concerned relatives here.

Canadian officials will continue to provide consular assistance and facilitate the Ahmeds' return to Canada, as we have been doing since first learning of their situation.

Oral Questions

We once again thank our partners in Saudi Arabia for their co-operation in addressing our concerns with regard to Canadian citizens.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Toronto families are worried about the dirty diesel train that will soon connect to Pearson airport.

While governments around the world invest in the future with cleaner electric trains, the government is leaving our biggest city in the past. Millions of travellers pass through Pearson airport every year. It is Canada's biggest airport. However, we should not be building 19th century transportation to get them where they need to go.

Why will the government not show some environmental leadership and help build an electric rail line to Toronto's airport?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has provided unprecedented amounts of funding for rail infrastructure throughout Canada.

If the member were really sincere about representing the people of Toronto, he would have stood and voted with this government on all our historic investments for infrastructure. Why does the member hate Toronto?

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by passing Bill C-10 to amend the Criminal Code, the Government of Canada will impose on the Quebec nation, on its territory, values that it rejects and will pass on the cost without Quebec having a say in the matter. In addition, today, Quebec's Minister of Justice declared that Quebec will refuse to foot the bill.

Does the Minister of Justice realize that this proves that the Quebec nation has no choice but to assume full control over its criminal laws, as any nation state would, to ensure that its values are reflected and it controls the cost of administering justice in its territory?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate anything about fighting crime is very upsetting to what is left of the Bloc Québécois, but these pieces of legislation have been before Parliament and have been in the public realm for quite some time.

I am very pleased that since this government took office, we have increased our transfers to the provinces by 30%, \$2.4 billion in the last year alone. That is the right approach to this. We will continue to help the provinces in that regard.

Government Orders

●(1505)

[Translation]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Her Excellency Rose Francine Rogombé, Speaker of the Senate of the Gabonese Republic.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the accurate research that clearly shows the Perimeter Institute received, and continues to receive, the funding that respects this government's promise. I would like to table this document to set the record straight. I would encourage the NDP to read the actual research and to stop making it up and misleading Canadians. With the permission of the House, I would table the public accounts document.

The Speaker: The minister does not need the permission of the House. He can table whatever he likes.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to set the record straight on the family—

The Speaker: Order, please. Setting the record straight is not a point of order. It is a point of debate. I would invite the hon. member to perhaps raise it in question period or in statements by members, but setting the record straight is not to use up House time as a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, are the documents tabled by the minister in both official languages?

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. It has come to the attention of the Chair that the document is in only one official language. Therefore, I would ask the Minister of State for Science and Technology to either provide a copy in both official languages or seek the consent of the House to table it in one official language.

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Mr. Speaker, I commit to tabling it in both official languages. I guarantee the facts are exactly the same. The research is consistent. The numbers are the same. The NDP is wrong, in both official languages.

The Speaker: We will wait for the document to be tabled in both official languages.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on that point of order, I do not know why the member referred to both being the same in both official languages. We do not have to laugh at our official languages of our country. We should respect that. There is something that happens with the government in disrespecting both official languages.

The Speaker: The minister has committed to tabling the document in both official languages and the House will wait for that before it is officially tabled.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord for raising this point.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

●(1510)

[English]

ENDING THE LONG-GUN REGISTRY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-19, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: We will go to the questions and comments period for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue. Questions and comments.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak against Bill C-19 and show my strong support for maintaining the long gun registry. I recognize there is division among Canadians, and in my riding, on this point, but what evidence tells me in the end is that this registry saves lives.

Members opposite like to say that we have already debated the bill in full. There are a few things wrong with that argument.

First, nearly a third of the members in the House are new members and so we would like to have our say. We would like to be able to represent our constituents, those who sent us here to bring their opinions to the House.

The second thing that is wrong with the argument is that this is a different bill than was originally presented in the private member's bill introduced in May 2009 by the member for Portage—Lisgar. That bill simply removed the requirement to register long guns. This bill goes far further than that, in a sense that it is proposing to have a bonfire of the data and to destroy the very important data that has already been collected under the gun registry, data which plays a very important role in keeping both our police officers and the public safe.

Both police organizations and the provinces want us to maintain that data and use it to enhance public safety. The money has already been spent gathering the data and it should not be destroyed. It should be shared with the provinces who wish to continue a registry on their own, should this legislation pass.

Government Orders

There is an additional complication here because prior to this registry, businesses were required to keep records of the sale of non-restricted firearms. This bill does not make any provisions for reverting to this process and, as we heard earlier today in question period, this means that weapons that were earlier used in incidents, like the Montreal massacre, weapons that were used in the terrible incident in Norway, will no longer be subject to registration at sale or any registration at all in the country.

While New Democrats acknowledge that first nations and rural Canadians have some problems with this registry, we have tried to address those points that would make the registry less burdensome to them. We believe we can find a way to address the problems with the registry, while at the same time strengthening gun control.

What are our proposals? We have agreed that we ought to decriminalize the first time non-registration of long guns, making a one-time offence a non-criminal ticket. This would go a long way toward the objections that Conservatives like to raise that law-abiding Canadians are being hit by the gun registry. They would be given a chance to register their weapons without acquiring a criminal record.

We would also agree to enshrine in legislation that there would never be a fee charged for registration under the long gun registry. This would reduce the objection that there is a high cost to many in rural areas who have low incomes and who need firearms for hunting or other farm related usages.

We have also agreed that we could prevent the release of identifying information about gun owners, except for incidents which would protect public safety, or under court order, or by force of law.

We have also suggested that guarantees could be put together to ensure that aboriginal treaty rights would be protected. I have talked with first nations in my riding and this is a concern of theirs. It is not that they object in principle to the gun registry, it is not that they do not have concerns about public safety, but they do, as they always should, object when their aboriginal treaty rights are ignored and things proceed without any consultation or talks with them. We would like to work with rural and aboriginal Canadians. At the same time, we would like to continue to give the police the tools they need to keep our streets safe.

From my point of view, firearm registration is already a one-time only procedure. It would never expire unless the weapons were transferred to a new owner. Under those conditions, to me, it seems much like the conditions by which we require people to get both a driver's licence and to register their cars; in this case, a firearms acquisition certificate and registration of the actual firearms.

While we would work to make it as non-burdensome as possible, to make it as easy as possible to register those, I still believe in the registration of long guns as an important part of public safety.

What has convinced me? What persuades me that we need to keep the registry? I want to talk first of all about police. I am a former police board member in my own community. At the time the registry was introduced, it was seen as a very important tool by the police that I worked with every day.

●(1515)

The registry gives real time access to information. It is regularly updated when the public safety threats are identified and used when police respond to calls and referenced during important investigations. The police officers in my riding have told me again and again that it does provide them with the information they need to solve crimes involving firearms.

As of September 11, 2011, the Canadian Firearms Registry has been accessed 17,402 times per day. Again, there is no alternative being presented by the government that would allow the police to have similar information that would prevent crimes before they are actually committed with firearms.

In one survey which was conducted, 92% of general duty police officers said they use the Canadian firearms information system and 74% of those front line general duty police officers said the results have provided and proven beneficial during major police operations, that they have helped keep police officers safe and that they have improved public safety.

When we look at the unfortunate deaths of police officers in this country over the past 10 years, it is important to remember that long guns killed 10 out of 13 police officers who died in service of the public. This registry has been supported by police officers across the country.

Chief William Blair of Toronto said, "The registry gives officers information that keeps them safe. If the registry is taken from us, police officers may guess, but they cannot know. It could get them killed".

That is the first reason that persuades me that we need to keep this registry. The second is the evidence on the public record about public safety.

Since the introduction of stricter gun laws in 1991, there has been a 65% reduction in homicides by long guns. This is data from Statistics Canada. These are facts; these are not opinions. The reduction in homicides involving any type of firearm, in other words, other types of firearms, was only 37%, so there has definitely been an impact that would cause the reduction in long gun homicides to go down again by 65%, almost double the rate of reduction in other firearms.

From 1995, when the firearms registry became law, to 2010 there was a 41% reduction in homicides by long guns. Rifles and shotguns are the guns most often used in unfortunate suicides, particularly those involving youth. While these have decreased by 64% in nine years, from 329 in 1995 to 121 in 2005, there has been no evidence that other methods have been substituted. So again, an important role in reducing the number of suicides among youth.

Government Orders

The third reason is my contact with women's groups in my riding and across the country. They have paid particular attention to family violence and the role of long guns in family violence in this country. When we look at the case of spousal homicides involving firearms from 1980 to 2009, there is a decrease in those figures, but on average one of three women killed by their husbands were shot and 88% of them were shot with long guns legally owned.

Since the introduction of the gun registry, gun-related spousal homicides are down by 50%. So still a significant problem, but a problem which has been greatly reduced.

Members on the other side are fond of saying “when police officers go to domestic violence, they cannot trust the gun registry 100%”. Well they can have fair warning if there are large numbers of weapons in that household. But that is not actually the issue.

The issue is, can guns be removed from households before there is an incident where someone is shot because police are aware, the weapons are registered, and lower levels of violence have indicated this may become a more serious problem in the future. That is where, in my mind, the real value of the registry is when we talk about family violence, the ability to identify weapons and remove them from the home before they are used for a terrible purpose like spousal murder.

The Conservatives like to argue that homicide rates have simply been on the decline and that our facts around public safety for women simply reflect that decline. But I have already said in my speech, we can show that there have been differential effects and greater decreases in the use of long guns in family violence, suicide and other public safety incidents.

• (1520)

When I stand today in opposition to this bill, I stand with police officers, women's groups, victims groups and the majority of Canadians.

Chief Daniel Parkinson of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police said, “Scrapping the federal Firearms Registry will put our officers at risk and undermine our ability to prevent and solve crimes”. Battered Women's Support Services in B.C. supports the registry and has gone so far as to ask the Liberal premier to set up a provincial registry if this legislation passes. The Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime says the majority of victims groups in this country support the registry.

I stand with the majority of British Columbias, 61% in the most recent public opinion survey, in support of the gun registry, and ask the government to abandon this reckless law.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member makes reference to the province of British Columbia. We know full well what the Government of Canada has said with regard to the province of Quebec in terms of the data bank.

My question to my New Democrat colleague is this. To what degree does he believe that the federal government has an obligation to support provinces that have a desire to continue a long gun registry by providing them the data bank as opposed to hitting the delete button and getting rid of the data bank, thereby causing a provincial government such as Quebec that would like the registry

put into place to have to recreate the data bank at a substantial cost when it could have spent money on many other projects?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I would like to see the long gun registry maintained. This is one of the most effective tools for public safety in the country. In British Columbia there is a debate just beginning about what happens if this legislation passes. That debate has not really developed because the government has not given us much time to debate it in the House of Commons. People have not really had a chance to consider what the proper response to the passage of this law would be.

I know that battered women's groups, as I mentioned, have taken the first step in calling on the Liberal government in British Columbia to establish such a registry. The important point is the destruction of data that the government is proposing. It would not even leave this option open to provinces. No matter what position they take in the future, it will foreclose the option of having provincial registries before there is even a chance to have that debate at the provincial level.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question for my colleague has to do with the rhetoric we heard earlier during question period about the fact that the Conservatives are not changing the classification structure for some very powerful weapons. While it may be true, the effect of failing to change the classification structure appears to be that weapons that used to be registered before the gun registry ever existed now no longer have to be registered in any way, shape or form, which makes me feel less safe. Could the member comment on that, please?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, it is perhaps one of the unforeseen side effects of this law that maybe the Conservatives had not thought about in their rush to pass it through without much debate. It seems that there are some weapons which will escape any kind of registration, including the kinds of weapons that were used by Marc Lépine in the incident at École Polytechnique and, as I said in my speech, in Norway. While I grant the Conservatives that it is probably not a deliberate attempt to deregister weapons, in fact it will allow these weapons to escape registration.

I am also concerned about the requirement to report sales of these kinds of weapons, which existed before the registry. Now that the registry is being abolished, we need to have the sales reports brought back.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's position and I find it quite difficult to understand a couple of things he said. I heard him say that people are going to be at risk because of these guns. Does that mean we are at risk if there is a military person in a tank or an airman in an aircraft? These types of people who possess guns do not create risk necessarily. Many target shooters and hunters enjoy those sports and we do not consider that they are dangerous people. The sweeping statement that everyone is at risk over this is not quite true.

Points of Order

He also referenced long gun homicides and suggested that there was a drop. Let me read from *The Chronicle Herald*, which states, “While it’s true long-gun homicides have dropped since the registry was introduced, it’s also true that murder rates have been—”

● (1525)

The Speaker: Order. I apologize for cutting off the hon. member, but I have to stop him there to give the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca a chance to respond.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked about military members. Of course, they all have IDs, they are all registered and everyone knows what weapons they are carrying. I have no doubts about them doing their job safely, but if they were to take those weapons from their job into another context which would be inappropriate, we would know that they have the weapons and we would know who they are.

My point about the registration of weapons is that it allows us to know who can safely possess handguns and they are no threat. It is similar to those who like to drive. Those who like to target shoot should register their guns and get a licence. This is no heavy burden on them in comparison to the gain we get in public safety. It is by knowing who possesses weapons that weapons can be removed from the hands of those who may have mental instability problems, addiction problems, or family violence problems.

I am not trying to remove guns from the hands of legitimate hunters, target shooters or—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member is out of time.

I understand the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale is rising on a point of order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-317—INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, who again has raised certain objections to my private member’s bill, Bill C-317. I must note that the member did not raise a single objection or make a substantive argument in response to my rebuttal, nor can he.

To reiterate, it is simply the case that Bill C-317 does not give any additional taxation power to the Canada Revenue Agency that it does not already have. It merely enumerates two of the most relevant of those already existing powers. To be specific, the CRA already has the power to revoke a labour organization’s tax exempt status and revoke dues deductibility. The CRA has the power to do this for several different types of violations of the Income Tax Act, including the one that is specifically identified in this bill, the failure of a labour organization to file a return.

As the bill does not grant the CRA any new powers to revoke tax exempt status or dues deductibility, there is no new ability created to collect extra revenue.

Only the requirements surrounding what must be included in a public information return are new. Let me emphasize that labour organizations must already file returns. They already face con-

sequences for failure to file returns. The tax consequences for failure to file returns already exist. Those tax consequences are not increased or changed by the bill. The only thing that would change is what information is required in the public information return.

While the public information return I propose is not onerous, it is probably more detailed in some areas than what is currently required of labour organizations. However, requiring more detail than may be presently expected does not mean requiring more tax or a new tax. It is already the case that a labour organization could refuse to file its currently required tax return, and it could face losing its tax exempt status and dues deductibility as a result.

Under my bill, a labour organization could also refuse to file its tax return, including the new public information return that I propose, and it would face the identical consequences.

Let us use the member’s own example of a dues-paying worker whose income was slightly below the second income tax bracket and was forced to pay taxes because of lost dues deductibility.

The member used an example to fit the definition of creating a new taxpayer, as it states in *Beauchesne’s*, “an extension of the incidence of a tax so as to include persons not already payers”.

The example could be a realistic scenario; I do not debate that. However, it makes no difference. Using the same example, the same dues-paying worker could be forced into paying taxes right now if his or her union refused to file its tax return today.

Nothing would change for that dues-paying worker with the passage of my bill. The power to create a taxpayer out of the dues-paying worker in the member’s example was granted to the Canada Revenue Agency a long time ago. My bill does nothing to change that.

Frankly, that is the long and the short of it. My bill’s sole purpose is to ask for more detailed information and to make it public. It does not impose any additional or new tax consequences on a labour organization or its members.

A different point the member raised in his response concerned the requirement of unionized employees to pay dues. Of course, in my response I did not dispute the requirement to pay dues, nor did I suggest that it was discretionary under certain labour contracts. Instead, I pointed out that employees always have the option to choose which union they want to represent them.

Again, Mr. Speaker, if you read the transcript carefully, you will see that the member did not address the substance of the point that I raised. Instead, he was merely dismissive of the well-established fact that union members can decertify their existing union and certify another one. In Canada this happens all the time for a variety of reasons with which the member is undoubtedly familiar.

Points of Order

● (1530)

I greatly suspect at this very moment if a union local deliberately violated the Income Tax Act by refusing to file a return and put its tax exempt status and its member dues deductibility at risk, its members would take action. One of those possible actions would be, as I stated, to decertify the union and bring in another. As the member himself pointed out, unions are democratic institutions, so another action might be to democratically remove the board of the local and install one that would comply with the law and thus preserve the dues deductibility of members.

The bottom line is that while it may be mandatory to pay dues, dues-paying employees do have options, including whether or not to pay their dues to a labour organization that qualifies for dues deductibility under the Income Tax Act.

However, regardless of the choices that union members may make, Mr. Speaker, I would urge you to focus on my major point, that there is no difference in the potential tax consequences in the scenario of a labour organization failing to file a tax return under the present Income Tax Act versus a labour organization failing to file under the amendments proposed by my bill.

Finally, let me note that both in his point of order and in his later response, the member disappointingly used a considerable portion of his remarks to engage in actual debate over the substance of my bill. He raised issues clearly unrelated to his point of order over ways and means, such as what he falsely assumes my bill would cost unions and his favourite theory about the strategy behind my bill.

The proper place for the member to raise these issues would be the time allotted for private members' business, and I would be happy to correct the member on his faulty arguments during that time.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his further intervention on this point.

Resuming debate. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

* * *

ENDING THE LONG-GUN REGISTRY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-19, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak in favour of Bill C-19, the ending the long gun registry bill.

I beg to differ with previous speakers from the other side that this particular subject has not been exhausted. We debated this subject in previous sessions of Parliament. I want to revisit a few of the discussion points from that time, but I will start by saying that our government believes strongly that to keep our streets and communities safe, we need to give the police the tools they need to do their jobs. I think we can all agree on that.

We need to continue to invest in smart crime prevention measures and ensure that dangerous criminals are taken out of circulation so that they can no longer victimize innocent Canadians. I might add as a substantive point, there is a need to deal with gun-related crimes. This is action this government has taken in the past.

As all members of the House know, our party's position and commitment dates back to 1995 when the previous Liberal government inflicted this lack-lustre attempt to deal with gun related crimes. What we wound up with was legislation that put gun control on law-abiding hunters, first nations, Inuit, farmers and sport shooters across the country. For these reasons the Conservative Party, now the government, has long opposed the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

By eliminating the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry, we instead can focus our efforts on more effective measures to tackle crime and protect families and communities.

I want to re-emphasize for the purposes of this debate what this bill would do. It would repeal the requirement to register non-restricted firearms, long guns; provide for the destruction of all records pertaining to the registration of long guns in the Canadian firearms registry and under the control of the chief firearms officer; and maintain control over restricted and prohibited firearms.

I also want to re-emphasize the fact that the ending the long gun registry bill would not in any way derogate from important legislation and policy that will continue to meet the important public policy safeguards around legal long gun possession and acquisitions. Specifically, firearm owners, or those who wish to acquire a firearm or ammunition, would continue to be required to undergo a police background check, pass a rigorous firearms safety course, and comply with all firearms safe storage and transportation requirements. Furthermore, firearms owners would also still require a valid a firearms licence to purchase and possess long guns and to register restricted and prohibited firearms, such as hand guns.

Obviously, these are important measures that we have actually fortified, not to mention of course making sure that the screening process has even more rigour to it to ensure that responsible long gun owners have their affairs in order to possess these types of long guns.

We are investing in a number of effective measures in this regard and in the broader public safety initiative. We are fighting organized crime, which is where many gun-related crimes occur, almost always with illegal weapons and prohibited firearms. We are introducing mandatory minimum penalties for serious gun crimes. We are combatting gun smuggling. Those are measures that we have taken and ones which we will continue to take.

Points of Order

I want to take a moment to summarize some of what has been presented to the House by my colleagues. There are two particular points.

First and most important, in the recent election Canadians from coast to coast to coast gave our government a strong mandate to end the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry once and for all, and that is exactly what the bill would do.

I would say by way of extension, the great Kenora riding has a rich tradition in hunting. Our first nations communities, many of which are isolated, depend on the safe possession and acquisition of long guns and ammunition for their traditions and way of life. They gave me a strong mandate to carry this message forward to our government.

● (1535)

Second, in contrary to what some special interest groups tell us, the bill does not weaken gun controls. I have alluded already to the fact that real gun control in this country is done through an effective licensing program, good legislation and public policy around prohibited and illegal weapons and the crimes that are committed with them. Licensing is what affects people, and it is how people who should not own firearms are identified. Bill C-19 simply does not change or address licensing at all. To say otherwise would be a misstatement of fact.

Third, the destruction of records is a necessary part of fulfilling our commitment to Canadians. I find this new hedging argument quite interesting. If the registration list still occurs, then it is in fact, by simple logic, still a registry. More importantly, in my respectful view, this is private information that was given by law-abiding citizens under federal legislation at the time. I do not believe that it is available for the opposition parties to raise what has become a new dimension to their debate. Perhaps it is out of exasperation that some of their members and others of the third party have lost seats in the House over this issue. Perhaps that is why they would create something out of what I believe is not just insignificant, but a misstatement of facts.

I want to remind members of the fundamentals of the long gun registry. It is a process by which law-abiding long gun owners are compelled by force of law to disclose personal information to the state. Those data are then stored and used as part of a gun control system. If we accept that this is neither an effective gun control system nor an appropriate use of billions of dollars of taxpayers' money, then by default we logically must agree that these data must be destroyed. It is also widely accepted that the data are incomplete and out of date and will become increasingly so over time.

As well, in an effort to grasp at any argument they can get their hands on, the NDP suggests that the destruction of these records would cost "untold millions", in the words of the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. This concerns me. The destruction of records contained in the long gun registry will not result in additional costs to Canadian taxpayers.

I will use my last couple of minutes to reflect fondly on the rich traditions of many northwestern Ontarians including, perhaps critically, our first nations communities.

I appreciate the countless number of chiefs, particularly those in isolated and remote first nations, who have laid out the problems that the gun registry has posed for them in their communities, not just in terms of possession and acquisition but also in the challenges with respect to ammunition. They have spoken loud and clear.

I am here as part of a bigger northwestern Ontario picture on this particular piece of legislation. With great honour and respect, as a long gun owner myself, I would impress upon the House that we must consider the rich traditions of many rural and northern Canadians, particularly those in isolated and remote communities. For example, I have had an opportunity to spend some time in the western Arctic, where I have engaged in hunting and the like.

Coming from northwestern Ontario, I realize that the opposition, particularly the NDP, are firmly divided on this issue. We have seen colleagues across the floor who are from my region vote in support of abolishing the registry, and I encourage those members to maintain their position. We know how northwestern Ontarians feel.

I agree with the intellectual point that there may be a desire for us to move on from this debate. Northwestern Ontarians want to participate in other regional issues and issues of national interest. However, I do not accept what is being proffered by members of the opposite party, particularly the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, who says that the passion has been lost.

● (1540)

To the contrary, we have never felt stronger about this. We want to move on, and I am asking members to support this important piece of legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Over the past few months, I have met with representatives of women's organizations in my riding. I am referring here to the Centre féminin du Saguenay, which has been taking care of abused women and their children since 1976, and Maison Isa, which is an organization that helps victims of sexual abuse. I met with these representatives at their request and I was happy to do so. These people told me just how important the firearms registry is and how useful it has been to them in their work with abused women. They spoke about the many instances in which a woman was afraid of her husband, who owned a firearm, and just how useful the registry could be in such situations.

What does the government have to say to these women who fear for their lives and the lives of their children?

Points of Order

•(1545)

[English]

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate that this member may have consulted with his constituents if he can appreciate that I spent a great deal of my life living in isolated and remote first nations communities. I have a rich professional background in dealing with a variety of domestic and sexual assaults, most unfortunately. Not one of them revolved around a gun-related incident. However, I can tell the member that this is exactly what the licensing process is intended to deal with.

The licensing process, which would not be affected by this legislation, deals specifically with stringent guidelines to prevent those kinds of people with those kinds of tendencies in those kinds of circumstances from lawfully possessing or acquiring long guns. That is an important intellectual point, and in the context of domestic abuse and sexual assaults, it is a more than important practical point in this debate.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member can provide a comment in relation to individual provinces. In particular, the Province of Quebec has indicated that it wants to reinstate a long gun registry in the province of Quebec. I understand other provinces might give it consideration. Some provinces have said “no” to it; I believe Manitoba has said “absolutely not” to the long gun registry. However, we notice that there are differences of opinion.

Could the member provide a comment on whether this legislature should support the Province of Quebec in its desire to have the long gun registry and on whether we can show that support by allowing them access to the data? The privacy issue that the member refers to, in the opinion of many, is just more of an excuse. Can we put that excuse to the side and provide—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I am never clear whether this is about a word count for the member or whether he is shifting his representation to the Province of Quebec.

I will answer in unequivocal terms. The answer is “no”.

That is private information that was given to legislation. It was given in the context of that piece of legislation. That is all it is for. It is the position of this government, and one that I strongly support and have encouraged my colleagues to support, that this information not be disseminated.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to compliment the member on an excellent speech. I know there are many people in northern Ontario who are deeply concerned about this issue.

I know, for example, that when the gun registry was first established, the leader of the NDP voted against doing so. Audrey McLaughlin, the MP for Yukon, like many other northerners, was very concerned about it. In my riding of Ottawa West—Nepean there are a substantial number of people who are concerned about this issue.

When we promised to scrap the gun registry, we did not promise to just forward it so that someone else could re-establish it. As a word, “scrap” has a very clear sense. I wonder if the member opposite could comment on that.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I do not always like to debate this issue as a division between urban versus rural and remote, but I can appreciate the issues and I think we have debated them at length. However, importantly, I share the member's concern over the inconsistencies, particularly in the official opposition's position on this issue. We know now, as members have said quite recently in press releases and statements outside this place, that there is division. We have seen a clear message from some of our NDP colleagues in northwestern Ontario, who I appreciate have stood with us to abolish and scrap the long gun registry; let us see if they maintain that position and do not create new hedging arguments to keep it.

That is not something Canadians accept. It certainly is not something—

•(1550)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

The hon. member for Western Arctic.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year I voted in favour of a private member's bill put forward by the member for Portage—Lisgar that would have done away with the long gun registry. That bill was a blunt instrument; however, it restricted itself to eliminating the need to register long guns. Now in front of Parliament we have the government's Bill C-19, which is not only a blunt instrument but a wrong-headed and meanspirited instrument, a bill that would drive a greater wedge between rural and urban Canadians.

The Conservatives are supposed to be the Government of Canada, a truly national government that is supposed to govern for all Canadians, not just the less than 40% who voted for it.

I have never hidden my position on the long gun registry. My position has always been that the long gun registry does not belong in the federal Criminal Code. Provincial, territorial and aboriginal governments should be the ones to determine how long guns are registered in their various jurisdictions. In 2000 the Supreme Court agreed with that position and said that every government has the right to register firearms. Firearms registration is not something that goes against our laws; it fits with the property laws of the provinces, and it would not be within the Criminal Code if the provinces took it over.

Bill C-19 goes against my position because the data would be destroyed without those other governments first being asked if they wished to use the data as the basis for their own registries.

The government has foisted upon Parliament a bill that is a slap in the face to Canadians in those parts of the country that favour a long gun registry, like Quebec. Before the federal registry, Quebec even had a plan to put in its own provincial registry.

The Conservatives claim they have to destroy the data because of privacy concerns that would make it impossible to transfer the data. I asked the Privacy Commissioner about this aspect. Here is her response:

Generally, s. 8(2)(f) of the Act permits the disclosure of personal information “under an agreement or arrangement between the Government of Canada or an institution thereof and the government of a province ... for the purpose of administering or enforcing any law or carrying out a lawful investigation.” Therefore, in appropriate circumstances, an information sharing agreement or arrangement put in place for the purpose of administering or enforcing any law (including provincial law) could assist to ensure any transfer of personal information was in conformity with the *Privacy Act*.

For those on the other side, this means that as long as there is an agreement allowing the transfer of the information, there are no Privacy Act concerns.

This ill-considered bill would cause farmers, hunters and trappers nothing but headaches and cost all Canadians more money in the end.

One of the advantages of a registry is that it provides an accurate means to show lawful transfer of firearms, but confusion will be the order of the day after the passage of Bill C-19. For instance, the Conservatives have not taken the safe storage provisions out of the Criminal Code. They remain, and will likely be more rigidly enforced by the police in the future.

Because of this poorly thought out bill, a number of important questions will have to be answered. For example, will someone who lends his or her gun to someone else be responsible for its proper storage? If a person gives a family member a gun and does not record that transaction in a proper fashion, will that individual still be liable for any unfortunate results of unsafe storage? Will the individual end up with a criminal record because he or she will have no simple, legal and effective way to mark this transaction?

It is vital to offer something for gun owners to reduce liability in sale, possession, responsibility for safe storage, and transfer of ownership. An effective, simple and reliable non-criminal registry at the local government level is something the vast majority of Canadians can accept and should be entitled to, without having to pay for it all over again; however, because the Conservatives did not think this through, by the time Canadian firearm owners begin dealing with these headaches, the data will have been destroyed.

The bill means that gun owners who live in those parts of Canada that want the registry will have to go through the process of re-registering their guns. Reburdening gun owners like that shows exactly how little the Conservatives have thought the bill through.

If Bill C-19 passes as presented, provincial, territorial or aboriginal governments that want to establish a registry will have to go back to square one, at great taxpayer expense, and redo the whole thing.

• (1555)

Gun owners in the jurisdiction will be forced to fill out more forms and pay more fees. Police will have to wait years to have a useful tool to work with. One province has already said that it wants to reconstitute a provincial registry, that being Quebec, and more may consider the options too. No one will end up with a criminal record by failing to comply with these provincial or territorial registries.

Because of the flaws in the bill and because I support the purpose of getting the bill out of the Criminal Code, I intend to move amendments that would put in place a three-year waiting period

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before the data could be destroyed. The Conservatives claim the NDP government, if elected in 2015, would want the data preserved to recreate the registry. My amendment would see that the data that was not picked up by the provinces would be destroyed in 2014.

As an aside, it is pleasing to hear that even the Conservatives could recognize the potential for the next election.

My amendments would require the government to consult with the provinces, territories and aboriginal governments to see if they wanted to recreate their own non-criminal registries.

Finally, my amendments would require that the data for those jurisdictions that wanted a registry would be transferred to the respective governments. This amendment would save Canadians hassles and money.

What we have in front of us is a government that is full of its own majority. It is full of the direction that it can take without responding to the needs of Canadians. It is a government that wants to do everything its own way.

When we talk about a band of lemmings charging over hill, it strikes me that is what is happening with the registry right now.

There are important and significant legal issues with the bill. They are issues that take time to debate and understand. We have seen the Conservatives put closure on the debate.

I am sure we will see the bill go to committee. I hope at that point in time the Conservatives will listen to reason and will take the time to understand the issues that are presented with the creation of Bill C-19.

The effort to remove the long gun registry from the federal Criminal Code is a useful thing to do. What has been layered on top of it is a slap in the face to co-operative federalism, to registered gun owners who wish to have some measure of liability protection as easily as possible and to a lot of Canadians.

The government does not have to do this. It does not have to be didactic about this. It should understand that it is making laws that will affect the lives of Canadians and legitimate gun owners and impact the liability of many people. It can make the right choice and support an amendment which would allow the data to be shared with the rest of the country, with the other jurisdictions that have a right to the data, as the Supreme Court said in 2000.

The government can do that. It does not have to turn its back on Canadians. It does not have to turn its back on the provinces. It does not have to act with its shirt full. It does not have to act puffed up and proud of what it is doing. It can act civilly for Canadians.

If it wants the approbation from other political people in the country, then the government should act civilized, do the right thing and follow the amendments.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on the hon. member's last statement. He wanted to know why the government was not concerned about what other political people in our country might think.

Points of Order

We are very concerned about what our constituents believe. The member knows well, as does most of the members in the House, that for the last five elections, and over the last 11 years, it has been a commitment that this party has made. It is not an agenda that was not laid out clearly before the electorate. My constituents knew when I ran in the election that the long gun registry was one of the platform planks in my rural riding, and will stick to my promise.

It is not about pleasing other political people such as MPs, senators and other politicians. It is about living up to my word to my constituents.

Why has the member, who I am certain has supported getting rid of the long gun registry in the past, backed down from his word as have most of his party?

• (1600)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, in 2000, I stood in Parliament the first time. I said at the time, and it is on the public record, that I thought the way to go with the long-gun registry was to put it in the hands of the provinces, the municipalities, those that could deal with it at a level that was appropriate. What I found offensive about the long gun registry was that it was enforced by the federal Criminal Code, so it made criminals out of people it should not have.

I am very much in favour of decriminalization of aspects of our law, this being one of them. I am sure if the Conservatives consider many other aspects of our law that could be considered for decriminalization too, they would be on the right track.

However, on this one, when you make the decision to destroy the data when you know perfectly well, through the Supreme Court decision in 2000, that the provinces have the right to take over the data and create their own registries, you are making—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I would remind the hon. members it is a good idea to direct their questions and comments through the Chair.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know there is a great deal of interest in what is happening today in the House, as stakeholders throughout the country have voiced their concerns and their opinions, stakeholders which include many different police forces, chiefs of police, women advocacy groups and many different non-profit organizations. They have come forward and said that they want the government to listen and to base its decisions on facts.

To what degree does the member believe the government is listening to any of the thousands of Canadians who want the government to at least appreciate the facts of the issue?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, my understanding of the debate over the gun registry has been that there has been very little attention paid to the facts on all sides in this debate. I have tried to take a rational, reasonable approach to important legislation. I have followed consistently what I have said over the years, and that is hunting implements should be part of property law. They should be enforced by the provinces, territories and aboriginal governments. They are hunting instruments. They are part of our culture. That would be a more appropriate place to have them registered, like cars, like dogs, as has been pointed out.

I am okay with the law coming out, but I am not okay with small-minded thinking that will destroy data that is useful to provinces that want to establish their own registries.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the destruction of data, has the member for Western Arctic seen the position of the Association of Canadian Archivists, which is raising issues about a significant public policy change in relation to documents?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, I will take that question under advisement. Any time data and records are destroyed with no purpose other than to sort of cast it off in a way that is emotional rather than rational, then I am against it.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to our Conservative government's bill to scrap the long gun registry. Over the course of the debate, we have heard from many hon. colleagues on both sides of the House. I am glad to add my voice and the voices of constituents to this important debate today on Bill C-19, ending the long-gun registry act.

I consider Palliser, which I have the great privilege to represent, a very special riding. It includes Moose Jaw, parts of Regina, as well as 11 rural municipalities. This law targets residents of my riding who are law-abiding gun owners, while doing nothing to prevent gun crime in urban areas.

Ending the long gun registry has been a long-standing commitment of this government. It has been part of our promise to Canadians that we would stand up for law-abiding families and deliver law and order measures that would actually work. That means measures that actually stop crime. That means measures that hold criminals accountable. That means measures that demonstrate real results to keep our communities safe.

Along with a strong economy, these are the priorities of Canadian families. They told us that loud and clear when our government was given a strong mandate on May 2, and we intend to deliver on our commitment.

Let me emphasize this point again. On this side of the House, we support laws and measures that actually work to stop crime and deliver results. We are against burdening law-abiding citizens with unnecessary, time-consuming paperwork that serves no purpose and costs taxpayers. We do not believe in treating hunters, rural residents or outdoor enthusiasts with unfounded suspicion. We also do not want to waste taxpayer money on programs that do not accomplish the intended objective.

Points of Order

For years the registry has been a burden on law-abiding hunters and rural residents. For years law-abiding long gun owners have been forced to comply with useless government regulations. The real question is, has it worked? I am afraid the answer to the question is no. The original intention in creating the long gun registry was to prevent gun crimes. However, when we look at the evidence, the facts are clear. The long gun registry does not prevent crime, does not protect front-line police officers and does not keep guns out of the hands of criminals.

Registered long guns account for less than 2% of homicides committed with a firearm and less than one-third of crimes committed with a firearm. It is important to note that in the very rare case where someone intends to commit a crime using a registered long gun, the fact that it is registered does not stop that individual. The long gun registry has no preventive mechanisms.

It is also important to be clear which firearms we are speaking about today. We are talking about ending the failed and ineffective long gun registry. We are not talking about handguns. In fact, handguns have accounted for two-thirds of firearm-related violence since 1998. The bill we are discussing has nothing to do with the regulation and registration of handguns.

What about criminals who actually use firearms? Criminals do not register their guns and generally use handguns not long guns, so the long gun registry does nothing to hold criminals accountable. Imagine a criminal or someone with the intention of committing a crime standing in line and paying a fee to register a long gun. That scenario simply will not happen. Criminals do not bother complying with government regulations.

If criminals are not held accountable, who really bears the burden of the long gun registry? The answer to that is law-abiding long gun owners bear the burden. They acquire them legally and operate them responsibly, but they are the people who are saddled with the paperwork and registration fees. The long gun registry also does nothing to ensure firearm safety use. The long gun registry does nothing to encourage the responsible use of firearms. This is a useless burden that does nothing to prevent gun crime or encourage the responsible use of firearms.

• (1605)

This is a burden that signals to Canadians that they are regarded with suspicion and regarded as potential criminals just because they happen to own a legal object, a common item that is part of the lifestyle for many Canadians and common to many communities all across Canada.

I also want to briefly mention the cost. The long gun registry was supposed to cost \$2 million. The cost is now up to over \$2 billion and we see that the registry does not deter or prevent gun crime. Hard-working Canadians also bear the burden of this pointless registry. We need to scrap the registry and stop wasting money. We need to stop stigmatizing farmers, outdoor enthusiasts and rural residents and we need to stop targeting the wrong people. We need to target the real criminals instead.

In fact, our Conservative government has been taking measures to target the real criminals already. We have already passed some important legislation on gun crime in previous Parliaments. We

enacted mandatory jail time for drive-by shooting and tougher sentences and bail conditions for serious gun crimes. These are important steps that target real criminals. We have cracked down on reckless street racing. Street racing is a crime and it should be recognized that way.

Again, we are creating measures that hold criminals accountable and leave law-abiding Canadians to live their lives in safety and security. We are proud of our actions. Our government is taking action to keep families safe with our recently introduced safe streets and communities act. This act includes preventing serious criminals from serving their sentences in their living room. We are taking steps to ensure that criminals face real consequences for their wrongdoing.

The safe streets and communities act includes tougher penalties for those who would sell drugs to our kids and it would prevent serious criminals and those convicted of sexual assault from ever being able to receive a pardon. In Canada, serious crimes deserve a long-lasting consequence.

We need to move away from past mistakes by scrapping this registry that puts the burden on the wrong people. I suggest that we move forward to deliver results for Canadians. We need move forward and build on progressive legislation that we have made in keeping our communities safe over the past two years. We need to target criminals and help stop real crime.

On behalf of the residents of my riding, I strongly support Bill C-19 that would put an end to the long gun registry.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are arguing that they are opposed to the data transfer because it constitutes a violation of privacy. The Privacy Commissioner, Jennifer Stoddart, has found that this does not violate privacy in any way. In fact, she maintains that the data can be shared between the government and the provinces to help the provinces enforce their laws. There is no need to impose costs. All that is required is an agreement between the federal government and the provinces that wish to participate, like Quebec.

When will the current government take action to sign agreements with Quebec and the provinces that wish to participate?

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, our government has been very straightforward and crystal clear. We want to scrap the registry, which means scrapping all of the bells and whistles that hang onto it, all the paper trails, all of those things. The information is submitted by people in a private information gathering way. We do not feel that we can pass that on to anyone. If the provinces want their own gun registry, then so be it, but we are scrapping ours.

Points of Order

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on that question. Common sense would dictate that to completely scrap, hit the delete button and destroy the information and not provide any of it to the province of Quebec, which is looking at it, will cost the Quebec taxpayers millions and millions of dollars. Those millions of dollars could be so much better spent on issues such as community policing, health care, nurses, doctors and so many other things.

Does the member not see the benefit of allowing Quebec to retain a long gun registry, because that is what the Government of Quebec would like to do? Why destroy the information?

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, part of the answer to that question is the reliability of the data. It has not been updated and it would be unreliable data. In talking with police chiefs, they suggest to their men, when they go to domestic disputes, that they go as if there are guns in the homes they are investigating because the registry is simply not up to date.

The other point that needs to be raised is the fact that, when I fill out a form for one level of government, I do not automatically say that all levels of government should have access to the information on that form. That is what we are saying here. I do not believe there is any legalese to support that position.

•(1615)

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a misunderstanding for which I need some clarification. The registry is actually the data and if we do not get rid of the data then I suspect we do not get rid of the registry. I do not think it is too deep a thought, particularly when the Auditor General said that the information was not reliable. It is information that should be accurate.

I am wondering if the member has a comment to that question.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, in talking with a number of police chiefs across Canada, they have said, off the record, that the registry is not usable for their men because it has not been kept up to date. Therefore, it is a piece of equipment that has no use.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I was taken aback to find that, when I made a point earlier in this debate regarding archivists, hon. members on the opposite side found it amusing.

I want to pursue that with the hon. member for Palliser. It is actually current federal law that materials produced through the legislative process remain in our archives. Privacy is protected. This is the normal course of affairs. It is really disturbing to people in the field of archivists and historians to see data destroyed.

Names would not be used but the historical data is valuable. Does the government realize it is changing public policy in a fundamental way?

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, again I would share with the member that the data is suspect in terms of accuracy. The data has not been kept up to date. It is data that belongs to the federal government, not to the provincial governments. If the federal government chooses not to share that data, then it is certainly within its rights.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the gun registry debate has gone on for a number of years, since before its creation, to its creation, to its eventual slow demise and death under the government, to this most radical posture that the current government has taken. I find we are now at a point where the government's ideology has fully taken over any sense of balance or common sense.

I say ideology because when a government says that its mandate, which it believes it has, to do something, in this case destroy records that were paid for by Canadians, was implied in the last election. The Conservatives did not talk about it. They did not ask any Canadians about it. However, it is implied. That is the most dangerous set of principles for a government to run on because, if it believes things are implied, it can read into any decision that voters may or may not have made to arrive at a conclusion that is convenient to the government of the day.

The Conservatives do have a mandate to end the long gun registry. In the unfortunate and broken electoral system that we have, a party can win with less than 40% of the vote but end up with virtually 100% of the power. That is something that we in the NDP seek to correct so that voters can see their votes actually reflected in the government that sits in this place. If there has ever been an example of a government abusing its power and its very thin marginal endorsement from voters, it is the present government on this issue.

The Conservatives hold up the privacy of the people we seek to represent and yet I have a letter here that the government is now aware of from no other person than the Privacy Commissioner of Canada who says that the act permits the disclosure of personal information under an agreement or arrangement between the Government of Canada or an institution thereof and the government of a province for the purpose of administering or enforcing any law or carrying out any lawful investigation.

There are no privacy concerns. One would suspect that the Privacy Commissioner of Canada would be the authority on any concerns with respect to privacy, otherwise, why set up the office? Why pay the salaries and have the staff if we are not going to listen to the advice of an officer of Parliament?

It seems, unfortunately, and too typical of the government to take an issue and then run to the extreme by suggesting that a \$2 billion bonfire on Parliament Hill of all the records that have been assorted and assembled would somehow make that \$2 billion come back.

I have an interesting moment for my Conservative colleagues who raised the issue of cost. It has been a fair criticism of the long gun registry because it was promised at a much lower cost than it eventually realized. Whether it was between \$1 billion or \$2 billion, it cost too much. That is a fair and honest concern.

Points of Order

However, we asked the government how much it would cost to delete all the records, because it is not a simple matter of hitting a button to delete seven million records. Each one needs to be done individually. The RCMP says that it is not sure of the exact number but that it would be many millions. When we asked the government if it had an estimate on the cost of destroying all of these records, it said “no, never mind, it is worth it”. Does that sound familiar to the ones who set up the registry in the first place, “no, never mind, it is worth it?”

The Conservatives have now flipped to the other side and, because of their ideology, they cannot find their way to have a simple and honest conversation with Canadians who paid for this data in the first place. The Conservatives cannot tell Canadians that they are going to burn this data and spend many millions more destroying it.

For heaven's sake, the government claims to respect the authority of the provinces and we have a province is clearly asking for the data.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Quebec has publicly asked for the data from the registry. Quebeckers paid for it. Why is this government telling Quebeckers that they need to pay again to get this information, to have a gun registry? It is ridiculous and stupid. This government will now say anything to the people of Quebec. It is saying that it is the Conservative government. It used to say that the opinion of Quebeckers was important. What an insult. It is ridiculous and it makes no sense.

[*English*]

We also see that the government, in its own legislation that it crafted up around Bill C-19, has to take an entire section to subvert and overcome Canadian law that says we cannot destroy records. It seems like a good law, does it not, that a government, whatever its ideological stripe, whatever its persuasion, whatever mandate it perceives, should not be capable of destroying records that were collected from the Canadian public. Does that sound familiar at all?

I wonder if next the Conservatives will destroy any of the votes that the farmers across the Prairies took in respect to the Wheat Board because they did not like the results of those votes. Let us destroy those records too because it is not in line with the ideology and the so-called mandate of the government.

It is anti-democratic. It is against the institution of what this place represents that from time to time we collect records from Canadians, criminal records, health records, in this case gun registry records. It is not for the government of the day to write laws that subvert other laws that exist for good reason.

What is the precedent being set by the government? That if the Conservatives find something inconvenient, they will simply write into legislation, “Never mind all those things we said about keeping records, that should be borne into our laws and Constitution of this country. We will simply override them because it fits our world view”.

The government spends so much of its time claiming that it defends the brave men and women of our law enforcement

departments across the country. Then a law enforcement official comes forward and says, and my good colleague from Ontario will know this, “We would like access to the data”.

We have the letter from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police saying, “It is fine that you are shutting down this registry, but please allow us access to the data”. Suddenly the government is not so interested in respecting or listening to the police of this country. Suddenly the government says, “Never mind the expertise or the officials, the folks who run our police department. They do not know”. All the Conservatives have to say is, “I have spoken to police officers who, off the record, say the gun registry is not important to them”.

However, through their own democratic institutions, the people they put forward to head up their police associations, those people are on the record as saying, “Please allow us access to the data to do our jobs”.

It comes to a point where ideology clashes with common sense, and we are at this point with the government. We seek from the government a moment of common sense because there are those like myself, my friend from Western Arctic and others who have for years campaigned and voted on ending the long gun registry because that represented the position of the constituents I represent in northwestern British Columbia. That was their clear and express purpose, and I think we should always maintain that bind, but the Conservatives have inserted into the bill, unlike the last provisions the last time the House voted, a poison pill into the legislation, making it a poisoned bill, and they know exactly what they have done.

The Conservatives are giving the shout out to the most ideological, the most radical elements of this conversation for no good reason because the law-abiding hunters and farmers of this country who use guns to either feed their families or protect their homes, those of which I represent in northern B.C., those people do not care if Quebec wants to set up its own registry, if Montreal wants to enforce a different set of regulations around gun ownership, or if Toronto wants to enforce a more serious provision through the provinces, why, for heaven's sake, would the government care?

When I talk to people in northern British Columbia, rural Canada, they say that they have had their disputes with the registry, but if folks in Winnipeg want to have a different set of rules and guidelines directed to them by their province, so be it. Why would the government intervene? For a government that claims to respect the authority and jurisdiction of provinces, of which the cities are a product, why step in between?

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The Conservatives have poisoned the well. They have made this an unsupportable piece of legislation, and there must be Conservatives across the way who campaigned on this, and as well as their right and intention, that understand that the precedent being created here is a dangerous one. It is a damaging one to the fabric of what this country stands for, which is simple and basic representation, that the burning of records is done by a government that holds on to an ideology of the most severe nature.

We should look through the history books. What governments burned records? What regimes burned records? There are not many. This government is about to become one of them. Do the Conservatives not have any pause?

That is right, my friend says. He would like to associate himself with other governments which, through the course of history, have burned public records. Now he scoffs. He cannot figure himself out. We are either for the burning of public records or we are not, and what we have arrived at here is a government that has lost its way.

•(1625)

The practice of wedge politics, of dividing one group of Canadians from another, rural versus urban, the west versus the east, Quebec and all the rest, has to stop. It is destructive and harmful. It does not serve any greater purpose other than some narrow, ideological partisan interest and it has to stop.

Change the bill, correct it, end the ideological attack and make some sense to all Canadians.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was a very enlightening statement. It is a shame that the people across the aisle feel all they can do is scoff and sneer at democratic discussion and debate.

I would like my hon. colleague to elaborate a little more on the fact that the riding I represent is in favour of the gun registry. It is in favour of the gun registry because it has endured more than its fair share of loss due to people who were not criminals but still had access to long guns. Many Montrealers lost people, including two young people I used to work with at a youth organization during the École Polytechnique incident.

I wonder if my colleague could expand on that a bit more.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, there are personal stories around this issue on both sides, I would suggest. That is why this debate becomes so emotional very often.

I say to my Conservative colleagues that if the province of Quebec or a particular city wishes to establish a different set of conditions for the citizens they represent, why, for heaven's sake, would the government stand in the way? It is the same taxpayer. It has already been paid for once. The Conservatives are often happy to say that it is one taxpayer. Yes, I agree, this has been paid for. Why are they asking Quebec to pay for it again?

The second piece in this is important, which is the notion around liability. The gun owners whom I have been speaking with over the last number of months have said if there is no registration whatsoever, even at point of sale, and if the gun is then stolen or bequeathed, there is no record of its transfer and the gun is later used in the commission of a crime, how does the original owner prove it?

How does the original owner verify that he or she had nothing to do with that crime? This is an increasingly important issue for the same law-abiding gun owners we have talked about.

•(1630)

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member's speech, specifically when he talked about the value as opposed to the cost. I would remind the hon. member that costs and values are not always aligned. A \$2 billion cost does not mean it was worth that.

I picked up on one comment. The hon. member said that some police officers have spoken off the record. Let me quote from a letter sent by a constituent of mine who encouraged me to read this. It states:

I am a serving Policeman and have been for over 23 years. I am a front line cop whose career has been dedicated to hunting and capturing society's worst. For the past 12 years, I have worked exclusively on a big city (SWAT) Team and have arrested countless rapists, armed robbers, armed drug dealers, violent gang members, and murderers...I know very little about running a Police department, writing traffic tickets, lifting fingerprints, or investigating shop-lifters...I do know about hunting armed violent desperate men—and I do it very well. The long gun registry does ZERO to help me do my job. 99% of front line cops that I know feel the same way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. There may be questions from other hon. members and we have to get to them.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, what we have on the record is from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. That seems to be

—

Hon. Ted Menzies: That's exactly what—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: My friend can choose another moment to enter this debate, if he would like.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police represents its members, as my friend represents the people in his riding in the House of Commons. I suspect that 100% of his constituents do not agree with everything he has uttered. So too is it in every situation and association. Of course, there are going to be dissenting views. No one suggested otherwise.

When we ask the government what it will cost to delete the records, it says it does not know and does not care. As the Minister of Finance's assistant, one would think he would be concerned as someone who manages the country's books. There is a big question mark over what it will cost to eliminate it.

Again, it is all one taxpayer. If the people of Quebec have already paid for this and they want the data, it is their data, and they should have it. The Privacy Commissioner says it is okay. The finance minister should say the same thing and get off his ideological horse and listen to some reason. It is a good piece of logic to follow.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before resuming debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Etobicoke North, The Environment; the hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Flooding in Montérégie.

*Points of Order**[English]*

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased today to speak in favour of law-abiding gun owners.

I am also pleased to speak on behalf of the many Canadian taxpayers who are asking the government for nothing more than to spend tax dollars wisely. I am pleased to support the bill and I know voters back home are watching to ensure I do.

For many years now Canadians who use rifles and shotguns for legitimate reasons have protested against the long-gun registry and increasingly, over the last number of years, taxpayers have joined their protest.

[Translation]

Last May, our government again promised to get rid of the long gun registry once and for all. In the throne speech, we repeated this promise. Now, with this bill, I am proud to say that we are fulfilling that promise.

[English]

First, let us look at the bill in the context of our crime reduction strategy.

The proposed legislation would build on a series of initiatives to make our streets safer that have extended over the last five years. During this time, our government created mandatory minimum prison sentences for serious gun crimes. We have created a new broad-based offence to target drive-by and other intentional shootings. We have also given the provinces and territories more money to enforce the law.

The bill is part of our larger agenda to make our communities and neighbourhoods safer. It is also part of an agenda to spend tax dollars in a way that would respect the priorities of Canadians.

The legislation would end the discrimination against rural Canadians for their use of shotguns and rifles. In doing so, it would eliminate the element of the current gun control system that is both wasteful and ineffective. It would also close a sorry chapter in the decade-long abuse dished out to taxpayers.

Moreover, it would retain the best parts of existing legislation which would allow us to focus our attention against real threats to public safety.

- (1635)

[Translation]

I would like to present some evidence in support of these arguments. However, I would first like to quickly explain why the bill before us is so necessary and is long overdue.

[English]

There is no evidence that the long gun registry keeps front line police officers safer, nor is there evidence to highlight just how the registration has prevented crime or reduced crime in this country.

This is not about having a system that is better than nothing. The registry has been a failure. It has failed law-abiding Canadians, it has failed the public and, importantly, it has failed Canadian taxpayers.

Let me explain. The current law targets duck hunters and farmers by making criminals of law-abiding citizens. Moreover, there is no evidence that it has prevented a crime before the fact. Police chiefs who support the registry have in fact been asked about this, yet have been unable to come up with examples where the registry was used to foil a crime.

For all this, the price has been an astounding \$2 billion. Yet, earlier today, the member for Winnipeg North disputed this figure, saying it was not grounded in reality. This is an outrageous statement.

Let us go over the history very quickly. When the registry was set up, initially, the then Liberal justice minister claimed it would cost Canadian taxpayers \$2 million. Yet the price went up and up and eventually hit \$2 billion. In fact, the Auditor General herself concluded the price at over \$1 billion and then gave up the audit, simply because the paperwork was not there for her to complete it at the time. I do not think there is much of a dispute out there that the registry has cost \$2 billion. For an hon. member to suggest otherwise is not being truthful with Canadian taxpayers.

Thus, in addition to being costly and ineffective, the long gun registry places an unfair burden on law-abiding citizens, people who use rifles and shotguns to protect livestock or provide food for their families, or who might use long guns for sports, such as wild game hunting and target shooting.

[Translation]

Ponds and woodlands in Canada's rural areas are often far from the scene of a crime. Forcing farmers and hunters to register their long guns has not protected Canadians living in urban areas. There is no evidence to support the long gun registry, but there is ample proof that the registry is ineffective.

[English]

Let me take a few moments to break some time-honoured myths.

First, most violent gun crime in Canada does not involve long guns. Between 1975 and 2006, for example, Statistics Canada showed the use of rifles or shotguns in homicides declined by a remarkable 86%. In 2006 alone, three times as many victims were killed with a handgun than with rifles or shotguns. These statistics are no aberration. In 2009, out of the 179 firearm homicides, almost 60% of the crimes were committed with handguns.

Points of Order

Furthermore, where long guns are actually used in violent crimes, the vast majority of the firearms are unregistered. Between 2005 and 2009, for example, police recovered 253 firearms that were used to commit a homicide. Of these, less than one-third, 31%, were actually listed with the Canadian firearms registry. Members opposite may say that one out of three is not bad, but again, let me highlight that these guns were only seized after the crimes were committed, not beforehand.

What all this means is that law-abiding citizens are spending time and money to comply with an ineffective law. At the same time, and this should come as no surprise to anyone in the House, criminals with guns simply ignore the registry. The result is an ineffective system that discriminates for no good reason, except perhaps prejudice against legitimate long gun owners, and it does nothing to stem the tide of illegal firearms crossing the border.

Again, what did the taxpaying public receive for all of this? An astounding bill for \$2 billion. Imagine for a moment if that money had been spent instead on front-line policing, health care, the Canadian Forces, or even going after illegal guns. Members can pick whatever they like, but I cannot think of a program in the last 20 years that similarly failed to deliver on its promise.

With all this in mind, let me recap the provisions of the new bill and how it will address these issues. The most important component of Bill C-19, and the one that has been so long awaited, is the end of the registration for non-restricted firearms. At the same time, the bill will retain the gun licensing system. Licences will still be required to own any type of firearm. An applicant will still need to undergo a background check and pass a firearms safety course. In addition, owners of restricted and prohibited firearms will still need to register these weapons through the RCMP. As such, we would continue controlling the use of restricted and prohibited firearms, such as handguns, which are by far the firearms of choice in the commission of a homicide.

Finally, the bill would address a very important issue that flows from our promises. As members can imagine, the registry has demanded mountains of paperwork from law-abiding citizens. This has long been a source of concern. Canadians are concerned about what will happen to these records. Will they be taken over by another level of government, or by a federal agency?

Earlier I mentioned the voters in New Brunswick Southwest. During the campaign the Conservatives promised to end the long gun registry. When asked what would happen to the data, I replied it would be deleted. After all, the data is the registry. One cannot credibly claim to oppose the registry yet quietly turn around and keep the information. This would make our pledge meaningless. We will instead preserve the privacy of these Canadians and end this failed debacle once and for all. I am pleased to say that the bill requires the elimination of all records related to the registry of non-restricted firearms contained within the Canadian firearms registry.

The proposed legislation is long overdue. It promises to eliminate a wasteful, ineffective long gun registry that penalizes law-abiding citizens and it will do so without weakening gun control. Instead, we can spend the millions we save each year on crime prevention programs that will truly help make our communities safer.

In short, the bill would replace waste and ineffectiveness with efficiency and value for money. For all these reasons, I urge members of the House to join me and countless Canadian taxpayers in supporting this bill.

• (1640)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier I asked one of my own colleagues a question regarding the rhetoric around the fact that the Conservatives do not plan on changing the types of firearms that will be registered.

Unfortunately, firearms that used to be kept track of will no longer be kept track of, firearms such as the Ruger Mini-14, the semi-automatic that was used at École Polytechnique.

I understand that the government intends to end the long gun registry, but in doing so it will end our ability to keep track of these very dangerous weapons. Perhaps my friend across the way could tell me how many hunters in New Brunswick actually use the Ruger Mini-14 to go after ducks.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, I must confess I have no idea how many hunters use that particular weapon when hunting.

I also do not know if the hon. member missed question period earlier today when the Prime Minister responded to this point saying that this bill does not affect the system which determines which firearms are restricted and which are not. That system was set up by the previous government and it is one we continue to follow. We will listen to the experts on that. That component is not part of this bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member amazes me in how he joins the many who try to give the false impression that the firearms registry cost close to \$2 billion, when we know that just is not true. Conservative members believe that if they repeat it enough times it will become true, but that is false information.

The reality is, in terms of the cost and implementation and putting it into place, over a 10-year period, it cost less than \$1 billion. I do not know where the member is getting his numbers. There must be a Conservative calculator at work.

We could talk about the G8. Let us remember that weekend for the leaders which cost three-quarters of a billion dollars, the Conservatives' three day party.

What is it that the member does not quite understand? Does he believe that the Auditor General was misleading the House, that the Auditor General has no credibility? The Auditor General said that the cost was less than \$1 billion over 10 years. Does the member not believe the independent Office of the Auditor General?

• (1645)

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, that is a good point, but it is wrong.

Points of Order

The Auditor General gave up her study because she concluded the paper trail just was not there. She was not able to even—

An hon. member: I will show you the report.

Mr. John Williamson: I was there. I was in the room. That is why newspapers and media outlets across the country trumpet a \$2 billion cost to the registry.

An hon. member: Show us the \$2 billion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, order. The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest has the floor. I do not know whether he has finished. If the hon. member is finished, we will carry on.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Crowfoot.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue along that whole vein of questioning.

I do recall that when Allan Rock began the registry, it was going to cost \$2 million. Soon after Anne McLellan came along and, with great apology, said that the cost was \$80 million but we would have a registry. A few years later, we were into the hundreds of millions.

Certainly CBC did its research. It was the one that reported the \$2 billion cost. It understood that the Auditor General had shut down shop because of the lack of a paper trail, and said that the cost was well out of proportion.

We know that it has cost Canadians way too much. I will give the member an opportunity to comment on that.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, it is like the *Twilight Zone* here. The only members who seem to dispute the cost of the registry at \$2 billion are those in the rump party across. In four years if those members want to explain to Canadian taxpayers that they are going to set up the registry again and it is only going to cost a couple of million dollars, good luck with that, Charlie Brown.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate. I must confess that in the last few weeks leading up to Halloween and after, I feel like I have been participating in some kind of revenge of the Reform Party performance. The Wheat Board is gone and the gun registry is about to go. It is a strange form of triumphalism. My friend from Crowfoot is getting his exercise in applauding.

What Canadians are looking for is public policy that is based on evidence, based on the facts, based on a reasonable assessment of risk. They are looking for public policy that is based on the realities of the situation. They are looking for public policy that is based on a consistent sense that we have as a country, that what we can do to reduce violence and reduce the loss of life is worth doing as long as it is not too intrusive, not unreasonable, and is reasonably fair and equitable.

I am not here to defend all of the expenditures in the registry. I think the costs are way less than the numbers that have been thrown around by the government over a 10 year period. No doubt some of that money could have been spent differently and perhaps more wisely, but that really is not the issue. Those are now sunk costs. We are not going to get the money back. No effort by the Reform Party

on the other side is going to get it back. All the enthusiasm they have for the rights of gun owners is not going to change the situation.

We register our cars. In many cities we register our bicycles. We register our cats and our dogs. We register a great many things. If the government had its way, we would be registering our canoes, if anyone can believe it. There are lots of things that we register.

Why is the one thing that the Conservatives have now developed this intense ideological objection to is the notion that we would ask people to simply register their guns, when we know that guns, in addition to killing ducks, moose and other animals, also kill people? We also know that long guns, in the case of rural suicides for example, are used in suicide, and long guns are used in cases of domestic violence.

We know that last year when responding to calls involving domestic violence, 7,000 registered certificates were pulled after police officers attended on the scene involving domestic violence. When members opposite say that it has never stopped a crime, never reduced a crime, that it is expensive and ineffective, blah, blah, blah, the mantra the Conservatives use to describe it, the fact is it probably has saved some lives. The evidence would suggest that and certainly the evidence of those who are speaking in favour of it would suggest it as well.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

We must consider Canadians' views based on the realities of the situation. Here is what Denis Côté, the president of the *Fédération des policiers et policières municipaux du Québec*, had to say:

Rifles and shotguns make up a substantial proportion of the guns recovered in crime in this country. They are the guns most often used to kill police officers, in domestic violence situations and in suicides, particularly those involving youths.

Mr. Côté was clear: police officers need this registry.

[*English*]

I am a practical guy, so when I talk to the chief of police in the city of Toronto, Vaughan or Markham, the first questions I always ask are: What about all the fuss on the gun registry? Is it useful? Do they need it? They have said, "Yes, we do. It does not save the world. It will not make all the difference. We cannot rely on it entirely. It is an imperfect vehicle but we need it, we use it and we do not want to lose it".

When I was premier, there was a terrible murder in Ontario of a young woman. Her mother, Priscilla de Villiers, became very active as an activist dealing with guns. She said:

The costs of maintaining the registry are modest—less than \$4 million a year—while the risks of eliminating the registry are enormous.

She asked a painful question, and I think members of the House need to listen to it:

Would a gun registry have saved my daughter or so many countless others across this country? We don't know.

She goes on to say:

No law can prevent all tragedies. But a gun control law which includes registration and is rigorously implemented makes it harder—not easier—for dangerous people to get firearms.

Points of Order

We have the head of the police association in Quebec, the chiefs of police across the country, someone like Priscilla de Villiers and the emergency doctors saying the same thing.

Mr. Drummond, from the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, an assistant coroner in Perth, Ontario, just down the highway, said:

So we will now all be unwilling participants in a social experiment that will undoubtedly place Canadian lives at risk. Our question to our government is that relative to the perceived inconvenience....

And that is really what members on the opposite are talking about. It is inconvenient.

He goes on to say:

...what will be the true cost, in direct human suffering, of their ideologically driven and scientifically bankrupt legislation. Canada's emergency physicians remain steadfastly supportive of the principles of the Firearms Act and the gun registry.

How many times have I heard the Minister of Public Safety say that he is speaking for victims? The ombudsman for victims, Sue O'Sullivan, stated categorically that she was in favour of the registry and thought it would save lives.

Just three weeks ago, we had a very moving debate in this House on suicide. If there is a gun around, registered or not, that gun could be used to take one's life. Kids can get access to it. The thing about the registry is that it is supposed to hold gun owners accountable for the use of the gun. To me, this is not an ideological question. It is a purely factual one. We spent the money and it is \$4 million a year.

Are we likely to see some lives lost as a result of greater access to firearms as a result of this repeal? I think anyone looking at it would say probably yes, and that is enough for me.

What really gets me about the government is that it is not enough for it to say that, as a government, it will not use the registry. It is not enough to say that, as a government, it does not think the registry is right. The government not only wants to control its mandate, it wants to control the future. Is will conduct a bonfire so that no one else will ever be able to do such a registry? That is what the minister said, "We want to stop any other government ever".

Is that based on evidence? What if we find that it is useful? What if we find other means of registering? What if we find less intrusive and less inconvenient ways of registering? Is the government saying that it will be opposed to that and stop that as well?

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

As my other colleague mentioned, this government is also saying that it will tell the Province of Quebec that it cannot do that either. We know that Quebec's justice minister, Mr. Fournier, clearly said that Quebec wanted to do so and that it wanted the means to do so.

[*English*]

I ask the government opposite to please abandon its ideological ways and stop pretending it can control the world, control all things and control the future. It should show a little humility in this legislation, bring it down to size and at least reflect the fact that most Canadians on this legislation do not actually agree with the government.

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of questions for leader of the third party. My first question has to do with the mandate that Canadians gave all of us in this House, some of us a stronger mandate than others in terms of the seats.

When we talk about the long gun registry and the view that Canadians across this country, from east to west to the north part of Canada, have had in opposition to this long gun registry, whether they were Conservative, NDP or Liberal, it was overwhelmingly opposed. When will the Liberals look at what Canadians want. Talk about defending ideology.

The other issue I would like the member to comment on is that the long gun registry does nothing to keep guns out of people's hands. He referred to suicide. How can the long gun registry keep any guns out of any individual's hands?

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, I will just relate the fact that I gave the hon. member. Perhaps she did not hear me when I said that, in responding to concerns about domestic violence, what I have been told, and based on reliable information that I have, is that police have pulled at least six thousand or seven thousand certificates. Therefore, they are pulling guns away from people who they think are likely to do harm in a domestic situation.

The member also raises a very interesting question about the nature of our mandate. Roughly 24% of Canadians, who were entitled to vote, voted for the party of the member opposite. I would strongly suggest that she not make the terrible mistake, which many governments have made over the course of history, of over-reading their mandate.

The member and her party should not over-read the mandate that they were given by the Canadian people. That would be a terrible—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

• (1700)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have lived with the issue of the gun registry since it was implemented. We saw the ham-fisted way that it was brought in, which caused a great deal of alienation. I have to say that in my office over the last seven years the issues regarding the registry have dropped to zero. People are upset about the licensing. People are upset about the various processes. The questions we had about the registry have pretty much vanished.

In response to the Conservative member, I sat down with a police officer and told her that I needed an answer on whether she used the registry. She told me that, in a case of domestic violence, they need to know whether there are four or five guns in the house. She said that it was not enough to know that the person is a gun owner. She said that they need to know if there is a fifth gun and that, if they do not know where that fifth gun is, people die. That is what police officers in the city of Timmins told me to my face.

I would ask my honourable colleague why he thinks that the party opposite continually undermines the legitimacy of the polices' point of view on this issue.

Points of Order

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, that will be a significant issue in the months ahead. Unfortunately, we have a government that has become captive to an ideology. When we actually look at it and talk to the police, we will get different opinions. My colleague from Macleod was raising an issue of a police officer in his constituency. I fully respect that from the Minister of State for Finance. There will be different opinions from police officers.

I can only tell members the overwhelming sentiment of the police in the city of Toronto and in most of the cities that I know in Ontario. They are strongly in favour of keeping the registry because they believe it saves lives and that it protects them better. They also believe that in situations, particularly in domestic situations, it is an important source of protection.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, we heard the Conservatives playing up the issue of their majority, even though we know that the vast majority of Canadians did not vote for them. What is even more appalling is that destroying this data will set back our culture of protecting people when it comes to firearms. I wonder if my hon. colleague could talk about the importance of keeping the data so that the other provinces, like Quebec, can create their own registries, unless they too are stuck with a Conservative government.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, in response to the question asked by my colleague from Bourassa, I would like to quote Ms. Stoddart, the Privacy Commissioner. She clearly said that nothing in the federal legislation prevents the federal government from sharing the data with provincial governments. She completely opposes the federal government's position. That is the reality.

All experts, including Sue O'Sullivan, who advocates for victims of crime, and Ms. Stoddart, the Privacy Commissioner, are clearly saying that the government's arguments are completely false.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I count this as an opportunity to again rise in this place to speak to Bill C-19, the ending of the long gun registry.

I will begin by thanking the member for Yorkton—Melville for his many long years of trying to get rid of the long gun registry. I also thank the former member of Parliament for Crowfoot, the one I followed, Mr. Jack Ramsay, who spent a lot of time working on Bill C-68 and also trying to get rid of the long gun registry.

As someone who is not only a farmer but who represents a vibrant and thriving farming community, I feel that it is important to ensure that my constituents' views are heard during the debate. In fact, I am very pleased to be able to chair the committee that will receive the legislation, Bill C-19, study it a bit more and report it, hopefully, back to the House.

I do not know how many of my hon. colleagues have had the pleasure of visiting Crowfoot. It is a riding that I am privileged to represent. My constituents work extremely hard and the folks there make a good, honest living, many of them off the land. My own family has been farming there for generations. In fact, my parents still live on the farm that my grandparents homesteaded over a century ago.

Farmers in Crowfoot raise all manner of crops and livestock. On my own farm, we raise wheat, barley, canola and, before I was elected, we raised cattle and had a cow-calf operation.

However, whether it is cattle or any other livestock, or grain, I can tell members that they can count on one thing being virtually the same in my riding. Every farmer has a long gun. It is one of the tools that they use on their farming operation, whether it is to protect their stock from a coyote, shooting a skunk or shooting gophers so their horses do not break their legs in gopher holes when they are riding through the pasture, long guns are part of everyday life on the farm in Crowfoot.

That is why the long gun registry has been such a thorn in people's sides for many years. For too long, the law-abiding farmers and hunters in my constituency have been made to feel like they have been doing something wrong simply for owning a long gun. They are burdened. They are burdened by the paperwork and by the cost of registry. They are burdened by the fact that many of them question whether they are abiding the very letter of the law. They are burdened by the very suggestion that by owning a shotgun or a rifle, even perhaps a .22, somehow, in the eyes of some politicians, they are made to feel like a criminal.

At the same time, these same law-abiding farmers in my riding open the newspaper every day and are confronted with stories about gun crime in cities across the country. These crimes are being committed by thugs and gang members. After one of those criminal activities takes place, they listen to the Liberals or the NDP talk about the reason that we need the long gun registry. The farmers and the ranchers in my constituency sit back and say, "Listen. I've never broken the law in my life. Why am I being thrown into the same conversation with these thugs and criminals when they talk about the registry and long guns?"

There are crimes being committed with illegal handguns and weapons that have been stolen or smuggled in from across the border but the opposition says that it is all a gun issue.

The good folks of my riding look at these stories and wonder why they are being penalized for crimes committed so far away by people so very different from them. They wonder what this place is doing to target those criminals, because the long gun registry will not stop them.

● (1705)

We have yet to see any evidence that the long gun registry actually prevents gun crime from happening. It does not prevent guns from being used in a violent manner. It does not stop illegal firearms from getting into the hands of criminals. It does not stop the smuggling of them across the border in the trunk of someone's car who is involved in organized crime. All it does is provide a list of all law-abiding hunters, farmers and sports shooters. All it does is provide a list of all those who own firearms. It provides a list how many firearms are in a farmer's farmhouse. It provides a list as to the types and models of firearms that an individual has.

Points of Order

Like my colleagues on this side of the House, I can see there is a fundamental problem with the long gun registry. It targets the wrong people. It targets people like farmers in my riding of Crowfoot. It targets those who have never perpetrated a criminal offence. It targets the farmer who picks up that 22, puts it into his halfton and rides out to the pasture to shoot gophers and rodents, which the member for Vegreville—Wainwright has been unable to kill with strychnine. That is the problem. At the same time, it does nothing to prevent the gun crime that is happening in cities across our country.

That is why I am adding my support to Bill C-19 today. The first speech I ever gave in the House was on Bill C-68 or the long gun registry. It has been 11 years and I still believe this as much or more than I did when I started.

Bill C-19 is straightforward legislation. Through the bill, our government will scrap the long gun registry. The bill would remove the requirement for law-abiding hunters and farmers to register their unrestricted long guns. It would ensure that the data in the registry would be destroyed. I applaud our government for doing that. In doing so, we will be ending over a decade and a half of injustice and of targeting the wrong people on gun crime.

At the same time, Bill C-19 would keep in place the regulations for restricted and prohibited firearms, such as handguns and semi-automatic rifles. These are the firearms that we read about in the media and which are used to perpetrate crime. These are the guns that are getting into the hands of criminals and being used on innocent Canadians. Putting the focus on long guns and law-abiding hunters and farmers who use them is simply misdirected attention that should be elsewhere.

Speaking of resources, I also want to mention something else I hear a lot about in my riding. People in the riding of Crowfoot, as do most in rural Canada, play by the rules. There is a lot of outrage over the sheer waste that we have seen with the long gun registry. The previous Liberal government originally said that the cost would be \$2 million, then a year later it would be \$80 million, then Anne McLellan said \$300 million and then \$700 million. Now it is over \$2 billion. That is too much waste for no reason at all.

The member for Toronto Centre said that if the registry saved only one life, it would be worth it. That \$2 billion could have saved many lives if we had been able to get more resources out on the streets, more police officers on the streets, and if we had been able to crack down on crime like some of our other crime bills have done. That is way too much waste for little or no value.

Our government believes in taking real action to keep Canadians safer, to hold criminals accountable. That is why we have delivered tough on crime legislation to crack down on those who are targeting law-abiding Canadians.

We passed the Tackling Violent Crime Act, which delivered: longer mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes; tougher new rules for bail for serious weapons; mandatory minimum sentences for drive-by shootings; tougher laws to combat organized crime; and mandatory minimum sentences for the use of a firearm in the commission of an offence.

This is the type of crime fighting measures this government is putting before Canadians and before the House. They are crime measures that are focused on the criminal and on criminal activity.

That is what this government is doing. We are committed to keeping its promise. We are committed to living up to those campaign policies and promises that we have made. We realize this long gun registry has been a colossal failure and we will be so pleased when we see the end of it.

• (1710)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech was very passionate. On the gun registry, I want to focus on the destruction of data that we already have. I realize the Conservatives have a majority and will pass this legislation. My appeal to colleagues across the floor is surely we will not be the kind of country that will destroy data that police officers tell us can be of use to them. Also, some provinces say that they want to use that data to have a registry.

For a government that says that it will be heavy on fighting crime, why is it willing to destroy not only one of the tools in a policeman's toolkit, but also one of the tools in the hands of RCMP officer?

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I chair the committee on public safety and national security. I hear the NDP members in that committee when we discuss pardons. One of the things they want more than anything else is to be certain that the information that links a criminal with a criminal record is completely destroyed. What happens if an individual comes to a border crossing and that information is still in some data system and some other country has it? They have asked for that information to be destroyed to help the criminal.

We want the data destroyed so the registry cannot be reused and the old information that is redundant and poor in a way cannot be used to build another boondoggle.

• (1715)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made Thursday, October 27 it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

• (1755)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 48)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Bélangier	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dusseauit
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groghé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Péclet	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rae	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriotte — 123	

Points of Order

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Oda
Opitz	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Poillievre	Preston
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trotter	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 154

Points of Order

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

• (1805)

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

(Division No. 49)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Hyer
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb

Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Oda	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Penashue	Poilievre
Preston	Rafferty
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 156

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Bélangier	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dusseau
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Grogulé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)

Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Péclet	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rae	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriote — 123	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

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

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ASBESTOS

The House resumed from October 31 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion.

• (1815)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 50)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Bélangier	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault	Eastar
Eyking	Foote
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain

Giguère
Goodale
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nantel
Pacetti
Péclet
Quach
Rafferty
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scarpaleggia
Sgro
Sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Valeriote— 123

Business of Supply

Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Hyer
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Pilon
Rae
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Savoie
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Turmel

NAYS

Members

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Baird
Bellavance
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fantino
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hoback
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Leaf
Lefieux
Lizon

Private Members' Business

Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunnery	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Oda
Opitz	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Plamondon	Poilevre
Preston	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 152

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP) moved that Bill C-290, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sports betting), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-290 is a very short bill; basically one paragraph and a little over one line. If it were to ultimately become law, it would delete one section of the Criminal Code. The overall theme of the bill is to deal with a problem that we have in the country with regard to gaming, specifically being able to bet on sporting events.

As it is now, paragraph 207(4)(b) of the Criminal Code prohibits the gaming on a single sports event in Canada. The effect of that does have some very serious consequences and I will go into that in more detail. However, by way of introduction, the primary purpose behind this bill is twofold: first, to create greater employment opportunities in the gaming industry in Canada and in all the provinces who pick this up; and second, at least as important, it is a blow against organized crime that has captured, controls and is making huge profits from it, as ascertained by all the reports.

It is important to set this in a historical context. If we go back and study this closely, the laws on gaming in this country go back to the 1600s in England. I forget who the king was at the time, but it was in

a period of time when he was very worried about his military gambling excessively. Laws were then passed in Westminster to prohibit all gambling in the country.

Over the centuries we have eroded that position. In fact, to follow the history in my riding, my predecessor, Shaughnessy Cohen, moved a similar amendment to the Criminal Code that allowed for betting at roulette tables, which was prohibited at the time. It allowed for roulette tables to come into casinos in the country. Following in that tradition, this is one of those periods of time when we should have our criminal law catch up with the reality of what is happening in our society.

In 1985 the federal government effectively gave up the administration of gaming operations to the provinces. It was one of those periods of time when there was some trade-offs going on with regard to revenue sources. This was a mechanism for the federal government to create new revenue sources for the provinces. Since that time a number of provinces have moved into gaming in a variety of ways: lotteries, casinos, additional betting being allowed at racetracks, and we can go down the list.

The role that gaming plays in provincial revenues has become quite significant. It is now literally billions of dollars across the country. In some cases, provinces have declined to take on those operations, but in other cases, provinces have taken them on wholeheartedly and have expanded their revenue base as a result.

• (1820)

To the point where we are with this particular expansion, the provinces would determine how they would implement this. From talking to various provincial administrations, there is a variety of suggestions if the bill becomes law, but ultimately the provision of gaming on single sporting events would vary across the country.

For instance, one province is considering allowing the casinos operated by first nations to take this type of gaming under their control. Obviously, the province would still administer it, but the bulk of the revenue would go to the casinos operated by first nations.

One province in particular is thinking of a very broad expansion using the British model. The gaming would take place in a variety of settings in that province.

In my home province of Ontario, as I understand it at this point, the primary thrust would be to allow the large commercial casinos, the casinos operated for charitable purposes that are smaller operations and potentially the racetracks, to do the administration. It would not expand it into the broader society as some of the other provinces are considering.

Whatever the model is, it is determined by the individual provinces, and some provinces may not take it up at all.

I would note at this point that both the Province of Ontario and the Province of British Columbia are on record with letters to the federal justice minister asking him to proceed with this type of amendment. The government up to this point has not proceeded that way, although I am expecting, and I may be overly optimistic because this is a private member's bill, substantial support from the government side as well as from our colleagues in the Liberal Party.

I will turn now to the real thrust behind this and I will deal with the criminal element first. There is no question that this type of gaming is illegal in Canada as well as in all of the United States, except for Nevada, where it is in fact legal. The casinos in Nevada do allow for single event betting. However, all of the other states and Canada prohibit it.

The end result of that prohibition has been that organized crime has moved into this field in a very big way. We have estimates from the U.S. of revenues coming in to organized crime at a minimum of \$80 billion a year. I will repeat that, because when I say that, most people think I said “million”, but I said “billion”. At the low end it is \$80 billion, with the estimate running to \$380 billion to \$400 billion at the high end. That is in the United States. With some of the information we have from our security services in Canada, the estimate is that a minimum of \$10 billion is wagered in Canada each year, and it may be as high as \$40 billion. That is the type of revenue we are talking about.

All of that money is going into the hands of organized crime. We do not believe that any substantive amount is going into other people's hands. It is controlled by the large criminal organizations, most of which are based in the U.S., but some of which are based here in Canada.

Some of this betting is also taking place offshore through the Internet. A number of those Internet sites are located in the Caribbean, where there is no ability for either the Canadian government or the U.S. government to thwart that type of activity over the Internet.

It is a situation where this activity is going on. Certainly there are people who argue that we are just expanding the ability of people to become problem gamblers. I do not believe that to be the case at all. This gambling is going on right now, all within the control of organized crime as best we can determine.

We are talking about taking it out of the hands of those in organized crime, a strong way to reduce the revenue they are generating, and move it into the hands, in our case, of provincial governments. Let them use the revenue for the purposes of operating their government.

The second reason I have been an advocate for this legislation is the potential it has for creating employment. Obviously it would create a substantial amount of revenue for provinces, but in addition, we ultimately would see some of that as jobs are created at the federal level.

• (1825)

As recently as September, the Canadian Gaming Association, which has a number of gaming groups around the country as part of its association, did an economic analysis of what would occur if this were allowed to become law in Canada and we could have this type of gaming going on. It is of particular interest to me because the city of Windsor is the host of one of the largest casinos in the country; I think it is the largest, but there may be one or two of the same size.

The estimate was that the number of additional jobs or the securing of existing jobs in the Windsor casino, just that one casino, would be somewhere between 150 to 250. Some jobs would be saved because there have been some layoffs recently because of

Private Members' Business

competition that we are getting from the U.S. side and just because of the general economic downturn that we have had recently, but we would secure those jobs or create new jobs.

The association did a similar analysis for the casinos, interestingly, in Niagara Falls, the home riding of the Minister of Justice, and came up with a similar number of jobs being secured or jobs that would be created. That is true across a number of other areas in Ontario and elsewhere in the country.

There is a very strong reason from that vantage point, not only the revenue that this would create for the provinces but, more specifically, the jobs it would create at the lower level.

I have spoken to some of my colleagues who have charity casinos in their ridings. They feel that a similar impact would occur. A number of these are situated along the U.S.-Canada border, and we draw a lot of trade from the U.S. side. For instance, in the casino in Windsor, the estimates continue to run that somewhere between 75% and 80% of the revenue comes from the U.S. side of the border. That is true even for some of the charity casinos. It is certainly true for Niagara.

The important part is that allowing for this type of gaming would attract tourist trade into Canada. People would come over. I always tell the story that I happened to be in Las Vegas when one of the national basketball tournaments was on. I remember sitting in Caesars, actually on the floor with all these students who were watching the game, knowing that they had placed bets on the game. That is the kind of tourism we would be attracting on our side of the border.

Let me indicate the support that we have had. I have already indicated that both the Province of Ontario and the Province of British Columbia have sought this amendment from the federal government. A number of municipalities, including the City of Niagara Falls and the City of Windsor, the Canadian Gaming Association, the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority, the Atlantic Lottery Corporation, the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation, and the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation have all indicated their support. They have an appreciation from working in this field and this part of the economy of what the consequences would be and are quite supportive that this would go ahead.

I will summarize the reasons for supporting this bill. It would be a blow against organized crime and a potential job creator for the economy. As well, it would move additional revenue into the hands of the provinces. It is a very simple amendment. It does not require a great deal of understanding of what we are doing or why. I would encourage all members of the House to support this bill.

• (1830)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like thank the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh for sponsoring this bill. I can advise him that I will be voting in favour of his bill.

Private Members' Business

I am sure the member has researched the history of this in drafting his bill. Would he advise me as to why an exception was made in the Criminal Code for a race or a fight or a single sports event? I am curious as to what the historical significance is or why the distinction was made for single events.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, I do not know the history of how it came about initially. I know why it has been preserved and that has been the fear, mostly coming from the U.S., that betting on a single sporting event would open up the possibility of professional players being bribed to throw a game.

When amendments like this have been proposed in a number of states in the U.S., that is always the kickback. It comes from professional sports organizations on the U.S. side. They push back out of the fear that somehow this will increase the likelihood of professional basketball, football or hockey players being more prone to being bribed to throw games. Those events can be bet on now. One just has to bet on three or five of them in a parlay type of arrangement.

If that kind of corruption is going to go on, it is as likely to go on under the existing provisions of the U.S. laws as it would be if we made this amendment.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question relates to our first nations communities.

I know it was referenced in the member's speech in a number of senses, but section 81 of the Indian Act allows for a band council to make bylaws in relation to the control of gaming and competitions. I was interested to hear my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh indicate the support of one Indian gaming commission. There has also been an indication that one provincial gaming commission is going to work with first nations.

Could the member expand on the consultations and feedback and what impact there will be on first nations communities vis-à-vis their involvement in gaming?

• (1835)

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, I want to be clear on this. Even though that provision is in the Indian Act, first nations still require this amendment. Although they have the jurisdiction to pass bylaws, that does not override the Criminal Code. The Criminal Code has to be amended first before they can invoke that part of the legislation under the Indian Act.

To be more specific with regard to the member's question, the role first nations play will vary across the country. There is friction between some first nations gaming operations and the provinces in some cases. How this would be implemented, how extensively they would be involved, would end up being a negotiated arrangement between the particular province and the first nation that is operating a gaming operation in that province.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his work on this file.

It is important to note that we are not condoning more gambling with this legislation. We are looking at making sure that we bring single game betting onside. It is something we currently cannot do, which many of us who have been involved in this did not know.

What could we do with the resources at the provincial and federal levels once this legislation is brought into effect?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, what the revenue would be used for would be determined by the province in each particular case. In some cases, the gaming revenue is going into a province's general revenue fund. In other cases, as in my home province, the charity casinos receive it and it is distributed. The first nations at Rama get a substantial part of it. First nations will benefit from their part of this operation.

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to support Bill C-290. This is a private member's bill which the member for Windsor—Tecumseh introduced in the House on September 28, 2011.

Bill C-290 would authorize a province or a territory to conduct single sport betting within the province or territory if it so chooses.

In order to better comprehend how this bill would modify the structure of the current provisions relating to gambling, I will briefly go through the history of the past and current Canadian laws in this area.

As members will notice, the gambling provisions in the Criminal Code are somewhat difficult to read and to understand. Nevertheless, a careful reading of these provisions shows that their basic structure is to prohibit all forms of gambling unless a particular form of gambling is specifically permitted by the Criminal Code.

[*Translation*]

Parliament has permitted such exceptions to the gambling offences as private bets that are made between individuals who are not in the business of betting. In Canada, we also have pari-mutuel betting on horse races, where the betting is conducted by a race association. Then there are lottery schemes that are conducted by a province or territory and the slightly narrower range of lottery schemes that are conducted by a licensee of a province or territory, such as a charitable organization.

Parliament has also authorized certain lottery schemes that are conducted on international cruise ships while in Canadian waters, if certain conditions are met.

[*English*]

Parliament included gambling offences when it enacted the first Criminal Code in Canada in 1892. There were some exceptions to the offences, primarily for bets made at a horse race. The provisions were expanded in the 1920s to include the exception for parimutuel betting on a horse race. That made it possible to put all the money bet on a horse race into a pool and the winners would share in the pool based upon how much they had bet on a horse that finished in a spot that entitled bettors on that horse to share the winnings.

A most significant change to the gambling provisions occurred in 1969 when the provinces, territories and the federal government were each authorized to conduct a range of lottery schemes. This followed closely on the heels of the reintroduction of legal lottery ticket operations in some U.S. states.

In 1985, Parliament withdrew the Criminal Code authorizations that existed from 1969 for the federal government to conduct a lottery scheme and it went through the authorizations that existed from 1983 for the federal government to conduct a pool betting operation. This left the field of lottery schemes exclusively to the operation by provincial and territorial governments and their licensees.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

It was in 1998 that Parliament authorized international cruise ships to continue operating their lottery schemes when they enter Canadian waters and up until the first port of call, if certain conditions are met. That change was made at the request of provinces in order to encourage the international cruise ships to sail to Canadian ports.

Some provinces have offered a particular kind of sports betting as a form of lottery scheme to their residents. The structure of this betting requires the bettor to select a number of games and predict the correct outcome for those games.

[*English*]

Bill C-290 would make it possible for a province or territory to conduct a lottery scheme that involves betting on single games. If Bill C-290 passes, I do not know if any bettors would still make bets on the outcomes of multiple games, but I would imagine that the vast majority of bettors would prefer to bet on a single game and its outcome.

Of course, it would be up to each province and territory to decide if it wanted to offer single sports betting, but that will be their decision.

Under section 207 of the Criminal Code, a province may operate a lottery scheme on or through a computer, but it cannot licence others to do so because single sport betting would, by necessity, require computer operation. Single event sport betting is something that the provinces and territories would conduct themselves because they may not licence others to conduct a lottery scheme that is conducted on or through a computer.

[*Translation*]

I want to mention that a province or territory could choose to locate a single sport event betting operation in a casino or at a race track, for example, and it could share the profits from the betting however it sees fit. Again, these would be matters for provincial or territorial decision-making. I am assuming that decisions would be made by a province or territory with the values and desires of their residents in mind. That includes keeping an eye open to the measures that are needed to prevent problem gambling.

[*English*]

I can appreciate that not everyone thinks that gambling is for them. However, it is my view that allowing single sport betting, even through a provincial lottery scheme, is far more appropriate than what is currently happening in this country. Betting with an illegal bookmaker is driving money to organized crime.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-290 is a response that would give the provinces and territories the choice as to whether they wish to join countries such as England where there is legalized single event betting on sports. I emphasize that the provinces and territories would be able to make that decision based on the particular circumstances within their jurisdiction.

The provinces and territories are best placed to determine public acceptance for single event betting and to implement measures for responsible betting. They have decades of experience in conducting a broad range of lottery schemes, from lottery tickets, to casinos with slots, table games and to betting on the outcomes of multiple sports events.

For those reasons, I support private member's Bill C-290 and I will be voting in favour of it.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the Liberal Party for allowing me to go a little sooner so I can get to another meeting tonight. I appreciate the camaraderie in the House, which does happen in this place.

It is important to recognize the work of the member for Windsor—Tecumseh on Bill C-290. I commend him for his work. He has had this bill in the past and has brought it forth again. It is very timely.

When we think about private members' issues that we can bring forward as members, this is a very serious one because it is about the economy right now. It would provide some extra revenue for the gaming industry. Also, I do not think we should underestimate the issues with regard to organized crime. We are concerned about people with gambling addictions, but we know that sports wagering is taking place under the table, not just in Canada but across the globe. What is really important is that this would take away some of the financing from organized crime.

It is very appropriate that the member for Windsor—Tecumseh is doing this from a local perspective, because we have a casino in Windsor. Sports betting happens in the United States where people take advantage of it. People go to Las Vegas and other areas where they can bet. This would be a benefit because we have a lot of competition from the U.S. with the high Canadian dollar right now. Also, the U.S. is bringing in a series of measures to tax Canadians, and there are other border issues.

We have seen a diminishing tourism industry. The HST being implemented had an affect upon tourism in Canada. Dropping the GST rebate was another blow to the tourism industry. Therefore, it is very important for us to see this as an advantage for us to compete against the United States in the gaming market right now. The U.S. has made efforts and has pushed to bring in single sports betting venues but it has not done so yet, except in Nevada.

From a global perspective, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh is doing his job as a justice critic for the official opposition by bringing forth a solution and a way to tackle crime with regard to the revenue stream that we see happening in the underground economy. I applaud the member on both those fronts. I think that is important to recognize.

Private Members' Business

Sports betting should not be underestimated. We do not even know the full value of what is going on in terms of the estimates of organized crime and sports betting happening illegally. There have been some studies done and they vary wildly. Some say it is anywhere from \$80 billion to \$380 billion annually. That is a big spread, but it is a lot of money that is actually out there in the system. Even if we could take a fraction of that by moving on this, it would be important, not just with regard to the employment aspect but also for ensuring that organized crime does not have an extra revenue stream in its repertoire. That is something I think Canadians want to see happen.

It is important to get the bill to committee and, hopefully, through committee really quickly. The sooner we get to this the better.

Coming from the perspective of a border town like ours, Windsor and Essex county, we have seen first-hand the difficulty with the economy. I note that in the supporters of the bill there is the CAW, the city of Niagara Falls, the city of Windsor, the Canadian Gaming Association, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission and several other provincial associations. One of the critical components of the bill is the way it would play itself out. Each province would have an opportunity to make its own decision. I am hoping that we will see the province of Ontario quickly grab onto this.

With reference to the challenges in a border community right now, this would be a shot in the arm for an area that has suffered quite a loss of jobs. I was on city council at the time when we tried to diversify the Windsor and Essex county area a number of years ago by moving into tourism. We were successful with a lot of different venues that we put forth but then there were other challenges. After 9/11, we saw the border change quite significantly. We now have more difficulty getting people to and from the border. This affects Americans coming into Canada as well as Canadians going out. We have extra taxes to pay and so forth. There were a few more problems for us.

We hear stories from the Americans that they feel hassled crossing the border back and forth, even by their own people. What has happened is that, with the artificially high dollar from the high petroleum industry exports that we are doing right now, we have lost. We have gone from basically 60¢ on the dollar when we brought in our tourism strategy, to parity or above. That is a significant shift over a small period of time.

• (1845)

We may think that eight to ten years is not that long, but it is when one is investing in a small business or in the tourism industry. This would provide a shot in the arm to attract visitors to come over.

One of the merits of the bill that is important to notice is that it acknowledges that the world is changing. When we brought the casino into Windsor, it did not have competition across the river but now it does. A series of Detroit casinos have now opened up. There are three casinos in particular, and there are also the aboriginal casinos that are in other parts of Michigan. We have a series of competition that we cannot deny.

In fact, if we walk down to the end of my street and look across the Detroit River, which is two miles, we can see one of the casinos there. Right across from the Windsor casino, Caesars, is the

Greektown casino, and not far from there is MGM Grand. Therefore, we have a significant reality to deal with in terms of competition. Offering a different product would be an essential component of protecting those jobs and once again seeing more visitors come over from the United States.

One of the benefits of living in a border society is that we often traverse back and forth for different products and for entertainment. For example, I go to the Detroit Lions game. I regularly cross the border to the United States to see its sports entertainment. Canadian dollars go over there on a regular basis. Many Windsorites go over to see the Tigers, the Pistons, the Lions, all the different organizations that provide sports entertainment.

We would then be reciprocating a different product on this side. The bill by the member for Windsor—Tecumseh is very timely as we have been watching Ohio enter into this market as well. Ohio has now opened up a couple of casinos, which has taken away the destination component that was often important. We had a lot of coaches that would come in with people from Ohio who saw the better service they would get at the Windsor casino. Caesars' product is very good. The brand is terrific. It is the only one outside of the United States. The corporation has made an investment to bring in live entertainment and other initiatives to keep the economy going and keep the jobs at the Windsor casino. People from Ohio would get on a bus and did not mind taking the extra step to come over the border to get a better product.

Now, however, we are competing to get the people out of Ohio because they are staying there. They do not necessarily say, "Let's go to the casino. Are we going to Detroit or Windsor? Which one should we select" and then get on a tour package or drive down and cross over. It was less of a big deal because they were making that effort coming from Ohio anyway. The bill would provide an opportunity for that element to shine as well.

We have some unusual opportunities that will happen over the next number of years that will enhance transportation from Chicago to Detroit. We cannot underestimate that market. There are tens of millions of people who live in that catchment area. Right now, they are moving forward on higher speed rail improvements. I look forward in terms of this bill giving us a marketing advantage to track from Chicago a number of different people who would visit our city. That is a market that we have not entered into much but it is something that we need. It is only five hours away.

The member for Windsor—Tecumseh should be praised for this initiative because he is using his time in the House of Commons to try to make better economic decisions and social justice by tackling the organized crime element. I commend him on that. We need more of that in this place.

• (1850)

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would echo the comments of my colleague who just spoke. I congratulate the hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition for his thoughtful consideration of the matter, a matter that is important to Canadians.

We will be voting in support of this bill at second reading in order to send it to a parliamentary committee for further review and examination and to hear from witnesses.

Private Members' Business

Gambling in Canada is a properly-regulated activity governed by the Criminal Code that sets out the parameters for gaming. As has been previously stated in debate, up until 1985 the federal government was directly involved in running lotteries. It then devolved that through a provincial-federal agreement and the ensuing revenues went to the provinces. As a result, while the Canadian government maintains its legislative responsibility for criminal law, it is the responsibility of the provinces to licence and regulate all legal forms of gaming so long as the activities remain within the scope of the Criminal Code.

Betting on sports currently falls under paragraph 207(4)(b), which is the paragraph that is proposed to be amended by this private member's bill. It defines "lottery schemes" and explicitly prohibits provinces from allowing wagering on "any race or fight, single sports event or athletic contest".

In reaction to this prohibition, provinces, through their provincial gaming corporations, have long offered parlayed-based wagering on sporting events. This allows for individuals to bet on the outcomes of three or more sporting events. We think of PRO-LINE, which is popular with millions of Canadians and allows them to wager on sports throughout the world, whether it is the National Hockey League, the National Basketball Association or the one that is most popular in my house, the English premier football league.

These types of wagers allow individuals to choose the outcome of three or more sporting events, the odds of which are published in advance by the provincial gaming corporation. In order to win, a person must correctly predict all of the outcomes. For millions of Canadians, this is a fun activity. It allows them to be more involved in the sport they are watching or following.

Regulated gaming provides a legitimate and sanctioned activity free from tampering and has the effect of generating substantial revenues for governments.

Bill C-290 would delete the section from the Criminal Code that currently prohibits betting on a single sport and would allow provinces the ability to create a regulated environment consistent with their current gaming activities. For individuals, the change would allow them to bet on one match as opposed to three or more so long as the odds were predetermined and published.

It has been suggested by my colleague, the House Leader of the Official Opposition, that several provinces have a desire to see this specific change to the Criminal Code. As an example, two of them, Ontario and British Columbia, have taken the additional step of writing the federal justice minister.

Why support this change? There is a lot of illegal gambling in Canada. Some of it relates to betting on single sporting events. Millions of dollars are spent illegally on single sport gambling and much of this activity is conducted by organized crime and bookies. It is underground and it unregulated.

Technology is also playing a role in the new gaming reality. Members will not be surprised to know that the criminal world adapts very quickly to new technology, using the Internet to exploit and make money from illegal gaming. Illegal sports wagering is all too common throughout North America.

The full extent of this illegal gambling is unknown, but some reports suggest it is massive. I will cite a couple of them.

The United States National Gambling Impact Study Commission has stated that estimates of the scope of illegal sports betting in the United States range anywhere from \$80 billion to \$380 billion annually. We have heard these figures from the member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

● (1855)

In Canada, a review of the annual reports of the Criminal Intelligence Service Canada suggests that "bookmaking exists in every region of Canada". According to the report, gaming profits revenue to organized crime groups to fund their illegal and legal activities. It says:

While the size of the illegal bookmaking market in Canada is unknown, it is also thought to be significant. If the range of illegal sports betting in the United States is accurate, it would not be unreasonable to assume that the range in Canada is between \$10.0 billion and \$40.0 billion.

These figures underline the seriousness of this issue and the need for action.

Regulated gaming provides a legitimate way for Canadians to gamble and, to be frank, it is a significant source of revenue for governments. Illegal gambling means lost tax revenue that provinces might use to provide more and better service to their citizens.

One sensible measure to combat illegal gambling is to change the Criminal Code to allow the provinces to regulate betting on single sporting events. It would have the effect of legalizing what is a common practice and deprive organized crime of another revenue stream.

While single-game betting is currently illegal in most jurisdictions, it is a booming business in other parts of the world. Online gaming is regulated and legal in many countries and they are reaping the benefit from increased tax revenues and profits. The largest component of this online betting includes sports and horse racing.

I believe this bill helps get the discussion going by pointing to a significant reality in Canada; that is to say there are legal and illegal forms of gaming and we need to address the latter.

I realize, as well, that some Canadians and perhaps members here as well, have, for various reasons, an issue with gambling under any circumstances. For them, there are some reasonable concerns. Like many activities, there are dangers involved in gambling. We all know, or have heard stories, of people who have an addiction to gambling with consequences that are serious and profound. A gambling addiction can overtake one's life. It can result in job loss, a broken family and financial ruin and we need to be sensitive to those concerns. However, for the vast majority of Canadians gambling is a fun and harmless activity.

Private Members' Business

In my home province of Prince Edward Island, for example, one of the highlights of the summer is our famous Gold Cup and Saucer. The Gold Cup and Saucer is one of the premier harness-race events in the world and one that has attracted thousands of tourists over the years. It is a great spectator sport, a great tourist attraction and a source of economic activity that is important to the local economy of Charlottetown. Tom Mullally and his team at the Red Shores Racetrack & Casino have done a wonderful job in preserving and enhancing this great island tradition.

I will be supporting this bill at second reading and hope that all members will do the same. It is important that we might have the opportunity to call witnesses at the committee to better understand the issues related to gaming in Canada. We may also have the chance to hear from people who may have concerns about this legislation and it is important that we hear from all sides of this issue before we proceed. I am sure the mover of the bill would agree with this as well.

● (1900)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak in favour of private member's Bill C-290, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sports betting).

At present, the Criminal Code only authorizes a province or territory to conduct betting on the outcome of multiple sporting events. That form of betting is sometimes called "parlay betting". By way of contrast, a province or territory may not currently conduct betting on the outcome of a single game.

Private member's Bill C-290, as sponsored by the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh, would modernize section 207 of the Criminal Code, which is the "lottery scheme" provision by authorizing a province or a territory to conduct, within its jurisdiction, betting on a single sporting event, such as a single hockey game.

Bill C-290 would leave it to each province or territory to decide whether or not to offer single sporting events betting and if so, whether to operate the betting by telephone, Internet and/or in land-based locations. Such provincial-territorial decision-making is precisely what now exists in section 207 of the Criminal Code with respect to provincial and territorial choices for other forms of lottery schemes, such as VLTs, video lottery terminals, and slot machines.

Under the lottery scheme provisions of the Criminal Code, only a provincial or territorial government may conduct a lottery scheme that is operated on or through a computer, slot machine or video device. A province or territory may not license others to do so.

Some provinces currently place video lottery terminals and slot machines in a land-based location, such as a casino or a race track, or in a lounge or pub. Similarly, under Bill C-290, a province or territory could place a single sport event betting operation in a casino, a race track or any other location that it might deem appropriate.

Currently under section 207 of the Criminal Code, a province or territory may also conduct a "lottery scheme" in co-operation with another province. We know that provinces and territories using this authorization have worked together to offer such national ticket

lottery schemes, such as Lotto 6/49. Similar inter-jurisdictional co-operation would be possible under the amendments proposed in Bill C-290 for single event sports betting. A province or territory could choose to work co-operatively with any other province or territory.

Similarly, it would be up to the provinces or territories to ensure that they consult with the sport organizations to ensure the integrity of the game on which the single sport event betting is being offered. Similarly, it would be up to the provinces and territories to consult with problem gambling service providers to ensure that single sport event betters gamble responsibly.

I have been talking today about single sport event betting that would be conducted by a province or territory as a lottery scheme under the authority of section 207 of the Criminal Code of Canada. It is worth remembering that section 204 of the Criminal Code already authorizes any bet, so long as it is done between persons who are not in any way engaged in the business of betting. In Canada we are free to spend our money on a bet if we so choose, so long as we are betting with another private individual who is not in any way engaged in the business of betting.

Historically Parliament has not been concerned with betting between private individuals, but rather with illegal bookmakers who entice betters with credit and who charge exorbitant rates of interest on any debt. Parliament should maintain that concern for illegal bookmaking which has links to organized crime, as the member for Windsor—Tecumseh has correctly pointed out.

If a province or territory chooses to operate a lottery scheme under the amendment proposed in Bill C-290, there would be a benefit to betters who wish to bet on a single game, but have difficulty finding another person to take the opposite side of the proposed bet. Also, in provinces and territories that choose to operate single sport event betting, betters who currently bet with illegal bookmakers would have the opportunity to bet with a legal operation conducted by their province or territory. The profits from legal single sport event betting would support provincial programs and services rather than being channeled by illegal bookmakers into organized crime.

Provinces and territories have had many years' experience in conducting a broad range of lottery schemes. It makes sense that the range of lottery schemes that they are authorized to conduct be expanded to include single sport event betting.

● (1905)

Finally, it also makes a lot of sense to keep Canadian gambling dollars within a province or territory rather than sending the money to illegal bookmakers in Canada or elsewhere, or to offshore Internet betting sites that poach Canadian bettors regardless of whether those offshore sites are legal or illegal in the host country. Bill C-290 would be a step in correcting this and a step in the right direction.

For all those reasons, I support Bill C-290 and will be voting in favour of it.

Provinces and territories have the experience to offer this form of betting if that is what their the electorate wants. On the other hand, if a province or territory chooses not to go there, that again is the province's decision to make, and it falls within the province's constitutional jurisdiction.

Adjournment Proceedings

I support this private member's bill. I see it as responding to a growing demand for the modernization of the Criminal Code “lottery scheme” provision. It reflects our circumstances in the 21st century.

For those reasons, I will be supporting the bill. I congratulate the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for bringing this important matter forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh has a right of reply.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, in my original speech I got all my points in. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, last Monday the parliamentary secretary rightly said, “Canadians can be proud of the contributions that Environment Canada scientists make to independent studies and policy development and to protecting Canada's environment”, and yes, we all can. Environment Canada has Nobel Prize co-recipients and scientists who make important discoveries, such as Dr. David Tarasick, who co-discovered the Arctic ozone hole.

What she did not say is that over 700 Environment Canada positions are in jeopardy, including those of Nobel Prize co-recipients in the climate change and impacts adaptation group, and that of Dr. Tarasick in ozone research.

What she also did not say is that the government is ending some programs, threatening science and reducing our ability to form evidence-based policy, and we know more cuts are coming.

In Atlantic Canada we have just learned that 18 positions will be lost, with 43 affected. Programs being reduced or lost include studies of the impact of antibiotic use in farmed salmon, the impact of waste from fish hatcheries on local waterways, the biological consequences of acid rain and the impact of mercury on loons. Her claim that the government is strongly committed to protecting Canada's natural heritage simply does not hold up.

The parliamentary secretary also said Environment Canada is more than committed to ensuring the continued engagement of stakeholders in international regulatory policy processes. However, scientists are asking the government to develop a plan to ensure the integrity of the ozone monitoring program and to commission a report to assess the adequacy of Canadian contributions to the global observing system for climate in support of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Will the parliamentary secretary commit to fulfilling the request, retracting the letters to ozone staff and continuing to support the ozone program?

Canadians should be highly critical of the Conservatives' record on the environment, particularly regarding climate change. For example, at the UN climate talks, we keep winning Fossil Awards for being followers instead of leaders on the world stage.

Canadians should also be skeptical of the parliamentary secretary's claim that the government will continue to both effectively and efficiently monitor ozone. We know the Ozonesonde program is in jeopardy and that there is no commitment to monitor ozone in the lower atmosphere. Moreover, the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre is just one person, and that person has been informed that his or her job is in danger.

Last week the parliamentary secretary brought up the point that Canada banned ozone-depleting chemicals. Yes, this is true, but it was the government back in 1987.

What we need now is for her government to step up to the plate, have the courage of decision-makers 20 years ago and take action to stop the cuts, to protect the scientists and to ensure that world-class science continues.

Let me be very clear. International scientists are calling for cuts to be reversed, and thousands and thousands of people across Canada want the cuts overturned. Will the government now do the right thing and reverse its irresponsible cuts to ozone research so that Canada can honour its international commitments?

● (1910)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Madam Speaker, my Liberal colleague is hardly in a position to criticize our government's plan as it was the previous Liberal government that signed grand international accords but took little action. In contrast, our government has a tangible plan to address climate change that balances the need to protect our environment and economic growth.

Adjournment Proceedings

With regard to ozone, to repeat what has been said several times in this House, Environment Canada will not close the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre. Measuring ozone in the upper atmosphere, otherwise known as stratospheric ozone, is an international obligation required under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer under the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer.

When it comes to atmospheric ozone science, Canada has been and continues to be a global leader. Since 1966, ozone has been measured from Resolute Bay in Canada. This represents the longest record of ozone observation in the Arctic anywhere in the world. Many of the ozone measurements used globally today were pioneered by Canadians. Changing the way ozone is monitored in Canada does not mean that Canada's ability to monitor ozone would be degraded.

Currently, Environment Canada uses two methods to measure ozone: the Brewer network and the ozonesonde network.

However, just because something is the status quo does not mean it is the best way of doing things. Science and technology improves over time; this is a fact.

The current plan for ozone monitoring is that Environment Canada is to integrate and optimize the two existing ozone networks. This will allow Environment Canada to deliver sound science, while also remaining within budget.

Ozone networking data from Canada are shared with the world via the World Meteorological Organization. In addition, Canada has maintained the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre for many years. The WMO supplies the data to other weather centres and agencies in Europe and the U.S.

To be clear, Environment Canada is not closing the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre.

Integrating ozone monitoring networks and changing the management of the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre will mean reducing the number of employees dedicated to ozone science. However, Environment Canada staff would remain dedicated to both these activities and to achieving quality results.

To reiterate, Environment Canada will continue to measure ozone.

• (1915)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, last week the parliamentary secretary asked me to support the government's plan to continue to monitor ozone. It is not a plan; it is cuts.

As a scientist, I simply cannot support cuts that will reduce Canada's ability to monitor the environment and respond to problems, reduce our country's ability to explore the links between ozone and climate change, and threaten international science and Canada's reputation. This is why I brought leading independent atmospheric scientists to Parliament Hill to speak at a non-partisan event to members of Parliament and senators this morning. They spoke about Canada's unique position to lead ozone research, our leadership in this area, and our responsibility to undertake research.

Finally, in light of the science presented today, I implore the government to do the right thing and reverse the cuts.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, Environment Canada will keep up its monitoring of ozone in the upper atmosphere. Environment Canada will not close the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre. Canada will continue to be a world leader in ozone monitoring, as it has been since 1966.

[Translation]

FLOODING IN MONTRÉGIE

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is an important moment for me today as I rise in this House to speak about a vital issue that affects coastal residents of the Gaspé, the Lower St. Lawrence and Montérégie.

I will give a bit of background. Last December, almost one year ago, high tides pounded the Gaspé and the Lower St. Lawrence, causing all kinds of damage to the shoreline, land and homes. Shortly after that, in the spring, Montérégie was also hit by flooding caused mainly by overflowing rivers. This reminder is important because we have asked the government many times to help the victims in the Gaspé and Montérégie.

The federal government's current response program provides assistance to the provincial government to help disaster victims. The current program is a joint program that we are very familiar with. Over and above the more than \$8 million Quebec will initially have to pay, the federal government will contribute dollar for dollar to provide the province with additional assistance to offset the cost of the damage.

However, it is not this program that we are talking about today, but a new program. All last spring, the government was being pressured to bring back the former shoreline erosion program, which fell under the responsibility of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. There was a program that allowed shoreline communities, whether they were along the St. Lawrence River or other large rivers in our beautiful land, to obtain help in the case of natural disasters or situations requiring them to adapt to the reality of the changing shoreline.

Last spring, we asked the government a number of times to bring back such a program. A new program is now needed with new adaptation measures, outside the existing program, that will allow the federal government to help provinces that experience weather-related damage.

Adjournment Proceedings

On June 6, when he passed through Montérégie, the Prime Minister announced that there would be new mitigation measures to reduce the impact of weather-related shoreline damage.

My questions for the government are very clear. What exactly are these measures? Who exactly will these measures help? What criteria will victims or communities have to meet in order to receive funding from the government to adapt their shorelines? How much will the government invest in this new program or these new measures and, more specifically, when will these new measures come into effect?

Last week, the Government of Quebec hastened to double its efforts to help flood victims receive help more quickly. Now, I believe that it is time that the federal government lived up to flood victims' expectations by confirming and implementing such measures.

• (1920)

[*English*]

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to address the member's question regarding the Prime Minister's commitment to provide financial assistance to provinces and territories for flooding mitigation efforts in 2011, including those in the flood-affected regions of Montérégie and Gaspé in Quebec.

The year 2011 has been an exceptional year for flooding across the country. Provinces and territories conducted an assessment of patterns of precipitation, rainfall and snowfall, temperature, snowmelt, and soil moisture conditions which provided indications for significant flooding in 2011. Some provinces made proactive, permanent mitigation investments to eliminate or reduce the impact and risks of hazards through measures taken before 2011 flooding.

To support these long-term investments, the Prime Minister committed the Government of Canada to cost share with the provinces on a 50-50 basis for permanent mitigation measures taken specifically for this year's flooding that are not otherwise eligible under the federal disaster financial assistance arrangements.

Recognizing the increasing impact of flooding on Canadian communities, the Prime Minister also indicated that the Government of Canada is prepared to discuss a mitigation strategy that would apply to all provinces and territories and which would enhance infrastructure to better withstand future floods.

Pursuant to these commitments, officials at Public Safety Canada are working closely with their provincial and territorial counterparts to develop two key programs with a focus on mitigation: a one-time contribution program to reimburse affected provinces and territories for permanent flood mitigation measures taken specifically for 2011 flooding and a long-term mitigation strategy.

The Government of Canada recognizes the value and contribution of proactive mitigation measures taken before an emergency or disaster occurs to eliminate or reduce the impacts and risks of hazards in order to protect lives, property, and the environment, and to reduce economic disruption. Not only does mitigation serve to reduce the impact of disasters on the lives of Canadians but it is also a cost-effective approach for reducing the economic burden of

disaster response and recovery costs on all orders of government, businesses, communities, families and individuals.

Though issues related to flood management are primarily within the purview of the provinces and territories, the Government of Canada is committed to providing assistance to flood-affected regions following natural disasters through federal mechanisms, including the disaster financial assistance arrangements and other forms of aid. For example, earlier this year following a request for assistance from the Province of Quebec for significant flooding in the Montérégie region, the federal government responded quickly by deploying the Canadian armed forces to provide assistance to the affected communities.

One of the highest priorities for the government is the safety and security of its citizens. We will continue to work with our federal, provincial and territorial partners, including the Province of Quebec, to protect Canadians from a range of natural disasters and to make our communities more resilient.

• (1925)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for her answer.

I believe the government is willing to work with the provinces that have been affected by these disasters, both through the existing program, which allows the federal government to help and compensate for damage sustained by the provinces, and also through new adaptation measures that would allow communities to adapt to changing weather conditions. In light of such evidence, we can no longer deny climate change around the world, but in Quebec and Canada in particular.

In light of the government's openness to establishing new adaptation measures, what is this government's game plan to raise awareness of these measures much more quickly, given how urgent it is for communities to adapt to the new realities?

[*English*]

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Madam Speaker, let me assure my colleague that the Government of Canada remains committed to working as quickly as possible with the provinces and territories and other partners to ensure a safe and resilient Canada and specifically in regard to flooding. My own riding in Manitoba has experienced severe flooding. We are working very closely and as quickly as we can.

It is important to note that during the flood season, Canada's armed forces were actively engaged in the regions severely affected by flooding and assisted in evacuations as well as preserving infrastructure, transportation routes and residential areas. That happened both in Quebec and Manitoba.

The government is working to provide financial assistance to affected provinces through the disaster financial assistance arrangements, which is the mechanism through which the government provides financial assistance to provincial and territorial governments for response and recovery from natural disasters.

Adjournment Proceedings

As I mentioned previously, the government will share on a 50-50 basis the cost of any permanent flood mitigation measures taken for this year's flooding that are not eligible under the disaster financial assistance arrangements.

Our government—

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. member.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:27 p.m.)

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