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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 26, 2012

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 26, 2012

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of our national anthem, led today by the hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

CABLE PUBLIC AFFAIRS CHANNEL

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate CPAC, the Cable Public Affairs Channel, on its 20th anniversary.

Twenty years ago, several cable broadcasters joined forces to continue providing Quebecers and Canadians with full coverage of the debates in the House of Commons in both French and English. I was a member of the House back then, and I remember how skeptical people were about the usefulness of such a station and the project's chances for success, but those skeptics were proven wrong.

While continuing to provide this essential service, the station has expanded its offerings and now broadcasts a wide range of political events and public affairs that are happening in all of the regions and that have to do with important issues that matter to people.

Congratulations to the founders, hosts, technical and support staff, and all those who, directly or indirectly, have helped keep people informed about the workings of our democracy and the men and women who play a role in it. Long live CPAC, and once again, congratulations on 20 years of broadcasting.

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[English]

LIFESAVING AWARD

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that all miners at Rocanville have been rescued and are now safe and sound and at home.

Also, I rise today to recognize one of my constituents, Mr. Darcy Gunnlaugson, who will be presented with a Lifesaving Award by the Canadian Electricity Association. The CEA Lifesaving Award is presented to those who have assisted in a lifesaving effort within the context of their everyday work.

Using the first aid training that he had learned from his employer, Darcy applied the Heimlich manoeuvre for the first time in his life and was able to dislodge an obstruction and prevent his daughter from choking. Darcy's experience highlights the importance of first aid training both in the workplace and in everyday life. As member of Parliament for Souris—Moose Mountain, I would like to commend Darcy for his quick thinking and action in a high-stress situation.

I congratulate him on being named a recipient of the CEA Lifesaving Award, and say, "Way to go, Darcy. We all stand behind you".

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, recently in downtown Toronto there have been 12 sexual assaults. That is 12 sexual assaults on women, and the women of Toronto are fighting back. One woman, Anni, gathered hundreds of people at Christie Pits to reclaim our space. Deb from Toronto Rape Crisis Centre brought together thousands of women to take back the night. Stephanie, Heather and Kasia organized "take back the block" parties to raise awareness. I want to thank all their efforts.

Together we have a message. A woman has the power to say no to sexual violence. Women have the power to dress and walk in any way we want and anywhere we want. A woman has the power to decide when and if she will have a child and does not need state control. A woman has the power to live without fear in her heart.

All of us must look out for each other and work together to stop men's violence against women. Let us start now.

*Statements by Members***ENDOWMENT INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure to hear the extraordinarily talented musicians of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra at its opening concert last Friday. I was delighted to hear the executive director commend the federal government for its endowment incentive program, which encourages private sector donors to leverage funding from the federal government for the orchestra's endowment fund.

I was also pleased to hear that the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra is making such good use of this generous program, which is a component of the Canada cultural investment fund. This useful program not only encourages private donations to endowment funds for arts groups but allows those organizations to better maintain their long-term financial stability.

As chair of the all party arts caucus, I want to ensure that all arts organizations all across Canada are aware and take full advantage of this excellent program opportunity.

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POLICE AND PEACE OFFICERS' NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, September 30 will be the Canadian police and peace officers' 35th annual memorial service on Parliament Hill. I take this opportunity to congratulate, thank and celebrate all those who wear the uniform in the daily service of protecting the safety and security of our communities.

[Translation]

This memorial day came about following the tragic death of a new Ottawa Police Service recruit. Officer David Kirkwood was killed in the line of duty on July 11, 1977. A year later, on September 24, 1978, a monument was erected on Parliament Hill to commemorate his life and his work for the city.

[English]

On September 24, 1988, the Government of Canada officially proclaimed the last Sunday in September as Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day.

I ask that all my colleagues join me in saluting the members of the RCMP and our provincial and municipal police forces across this country, whose dedicated public service ensures orderly communities where we can truly live in harmony and enjoy the freedoms and rights we hold dear.

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FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to honour a hero, someone who has championed a cause for almost 20 years and someone who wants to target real criminals. He submitted hundreds of access to information requests to pinpoint government waste. This person is a whistleblower who exposed billions of taxpayer dollars gone awry.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to the member of Parliament for Yorkton—Melville. Albertans are going to celebrate this Oktoberfest

at Calgary's premier shooting centre, the Shooting Edge. On Friday, October 12, much bratwurst and sauerkraut will be consumed in his honour.

I invite all members to come celebrate the man who tracked, hunted down and took out the long gun registry, our very own Conservative member of Parliament for Yorkton—Melville.

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● (1410)

CABLE PUBLIC AFFAIRS CHANNEL

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise to congratulate CPAC, the Cable Public Affairs Channel, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary today.

[Translation]

Twenty years ago, several Canadian broadcasters joined forces to provide Canadians with easy, direct access to the parliamentary debates of their democratically elected representatives.

[English]

From this humble start, CPAC has continued to expand its coverage and gives Canadians unprecedented access to a diversity of political and public affairs events. CPAC has also brought Canadians closer to what happens in their Parliament.

[Translation]

For the past 20 years, all CPAC staff have been doing a wonderful job providing a unique and much-appreciated perspective that is helping more and more Canadians become interested in politics.

[English]

On behalf of the official opposition and the New Democratic Party, I offer my sincere congratulations. May its next 20 years be as productive, informative and as invaluable to our democracy as the last two decades.

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CABLE PUBLIC AFFAIRS CHANNEL

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am also very pleased to congratulate the Cable Public Affairs Channel, CPAC, as it celebrates 20 years of providing Canadians gavel-to-gavel coverage of parliamentary proceedings in this House, as well as all televised House and Senate committees.

It has been 20 years since a group of Canadian cable companies took over the operation of the channel and expanded it to become the country's only bilingual, commercial-free public affairs television station. The partnership between CPAC and the House ensures Canadians from coast to coast to coast have live and complete access to their representatives in the House.

On behalf of the Conservative caucus and all parliamentarians, I would like to congratulate everyone at CPAC, and express our best wishes for their continued success and for their 20th anniversary.

*Statements by Members***HUMAN RIGHTS**

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are deeply disappointed by the decision of the Ho Chi Minh City People's Court to convict and sentence to lengthy prison terms Mr. Nguyen Van Hai, Ms. Ta Phong Tan and Mr. Phan Thanh Hai for peacefully exercising their democratic rights. All three are prominent bloggers and are members of the Free Journalists Club.

Canada urges the Vietnamese authorities to respect all of its international obligations, including freedom of expression, and to release these three bloggers and the many others imprisoned for peacefully expressing their opinions.

Yesterday at the United Nations, I made an announcement of \$500,000 to the Lifeline initiative to assist NGO activities that promote freedom of expression, among others, as this is one of the objectives of our foreign policy.

* * *

[Translation]

FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, September 25, was a symbolic day for Franco-Ontarians and a day of celebration for many people in Nickel Belt.

This year marked the 37th anniversary of Franco-Ontarian Day. We are also celebrating the 37th anniversary of the creation of our beautiful white and green flag. This flag remains an important symbol of solidarity among our communities.

The origins of Franco-Ontarians date back over 400 years and, at present, 44 municipalities remain officially bilingual in Ontario.

It is important to remember that, while the flag unites us, it is action that defines us. We are the agents of and driving force behind social, cultural, artistic and economic development.

Thus, I wish to celebrate the vibrant and exceptional francophone population of Nickel Belt, and indeed all Franco-Ontarians.

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[English]

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 10th anniversary of Cybertip.ca, a website operated by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection.

On behalf of the government, I offer congratulations and personally thank it for all the work it is doing to protect children from online sexual exploitation. We are proud to have the centre as a partner in ensuring the ongoing safety of our children.

We have brought forward a number of measures to better protect children, such as increased penalties for sexual offences against children and two new offences aimed at conduct that could facilitate or enable a sexual offence against a child. We have also passed legislation to make the reporting of child pornography mandatory for Internet service providers.

Cybertip.ca has been designated as a service responsible for receiving such tips. We must offer programs and services to both

children and parents to reduce and prevent child victimization. That is exactly what the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and Cybertip.ca have done.

I congratulate the centre on its 10 years of Cybertip.ca.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

WOMEN'S SUPPORT CENTRE IN STE-JULIE

Mrs. Sana Hassainia (Verchères—Les Patriotes, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to draw attention to the 20th anniversary of an organization in my riding. Entre Ailes Ste-Julie was established on October 7, 1992, and has been helping women in the region ever since. Its goal is to help women improve their living conditions. It also organizes meetings to help women feel less isolated.

A non-profit since 1998, Entre Ailes Ste-Julie is an independent organization with its own organizational structure. It has 181 members and more than 80 volunteers. It offers three programs per year, training, workshops, courses, speakers, special events, group outings and much more. Volunteers regularly conduct home visits for women with reduced mobility who experience isolation. Support sessions for the bereaved are also available.

On November 3, a special evening will be held at the Maurice-Savaria hall in Sainte-Julie to celebrate the organization's 20th anniversary. Congratulations to the vice-president, Christiane Pelletier, and the executive director, Marie-Chantal Paquette, and all the volunteers. Your contributions and efforts on behalf of women in the region are invaluable.

* * *

NATIONAL FOREST WEEK

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is National Forest Week, a time when all Canadians are encouraged to learn more about the importance of this renewable resource.

Our forestry industry is a major contributor to the economy, particularly in rural areas, where it provides direct employment for 234,000 workers. Our government is helping forestry companies to expand their market and invest in research and environmental improvements.

[English]

The crash of the United States housing market shows us that we must diversify markets. That is why our government is helping companies tap emerging markets. And our strategy is working, showing dramatic results. Since 2007, there has been a 1,000% increase of Canadian softwood lumber exports to Asia. In British Columbia, the equivalent of 20 mills is now producing forest products for the Chinese market alone.

Our government will continue to support Canada's forestry sector to create jobs and economic growth right across the country.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CABLE PUBLIC AFFAIRS CHANEL

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the entire team at CPAC, the Cable Public Affairs Channel, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary today.

[English]

Twenty years ago CPAC was created to provide all Canadians with access to their democratic process. Informing the public about Parliament, politics and public affairs through programming focused exclusively on the people and the processes that shape our great country has been the main objective of CPAC.

[Translation]

It has always been CPAC's mission to go beyond the headlines to provide Canadians with full coverage of what is happening in Canada's Parliament and an analysis of the positions of the various parties in order to allow Canadians to fully participate through weekly interactive programs.

[English]

On the occasion of its 20th anniversary and on behalf of the Liberal Party, I congratulate CPAC.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to share with all members of the House comments made recently by the NDP member for Burnaby—New Westminster. Just weeks ago the NDP member said, “the federal government seems to completely reject the policy of cap-and-trade, which allows us to put a price on carbon”.

Our Conservative government completely rejects the NDP policy of putting a price on carbon. The NDP policy is a job-killing carbon tax that would increase the price of everything, including gas, groceries and electricity.

What is really dangerous about the comments from the NDP member is, despite the fact that our natural resource sector would suffer catastrophic job losses with an NDP carbon tax, the NDP member advancing a carbon tax is the NDP's natural resource critic.

The NDP might not care about the 1.6 million Canadian jobs dependent on the resource sector, but we do. That is why we will continue to fight the NDP's job-killing carbon tax.

* * *

● (1420)

PORK INDUSTRY

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a looming crisis in Canada's pork industry. Drought conditions across North America have increased the price of feed. Some of Canada's largest pork producers have filed for creditor protection.

It is estimated that pork prices in the summer of 2013 will be the highest in Canadian history. However, all the government can do is

hem and haw about plans it may or may not have to deal with this crisis.

When the NDP raised the issue of drought conditions last week, the government was entirely dismissive. It did not see a crisis. It did not see a need for action.

However, in a letter to the NDP leader from the Alberta Pork board of directors it says, “Without significant support...the pig industry in Canada will most definitely begin to collapse within the next few months”.

We, in the NDP, stand with producers and, like them, demand action from the government, not just words, to address this devastating crisis. When will it act?

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as winter approaches and temperatures begin to drop, Canadians in my riding up north and across the country are thankful that they are not subject to the NDP's massive carbon tax.

The NDP's carbon tax scheme would drastically raise the price of electricity, causing families to use more of their hard-earned money to heat their homes. The NDP's regressive \$21 billion carbon tax is reckless and unfair to hard-working families that simply want to keep their homes warm and comfortable during the fall and winter months.

I am proud that our government has continually lowered taxes for Canadian families and has created important initiatives that help Canadians save money, like the home renovation tax credit, which saves Canadians tax dollars and decreases their home heating costs.

The NDP should be ashamed of its sneaky carbon tax, call it a carbon budget, that would take money directly from the pockets of hard-working Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with 300,000 more Canadians unemployed today than before the crash of 2008, a record \$50 billion trade deficit and the highest household debt in Canadian history, the Conservatives' solution is to send the Minister of Finance to lecture business leaders, but Canadian business leaders are voting with their wallets and holding off on new investment. They are sitting on over half a trillion dollars in dead money.

When will the Conservatives stop lecturing Canadians on the economy and start listening?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, we all know there are great challenges in the world economy that affect our country.

Oral Questions

With that said, Canada's economic performance continues to be far superior to that of most other developed countries. The number of jobs is up by more than three-quarters of a million, investment is up, exports are up and growth is up.

We will ensure that we resist any ideas for carbon taxes, for tax increases, for shutting down industries and for blocking trade. This government is committed to the growth and prosperity of our country.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our priority is jobs. The Conservatives' priority is making up stuff about the NDP.

[*Translation*]

Since 2006, the Conservatives have wasted \$55 billion in gifts to big corporations through tax cuts. The Prime Minister swore that this would create jobs, but what is really happening is that Canadian businesses are letting half a billion dollars sit in their coffers.

Since even his Minister of Finance has admitted that these corporate tax cuts have not had the expected results in terms of investments in job creation, what will the Prime Minister do to get all of this money circulating?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again today, an international organization said that Canada was one of the best places in the world to invest in. That is why investments are going up, job creation is going up and economic growth is going up.

[*English*]

Obviously, there is more to do, but we are moving in the right direction.

I do not have to make up anything about the NDP. I have here, in black and white, its platform from the last election. There is a little table at the end, which says, "Cap and Trade Revenues By Year", \$21 billion, "Be a part of it".

• (1425)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after seven years of Conservative corporate tax cuts, the Conservatives have nothing better to offer than more lectures to Canadian businesses. However, despite their finger wagging, Canadian businesses are sitting on over half a trillion dollars in dead money. Even the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters has said that Conservative corporate tax cuts have had "little observable impact on new investment in Canada".

What will it take for the Conservative government to finally change course?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under our government, our record of growth continues to be superior. Taxes are down not just for business, they are down for individuals, they are down for families. In every case, the NDP voted against those tax cuts. We have voted for them.

The manufacturing sector can speak for itself. Let me read what the president of Patriot Forge, a manufacturing company in southwestern Ontario, just said, "The higher taxes proposed by the NDP will make it much more difficult for our Canadian plants to compete".

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, because of the Conservatives' improvised and uncertain economic framework, oil company executives are asking the government to put in place clear rules regarding ownership of the oil sands, which the Conservatives are not doing. Instead, they are holding discussions behind closed doors about Nexen.

Will the Conservatives listen to the concerns of Canadians and business owners instead of ignoring them?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government will always act in the best interests of the country. As we have said, this transaction will be examined very carefully. I must also remind my colleague that the Investment Canada Act contains provisions to protect national interests. These are provisions the NDP voted against.

She spoke about company executives. I can say one thing: company executives can rest assured that we will not leave them out in the cold by bringing in taxes that are too high and by opposing any form of trade and investment in the country.

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when oil industry executives have more concern about Canadian sovereignty than the government, we know there is a problem.

People are concerned about opening the floodgates to other foreign governments buying up our natural resources. No matter how much the Conservatives furrow their brows and point to their shoelaces, if they refuse to act we will have the slow hollowing out and the nationalization of our resource sector by other governments.

What is it going to take to get one of those ministers up on their feet, listening to the real concerns of Canadians?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we speak with the business community and entrepreneurs, the ones who created the wealth in this country, they tell us that they are very afraid of the proposed NDP carbon tax, \$21 billion of revenue. They are afraid of the NDP's approach of anti-trade, anti-business, and anti-investment.

I am speaking about Canada. I am proud to be Canadian. Everything we have done on this side of the House is in the best interests of Canada.

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GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is Right to Know Week and we are supposed to be focusing on the benefits of transparency and accountability. Do members remember those words?

Oral Questions

However, the Conservative government is marking it by hiding cuts from the Parliamentary Budget Officer and by hiding the true cost of the F-35. Now the Prime Minister has a secret cabinet committee on cuts that is chaired by the minister of gazebos himself.

When will Canadians get access to the information that they have paid for with their tax dollars?

• (1430)

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure what the hon. member is referring to. I am chairing a new cabinet committee which was announced in a news release by the Prime Minister's Office. That is not exactly the way to be secretive, I would assure the hon. member.

We believe that the budget officer should concentrate his time and his energy examining how Parliament and the Government of Canada spends its money, not fretting about money we have not spent. That is the fundamental difference.

We will be accountable to Parliament on all of those expenditures.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Let me try it again, Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Vancouver—Quadra.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, the minister obviously did not understand the first time.

[Translation]

This is Right to Know Week, which is about promoting transparency. However, the government has chosen to mark the occasion by being secretive. It is refusing to provide information about cuts to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and it is refusing to disclose the true cost of the F-35.

When will Canadians have access to the information that, as taxpayers, they are entitled to receive?

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 said, we will continue to report to Parliament in the usual ways, including the estimates, quarterly financial reports and the review of public accounts. We are keeping our promise to be accountable to the House.

[English]

We continue to have that kind of accountability. It is the normal course to report on these things and we will continue to do so.

We are spending money to benefit the people of Canada and we will continue to do so.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, talking about being kept in the dark, Canadians are being kept in the dark about the Nexen deal. We need to know exactly what is being considered in the proposed deal and what percentage of foreign

ownership the government will allow in Canada's resource sector. Canadians want to know.

Why has the Prime Minister not been answering these questions? Why is the Prime Minister refusing to be transparent with taxpayers?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we will always act in the best interests of the country. The Liberal Party, Mr. Canada, never turned any single deal in the country.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Christian Paradis: Once again, I am passionate here, Mr. Speaker, because these guys are trying to say that we are not working in the interests of the country. However, I can say that this transaction will be scrutinized very closely.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development made a comment that demonstrated this government's contempt for people who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

She said, "...when they do work, they will always be better off than when they do not."

The minister does not care that people lose 50% of their benefits if they compensate for their loss of earnings by working one or two days a week. The minister believes that, as long as they are earning something, it is not her problem.

Is this all the consideration that the minister has for unemployed workers?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to help people find work when they lose their jobs and that is what we will do. However, we will also encourage them and give them money if they work while they are receiving benefits.

For example, Tracy, who receives \$264 a week in employment insurance benefits, works three days a week and earns \$12 an hour. Before, she would have been able to keep \$106, but now she can keep \$144.

We are here to help unemployed workers.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is just as we thought. The Conservatives do not have any consideration for unemployed workers.

The chair of the regional conference of elected officials in my region, the Gaspé, said that 80% of that region's economy depends on seasonal workers.

What does the minister's reform involve? Is she suggesting that fishers from Rivière-au-Renard fish all year? There are not enough fish in the sea to fish that long.

She is attacking restaurant owners in Percé. Should they stay open all year too? There are no tourists in Percé in the winter.

Oral Questions

She is attacking forestry workers in Chandler. These people will have no choice but to leave the area.

Why are the Conservatives going after the Gaspé?

• (1435)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely false. If seasonal workers cannot find another job, then employment insurance will be there for them, as it always has been. However, if they can find work, they will be better off than if they were not working.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe what we are hearing.

It is not just the Gaspé that is being attacked.

Alain Cormier and his wife, two of my constituents who work at the Village Historique Acadien, learned that a pilot project that added five weeks of unemployment in their area ended on September 15, 2012. This means that neither he nor his wife will have a damned penny to pay their bills in the spring of 2013.

And they are not alone. All seasonal workers will suffer the same fate.

Why will the minister not extend the pilot project? In the spring, they will not have a damned penny to their names to pay their bills.

The Speaker: I heard a word that I believe is unacceptable. I hope the hon. member will clarify this after question period.

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this pilot project that gave people five extra weeks was introduced during the global recession. We knew that it would be even harder for people to find other jobs, and that is why we extended benefits, but things are better now. Those programs were meant to be only temporary.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is a scenario faced by a new mother in my riding. I spoke with her last night. Doreen is a French teacher, who has been on maternity benefits since January. Two weeks ago, she was offered a part-time job of four hours a week teaching French from her computer at her home. However, with the new EI changes, she will lose 50¢ on the dollar. By the time taxes are removed from her paycheque, she will not have enough to pay for diapers.

Why is the government punishing new mothers?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, right across this great country of ours we have, despite high unemployment rates in some areas, shortages of skills and labour.

In many cases, the EI system has discouraged people from working. The changes we are making are going to help most Canadians be better off when they work than when they do not. That is the objective because we need all the skills and talent at work that we can possibly get.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not seem to understand, so we will explain what does not work.

The mayor of Saint-Siméon, in Charlevoix, wrote to the Prime Minister. He spoke about “a serious threat to the survival of our small rural communities”, communities that depend on seasonal industries. How did the minister respond to this mayor, who is afraid that 40% of his residents will move out of the region? With indifference.

Will the minister finally listen to reason and reconsider, or is she washing her hands of the matter to the detriment of our regions?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member obviously does not understand what we are doing. We are encouraging people to work. It was our government that introduced support for workers to help them seek and find work and prepare for interviews. We want to help people work. We want to encourage them to work, not prevent them from working. Unfortunately, the NDP voted against all our initiatives.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is clear, the minister either does not get it or just does not care.

Let us take the \$5 billion TV and film industry which employs about 130,000 people on a project-by-project basis. In between projects, workers are out there hustling for their next gig. That is how this works. To force them from their field is to rip the muscle right out of the sector.

Why is the government weakening the Canadian arts and culture industries just at the time when they are becoming world leaders?

• (1440)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no government has done more to support our arts and film community, thanks to the very fine work of our Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages.

We need to support those individuals in their search. We are going to help them look for those jobs in their field. We are going to help them look for them—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. There is far too much cross-conversation.

The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, I was having problems hearing myself over that noise.

We have to support these workers in their efforts to find a new job within their skill range and region. That is important. We are not asking people to move across the country, but we are supporting them in their search, in their job, in their specifications, and in their region. It is too bad the NDP did not support us in that.

Oral Questions

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, frankly, British Columbians are also concerned about these cuts to EI, especially how they will affect young people. Youth unemployment is about 15% and thousands of young folks have simply given up hope and stopped looking for work.

Today there are 300,000 more Canadians unemployed than before the recession. How can further cuts to EI help young people find jobs?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, there were over 770,000 net new jobs created in this country since the recession. We are very proud of that. Part of that success comes from our investments in our Canada youth employment strategy, things like Canada summer jobs and the extra \$50 million that was in this year's budget to help young people who are facing barriers to employment get the experience they need to get the skills and jobs today and tomorrow.

We are helping those young people. Unfortunately, once again, big surprise, the NDP voted against those efforts to help our young people.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many of these 700,000 jobs are good, well-paying jobs that people can support themselves with.

Year after year B.C. fruit growers in my region depend on seasonal workers to help them bring in the harvest. With the new EI changes, these seasonal workers may not be there come harvest time. Fruit growers are already facing competition from low-cost fruit imports being dumped on our market. Now they are facing a destabilized work pool. Why did the minister not consult with fruit growers in my region before she made these changes?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, coming from the part of Canada that I do, Haldimand—Norfolk, it is the home of the farms program. We recognize how important agricultural workers are to our economy. That is why the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and I have met with leaders in the agricultural sector who depend on foreign workers. We have assured them that there will be no changes to this program. We recognize their need.

We also recognize the need to give Canadians first chance at these jobs. When Canadians cannot fill those jobs, then obviously our farmers are going to be able to rely on us to keep these programs in place and help them get the labour they need for their farm.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister simply is not listening. What all of these examples show is that the Conservatives are not being honest with Canadians. Their own numbers contradict them.

The government originally budgeted \$130 million for one year under the old working while on claim pilot project. Now it is budgeting \$74 million over two years for the next version. Less money over a longer time means that fewer people will benefit.

Will the minister now stand up and explain why the government is punishing unemployed, part-time and low-wage Canadians?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the 770,000 net new

jobs that have been created. Over 90% of those are very high quality, high paying jobs. We are proud of our contributions to that.

Our priority for this country is job creation and the growth of our economy. To do that, we need to have all the talents and skills of Canadians at work.

When there are jobs available within the skill range in a given area and there are people on EI with those skills, we will help connect those workers with those jobs. That is better for the employers, but it is also certainly better for the workers and their families.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are struggling with the proposed foreign buyout of Nexen because the rules are not clear and the process is a secret black box.

After the potash controversy two years ago, the Conservatives promised better definitions and a more open procedure. They have wasted all that time and now a flood of takeovers is on the horizon.

With respect to the Nexen deal, does net benefit include some Canadian directors added to the board of CNOOC, and the board of Nexen retaining a majority of Canadian directors? Is that assured?

• (1445)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not true at all.

First, I must remind my colleague that the Investment Canada Act process has a provision to protect national security. That is an improvement we put in place. We have improved transparency. We set up a dispute resolution clause.

I must remind my colleague that the Liberal Party never turned down a single deal in the past.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister has said that Canadians concerned about the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The hon. member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Speaker, the minister insists that Canadians concerned about the government's EI reforms just need to get an "education" in them before they speak out.

Oral Questions

Irene from my riding got her education. She lost her job as a full-time nurses' assistant and was picking up part-time shifts and receiving EI while looking for full-time work. Irene got her education in EI reform and her textbook was her pay stub, now \$65 a week less for working on claim than under the previous program. Is this encouraging anything?

Does the minister understand that she is the one who needs to go back to school and work some—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are working to help people who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own with new jobs, with our increase in job alerts and making sure that employers who want to bring in temporary foreign workers are connected with the unemployment system so they can access Canadians and give them first shot at the jobs.

Let us look at Bill. Under the new system, he could be making \$330 a week on EI and three shifts of work at \$15 an hour. Under the old system he would have kept \$132. Under the new system, he will be able to keep \$225.

That is better. He is working and his family is better.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ridiculous answers like the minister's will only get her so far. Sooner or later, the truth will come out.

Under the previous system, people could keep 40% or \$75. From now on, the government will take away 50% the minute a claimant earns money. That means people will be losing more. The minister is encouraging people to work under the table.

Is this incompetence or ignorance? She does not know her portfolio. Can someone help her?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I said exactly the same thing. I provided the same numbers, and they called me a liar. Under the previous system, people could work about a day to earn \$75, and every dollar they earned after that was clawed back by employment insurance. Now, a claimant who works more than one day gets to keep 50% of his earnings. That is much better.

* * *

[*English*]

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen this all before. When the minister fails to put the concerns of consumers first, Canadians suffer. Concerns are growing over the ever-expanding beef recall. The XL Foods Lakeside plant has been decertified from exporting meat to the U.S. and is cutting shifts. Yet all we get from the minister are contradictory and unclear statements. The government's regulatory changes and funding cuts are undermining faith in the CFIA and may have caused a delay in the recall.

When will the government start providing answers to Canadian families?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian consumers are always the first priority when it comes to food safety. We have hired an additional 700 new food inspectors since 2006, including 170 dedicated to the meat lines. There have been no cuts at all. The opposition voted against every one of these additions.

Of course, I will continue to hold the food safety officials' feet to the fire to ensure that the agency responds as quickly and efficiently as possible.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is nonsense.

Yesterday, when speaking about the E. coli outbreak at the Alberta plant, the Minister of Agriculture said that there had been no illnesses in this case. So there is no problem. However, investigations are under way in five to eight cases. When this kind of problem comes up, consumers become distrustful and the entire industry pays the price. The United States raised the problem three days before Canada.

Why does the minister say he is satisfied with the situation?

• (1450)

[*English*]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said in my first response, food safety for consumers is a priority for this government. Canadian food safety officials began containing the contaminated products on September 4, the day the outbreak was identified.

We have introduced important new legislation to help CFIA respond to food safety situations like this as swiftly as possible. The NDP members have already said they will be voting against the safe food for Canadians act. That is shameful.

* * *

PENSIONS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again the Conservatives have workers in their sights. The government wants to reform pensions and potentially create a two-tier workforce by forcing new hires to work longer than their colleagues. Besides forcing new workers into longer careers, this insidious decision could eventually lead to pay and benefits cuts.

Will the Conservatives come clean? Does the minister intend to raise the retirement age of Canada's public service to 67? Yes or no?

Oral Questions

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question is about bringing public sector pensions in line with the private sector, to ensure that the plans in the public sector are sustainable in the long term. That is our goal and now the NDP and the big union bosses do not like that. They like to complain about that. However, the fact of the matter is this is the standard in the private sector. We think it is being fair and reasonable to public sector employees while being accountable to the taxpayers of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, finally, we have the beginning of an answer, but it is still far from being enough. A lot of information is missing. Financial security at retirement is important to Canadians and we need more information.

First, Canadians were surprised that the government was increasing the age of eligibility for old age security, and now we learn that the Conservatives want to reform Canada's public service pension plan. Who is next on the ministers' list?

Can the government tell us when it will officially increase the retirement age for workers?

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, with the 2012 economic action plan, there will be changes to the public service, but at the same time, we will have a system that is more sustainable over the long term. Yes, it is another challenge, but the NDP and their union buddies want the status quo. That is not in the best interests of Canadian taxpayers.

[*English*]

It is not for the benefit of taxpayers. We will be in favour of change.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP supports a carbon tax that would kill jobs and increase the price of almost everything, but our Conservative government is focused on economic growth, job creation and long-term prosperity.

Can the minister tell the House about changes to our diplomatic ties in the Asia-Pacific region?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, I had the pleasure of announcing that Guy Saint-Jacques will be our new ambassador to China.

I know Mr. Saint-Jacques personally, and I have full confidence that he will be able to maintain strong ties between our two countries. He is fluent in Mandarin, and this will be his fourth posting to China.

I know that all members of Parliament will join me in wishing Guy and his family the best as they return to China.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are going to do more than dismantle 50 years of environmental protection with their mammoth budget bill. They have a cavalier attitude. They did not even take the time to consult Canadians about the colossal changes they are making to environmental assessments. And now they are trying to make things right with limited consultations, by invitation only, months after the damage was done.

Why did the minister not consult Canadians before ramming these changes and their consequences down their throats?

• (1455)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that she is right, that we are conducting consultations widely across the country with stakeholders and partners.

In answer to her direct question, until the legislation was tabled it would have been inappropriate for us to consult. I can assure my colleague that we are fully engaged now.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the changes to environmental assessments affect the communities of all Canadians. They affect water quality and the food people eat. And the people were not consulted. Seismic testing, dams, wind farms and power plants do not require any federal environmental assessment whatsoever.

When the Prime Minister said that he wanted science-based approvals for projects, what kind of science was he talking about? His own?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows full well that the deficiencies in the previous Canadian Environment Assessment Act were well reviewed in committee in this parliament and in previous parliaments.

The improvements and strengthening that we brought forward in CEAA 2012 are there for all Canadians to see. As we move forward, implementing the new provisions of this improved law, we look forward to input from all stakeholders and partners.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of projects that no longer require environmental assessment, let us talk about the Oshawa ethanol plant.

Until the Conservatives rammed through their bill to dismantle the Environmental Assessment Act, the project was going to be subject to a full federal environmental assessment, but thanks to the minister's reckless changes the federal government has abandoned this process. The same project on one day deserves environmental assessment and the next day it does not.

Why are the Conservatives so afraid to let communities have their say?

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, my colleague knows full well that CEAA 2012 provides for the Government of Canada and the Environmental Assessment Agency to focus on the large and most significant projects that are being proposed across the country.

The 2,000 to 3,000-plus screenings that were in effect under the previous act are now the responsibility of lower levels of government but are still subject to the same strict federal environmental laws.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are afraid of democracy. They are afraid of Oshawa city council's rejection of an environmentally risky ethanol plant, so they took over the waterfront and appointed their buddies to the port authority.

The Conservatives killed the environmental approval process and rubber-stamped the ethanol plant. When 300 people showed up to ask questions last night, the Conservative chair would not even let them speak.

Why will the Conservatives not listen to the people of Oshawa? What are they afraid of?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP members are always negative. They are negative about trade. They are negative about investment. They are negative about energy. We are focused on jobs and prosperity across this country, and at every turn the NDP is trying to stop that.

We are proud of the \$10 billion our government has invested in clean energy initiatives and a cleaner environment. That is three times as much as the previous government. We are proud of the significant investments we have made, which are supporting renewable power and renewable energy sources across this country. We will work to continue to develop jobs and long-term prosperity for Canada.

* * *

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, U.S. inspectors caught E. coli contaminated meat at the border on September 3. U.S. inspectors had to inform our food inspection agency that we were shipping contaminated meat. It took the CFIA two weeks to notify Canadians. The recall keeps expanding. The U.S. has banned imports of XL Foods beef and we just learned people are getting sick in Edmonton from XL steaks.

Clearly, Conservative cuts are hurting food safety and trade. Will the minister tell us if we should continue to rely on Americans for our food safety and will he stop trivializing the risk?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian consumers can be assured that they are a priority for us when it comes to food safety. We have enhanced the capacity of CFIA to handle these types of outbreaks.

Canadian food safety officials began containing the contaminated products on September 4. We have hired additional manpower for

them to get this done. We will introduce important new legislation very soon. We hope the Liberals will support us.

* * *

● (1500)

PENSIONS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a Towers Watson study says years of volatile stock markets and low interest rates have made Canadians feel very vulnerable about their pensions and retirement. Employees are willing to sacrifice their pay, bonus opportunities and even time off if it will secure their pensions. Canadians are understanding more and more every day how important pension security is, yet the government continues to slash support for the most vulnerable.

Now that the government's PRPP proposal has been discredited as nothing more than a tax on the poor, when is the government going to get serious about pension security for Canadians?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I guess that is one group's opinion. However, some 60% of the people in Canada's workforce do not have a workplace pension plan available to them right now. We have put forward an option that provides a pension for them which they can contribute to. I have no idea why the opposition would actually vote against 60% of the workforce that do not have an option. The opposition said no, that is not right. We are moving forward with the pooled registered pension plans in conjunction with the provinces. We think that is good to help Canadians.

* * *

JUSTICE

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite promises from the Prime Minister to not reopen the abortion debate, today the House will vote on Motion No. 312 that does just that. New Democrats are the only party united to stand up to vote for women's equality. This is not a matter of conscience; it is a matter of rights. Canadians have heard a lot from Conservatives and others in the House, but the question is what those members will do tonight. Will they stand up to defend Canadian women's rights?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats were part of the subcommittee that allowed this matter to come before Parliament. All I can tell them is if they disagree with that or if they find this very upsetting, they should take it up with their committee members and pass it on to their House leader.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister must show leadership. He must be clear with his cabinet and all his members. Women's right to choose is not negotiable. It is not a question of conscience, but a question of equality and fundamental rights.

Oral Questions

Will the cabinet ministers who vote in favour of Motion M-312 have the courage to stand up and explain why they want to strip Canadian women of rights and why they are breaking their election promise?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the New Democrats who have been unclear. They were part of the committee that allowed this matter to come before Parliament. That is all I can say to the member. If it is very upsetting or if those members disagree with that, they should pass that on to their House leader along with all the other issues they disagree with, and tell the House leader what a bad idea a carbon tax is, socialism. The list goes on. It is endless. That is what she should do and report back to Parliament.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government, thankfully, has shifted the focus from that of former Trudeau era solicitor general Jean-Pierre Goyer, who said that it was time to take the focus off public safety and put it on the rights of convicted criminals. I can assure the House that our government will always put law-abiding Canadians first.

Later today the House will vote on my private member's bill, Bill C-293, which cracks down on vexatious complaints from prisoners. Will the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety be voting for this very important bill?

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating the member for Scarborough Centre. This is a common-sense goal and a bill that our Conservative government supports. It will put an end to frivolous and vexatious complaints from inmates. For example, some of them are complaining about the temperature of their food or the lighting in their cell. It will give correctional officers the ability to focus on real, legitimate complaints.

I would encourage the opposition, the NDP and the Liberals, to support the bill. It is common sense and is very much needed.

* * *

• (1505)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in a fit of Napoleonic grandeur the Minister of National Defence crowned himself advocate in chief for our soldiers. Since this is a new position for him—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I see that his subjects are already rising.

Since this is a new position for him, would he start by telling Rear-Admiral Smith that his opinion on whether or not the ombudsman's report is balanced is entirely irrelevant? Second,

would he tell the rear-admiral that the ombudsman's job is to advocate for his troops? While he is at it, would he go to bat for the two vets who have lost—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an independent military ombudsman plays a very important role in moderating the interests of Canadian Forces personnel and providing impartial advice.

We support the office of the ombudsman the same way we support the MPCC, the same way we support the grievance board, as they work within their mandate and will continue to do so.

Our government, of course, has enormous respect for the men and women of the Canadian Forces. Unlike the member and his party who brought about a decade of darkness, we are bringing a decade of delivery.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Privacy Commissioner has discovered that several popular Canadian websites are leaking personal information. Six of them have allegedly committed serious breaches of Canadians' privacy. Meanwhile, the Conservatives sound like a broken record. Privacy legislation in relation to commercial businesses should have been reviewed over a year ago. And Canadians have been waiting for anti-spam regulations for over two years now.

When will the Conservatives realize that this is the 21st century, that people no longer communicate by Morse code, and that Internet users need real protection?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act is ready to be introduced. As soon as the opposition is ready to move forward, we can introduce it and move ahead. We are ready when they are.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are very concerned about the suffering and starvation of innocent children in the Sahel region of Africa. Almost 19 million people are affected by the food and nutrition crisis spanning a number of western African countries.

Would the Minister of International Cooperation please give the House an update on his recent work in the Sahel?

Points of Order

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, World Vision is using lunch bags to encourage Canadians to donate their lunch money to the crisis in the Sahel.

With Canada's support, 10 million people have received food assistance and 250,000 children have been treated for acute malnutrition.

On August 7, our government launched the Sahel crisis matching fund and invested \$10 million immediately to help those in need. Until September 30 we will match every dollar contributed to a registered Canadian charity responding to this crisis.

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[*Translation*]

QUEBEC CITY ARMOURY

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives promised years ago to show us the plans for the future Quebec City Armoury, but we still have not seen anything.

The fire at the Quebec City Armoury occurred in April 2008. For four and a half years now, the Conservatives have been dragging their feet and hiding the plans and the cost of the reconstruction of the armoury.

Why is the Minister of Public Works refusing to share the plans and the cost of the reconstruction? When will the sod-turning ceremony take place?

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is very proud to participate in the rehabilitation of the Grande-Allée Armoury. We are restoring a site that we know has shaped the history of Quebec City, but also of Canada. We are supporting local jobs in Quebec City and allowing people to enjoy the armoury for years to come.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister refused to attend the Beijing Olympics, accusing China of industrial sabotage and deplorable human rights. One of his ministers called China one of the world's worst violators of human rights. Now our PM would allow Chinese communists to scoop our key natural resources. Then, China bad; now, China good.

Will the Prime Minister stand up for democracy and Canadian control over strategic resources and say no to this reckless Nexen deal?

• (1510)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, this transaction will be scrutinized very closely. We will work always in the best interests of Canada. We have put in place provisions that take care of national security interests. My colleague can rest assured that we will deal with this matter very carefully.

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to acknowledge for hon. members the 20th anniversary of CPAC, the Cable Public Affairs Channel.

[*Translation*]

Created in 1992 by a consortium of 27 Canadian cable companies, CPAC was given the core mandate to provide, at no cost to taxpayers, coverage of the proceedings of the House of Commons to millions of homes with cable subscriptions.

[*English*]

Since then, CPAC has expanded to provide continued unfiltered coverage of House of Commons proceedings and parliamentary committees, as well as a multitude of other public affairs activities across the country.

[*Translation*]

Today, CPAC plays such an important role in the political life of Canada that it is truly difficult to imagine that such an essential service once did not exist.

[*English*]

We have with us today in the gallery the members of CPAC's board of directors. On behalf of all members, and indeed all Canadians, I would like to thank them and CPAC for their invaluable contribution to Canada's democratic process.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: You will have the opportunity to meet the members at the reception CPAC is hosting in the East Block courtyard later this afternoon.

* * *

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst wishes to clarify what happened during question period.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thought you had a question for me, and I was ready to answer.

I have been in the House of Commons for 15 years. I was the party whip for 11 years. If anyone cares to look at the blues for that 11-year period, they will see that I used the word I used today many times, and it was never in violation of the Standing Orders before.

If I offended the Prime Minister, I withdraw the words “damned penny”.

Instead, these people will not have one red cent with which to pay their bills.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Sometimes these words are not helpful during the exchange in question period. The tone has as much to do with it as everything, so I appreciate the interjection.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***STATE OF CANADA'S FORESTS**

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the provision of Standing Order 32(2), it is my pleasure to table, in both official languages, the 2012 edition of the State of Canada's Forests annual report.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, three treaties.

The first is entitled "Protocol to the Agreement Between the Government Of Canada and the Government Of The People's Republic Of China for Co-operation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy", done at Beijing on July 19.

The second is the entitled "Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the People's Republic of China for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments", done at Vladivostok on September 9.

The third is entitled "Agreement on Social Security between Canada and the Kingdom of Norway", done at Ottawa on June 20.

A explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation to the third part of the 2012 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, held in Strasbourg, France on June 25 to 29.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association respecting its participation in the second round of the French legislative elections, held in Paris and Poitiers, France, from June 14 to 17, 2012.

• (1515)

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, two reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group.

The first is the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation respecting its participation at the Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance Conference held in Ottawa, Ontario, from May 6 to 8, 2012.

The second is the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation respecting its participation at the Western Governors' Association Annual Meeting held in Cle Elum, Washington, from June 9 to 12, 2012.

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*[English]***PETITIONS****RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN**

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions that I would like present, including from Richmond Hill. Hundreds of constituents have asked Parliament to vote in favour of Motion No. 312 to look at when human life begins.

I also have more petitions from Ajax—Pickering on the same motion. The petitioners ask Parliament to consider looking at the 400-year-old definition of human life.

The final petition is from Kitchener—Waterloo on a similar front. The petitioners ask Parliament to vote in favour of Motion No. 312.

ABORTION

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with some coincidence, I have a petition from some of those very same places. The petition is signed by Canadians from across the country, including Kitchener, Waterloo, LaSalle, Québec, Windsor and Essex County.

The petitioners urge the government and all parliamentarians to vote against Motion No. 312 presented by the Conservatives, which would reopen the debate on abortion. They note that the Prime Minister made a promise and has since broken it with this issue now being debated on the floor of the House of Commons and being voted on this evening.

INTERNATIONAL AID

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present to the House today. The first petition is from Development and Peace.

The petitioners take note of Canada's decline in absolute and percentage terms of its commitments to official development aid. They also note that several NGO's have suffered as a consequence of the cutbacks, particularly D and P. They take note of the better aid bill, which would take into account the perspectives of the poor, that our aid be directed to poverty reduction and only poverty reduction and be consistent with international human rights standards.

The petitioners ask that the funding to CIDA be restored, that we go back to 0.7% and that the funding for D and P be restored.

TERRORISM

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has to do with former al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and numerous terrorist organizations.

The petitioners call on the government to chastise the Pakistani government for providing safe harbour for—

The Speaker: I will have to stop the member there. There are quite a lot of members rising and we only have about 12 minutes left. Perhaps we can have very succinct summaries. If members have multiple petitions, perhaps they could group them together as much as possible.

The hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans.

[Translation]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the past few months, we have been reflecting on Motion M-312. I have received a number of petitions regarding our consideration of that motion, all calling on Parliament to reject any law that suggests that some humans are not humans.

[English]

I have received petitions from across the country indicating that Parliament has the solemn duty to reject any law that says that some humans are not humans.

[Translation]

SAINT-LAMBERT TRAIN STATION

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to present a petition signed by over 1,000 people in my riding who oppose VIA Rail's plans to close three customer service counters at the Saint-Lambert train station and replace them with automated kiosks. This will seriously reduce the quality of service at the station.

The petitioners are calling on this House to intervene with VIA Rail and convince that organization to reverse its decision to eliminate three customer service counters at the Saint-Lambert train station.

• (1520)

[English]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition which supports Motion No. 312. The petition contains about 150 signatures from the people of Sydney—Victoria and visitors to my area.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to affirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as a human being by amending section 223 of our Criminal Code.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present 11 petitions representing hundreds and hundreds of Canadians from across southern British Columbia, southern Ontario and communities across my riding of Essex.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as human by amending section 223 of our Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

[Translation]

ABORTION

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition against Motion M-312, which, as

Routine Proceedings

everyone knows, is merely a veiled attempt to reopen the abortion debate, one that has been over for quite some time. In presenting this petition, I am also honoured to acknowledge a women's centre in my riding, the Centre de femmes l'Essentielle de Bevoil, which was extremely supportive of our efforts to halt this attempt.

[English]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition on behalf of my constituents.

The petitioners note that Canada's 400-year-old definition of human being says that a child does not become a human being until the moment of complete birth. They call upon the House of Commons to amend section 223 of our Criminal Code.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, too, have a great number of petitions from Canadians across the country who want Parliament to recognize that every human being has an inherent worth and dignity.

In particular, I have another 1,300 signatures to add to the 1,200 or so I filed yesterday, from people in the area of Scarborough—Rouge River, 100 from the area of Willowdale, 625 from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca and another 700 from everywhere across Canada in 10 petitions. They just keep flooding in.

[Translation]

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present a petition in support of my Motion M-405, which calls on this House to examine the possibility of amending the Motor Vehicle Safety Regulations to equip all household utility trailers with a wheel locking device.

Several fatal accidents have occurred as a result of trailers that became unhitched. As parliamentarians, it is our duty to examine this matter and try to come up with a solution to prevent further loss of life.

[English]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present hundreds of signatures on petitions in support of Motion No. 312 to change section 223 of the Criminal Code to reflect 21st century medical evidence. I note that they are from Vancouver, Richmond, Newwest, Langley and Surrey.

[Translation]

ABORTION

Ms. Hélène Lavergère (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present another petition signed by men and women from across Canada who are opposed to Motion M-312 and this attempt to reopen the abortion debate.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Mississauga East—Cooksville, the riding I represent.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as human beings and to amend the section 223 of the Criminal Code in a way to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

[Translation]

ABORTION

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present a petition from people across Quebec who are strongly opposed to Motion M-312, which reopens the abortion debate

At the same time, I would like to mention women's centres. There are many in my riding that fight for women's rights year after year.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of presenting petitions from across Ontario concerning the Experimental Lakes Area in northwestern Ontario.

The petitioners say that closing the world-renowned science facility would jeopardize unique research on lakes, river and fish, cost the government very little money and the world immensely in the long run.

• (1525)

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions from my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. The petitioners urge all members to support Motion No. 312.

DEMENTIA

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of rising to table a petition calling for support for Bill C-356, tabled by the member for Nickel Belt, who has requested a national dementia strategy.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have 14 petitions that call upon the House of Commons to amend section 223 of our Criminal Code, many of them signed by young women. I would point out that five petitions are from my riding, six from across Saskatchewan and three from the rest of Canada.

HIV-AIDS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by hundreds of constituents of my riding put together by the Grandmothers Advocacy Network.

The petitioners point out that millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa are dying of HIV-AIDS and that Canada's Access to Medicines Regime has been stalled and is not operative.

Therefore, they call upon Parliament to pass Bill C-398, which is currently before the House, to make necessary amendments to the Canada's Access to Medicines Regime to get drugs flowing to HIV-AIDS victims of sub-Saharan Africa.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have petitions on two issues.

Again, as many colleagues, I have a petition from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. The petitioners call upon the House to confirm that every human being is recognized as by Canadian law.

ABORTION

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also have several petitions, again, from across the country.

The petitioners call upon the government to defund the International Planned Parenthood Federation for its aggressive funding of abortion abroad.

[Translation]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mrs. Sana Hassainia (Verchères—Les Patriotes, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present a petition signed by Canadians across the country who are opposed to Motion M-312 introduced by the Conservatives.

This debate has been closed for decades. Many women in Canada are stating their clear opposition and are hoping that all members will support a woman's right to choose and will not revisit an issue that has already been dealt with.

[English]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I present petitions on behalf of Canadians who challenge the 400-year-old definition of when life begins, due to 21st century medical advancements. I was three weeks premature. I thank my mother and the hospital staff for choosing life.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will change the channel. I have two sets of petitions.

The first one has over 200 signatures from the folks from Castlegar and the Slocan Valley who would like Parliament to impose a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa because of the economic hit that organic farmers could take.

Routine Proceedings

HEALTH OF ANIMALS ACT

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have over 1,000 names supporting my Bill C-322, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act. The signatures are from people right across Canada who want this act, which would prohibit the importation or exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption, as well as horse meat products for human consumption.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by 658 people from the riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry in support of Motion No. 312.

ABORTION

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand with petitions from thousands of Canadians, women and men, who have called on the government to oppose Motion No. 312 and recognize that it is about a woman's right to choose, a fundamental human right, a right that we as Canadians are proud to uphold. We certainly hope that all government members and members of all parties will stand with these Canadians and move ahead on equality rather than turning the clock back.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today.

The petitioners note that section 223 of the Criminal Code is from 400-year-old British common law and stipulates that a child only becomes a human being once he or she proceeds from the womb. The petitioners say that advances in medical science say otherwise. One petition calls for the House to support Motion No. 312 and the other calls for the change in section 223 to reflect the reality of the new science.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition in support of Motion No. 312.

CELLPHONE TOWERS

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to change the channel again.

I rise in support of a petition from many of my constituents, calling upon the government to impose a moratorium on the erection of cellphone towers and to call for immediate implementation of unbiased, non-industry-funded scientific research on the short-term and long-term biological and health effects of human exposure to microwave radiation.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

ABORTION

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to present a petition signed by hundreds of Canadians who are opposed to Motion No. 312, which is an attempt to reopen the debate on abortion. These many people want to express their opposition to this motion and are hoping that all members will support women's right to choose by voting against this motion.

[*English*]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions from citizens who have serious concerns about the 400-year-old definition of when life begins and they ask the Parliament of Canada to take action to protect all human beings.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have one petition from citizens who are calling upon the Government of Canada to issue an invitation for all states to gather in Canada to begin discussions needed for a global legal ban on nuclear weapons.

[*Translation*]

SAINT-LAMBERT TRAIN STATION

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise to table a petition signed by many Quebeckers who are against the elimination of three jobs at the Saint-Lambert train station. VIA Rail is a essential transportation service on the south shore.

ABORTION

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling two more petitions related to Motion No. 312 signed by many men and women who see this motion as an affront to women's rights.

[*English*]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present some petitions from hundreds of Canadians from Parkdale—High Park, Trinity—Spadina and other places across Canada who are calling on the government to amend section 223 of our Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

CHILD NUTRITION

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition from people from my riding calling on the Government of Canada to provide leadership and support for child and youth nutrition programs through the ministries of health and agriculture.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

S. O. 52

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

ARCTIC ICE

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Halifax.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the floor to speak about the extremely urgent situation in the Arctic.

[*English*]

Canadians and people around the world were shocked when the U.S.-based National Snow and Ice Data Center reported last week on the dramatic melting of summer ice levels in the Arctic this year. Those levels fell to 50% of the average levels reported between 1979 and 2000. Based on the latest numbers, some scientists are even predicting that the Arctic might be ice-free during the summer of 2030.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am asking today for an emergency debate on this issue and the reasons for this are significant and wide-ranging. The melting is expected to have a domino effect on our environment, creating further warming of our climate as uncovered Arctic waters warm more quickly. This will, in turn, affect all regions of Canada with more extreme weather, in part because of the effect warmer Arctic waters will have to change the speed and path of the jet stream. It will affect all communities and all industries.

NASA climate scientist James Hansen is calling the degradation of the Arctic sea ice a “planetary emergency”.

[*Translation*]

Mark Serreze, NSIDC director, told the media that “[w]e are now in “uncharted territory.”

[*English*]

The situation is clear and it is worrying. The extreme melting that happened this summer goes beyond being a warning of potential terrifying global environmental consequences.

Since the report was released last week, I have talked to people around the country and realized this is not just an environmental issue, it touches all aspects of our society from international relations to national security, agriculture, natural resources and more. It is a harbinger of massive socio-political and economic change that parliamentarians have a duty to address for reasons of national security. There is no time to waste. Our country needs a plan.

With Canada taking on the chair of the Arctic Council in 2013, a comprehensive debate on Arctic issues is already overdue. We must

prepare our domestic plan and prepare for multilateral partnerships on Arctic issues.

[*Translation*]

This issue simply cannot wait. We have to discuss it in the House in order to find solutions and make a plan for the future.

[*English*]

We need to discuss next steps and Canadians must be given a voice on this issue. It concerns us all, including future generations.

I await your decision, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Halifax for both the letter and the explanation of the issue. While I am sure it is an important issue to her, I do not think it meets the test for an emergency debate.

I do know in coming weeks there will undoubtedly be supply days allotted and perhaps the House will have an opportunity to discuss it at that time.

● (1535)

ARCTIC ICE

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this summer Canadians experienced weather extremes like none in history causing droughts in eastern Ontario and the failure of fruit crops in southwestern Ontario.

In the United States, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported the highest August temperature since 1885, resulting in drought in the Midwestern states and devastating the corn crop. A report by Jennifer Francis of Rutgers University and Stephen Vavrus of the University of Wisconsin showed that the extreme weather is directly related to the loss of Arctic summer ice cover. This month, Arctic sea ice declined to its lowest level ever, beating the previous record set in 2007. The North Pole's ice cap is now 50% below what it was in 1979 to 2000.

Francis and Vavrus have shown that the increased loss of Arctic summer ice cover is adding enough heat to the ocean and atmosphere to redirect the jet stream, the fast-moving high-altitude river of air that steers weather systems across the northern hemisphere. The sixth lowest Arctic sea ice extents have occurred during the past six years. As a result of such extensive sea ice melt, the study says that the jet stream is behaving differently. It is becoming slower with bigger troughs and ridges.

As more ice melts, the dark ocean is revealed, absorbing more solar energy and heating the water. The heat is released back into the atmosphere in the fall and winter increasing the air temperatures over the Arctic, which in turn reduces the temperature differential between the air in the Arctic and the air further south.

Government Orders

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

HELPING FAMILIES IN NEED ACT

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC) moved that Bill C-44, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Employment Insurance Act and to make consequential amendments to the Income Tax Act and the Income Tax Regulations, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in this House today in support of Bill C-44, Helping Families in Need Act.

[English]

The government is delivering on our commitment to support Canadian families by introducing new income supports for them in times of sickness and tragedy.

Our government listens to Canadian families. We know that raising a child is one of the most important responsibilities that someone will ever have, so when a parent has to struggle with illness while balancing other responsibilities, whether at work, home or both, the whole family is affected.

We have heard from families all across this great country about situations where a parent becomes ill soon after a child is born and while the parents are still receiving parental benefits. In those cases, parents have been unable to access EI sickness benefits during or after their receipt of parental benefits because of the way the Employment Insurance Act is written.

Our government is taking action and changing the rules for ill parents.

[Translation]

Bill C-44 will enable parents to receive employment insurance sickness benefits if they become ill while they are receiving parental benefits.

[English]

This new measure will benefit approximately 6,000 Canadians per year and will come into effect in early 2013. Additionally, as part of the bill, we are including changes for other income supports for families when they need these the most.

[Translation]

As the Prime Minister announced in April of this year, we will provide financial support to parents who are struggling with the disappearance or death of their child as a result of a crime. This measure will come into force in January 2013.

I would like to point out that Senator Boisvenu has worked tirelessly on moving forward with this issue.

[English]

I must pause here before proceeding. Everyone I have spoken with and heard from has applauded the introduction of these changes, acknowledging that our government will be providing families in the most tragic and difficult situations with up to 35 weeks of income support.

Historically, this temperature differential has driven the jet stream, which circles the earth from west to east and forms a barrier between the atmospheres in the Arctic and elsewhere. However, as the temperature difference has declined between the north and the south, the speed of the jet stream has slowed by about 20% in the last few decades. Additionally, as the jet stream has slowed and its north-south movements have become more pronounced, generally moving further north. When it does move south, these intrusions are heading further than previously.

The changing jet stream is the main culprit behind the increasingly extreme weather events. The known negative impacts of these extreme weather events are crop failures across North America and higher food prices. For example, it has been estimated that as much as 70% of the U.S. corn crop failed this year because of drought in the Midwestern states. The apple crop in southwestern Ontario failed due to a period of unusually high temperature in March and farmers in eastern Ontario are paying as much as \$140 for a bale of hay due to drought this July.

The failure of the U.S. corn crop alone will result in food costs as high as 80% to 90% for food on grocery shelves containing corn. Meanwhile, beef, pork and dairy farmers are now reporting that they will have to decrease the size of their herds as they cannot afford the fodder, which will result in more shortage and drive costs up.

Potential negative impacts from higher food prices include increased unemployment, criminality and civil unrest. Lower crop and animal yields will likely increase unemployment in the food processing industry as fewer people will be required to prepare the food. People in southwestern Ontario who work in the fruit industry will have no jobs while cattle, pork and dairy farmers will lay off hands in order to afford fodder for their animals. These job losses will have a ripple effect across all sectors. Demands for goods and services will be reduced.

Further, as we have seen increased theft of gas due to higher prices, so will increased food prices result in theft. As history has shown, increased food costs or shortages have resulted in civil unrest—

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the hon. member to quickly wrap-up. He has had the floor for quite some time now.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: *Deus impeditio esuritori nullus*: no god can stop a hungry man. The Russian revolution, for example, began with riots over lack of food.

For these reasons, the House must immediately debate how Canada will deal with the increasing Arctic sea ice melt and the disastrous effect it is having on our weather systems, agriculture and economy.

• (1540)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I appreciate the request from the hon. member. As I have mentioned, I do not think that this meets the test parameters for an emergency debate.

Government Orders

However, I was absolutely stunned last week when the NDP actually voted against helping these Canadian families. In the ways and means motion that was required to introduce these changes, NDP members turned their backs on parents who need our help. Our strong, stable, national, Conservative, majority government stood up for parents of murdered or missing children last week.

NDP members, as we know, never say no to spending. It seems that that is all they know how to do sometimes, along with providing massive tax increases. However, last week, without any sound rationale, they said no to parents who really need our support.

I am hoping that they have changed their minds since then. Perhaps they heard Bruno Serre's story. It is a tragic story about when he lost his daughter to crime. Perhaps they heard the story as he related it at the launch of the bill last week.

● (1545)

[*Translation*]

Bruno Serre is the vice-president of the Association of Families of Persons Assassinated or Disappeared and the father of Brigitte, who was murdered in January 2006, at the age of 17, while working a shift at a Shell gas station in Montreal. This is what he said:

I would like to thank...the Conservative government for keeping its promise, a promise that gives families like mine renewed confidence in our government's willingness to help them.

[*English*]

The third component of this legislation was also previously announced by our Prime Minister this summer, that we will offer employment insurance benefits to parents of critically ill or injured children.

Every year about 19,000 children get sick enough to require prolonged treatment in intensive care units.

[*Translation*]

To heal, seriously ill children not only need doctors day and night, but they also need the comfort that their parents can provide. This new benefit will help alleviate some of the financial hardships experienced by parents who have to miss work to spend time with their families.

[*English*]

They need the comfort of their parents. This benefit will help reduce some of the financial pressure that parents experience as they take time away from work to look after their family. Working parents in this situation have to use up their vacation and any other leave and allowances they may have. Then they will likely have to take unpaid leave from work, often with no clear idea of when or if they will be able to get back to work.

Our government has committed to helping and we are doing so with this legislation. Conservatives have been working hard for families for years and some of the work on this new EI benefit was actually started in 2008 by my colleague, the MP for Leeds—Grenville, who introduced a private member's bill on this topic. That bill and the subsequent discussions helped create the policy for parents of critically ill or injured children, and I thank my colleague from Leeds—Grenville for his efforts.

When announcing the tabling of this legislation last week, I was particularly touched by the story of Sharon Ruth, an advocate for parents of critically ill children. Sharon's daughter, Colleen, was six years old when she was suddenly diagnosed with cancer. Sharon's world was suddenly and completely changed. At the podium Sharon said:

[I]t wasn't until our country finally got a majority government that I'm standing here today with all of you on the brink of what I hope will be revolutionary change to help those families that are in need and most vulnerable.

The most important news is that Colleen is now cancer free and is enjoying life as a healthy and very active young woman. Sharon's worlds were clear on behalf of all of the parents who continue to struggle:

My hope is that this legislation passes quickly and without incident. I know all too well what it's like to suffer the emotional and financial devastation of a child with a cancer diagnosis. The sooner our government can bring relief to those thousands of families across Canada currently navigating this life-altering journey, juggling jobs, bills, treatment and hope the better.

To Sharon I say, I hope for that too.

[*Translation*]

Family, as well as the importance we attach to it, is one of the fundamental values that unite us as Canadians.

[*English*]

When times are tough, sometimes beyond what we could ever have imagined, that is when we support each other. That is what we do as Canadians and that is what we are doing as government. After all, the last thing that a parent should have to worry about at such a time is how to make a mortgage payment or how not to lose their job.

On that note, changes will also be made to the Canada Labour Code as part of Bill C-44 to provide job protection for parents under federal jurisdiction who take a leave of absence while coping with having a critically ill or injured child, or a murdered or missing child.

All of these measures will be providing assistance during some of the most trying or tragic times that a family could ever endure. They also represent our government's steadfast commitment to fulfilling our promises, listening to Canadians and making life better for hard-working families in this country.

● (1550)

As Dan Demers of the Canadian Cancer Society stated:

[I] think it's critically important that we acknowledge that in the last election, this government made a commitment to parents and families who are caring for children in the most difficult situations we can imagine and today, we're not only seeing the Government take action to fulfill this commitment, but they're moving in this town at lightning speed and...they're exceeding our expectations.

He also said:

These programs will strengthen Canadian families and provide them the flexibility and the security they need to help keep their lives as normal as possible through a very very difficult time.

I could not agree with him more, and I can only hope for all the parents who could benefit from these changes that the NDP will realize that this is not time for partisan games and needless dissent.

Government Orders

[Translation]

It is time to work together and help families in this country when they need it most.

[English]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the minister for keeping a straight face when she said that she thought we should debate this bill without partisan games and began her speech by launching into a fully partisan game.

Leaving that aside for the moment, I am happy to say that we will be supporting this bill on this side of the House. There are some significant measures that will help parents of critically ill children and children who were murdered or have gone missing, and we are proud to do that on this side of the House.

I have a question for the minister, though. I wonder if she could tell us why, in the Conservatives' 2011 election platform, they made a commitment that the support for parents of critically ill children would come out of the general revenue fund and not the EI fund, which is where they are now drawing the money from. It is an important distinction. Canadians deserve to know how their tax dollars are being spent and what the integrity of the EI fund will look like in the future. I would like the minister to respond.

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, I first want to sincerely thank my colleagues in the NDP for seeing the light and supporting this bill. This is good news and we welcome their support, as do, I am sure, Sharon and Bruno Serre and all of the families that are going to be affected by it.

We took a look at the best and fastest way to provide these supports to parents of critically ill or injured children and parents who need access to sickness benefits while on parental leave. EI was the most efficient and effective way to do this.

In terms of supporting parents of murdered and missing children, we found that we would be able to provide the service much more quickly, efficiently and effectively if we were to provide the service outside of the EI system. That is why we are proceeding this way so that we can support families as effectively, efficiently and quickly as possible.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intent of Bill C-44 and the Liberals will in fact be supporting it as well.

I cannot help but recognize the minister's change of heart because when Liberals made a similar policy announcement, her comment was that there were other options for people trying to care for their loved ones, including the fact that "Most employees do have vacation leave that they can use". That was her comment last year.

It is strange that we are having this debate today and then having a technical briefing tonight, but at least there is going to be a briefing and this bill will go to committee. This impacts maybe 6,000 Canadians, but the changes to the EI working while on claim provision impacts about 850,000, and those changes never went to committee.

This is a better way to do it, to shed light on it and find out about any unintended consequences. Does the minister not think that if we had also done this with the changes made to the working while on

claim provision, we would not have the sort of mess we now have with low-income earners?

• (1555)

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, today we are here to discuss Bill C-44. During question period I addressed the hon. member's issues with employment insurance. In terms of employment insurance, what is relevant right now is Liberal support for Bill C-44, which will be using the employment insurance fund to help parents who become ill while on parental leave and support parents dealing with critically ill or injured children.

I have to say that I am delighted with and welcome the support of the Liberals on this bill. I thank them very much.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the minister on her speech and for bringing forward this important piece of legislation. As a member of Parliament from Mississauga, I have heard from many parents who have critically ill children who have been requesting this kind of support.

I am glad to see that the NDP and the Liberals have decided to support the bill. I have to say the NDP caused us a bit of concern earlier when its members voted against a ways and means motion, but I am glad to see they have made the right decision to support this bill.

Would the minister comment on what she has heard from parents of critically ill children about the need for this bill?

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, last week after we tabled the bill in the House, we had a launch for the bill. It was one of the most moving events that I have been to in a very long time. There were parents who have been through these tragedies with their children, such as Sharon Ruth, whose daughter was suddenly diagnosed with cancer at age six. Some of my colleagues in this House have been through similar circumstances. Senator Boisvenu, the founding president of the murdered or missing persons' families association, was there and is very appreciative. All of them recognize that families need support. They gave us full credit for recognizing that need and being able to deliver on these supports to help them out. It really was a love-in and it was a privilege for me to be there with these folks.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, there is one part of the bill that puzzles me and I truly am looking for clarification. I look forward to the minister's briefing on the bill, which we obviously did not have the privilege of having before we had to debate the bill.

There is one part in the bill that deals with missing children. I certainly understand and support the intent of the bill as far as it goes, but I wonder if the minister would explain why it only deals with children who have gone missing as a result of a suspected breach of the Criminal Code, as opposed to children who have gone missing? All of their parents, I assume, would be equally worried. It would be a traumatic experience to know that one's child is missing, and yet the minister puts a caveat on that part of the bill.

I am sincerely looking to the minister to explain why that limit would be put on that provision of the bill.

Government Orders

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that whenever a child is missing, it is a terrible thing for the parents to deal with.

We had a lot of consultations before bringing in the bill. It was determined, based upon the advice that we received from the law enforcement community, from the legal community, even from parents who have been through this, that when a child is missing due to a suspected criminal act, there are a lot of other circumstances that come into play that require attention, things like dealing with the police, dealing with the legal system, potentially dealing with ransom demands. While they are all terrible circumstances, it was recommended that we include a limitation, and that is why we have done that.

•(1600)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the number of Canadians who will be impacted is fairly modest, some 6,000. Would the minister share with us what the cost of the program would be with 6,000 people?

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, for the portion of the program that is for parents of critically ill or injured children, this would have a positive impact on some 6,000 families, at an estimated cost of \$60 million per year, which would be funded through the employment insurance account.

We believe that is a reasonable price. We have taken a look at it. We believe that is the level of support that would help these families in their hour of need.

[*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 St. Paul's, Aboriginal Affairs; the hon. member for Winnipeg North, Immigration.

[*English*]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-44, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Employment Insurance Act and to make consequential amendments to the Income Tax Act and the Income Tax Regulations.

Bill C-44 would provide a series of improvements, most of them through the employment insurance program, to Canadian families who desperately need the support of their government. For that reason, we are pleased to support this bill.

In fact, some of the provisions of the bill were lifted straight out of my private member's Bill C-362, and if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then I will consider myself flattered. Let me review which parts of Bill C-44 were lifted from my bill.

First, one of the proposals included in the government's bill would amend the EI Act to allow mothers and fathers currently on parental leave to access EI sickness benefits if they fall ill during their parental leave. This is a welcome and long overdue amendment. There are few Canadians who would disagree that new parents, who very often are already stretched both physically and financially, should not be penalized if they become ill while on parental leave.

I am a little puzzled though as to why the minister would have stopped short of extending this benefit further. If she appreciates the injustice of denying sickness benefits to those whose circumstances change while on parental leave, then why did she fail to apply the same consideration and logic to workers who are laid off while on parental leave? Why would she solve one injustice and at the same time wilfully ignore the other?

My bill does take that extra step. It would fix that wrong. It points out that those on parental leave, the very same physically and emotionally drained new parents who sometimes become ill while on parental leave, can through no fault of their own find that they have been downsized or laid off while on parental leave. As it currently stands, parents in that situation are denied benefits and, inexplicably, the government is content to leave them twisting in the wind, unsupported by even the meagre support provided by EI.

On the upside, my private member's bill also includes provisions to cover the self-employed in this benefits arrangement, and I am pleased to see that the government has at least adopted that.

Let me move on to special benefits that Bill C-44 would provide for parents caring for a child with a critical illness or injury.

While support for these parents is important and, frankly, long overdue, I am concerned that parents are only eligible if they have worked a minimum of 600 insurable hours over the past year. More than anything, this raises the question for me of whether the EI program is the best vehicle for delivering this parental support.

I would point out that at one time the government agreed with me. As recently as 2011 the Conservative Party platform read, "Funding for this measure will come from general revenue, not EI premiums". The Conservatives were right to adopt that approach.

Whether one is a waged worker, a senior manager, a professional, or a stay-at-home parent, the devastation of a critically ill child is the same. All Canadians who find themselves caring for their seriously ill child are incurring a myriad of expenses that go beyond lost wages, and they all deserve our support.

What happened to make the government change its mind? The grant for parents of murdered and missing children will be paid from general revenues and not through EI, but with respect to critically ill children, the Conservatives have ignored their election promise and are paying for their commitment through EI.

I do not need to remind anyone in the House that the EI fund is not the government's money. It is a fund to which only workers and employers contribute, so for the government to draw on that pool of money to create a photo op on a policy announcement no matter how positive is surely beyond the pale.

Government Orders

As tempting as it is for me to go on about that theme at greater length, let me leave the Conservatives' partisan antics aside and return to the policy itself.

Mercifully, I have never experienced the anguish of parents whose child is diagnosed with a serious illness. I can scarcely imagine how difficult and frightening it must be. It is precisely at life-altering moments like those that we all need not just our friends and families, but our communities and our government as well. At the very least, government must ensure that their burden is not increased by adding financial worries to the heap. Surely that is one of the principal ways in which government directly serves the needs of the community, of people, of taxpayers.

I am pleased that the government has finally moved to provide a basic level of financial assistance for those Canadians. It is not enough of course. Families going through serious illness incur enormous expenses, and EI benefits are a maximum of 55% of income, but it is a start.

Having said that though, a few other questions must also be addressed.

• (1605)

The government says that it intends to make these benefits available to the parents of children who are “critically ill or injured”. I am deeply concerned about how the government intends to define “critically ill or injured”.

As it stands now, compassionate care benefits have been available to parents of a child who faced “a significant risk of death within 26 weeks”. That incredibly cold and narrow definition of serious illness will certainly keep program costs down, but it fails a huge number of the very same Canadian families the government says it wants to help.

Serious illness just does not work that way. Health care does not work that way. Families do not work that way. The Canadian Cancer Society points out that parents of critically ill children have been reluctant to submit claims for financial support because they did not wish to acknowledge that their child had a significant risk of dying.

Of course, through the advance of research, survival rates are, thankfully, increasing. For example, over the last 30 years, childhood cancer survival rates have improved substantially. They have gone up from 71% in the late 1980s to 82% in the early 2000s, and the five-year survival rates have increased for several types of childhood cancers.

Obviously, I am not a health care professional, but I cannot imagine that the government's insistence on a formal declaration of near imminent death is medically wise, never mind emotionally tolerable. Rarely are parents or doctors comfortable being so categorical about a child's prognosis, and to put parents in the position of requesting such a declaration so they can access desperately needed financial assistance is, to me, unconscionable.

In reality, many childhood illnesses that were considered terminal even five years ago are no longer so. Childhood cancers are notorious for peaks and valleys, remissions and recurrence, and increasingly, cure. The current black and white definition of critical illness means the parents of the child that faces a difficult and

uncertain course of chemo or an organ transplant, but whose child has a reasonable chance of survival cannot currently access this benefit. Surely the minister appreciates that those parents need support too.

It is a situation that the minister must ensure is remedied in the regulations attending this bill. The definition of “critically ill or injured” must not be conflated with “significant risk of death within 26 weeks”.

Let us move on to some of the other provisions in the legislation before us.

Bill C-44 provides for changes to the Income Tax Act that will facilitate a direct grant to the parents of missing or murdered children in Canada. Importantly, there is a caveat. The missing child must be missing on account of a suspected breach of the Criminal Code.

A couple of concerns come to mind immediately. First, while this grant is unique in the legislation insofar as it is not part of the employment insurance system, it is nonetheless tied to the income of the parent. In order to apply for the benefit, a parent must have earned a minimum of \$6,500 in the last calendar year. I wonder what the government has in mind with respect to stay-at-home parents, for example, whose child is missing as a result of a suspected breach of the Criminal Code. That parent, who may have other children to care for, who may be a caregiver for an elderly parent, who undoubtedly has responsibilities in his or her own home and community, has no access to this benefit.

Why has the government tied this grant to income? Surely all parents of children missing in a suspected criminal case need and deserve the financial support that permits them to focus on the crisis in their family.

Second, and I spoke to this in response to the minister's speech just a few minutes ago, I am still not sure I understand the rationale behind providing support only for parents whose children are missing “as a result of a suspected breach of the Criminal Code”. If I am understanding this right, if a family were to go wilderness camping, say, and their toddler wandered away from the campsite and ended up missing, the parents would not be eligible for any support during their time of frantically searching for their child. Why is that? Why is that awful situation any less worthy of support? Did the government's need to feed the rhetoric of its law and order agenda take precedence over good public policy here? I am simply not understanding why the Criminal Code caveat was deemed necessary to add in this bill.

That takes me to the larger context of the bill. I have acknowledged that the legislation before us today provides a small but important improvement for new parents who get sick while on parental leave. I welcome the additional support for parents of critically ill or injured children and those whose children are missing or murdered. Those are indeed positive changes, and I am pleased to see that the government is taking steps, tentative though they are, toward developing an understanding of working Canadian families and the struggles that they face.

Government Orders

● (1610)

What the legislation does not do speaks volumes about the government's view of the appropriate use of the EI fund. At a time when at least 1.4 million Canadians are out of work, the government crafts EI legislation that provides a benefit only for people who are not, in fact, unemployed. How ironic is that?

While the official number says unemployment sits at about 7.3%, we all know that the number is much closer to 14%. The government knows that as a result of its policies, hundreds of thousands of Canadians are not included in that number. Those no longer looking for work or who are employed in part-time, temporary or casual employment are not counted in the official figures.

The real unemployment rate is a frightening indictment of the government's failed economic policies. The fact is that 300,000 more Canadians are unemployed today than during the recession. This is a government with no industrial strategy and a government that is overseeing the decimation of the manufacturing sector.

The fact is that Statistics Canada pointed out last spring that there were almost six unemployed workers for every reported job vacancy in Canada. The fact is that the government's failed economic policies have devastated workers and families across the country. Its economic action plan is comprised of little action and lots of advertising.

To add insult to injury, while Canadians continue to suffer the consequences of the Conservatives' discredited and ineffective trickle-down policies, the government has moved to restrict and undermine the very social safety net that was designed to help families weather such economic downturns.

Less than half of unemployed Canadians now qualify for EI benefits. Fully 60% of unemployed men and 68% of unemployed women get no support whatsoever from EI and 870,000 Canadians have no access to EI benefits, despite the fact, again, that employment insurance is a program entirely paid for by workers and employers, a program funded without a nickel from the government's treasury. That is an historic low.

No doubt the government is proud of successfully shutting more than half of unemployed Canadians out of the insurance system for which their own hard-earned wages have paid. It hurts workers, small businesses and communities, but it helps build that EI surplus, which successive Liberal and Conservative governments have raided to the tune of \$54 billion to pay down their debts and to finance more corporate tax cuts.

The government has no understanding of the devastation that job loss can bring to a family. There are 1.4 million Canadians officially out of work. Those families are on the knife-edge of poverty. They are losing their homes and savings. Their kids cannot join sports teams or travel with the school band or, far too often, start the school day with a decent breakfast.

However, the Prime Minister betrayed his lack of compassion and understanding for unemployed Canadians when he told the American Council for National Policy, in 1997:

In terms of the unemployed, of which we have over a million-and-a-half, don't feel particularly bad for many of these people. They don't feel bad about it

themselves, as long as they're receiving generous social assistance and unemployment insurance.

Who knew that when Mitt Romney accused 47% of Americans of being work-shy layabouts, that he stole the line from the Prime Minister? Not to be outdone, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development said, "We do not want to make it lucrative for them to stay home and get paid for it".

With that kind of cabinet leadership, it is no wonder that the prevailing attitude of Conservative backbenchers toward the unemployed is, in the now infamous words of the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's, they are "no-good bastards". What a way to blame the victims for the government's failed economic policies.

The Conservatives say that they are focused like a laser on jobs, but clearly their focus is on job cuts not job creation.

The stark reality is that unemployment in Canada is unacceptably high and access to employment insurance benefits is at a record low. When one of the 40% does manage to jump through the myriad of hoops designed to disqualify people from benefits, they can only get benefits that max out at \$485 per week and are available to them for shorter and shorter periods.

I will remind members again that all of that must be seen in the context of one overriding truth, and that is the employment insurance system is 100% funded by employees and employers. Indeed, the Conservative fondness for Tea Party politics is evident again.

EI begins to look more and more like U.S.-style private health care coverage. Sure, companies offer insurance, provided people are young, healthy, have no pre-existing condition and are statistically unlikely to ever claim a nickel from them. So it goes with Canada's EI.

● (1615)

Sure, we have employment insurance. Individuals and their employers will have to fully finance it with significant premiums, of course. However, goodness, if they ever actually want to use the safety net they paid for, the government will throw up as many roadblocks as it possibly can. They have to wait two weeks without any money, even after filing their claim, and they cannot get benefits if they have not worked immediately prior to their claim, even if they have paid into the fund for many years. If they somehow manage to clear those hurdles and they do get benefits, it is only 55% of their wages. Retraining for a transitional economy, new skills? Oh dear, no, the government does not do that.

Government Orders

Where is the comprehensive study of the employment insurance program? Where is the strategic analysis and the comprehensive reform the system so clearly needs? Where is the jobs strategy, the skills training, the second career program, the forward-looking, aggressive and progressive programs to get Canadians' skill sets renewed and retooled and to get Canadians back to work? Where is the vision? Where is the leadership? In fact, there is none in the bill, not from the government.

We have before us a bill that provides important support to, by the government's own admission, perhaps 6,000 Canadians. However, we are puzzled. None of those 6,000 Canadians are actually unemployed. Do they need and deserve government support? Absolutely. Can I remind the minister of the very first line of the Service Canada website, which stipulates, "Employment insurance provides temporary financial assistance to unemployed Canadians who have lost their job through no fault of their own while they look for work or upgrade their skills".

The bill before us today would do absolutely nothing to support that mission statement. It would provide financial assistance to not a single, unemployed Canadian. It fails completely to address the urgent needs of the at least 1.4 million Canadians without work, without a paycheque and, increasingly, without hope.

On this file, the only leadership is coming from this side of the House of Commons under the leadership of the member for Outremont, the leader of the official opposition. We are the only party that offers policies to extend access to EI benefits, not to limit it further.

When will the government listen to Canadians, as we have done, and undertake a strategic review of the entire program, with a view to: extending EI stimulus measures until unemployment falls to pre-recession levels; eliminating the two week waiting period; returning the qualifying period to a minimum of 360 hours of work, regardless of the regional rate of unemployment; raising the rate of benefits to 60%; and improving the quality and monitoring of training and retraining?

That is the kind of support unemployed Canadians, and the Canadian economy, needs from the government.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague's comments with some interest. I want to note that the bill does not actually fix one of the most egregious problems of the EI system, and that is its discrimination toward women.

Women are the only sex that I am aware that can have babies. As a result, women are the only sex that can take maternity leave, and in large measure, of the maternity and parental leave, most of them are taken by women.

I am aware of at least six in one of the workplaces I dealt with where women had taken maternity leave and did not have time to accumulate enough hours before their permanent layoff from their employer. As a result, those women, in my view, were being discriminated against. It was only women who took maternity leave and therefore those women were not eligible for regular benefit when they were subsequently laid off from the employer. They were back

at work for a month or a month and a half, so they did get a few hours in, but they were not able to collect regular benefits.

Would the member like to comment on the lack of government response to this issue?

• (1620)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, the member points to one of the most serious flaws with our current EI system.

As I mentioned in part of my speech, I introduced Bill C-362, which we have called "EI for moms". The member is quite right, we cannot currently stack EI benefits. If individuals are on maternity leave and their company closes down, they are no longer eligible for EI as their colleagues would have been.

It is not just true for maternity leave and regular benefits, it is also true for sick benefits, for all special benefits: none of them can be stacked. It is one of the most serious flaws in the EI program. I am really appreciative that my colleague pointed out the particularly discriminatory impact of those policies on women in our country.

We had incredible support for Bill C-362. As I said earlier in my speech, the minister has poached some parts of that bill and incorporated it into Bill C-44. I would strongly encourage her to also adopt the rest of the bill.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member went on about all of the deficiencies that she sees in EI, but did not really talk to the real crux of the issue, which is Bill C-44 and the great work it would do toward supporting families.

I have first hand experience with this. Neighbours of mine had a child who was ill from getting cancer treatments for seven years. The family could not find any support in the system at that time. They pleaded with me, as their member of Parliament and as their neighbour and friend, to find a way to get solutions to help support families that were dealing with children who were critically ill and often terminal so they would not have to worry about the financial flows from day to day.

I want to ensure that the member will support the bill because it takes the right approach to support families that deal with so many circumstances if their children are ill, injured or fall victim to violent crimes.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure how to respond to my colleague. I know you were listening to my speech intently and will know that the first half of my speech dealt specifically with the impact of Bill C-44 on parents of critically ill, missing or murdered children. I am sorry the member missed that part of my speech. I said at the outset, as well, that we would support the bill.

At this point I am looking for some direction from the Chair. Should I ask for unanimous consent to redo the first half of my speech so the hon. member can have the benefit of that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Government Orders

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments and the view shared by my colleague. As she indicated from the outset, the NDP will be supporting the bill at this time.

As the minister indicated in her comments, and as has been brought up by the Conservative members, the NDP did not support the ways and means motion on that. Obviously, there was something in the bill at that time that was of concern.

Perhaps my colleague could share with the House what the concerns were around the bill initially, because it has a tremendous impact for those who will be impacted by it. Therefore, could she share some of the concerns around the ways and means motion and why her party did not support it at the time?

• (1625)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question. The member is quite right that this bill will have a significantly positive impact on those 6,000 estimated Canadians who will be impacted by the changes under Bill C-44.

With respect to the financing of the bill, I think I was clear in my speech on the matter. In their 2011 platform, the Conservatives promised that the financing of the bill would come from general revenues. Instead we see in the bill that the money will now come out of the EI fund. The EI fund is not the government's money. It is easy for the government to offer new programs when it does not have to pay for them.

The way Bill C-44 is written now, the support for parents of critically ill children would come out of a program that was initially designed to help unemployed Canadians. That mission has been completely lost in the bill. Therefore, we are concerned about how the government is proceeding with financing the new initiatives in Bill C-44.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for her tenacity and dedication to the issues that she cares deeply about and has been working on for many years.

I would also like to commend her good grace in noting that there is parliamentary work to be done and suggesting that we support this bill so that the committee can discuss it further. She is a shining example of how we should operate: acknowledging good work when we see it and refining it in committee.

We all know that the members opposite see the employment insurance fund as a treasure chest to be plundered at will. Does my colleague believe that the Conservatives' decision to use the EI fund to provide support for families with gravely ill children suggests they would like to clean the fund out completely?

[*English*]

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely believe that it is our role as parliamentarians here to protect the integrity of the EI fund. Those people who were watching not just the debate this afternoon but who perhaps tuned in a little earlier during question period will have seen us take on the Conservative government about the way it has treated two pilot programs with respect to EI. One is to

stop all help for seasonal workers. The other is to make it more difficult for people on EI to make a bit of extra money while they are on claim. That was the working while on claim pilot project. We have been going hard after those issues, because they impact literally thousands of Canadians.

The member is quite right in saying that it is up to us to hold the government to account for those changes and that it is up to us to maintain the integrity of the system. That is why we exposed the fact that both successive Liberal and Conservative governments have stolen \$54 billion out of the EI fund to pay for corporate tax cuts, to pay for debt reduction. It was not their money. That money was there to help unemployed Canadians.

Members can imagine the program expansion that could have been funded with \$54 billion. Instead, it went to corporate tax cuts. What did we learn from Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of Canada? We learned that businesses are not even investing that money to create jobs. They are hoarding that money, and he called it "dead money".

That is why we need a strong official opposition like the one we have under the member for Outremont to challenge the government on its handling of this very important EI system.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to joining and contributing to this debate. As I indicated earlier in my question to the minister, the Liberal Party will be supporting this bill. We see it as a positive gesture in that it will have a positive impact on Canadians who are in a very traumatic position, who are battling and going through some great personal challenges. For Canadians who are facing such hardship and facing such emotional, physical, mental and spiritual pain, the anguish they go through in these types of situations should never be compounded by a further financial burden.

This bill would certainly go toward that. I know my friend and fellow member of the Standing Committee on Human Resources and Skills Development, the member for Brant, is going to speak on this issue. I know he can speak first-hand and I look forward to his intervention and comments today on this piece of legislation.

As I tried to impart to the minister at the time, it is a bit strange that we are debating this today and then we are invited to the technical briefing on the bill later this evening. We are debating what we think the bill is going to include and how it will impact Canadians and how it plays out, but we have seen that the track record of the government is not great on actually saying and implying it is going to improve on a particular issue in a particular situation. The old adage is that the devil is in the details, and when those details finally unfold, we see that there are unintended consequences or that the consequences have such a negative impact on a group that it makes no sense whatsoever for the government to have proceeded in this manner.

Government Orders

My colleague from Hamilton Mountain made note of the working while on claim provisions. I would like to welcome the New Democratic Party to that discussion, because we started that when the House opened. We have been pounding that one, so it was nice to see NDP members getting engaged today and giving it the old college try. We appreciate the support, but we have been hammering all last week on it. It was probably the article in *The Globe and Mail* that finally sparked them to see that there might be something going on there that they might want to pay attention to.

What we have seen from the minister and her handling of the working while on claim file would make the NFL replacement officials blush with competency. Whatever took place through the genesis of that bill, whatever is going on there, there are people being hurt, and that is the part about the devil being in the details. That is why we look forward to the technical briefing. That is why we support sending the bill to the committee.

This bill impacts 6,000 people. This is an important piece of legislation, an important piece of assistance. An estimated 6,000 people will benefit from this change. We will go through this at committee.

The same cannot be said about the other changes, because they impact 850,000 Canadians. When we look at the unemployed, we see they number 1.4 million, but 850,000 Canadians received some type of support through the EI program last year, and they would be impacted by the changes made by the government.

● (1630)

Again, I do not know if there is a great deal of trust between Canadians and the Conservative government. The minister is now saying that the best way to support this program is through the EI system. However, she is clearly on the record in response to an announcement made prior to the last election about a family benefits package, much of which is in the bill here, when she said that there are other options for people trying to care for loved ones, including the fact that “most employees do have vacation leave that they can use.”

She felt that people could take vacation to accommodate some of the time needed to care for those loved ones in a tough situation. This shift in her position might cause some concern, and members can understand why we look forward to the technical briefing.

Again, it is great to come in and read a speech, but it is about understanding the files. When there are a couple of variables within the files, all Canadians want to know is the truth about how it will impact them.

The minister went out on a nationwide public relations initiative this year to sell the working while on claim program. However, even today in the House, she responded to a question posed by the member for Bourassa by saying that under the old system, workers were only allowed to earn \$75. However, that was the minimum; members know that it is 40% of their EI earnings, so if a person was earning maximum dollars, they would be able to earn \$194 before dollar one was clawed back.

I think that is about the minister not understanding the files. She can read her eloquent speech here, but I look forward to sitting down

with the bureaucrats to see how this would impact Canadians. I will put my trust in the bureaucrats.

The minister gave two examples today in answer to questions and cited examples in relation to someone working for three days. However, when the EI benefit variables are changed and the maximum EI benefit is used, in both of her examples they would have lost under the new program as well. She is being a little cute with some of her answers, and totally disingenuous.

We look forward to going to the technical briefing this evening and quizzing the officials on how they see this rolling out and the impact it would have on Canadians. Whenever we work with and make changes in the EI program, it does have an impact.

I think the comment that was made by the member for Hamilton Mountain was worthwhile. If somebody utilized this program within the EI system, used 35 weeks of leave, but was then unfortunate enough to lose their job, what happens then? Certainly a stand-alone program may make more sense in this particular situation.

My friend and colleague for Sydney—Victoria came forward with a private member's bill in the last Parliament. It was supported by the NDP and the Bloc, but it was not supported by the Conservatives. The bill was for the extension of EI benefits for those facing additional hardship.

● (1635)

Right now, the benefit runs for 15 weeks. However, there are a number of different statistics. The representatives from the Canadian Breast Cancer Society had talked about the normal period, especially if somebody is going through chemotherapy, running about 35 weeks. To have one's benefits run out after 15 weeks poses an incredible hardship on somebody who is battling a disease like cancer. Representations were also made by the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation.

When the bureaucrats, the people who work at Service Canada and the employment insurance offices, have to phone somebody who is fighting a catastrophic illness and tell them that his or her benefits are running out and can no longer continue, they know the hardship and the stress that they are placing on that person. They advocated for the changes that were being advocated by the private member's bill put forward by colleague from Sydney—Victoria.

It comes down to those types of choices. It comes down to who we are going to be able to provide for. I think it would have been a worthwhile initiative to support that bill.

There are some concerns, even with the EI, about the information we are using when we make these decisions. It has been said that the Conservatives are not that interested in facts or science. They never want to let the facts interfere with sound ideology. My colleague from Malpeque says the only science they believe in is political science.

Government Orders

In 2010, the EI tracking survey conducted by Human Resources and Skills Development shed some light on the inadequacy of the current 15 weeks off. In that survey, 16% of respondents who took time off work due to illness required 13 to 25 weeks off, while 20% required over 25 weeks off from their workplace. There is evidence from medical stakeholders that reaffirms that these timelines are pretty standard.

That tells us that the current EI system takes us part way, but not all the way.

This bill is a good first step, I think, and it is a nice gesture. However, I think there is so much more that can be done.

Other nations recognize that. European Union countries, Lithuania, Japan, all look at 22 weeks for sick benefits, while we are still at 15. Again, 22 weeks is not enough but it is closer to the standards that are being advocated by stakeholders that know these issues.

There are some other changes that could be made. There are worthwhile changes being put forward in Bill C-44, but there are other changes that could be made.

I am sure all members of the House have had an opportunity to work with and to listen to people who suffer from multiple sclerosis. My office manager is an MS patient. She is a tremendous lady, but there are peaks and valleys. There are times where she is able to work full out but then there are times where she needs rest. It is the disease that dictates how much energy one has on a particular day. It is a terrible affliction.

If there were some flexibility within the EI system then we could accommodate a worker who is skilled and trained and wants to work, and who works in a job that has some flexibility within it.

●(1640)

The government talks at great lengths about skills shortages and the need for skilled labour. Someone could be dealing with MS for many years and still be a valuable contributing member of the workforce. If there is a bit of accommodation through the EI program, then that is a good fit for everyone. It is a good fit for the person, it is a good fit for the employer and it is a good fit for the economy.

Bill C-44 is a good step. It is an important gesture and a good gesture, but much can still be done within the system without costing a lot to the system, especially trying to accommodate those who suffer from MS. It just makes so much more sense to try to make sure that the person is a productive and contributing member of the community.

We on this side of the House have stated before that we understand the impact on these families. It is an intense expectation on these families. It is one that no family wants to go through. When people are dealing with an illness, when parents are dealing with a son or daughter's affliction, we as Canadians are compassionate enough to do what we can to help them through that situation. I think Bill C-44 would at least go some ways toward that.

My party and I look forward to supporting the bill.

●(1645)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that the Liberals will be supporting the legislation. The NDP have obviously been shamed by the Canadian people into supporting what is a very good bill, a bill which would help a lot of Canadian families.

Obviously we all hope that we are never put in that situation, but thankfully the government has brought the bill forward.

The member served in a Liberal government and in an opposition that cut two deals with the NDP. One was to keep the Liberals in power over a budget bill and the second was a coalition agreement. NDP members always talk about how the Liberals raided the EI fund. I am wondering if in either of those two deals, the NDP ever made it a condition that the funds the Liberals took from the EI system would be put back into the EI system. Did the NDP ever make that a condition or is it the usual NDP garbage of saying one thing and doing exactly the opposite?

The NDP has absolutely nothing. Those members do not care about Canadians, workers or the economy. They will do anything to get from that side to this side of the House and they know Canadians will never let them do that.

Could my colleague tell me if the NDP ever asked to have that money restored back to the EI fund?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, I have been here 12 years now and that is the best question that I have ever been asked.

For my colleague's benefit, the fact is that the EI fund was never a stand-alone fund and all Canadians realize that now. The Liberals took power in 1993 and the unemployment rate was 12.5%. Let us remember that. The unemployment rate in this country in 1992-93 was 12.5%. There was a stand-alone EI fund that was totally bankrupt. Under the Auditor General's advice, the operation of the EI program fell into general revenues. It fell into the general pot.

Under the stewardship of the Liberals the unemployment rate went from 12.5% down to 6.5%, inflation went down from double digits to single digits, interest rates at 12.5% went down to prime. More people were paying into the EI program then because more people were working and fewer people were drawing money out. Obviously there was a surplus but that was then and this is now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about commitment, or rather a lack of commitment. My colleague said that the bill would extend the number of weeks of employment insurance for people who are seriously ill. For example, people like Marie-Hélène Dubé, who lives in Laval, if I am not mistaken. A big campaign was organized in that regard.

My colleague spoke about a bill from the last Parliament, but there was another one in this Parliament. After the last election, we had the opportunity to vote on it. Once again, only the Conservatives were opposed.

Government Orders

I would like my colleague to tell me why the government is proposing changes when, at the same time, it has no clear vision about improving things for other people. This seems to be a problematic tendency on the part of this government. Changes are made to the immigration system, but other things are left out. The same can be said about employment insurance.

I would like my colleague to elaborate on this very troubling problem.

• (1650)

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, indeed, I remember that campaign. My colleague from Sydney—Victoria already had his bill positioned and it was on the table. There were two ladies who worked in his office, one who had fairly severe heart problems and the other who was battling cancer. The bill was sort of inspired by those in his office and by speaking with officials. However, I recall very well the campaign by the young lady.

EI is about making decisions. It is like the tax structure. The Conservatives have boutique tax credits that cause people to question whether they really impact any behavioural change. With EI, we want the system to work for the vast majority of Canadians who lose their jobs and are out of work. That is what it is there for. Beyond that, we are compassionate people in a compassionate nation and we have to care for and provide for those going through those horrific situations.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member if he was given any explanation by the House leader, the minister or the parliamentary secretary as to why the debate was this afternoon when, indeed, the technical briefing is not until this evening.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, we were not given any indication as to why. The cart arrived and then we got notice of the horse shortly thereafter.

I look forward to meeting with the bureaucrats tonight. We will get an appreciation for where the areas of concern are going to be and we will have an opportunity to quiz those who deal with this day in and day out. Frankly, what we are getting from the minister is a mile wide and an inch deep, and that is not unique at all to this situation.

We know about the famous letter to *The Guardian* newspaper, in which the minister said that 80% of EI recipients were getting their cheques in 21 days, when they were actually getting notice of either payment or non-payment. It is tough putting groceries in the fridge with a notice of non-payment. For some reason, Sobeys does not cash notices of non-payment.

We will see the officials tonight. We anticipate a good exchange of ideas and we will be better briefed tomorrow. It would have been more advantageous to have it prior to this debate today so we could quiz the minister. However, since that is not the case, we will take those questions to the bureaucrats tonight and pass them on to the minister maybe in subsequent question periods.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for almost answering that question. He can help me if I am wrong, but I think what he did say is that the NDP never once talked

about this when it was cutting deals to keep the Liberal government in power, or when it was cutting deals to try to circumvent the popular will of the Canadian people when they voted to put this government into office. Principle is not something the NDP actually stands on. The NDP members like to make great speeches that they do not really believe in, but when push comes to shove it is all about their trying to get on this side of the House. They do not actually stand for anything.

I say to the NDP that it is probably not a strategy that works very well because look what it did for the Liberals when they stood for nothing. They got into that little corner of the House.

Could the hon. member reiterate for me if he believes this is a good policy. Does he and the Liberal Party believe that this will actually help Canadian families who are in need? Is he and the Liberal Party, unlike the NDP which always makes its decision before actually reading anything, willing to work with the government to actually improve the situation of Canadian families across the country?

• (1655)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, the member is asking me to say something nice about the piece of legislation, but I will wait for the technical briefing. I stuck my neck out. I actually believed the Minister of Human Resources when she said she was going to increase the amount Canadians could earn working while on claim from 40% to 50%. She said nothing about taking away the allowable earnings. She said nothing about that at the time. That came out six months later.

When she came out with a grand plan, I said “kudos” to the minister. My colleagues in the committee would know I did. I said it made sense, that it was a good pilot project to go from 40% to 50%. How they jiggled that up, I am not sure. They must have people staying awake at night wondering how they can stick it to the most vulnerable in our country.

If we go to the briefing tonight and the bureaucrats can answer our questions satisfactorily, then I might come back and say yes, it is good for Canadians.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today in support of Bill C-44, the helping families in need act.

Before I make my formal remarks, I would like to extend my appreciation to both the NDP and Liberal Parties for their support of this bill, even though at this point it sounds like there may be some conditions around that. I think this is a great example of what some parents and groups across the nation consider a revolutionary change and, certainly, a compassionate new way to recognize those most in need.

The bill contains three measures that will help Canadian families at a time when they most need it. These include EI benefits for parents of critically ill children, enhanced access to sickness benefits for parents receiving EI parental benefits, and federal income support for parents of murdered or missing children.

Government Orders

Thankfully, we have a Prime Minister and government that understand that families are the building blocks of our society and recognize that parents should have the option of being with their children at a time of crisis, without fear of losing their job or financial security.

I would also highlight the work of the member for Leeds—Grenville in his private member's bill on this matter in the last two parliaments, which acted as a catalyst for these changes to be made in this very compassionate bill. As well I would recognize the member for Selkirk—Interlake who moved a motion in 2006 on this topic and has been a determined advocate for parents of critically ill children.

Today presents a rare opportunity for me as a member of Parliament to connect with an issue so personal and so close and to tell a story that I have never told in public before. I stand today to speak for the many families whose lives will suddenly be turned upside down and irreversibly changed when told that their child has a life-threatening critical illness, or has been murdered or is missing and cannot be found.

The Canadian Cancer Society reports that today and every day in Canada four families will receive the news that their child has life-threatening cancer diagnosis. That is four today, four tomorrow and four every day.

Twenty-four years ago my family and I received the news that our two-year old son was critically ill with a very high-risk, life-threatening leukemia. The odds of his survival were slim.

The news was delivered on a Saturday afternoon, and our son was transferred immediately from our local hospital to the McMaster oncology unit in Hamilton where toxic chemicals were injected into his body to arrest the blood cells gone wild. Remission happened two weeks later, and an aggressive two-year chemotherapy and radiation protocol was put into place after the McMaster team of doctors determined that is what would be necessary to cure our son.

We spent over 270 days in hospital over those two years. Our son went through cranial radiation, spinal cord injections, and toxic chemicals were regularly put into his body. However, there was always one parent by his side. We quickly realized that we were not unique: there were 8 to 12 other families at the McMaster oncology unit at any point in time, at different points in the process.

It is true that cancer does not discriminate. It does not discriminate by social situation, economic situation or, for that matter, any situation that people find themselves in.

I was self-employed and, frankly, I had never had the opportunity to participate in EI. It was never available up until the time our government changed it to enable self-employed people to become part of the EI program. Now our government has set the platform for self-employed people to become part of the EI program. Even then, some 24 years ago, that was not possible. Our government corrected that.

• (1700)

We also learned at the time that for those with life-threatening conditions, much more is needed for them to get better than just

round the clock medical care. Our children need the comfort of their parents and their family beside them.

Our son Jordan is a miracle child. Now 26, he is here with us today in Ottawa, a cancer survivor after having beaten the odds. He is a unique young man because, like many who received the same treatment protocol, he suffered brain damage as a result of the combination of cranial radiation and a very aggressive chemotherapy used in his treatment protocol. There are many families who face such circumstances and no parent should have to choose between a job and supporting a loved one.

I can tell many stories of the families we met at the McMaster oncology unit. However, I will tell one that has stuck with our family ever since we spent two years at that unit. It is the story of a 16-year-old girl who was in the room next to our son's. There were times we could go home and then back. As I said, we spent over 270 days in hospital. However, every time we went back, she would be on the ward, experiencing yet another trial of a bone marrow transplant or some other experimental drug to try to save her from this dreaded disease. The one time we were there, her entire family had gathered around her because all of the treatment options had been exhausted for her. There she was, a beautiful young girl aged 16, with her family around her saying goodbye to her because the end was near. This is not an unusual story, as there are children of many ages who are being treated today at many hospitals across this country.

As we have said here today, this would immediately help 6,000 families. It will help everyone as it goes forward. When we are told by the opposition that their support is conditional, we say that it should not be conditional. This should have happened a long time ago under previous governments, for all the people who are currently experiencing this.

What Sharon Ruth said at the announcement last week about her daughter and her situation absolutely parallels our experience and that of many other families. She has been such a strong advocate through the years, via the member for Leeds—Grenville, to bring it to where it is today. Therefore, criticism from the opposition saying that this is conditional is absolutely unacceptable to my mind.

As was also mentioned, the helping families in need act will also provide federal income support for parents of murdered or missing children. I would be remiss if I did not highlight the work of my caucus colleague, Senator Boisvenu, for his tireless advocacy on behalf of victims of crime. It is based on his personal experience from the tragic loss of his daughter, who was murdered. He took up this matter and his advocacy work has led to this part of this proposal. For far too long, families who are touched by a traumatic circumstance of a criminal act committed against a family member have not received the support they need and deserve. As Senator Boisvenu would say, the unique situations families face when seeking justice within the criminal justice system require a unique measure to support them during such a trying time. These measures expand on and complement other government supports for parents, many of which have been strengthened by our economic action plan.

Government Orders

● (1705)

Our government recognizes that it is difficult for working Canadians to balance their job and their desire to care for family members with a serious illness or disability, or cope with the trauma of a missing or murdered child. I personally cannot imagine what receiving that news would be like.

I am hopeful that the opposition will be supporting this legislation as they said they would, because this legislation needs to be passed quickly to meet our government's ambitious timelines for implementation.

I cannot put it better than Sharon Ruth, the mother of a cancer survivor. She spoke last week when we announced this new bill. She said the following:

My hope is that this legislation passes quickly and without incident. I know all too well what it's like to suffer the emotional and financial devastation of a child with a cancer diagnosis. The sooner our government can bring relief to those thousands of families across Canada currently navigating this life-altering journey, juggling jobs, bills, treatment and hope, the better.

It is pretty hard to argue with that. I call on all members of the House to support the speedy passage of Bill C-44, so we can deliver this much needed help to families in incredibly difficult circumstances.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his comments and the quite touching stories and family histories he gave us.

While we do support the notion of the bill, I think some on the other side might agree that this is only the beginning of the changes to EI that are necessary to make it easier for families in this country.

For example, women are discriminated against because if they are receiving maternity benefits, they cannot qualify for regular EI if they are laid off after they return from maternity leave.

The Liberals brought in a measure which lowered the rate payable from 60% to 55%. It was supposed to be temporary because of a temporary blip in the economy, but it has been there ever since and no government has ever done anything to put it back to what it was.

Would the member comment on these two issues and whether these things need to be fixed in the EI system as well?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, today's discussion is about a totally different subject matter than the hon. member brought up.

However, if he looks at the track record of what our government has done since we have taken office to help improve employment insurance for those who are in true need, he will see about six steps to set the platform to where we are today. I alluded to one in my speech, which is with respect to people who are self-employed. They are typically small business owners like myself. I had a small company with a workforce of about 15 to 20 individuals, yet I could not be part of an EI program. Our government corrected that.

Our government has gone on to provide more benefits, greater benefits, with the things we have done to employment insurance since we have been elected than any of the previous governments that I have watched through my lifetime.

● (1710)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank our colleague for sharing his very personal and moving story and how it applies to the legislation before us.

Would the member please describe the program itself, the new benefit, how long it lasts, who qualifies, and how it is different from the compassionate care benefit?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, it is proposed, if the legislation passes, to be a 35-week additional benefit of income support for parents over and above their regular EI benefits to get them through that critical period of time when helping their child get through a life-threatening illness. The key element is that it will add to the current EI protocol by 35 weeks.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Brant for outlining what has to be a very difficult personal story.

My problem with the legislation and some of the comments made today is the experience we have had with the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development. We had a debate in the House yesterday and the minister in question period today came back with different examples than she has been using all along. The minister said that everyone would benefit and we know now that is not the truth.

We have not had a briefing on this legislation yet; it will not happen until tonight. I know what the legislation says is wonderful and in glowing terms. In fact, I agree with what it says in the summary of the bill. Many of us have been advocating for a long time that the sick leave under the current EI legislation is not adequate for MS, cancer and many other cases.

Could the member give us some assurance that at the end of the day we are not going to get caught short by the minister again, who obviously does not know her files, who put previous changes into the act which were found to be wrong? There are people suffering in my region as a result of that.

Can the member give us any assurance that what the minister claims is accurate?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the sentiment of the question, but it is quite a characterization he has given to a minister who has actually stepped up to the plate and held an election commitment. Let me read what Dan Demers who represents the Canadian Cancer Society said at the press conference:

I think it's critically important that we acknowledge that in the last election, this government made a commitment to parents and families who are caring for children in the most difficult situations we can imagine and today, we're not only seeing the government take action to fulfill this commitment, but they're moving in this town at lightning speed—

That is in total conflict to what the member just described. The minister realized there was a need, created the legislation to take care of that need, and put it together while being advised by people like me and Sharon Ruth who are in the situation.

I assure the member that we have this right. This is the right step to take and it is because of the commitment of the minister.

Government Orders

•(1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, similar bills have been introduced, some of them even by Conservatives. Several bills about this issue were introduced in previous Parliaments. Other bills have focused on other issues, other important changes that should be made to employment insurance. Earlier, I asked another colleague a question about this. Who could forget Marie-Hélène Dubé, who urged the government to extend the employment insurance period for people with critical illness?

We support these measures, but we think it has taken too long. This seems a little piecemeal. It is as though the minister is trying to make us all forget the many disappointments there have been so far on the employment insurance front.

Can my colleague tell us, first, why it took the government so long to introduce these measures, and second, when the Conservatives will do more to help the people who have to resort to the employment insurance system?

[*English*]

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, the member's comments and question are somewhat misdirected. We are witnessing a government bill which was introduced in previous Parliaments in private members' bills and motions. He is absolutely correct about that.

The Conservative government has said we need to take the first steps in making sure we provide the supports that families who are in true need have to have, so they do not have to worry about the economics of their situation.

In previous Parliaments those motions were opposed. The opposition was stalling and not allowing this kind of legislation to go forward.

That is the history of this. We are taking action.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to congratulate my colleague from Brant not only on a great speech but on the amazing care and compassion I have witnessed his family give to Jordan over the years. I had the privilege of meeting Jordan yesterday in the lobby.

My colleague outlined a number of the changes that have occurred in terms of self-employed individuals, which our EI system now recognizes, as well as the number of weeks that are provided. There is one key element that is different and which was discussed in the parliamentary committee on compassionate care. It was the change to the definition of when people could use the EI benefit being the parent of a terminally ill child or the parent of a gravely or critically ill child.

I wonder if my colleague could comment on how important that is to parents and how important it would have been had that been in place when his family faced its very difficult situation.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, what is most critical is the continuity of parents being with their child throughout this. The child could be less than a year old up to 18 years old. Families and parents need the ability to focus on the continuity of the care of the child and making sure everything possible is done to create the circumstances to make the child well.

I believe that is what the member was asking. This bill accommodates that.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I recognize the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot to resume debate, I must inform her that I will have to interrupt her at 5:30 p.m., at the end of the time provided for government orders.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise here today to speak to this bill. Before I begin, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time.

My parents know what it is like to have a sick child at home. It was very difficult for my family at the time, and not only in terms of finances. It is especially worthwhile that the bill provides something for parents in this situation.

We in the NDP support Bill C-44 to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Employment Insurance Act, the Income Tax Act and the Income Tax Regulations. These new measures will allow workers to take leave and receive employment insurance benefits if their child were to become critically ill or die, or disappear as the probable result of a crime.

Bill C-44 makes a number of amendments to the Canada Labour Code in order to increase the amount of leave parents can take, which I think is a very good thing. We do not always disagree with the members opposite. The bill allows parents to extend their maternity and parental leave by the number of weeks that their child was hospitalized, and to extend their parental leave by the number of sick days taken during the parental leave, and the same goes for time spent serving in the Canadian Forces reserve.

It grants unpaid leave of up to 37 weeks for parents of gravely ill children. It also grants 104 weeks of unpaid leave to parents of children who are killed as a result of a crime and 52 weeks of unpaid leave to parents of children who disappear as a result of a crime. It also extends the period of unpaid leave that can be taken as a result of illness or injury without the fear of being laid off after 17 weeks, which is also worthwhile.

I must point out that the Canadian Caregiver Coalition congratulated the federal government on the new, extraordinary employment insurance benefit that it proposed for parents who take a leave of absence to care for a child who is critically ill or injured. We are talking here about parents but, in all cases, caregivers are the invisible backbone of our health care system. We must not ignore that fact, and we must help these people. They take on various key roles in caring for children, parents or other family members who need assistance as a result of an injury, a long-term illness or a disability. The coalition estimates that approximately 5 million Canadians provide unpaid care to their loved ones, many of whom are their children or other family members.

Private Members' Business

We support this initiative, which is designed to help families of murdered or missing children so that they do not have to worry about money. When parents have a sick child at home, they do not need the added burden of worrying about how they will make ends meet, how they will pay for food, their rent and their child's medication, which is extremely expensive. This is a worthwhile measure for parents and for sick children who need their parents.

I would like to speak a little bit about my own experience. I had a little sister who was sick when I was young. My mother was able to stay with her, but how many times have I seen parents who are heartbroken at having to leave their child alone at the hospital because they have to go to work? It is an indescribable feeling. I am not a mother; I can only imagine what I would be like.

We support this initiative to extend parental leave and to provide financial benefits to parents of sick children, whose priority is to be full-time parents.

● (1720)

We also support the new right to combine special employment insurance benefits. Thus, a parent who becomes ill or is injured while on parental leave will not have to give up time with their child. Parents with sick children often suffer from burnout.

Support for this bill has nothing to do with ideology or partisan politics. It is a matter of helping the families who need help, both parents and children, since we know that when we help parents, we automatically help their children.

However, I find it deplorable that these measures do not address the more challenging issues with employment insurance, such as Canadians' lack of access to employment insurance benefits. We have been working on this for a long time. We want a comprehensive reform of the employment insurance system.

These are worthwhile measures, but we could do even more. We want employment insurance to be accessible to and effective for all Canadians.

As for the provisions that will enable parents to apply for sickness benefits while receiving parental benefits, the minister estimated that this could help about 6,000 Canadians a year. Although I think this is a good measure—I have said that from the beginning—about 870,000 unemployed Canadians are unable to receive regular employment insurance benefits. Moreover, this bill does not address some important issues, such as the fact that about 500,000 Canadians received regular employment insurance benefits in July 2012, while there were over one million unemployed Canadians that same month. This means that more than 800,000 unemployed Canadians were not entitled to employment insurance. In fact, fewer than 4 out of 10 unemployed workers receive employment insurance, which is the lowest rate ever.

For example, in Saint-Hyacinthe, in my riding, the current unemployment rate is 6.7%, and in Acton Vale, also in my riding, the rate is 7.9%.

In the past year, there has been no real change in Saint-Hyacinthe's unemployment rate. On the same day last year, the unemployment rate was practically the same. This year in the winter period, when there is usually an increase in the unemployment rate due to seasonal

workers, there was an unusual spike in the unemployment rate. The same phenomenon was also noted in the Acton Vale region. These are rather eloquent examples of the problems related to employment insurance.

● (1725)

It seems that unemployment rates are not declining, which means that more and more people must resort to employment insurance. In its current form, the employment insurance program is not accessible or effective.

The measures in Bill C-44 are good and might be effective, but I do not believe that they benefit enough people. In fact, parents could find themselves in this situation and not be entitled to employment insurance.

It goes without saying that we support these measures because we believe that they could help alleviate the suffering of some parents in need. Unfortunately, these measures will not help enough people.

In conclusion, we will support these measures, but there must be adequate funding for them. We need to completely reform employment insurance and include such measures.

● (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot will have five minutes for questions and comments when the House resumes debate on this motion.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

The House resumed from September 19 consideration of Bill C-350, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (accountability of offenders), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage of Bill C-350, under private members' business.

Call in the members.

● (1800)

[*English*]

And the bells having rung:

The Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 1.

A negative vote on Motion No. 1 necessitates the question being put on Motion No. 2.

● (1810)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was agreed to on the following division:)

Private Members' Business

(Division No. 464)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
 Adler
 Albas
 Alexander
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambler
 Anders
 Andrews
 Armstrong
 Ashton
 Atamanenko
 Ayala
 Bateman
 Bellavance
 Benoit
 Bergen
 Bevington
 Blanchette
 Blaney
 Boivin
 Boughen
 Boutin-Sweet
 Braid
 Brison
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Butt
 Calandra
 Cannan
 Caron
 Casey
 Charlton
 Chisholm
 Chong
 Chow
 Clarke
 Clement
 Côté
 Cullen
 Daniel
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Day
 Del Mastro
 Dewar
 Doré Lefebvre
 Dubé
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dusseault
 Easter
 Fantino
 Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
 Flaherty
 Foote
 Fry
 Gallant
 Garrison
 Genest-Jourdain
 Gill
 Godin
 Goodale
 Gosal
 Gravelle
 Grogulé
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hawn
 Hiebert
 Hoback
 Hsu
 Hyer
 James
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lamoureux
 Larose
 Adams
 Aglukkaq
 Albrecht
 Allen (Welland)
 Allison
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Angus
 Ashfield
 Aspin
 Aubin
 Baird
 Bélanger
 Bennett
 Benskin
 Bernier
 Bezan
 Blanchette-Lamothe
 Block
 Borg
 Boulerice
 Brahma
 Breitzkreuz
 Brosseau
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooze
 Byrne
 Calkins
 Carmichael
 Carrie
 Cash
 Chicoine
 Chisu
 Choquette
 Christopherson
 Cleary
 Comartin
 Crowder
 Cuzner
 Davidson
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Dechert
 Devolin
 Dionne Labelle
 Dreeshen
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Dykstra
 Eyking
 Fast
 Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
 Fletcher
 Freeman
 Galipeau
 Garneau
 Genest
 Giguère
 Glover
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Gourde
 Grewal
 Harper
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hassainia
 Hayes
 Hillyer
 Holder
 Hughes
 Jacob
 Jean
 Karygiannis
 Kellway
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Lapointe
 Latendresse

Lauzon
 Lebel
 LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
 Leitch
 Leslie
 Liu
 Lobb
 Lunney
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Mai
 Masse
 May
 McCallum
 McGuinty
 McLeod
 Menzies
 Michaud
 Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
 Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nicholls
 Norlock
 Obhrai
 O'Neill Gordon
 Pacetti
 Paradis
 Payne
 Penashue
 Pilon
 Poilievre
 Quach
 Raitt
 Rathgeber
 Raynault
 Reid
 Richards
 Ritz
 Sandhu
 Scarpaleggia
 Scott
 Sellah
 Shea
 Shory
 Sims (Newton—North Delta)
 Smith
 Sorenson
 St-Denis
 Stoffer
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Tilson
 Toone
 Trost
 Trudeau
 Turnel
 Uppal
 Valeriote
 Van Loan
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Wilks
 Wong
 Yelich
 Young (Vancouver South)
 Laverdière
 LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
 Leaf
 Lemieux
 Leung
 Lizon
 Lukiwski
 MacAulay
 MacKenzie
 Marston
 Mathysen
 Mayes
 McColeman
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 Menegakis
 Merrifield
 Miller
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
 Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
 Mourani
 Murray
 Nash
 Nicholson
 Nunez-Melo
 O'Connor
 Opitz
 Papillon
 Patry
 Péclet
 Perreault
 Plamondon
 Preston
 Rae
 Rajotte
 Ravignat
 Regan
 Rempel
 Rickford
 Rousseau
 Saxton
 Schellenberger
 Seeback
 Sgro
 Shipley
 Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
 Sitsabaiesan
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Stewart
 Storseth
 Sullivan
 Thibeault
 Toet
 Tremblay
 Trotter
 Truppe
 Tweed
 Valcourt
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Warawa
 Watson
 Williamson
 Woodworth
 Young (Oakville)
 Zimmer— 292

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 carried.**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC)** moved that the bill be concurred in.**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Private Members' Business

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*Translation*]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

The House resumed from September 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-293, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (vexatious complainants), be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading of Bill C-293, under private members' business.

The question is on the motion.

• (1820)

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

(*Division No. 465*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Bélangier
Bennett	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Byrne	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Casey	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cuzner
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)

Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureux
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Murray	Obhrai
Norlock	O'Neill Gordon
O'Connor	Pacetti
Opitz	Payne
Paradis	Polievre
Penashue	Rae
Preston	Rajotte
Raitt	Regan
Rathgeber	Rempel
Reid	Rieckford
Richards	Saxton
Ritz	Schellenberger
Scarpaleggia	Sgro
Seeback	Shipley
Shea	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
Shory	
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
St-Denis	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Trudeau	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Valeriote
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 — 193	

NAYS

Members

Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Caron
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Freeman
Genest
Giguère
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hyer

Private Members' Business

Jacob
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Marston
Masse
May
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Ravignat
Rousseau
Scott
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Tumel— 101

Kellway
Larose
Laverdière
Leslie
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Nantel
Nicholls
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Quach
Raynault
Sandhu
Sellah
Sitsabaiesan
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay

Lizon
Lukiwski
MacAulay
McColeman
Merrifield
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Neill Gordon
Payne
Poilievre
Rathgeber
Seeback
Shiple
Storseth
Sweet
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Zimmer— 91

Lobb
Lunney
Mayes
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Miller
Norlock
Opitz
Penashue
Rajotte
Ritz
Shea
Sorenson
Strahl
Toet
Tweed
Van Loan
Warawa
Watson
Wong
Young (Oakville)

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SUBSECTION 223(1) OF THE CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from September 21 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion M-312 under private members' business.

The question is on the motion.

• (1830)

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

(Division No. 466)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Benoit
Bezan
Boughen
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Calkins
Carrie
Clarke
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Fast
Gallant
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lake
Lauzon

Albrecht
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Bergen
Block
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Cannan
Chong
Davidson
Devolin
Fantino
Galipeau
Goldring
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Jean
Karygiannis
Komarnicki
Lamoureux
Lemieux

Adams
Aglukkaq
Alexander
Andrews
Armstrong
Ashton
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bateman
Bellavance
Benskin
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brisson
Butt
Calandra
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Chisu
Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dewar
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dykstra
Eyking
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher
Freeman
Gameau
Genest
Giguère
Glover
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Holder
Hughes
Jacob
Kellway
Kerr
Lapointe
Latendresse

NAYS

Members

Adler
Albas
Allen (Welland)
Angus
Ashfield
Aspin
Aubin
Baird
Bélanger
Bennett
Bernier
Blanchette
Blaney
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Braid
Brosseau
Byrne
Carmichael
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Choquette
Christopherson
Clement
Côté
Cullen
Daniel
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dechert
Dionne Labelle
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Easter
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Foote
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Gill
Godin
Goodale
Gosal
Gravelle
Harper
Harris (St. John's East)
Hoback
Hsu
Hyer
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Larose
Laverdière

Lebel	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leef
Leitch	Leslie
Leung	Liu
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nicholson	Nunez-Melo
Obhrai	O'Connor
Pacetti	Papillon
Paradis	Patry
Pécllet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Preston	Quach
Rae	Raii
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Rousseau
Sandhu	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Smith
Sitsabaiesan	Stanton
Sopuck	Stewart
St-Denis	Sullivan
Stoffer	Tilson
Thibeault	Tremblay
Toone	Trudeau
Trottier	Turmel
Truppe	Valcourt
Uppal	Wallace
Valeriotte	Yelich
Wilks	
Young (Vancouver South)— 203	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

[English]

It being 6:34 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

● (1835)

REFLECTING THE REALITIES OF CANADIAN ARTISTS ACT

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP) moved that Bill C-427, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (income averaging for artists), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your new position. Having sought your counsel a number of times, I cannot think of anyone better to follow in the previous Deputy Speaker's footsteps.

I am more than pleased to stand in the House today as an artist and member of the House to speak to this bill. It is neither a new idea nor a particularly brilliant idea in and of itself, but it is an important idea.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-427, my private member's bill, is to introduce income tax averaging for artists. It is something that has been sought by the artistic community for over 15 years and is very important to the community.

I named the bill to recognize the value of artists and their realities because that is what the bill does. It takes into consideration the fluctuations and spikes in an artist's income at any given time and puts a value to that through the Income Tax Act.

I have divided Bill C-427 into two parts. The first part is the actual income tax averaging where an independent artist can take an income spike in any given year and average it over the previous two to five years.

This is important because the life of an artist is very unique. They trundle along at \$20,000 to \$40,000 a year for a period of time and then, through hard work and learning their craft, they may spike one year. In the case of actors, they may land a television series or a particularly plum role in a movie and their income can spike from \$30,000 to \$250,000. For the artist, it is a great thing and a recognition of their abilities, but tax-wise it creates a huge hit that they will have to carry for the next few years.

For example, when I was working on a series in South Africa, I was out of the country for approximately a year. When I came back, no one knew where I was. The series did not get picked up. I spent the following year rebuilding my career and not making as much as I was before the series.

The bill would make allowances for performers, visual artists or painters who spend years working on a sculpture or a series of paintings to sell in a given year. Hopefully the artists will be successful, but in some cases they go back down to zero because while they are working they are not generating income.

Bill C-427 would allow independent artists to average the proceeds from their work over the previous four years. Basically, they would be reassessed on their tax filings for the previous four years.

I need to point out that this bill is directed at what I call the journeymen artists. They are the artists who work every day hoping to make it big and sell well, which is the vast majority of artists in Canada. If they are blessed enough, they have that opportunity within a given year but it is not a consistent thing by any means. Bill C-427 is not aimed at the artists who have "hit it", as one might say, such as those artists who have a series going on for a number of years or whose work is consistently auctioned off at high amounts. The bill is not aimed at those people but rather at everyday working artists.

Private Members' Business

●(1840)

The second part of my bill is a tax exemption on the first \$10,000 of residual income. Residual income is any income that comes from royalties or residuals as in the film industry. Most people are familiar with the U.S. version of the residual system, which is that anytime a project plays or a show airs, the artists are paid for it. In Canada, it is a different system. In Canada, Canadian film and television actors are paid a percentage of their overall fee up front and the producers and/or distributors get to use that work for a period of two to four years before any back-end or residual payments are made. For the two to four year period nothing is coming in. After that, residuals start coming in.

I have received cheques for \$1.45 that cost me more to process than the actual cheque itself. However, that can range from \$2 to \$200. The importance of this money is that it is essentially found money. It is money that one cannot budget for because one has no idea how a project is going to sell afterward. In many cases, this residual income, which comes in throughout the year, is the difference between making ends meet at the end of the year financially and not. I am looking for a \$10,000 cap on money that comes in through that residual system to be tax free so it can be used by Canadian artists.

The economics of this are really quite simple. I had the bill costed. With both parts it is a total of approximately \$25 million, and that is rounded up. However, it is not a \$25 million loss to the coffers of government. It is \$25 million that goes back into the pockets of working artists who can then reinvest in themselves as small businesses. Make no mistake about it, actors, performers and artists are small businesses. They can reinvest in the economy through consumerism. That money comes back to the coffers through sales tax or just through investments. It is not a \$25 million loss that we are looking at.

One of the questions that came to me as I was discussing this with my colleagues was the aspect of fairness. There are other industries that are cyclical in nature, such as insurance brokers or real estate agents or farmers. The question is how do we do this for one sector of Canadians and not for the others. What I say is that labour in the world and in Canada has changed.

Once upon a time we could pocket everyone into a few different categories. They were labourers, management, professionals or something of this nature. Now things have become really specialized. Looking at the medical profession, we can no longer go to a GP. In fact, fewer people are going into general practice as doctors. They are specializing. We go to a heart specialist. We go to an ear, nose and throat person.

The labour landscape in North America or in the world, especially in Canada, is being specialized just as much. In the IT world, we have any number of different specialties that have their own unique problems. We need to begin to look at the labour market in that way.

For over 15 years now, artists have been looking for a recognition of that difference. The vast majority of independent artists do not have access to EI benefits or to pension plans. The cultural community had to create its own entities to take care of artists' futures. ACTRA has the Actra Fraternal Benefit Society, which is

open to everyone in the industry. That way, artists can put money toward RRSPs through the benefit society. They can put money toward extended health care through the benefit society.

●(1845)

The issue of credibility at banks is something that artists have had to face for many years and still have to face. A colleague of mine had two series under his belt and wanted to buy a house. To get a mortgage he had to get his father to co-sign. That led to the founding of CASCU, the Creative Arts Savings and Credit Union, which was founded by ACTRA Toronto and is now available to the artistic community with a better understanding of the lifestyle of people in the arts.

These are things that the community has done for itself and it is incredibly important that we begin to recognize the value of artists to our economy: \$85 billion from \$8 billion being put in. That is a very high return. We would like to see fairness in recognizing those aspects, that lack of accessibility to programs that other people have access to, and balance that out. Within the tax system itself there are easements that are given to people for various reasons and all of those reasons are warranted, be it child tax credits or investment credits. There are a number of different things such as the volunteer firefighters tax credit, which is a worthy tax credit but it is not available to people who are not volunteer firefighters.

To the question of fairness, income tax averaging is a way of finding that balance for a unique sector of the Canadian landscape, the artists, and creating a world for them where they are seen as legitimate contributors to the Canadian economy, to the Canadian identity and to the business landscape. As I said, artists are not recognized as small businesses and we need to get past that sense of artists being long-haired hippies sitting under a tree writing songs and saying, "Yo, hey, this is great". They are legitimate business people. They are legitimate contributors to the economy.

I will speak for every independent artist in this country when I say that all artists want to do is to be able to live a life from the fruits of their labour. They want to be able to raise a family. They want to be able to buy a car and put gas in it, although it is really expensive these days. They want to be able to buy a house, invest in their future. This income tax averaging act, in recognition of artists' realities, would be a step forward to help them do that.

On that note, I look forward to questions, comments and opinions.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought the mover of the bill did a great job, a very compassionate one. If he were not from the artistic community I would be really impressed, but I am simply just impressed. I have worked with him for quite some time now and it was a great speech. It is a worthy cause. I will not even call it a cause because it is not charity but something they would work for.

The bill is well thought-out and well reasoned, and we should all support it. I will certainly be voting for it for several reasons, but I would like to talk about income averaging. It is a concept that has been around for quite some time. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s income averaging was available for all people. Is there a certain model or way that other nations do this that we should look to as a good model to use in this Canadian context?

Private Members' Business

• (1850)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. The model that I used is based on the Australian model. There are a number of countries that have varying methods of income tax averaging. Some are income tax credits and others are through the model of reassessment of previous years.

I felt that this was the best model because I would not have to make any predictions about what am I going to earn next year or the year after, which could run into problems. Reassessing based on previous years is something that I felt was more acceptable to the community and something that was a little more predictable and workable in our Canadian context.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am trying to get a handle on what Bill C-427 would actually cost Canadians. We did not talk about that, but that is where I come from in a lot of ways. To bring in this legislation there would be a cost to taxpayers across Canada. Could the hon. member give me an idea of what the cost of the program would be over the year? We have done an estimation that the minimum would be \$25 million a year.

Has the member thought about where the money might come from, or what programs would be cut? Could he give us a hint as to how he would raise the money?

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right. We had it costed by the finance department through the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The combined rounded up total was approximately \$25 million.

Where would I find the money? Any budget that is put together by any government is based on a matter of choices. There is no concrete way that it needs to be done.

One has to consider the choices. For example, if we cut a thousand jobs, we may save money in one area, but we have to remember that there would be a thousand people who would have no income, and as such they would not be paying income tax. Those thousand people would not be purchasing because they would not have any buying power. No sales tax revenue would be generated. There would be nothing feeding the economy through consumerism. We may win a few dollars in one area and lose a few dollars in another. It is a matter of choices.

This would be a very modest cost. It would allow artists to become stronger participants in the economy and to reinvest in themselves as businesses and as families.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the outset, let me thank the hon. member for bringing this bill forward. I had the opportunity to work with him on the Canadian heritage committee for some time. I know he has moved on to other responsibilities with official languages, and I wish him well.

As Canadians we are very proud of our artists. Of course, this government is very proud of our artists. We are not talking just about people like Justin Bieber or Celine Dion, Canadian artists who are very well known internationally, but we are talking also about people in our local communities across the country.

In my riding there are two extraordinary singer-songwriters, one by the name of Quisha Wint and the other by the name of Dallas James. They are incredible singer-songwriters. Quisha, who has just released a spectacular album, is incredibly talented. Dallas James performed at my Christmas concert last year and really wowed the audience.

I think we would all agree that our artists and musicians across the country make us very proud. In many ways they are the custodians of Canada's identity abroad. They are the ones who help display everything that we as Canadians are proud of. At home we are extremely proud of the efforts they make on our behalf.

This government has been investing extraordinary amounts of money in the arts and culture since being elected. We understand how important the arts and culture sector is to our economy. That is why when we introduced our economic action plan, we did not just maintain funding for the arts, but we actually increased it. In the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, the government will continue to maintain these record levels of support. That is in contrast with what other jurisdictions around the world are doing with respect to arts and culture.

In the United States, for example, the National Endowment for the Arts runs on less money now than it did 20 years ago. Last year Arts Council England saw its funding cut by 30% and its operating costs cut in half. In Australia the budget for the Australia Council for the Arts is \$163 million per year. In Canada this year the budget for the Canada Council for the Arts is \$180 million.

In fact, since this government was elected, we decided to actually increase funding to the Canada Council for the Arts by 20%, which is the largest funding increase for the council in decades. We have kept that increase despite the fact that the world economy continues to be under some serious pressures. We made a commitment on this side of the House to bring our budget back into balance, to continue cutting taxes for Canadian families, to continue investing in job creation initiatives, but we have been able to maintain funding for the arts and culture, and we are extraordinarily proud of that.

Let us look at another example. Michigan recently passed a budget that reduced the state's arts budget by 80%.

We are not doing that. Through Canada's economic action plan, we have invested in theatres, festivals and museums. We have invested in the travelling exhibitions indemnification program. Our museums not only can bring in more important exhibits to our national museums, but the national museums can actually send more of their displays across Canada so that more Canadians can see the collections that we have and truly understand how important our national museums are to our country.

We have created two new national museums. The new Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg is well under way. It is an absolutely spectacular museum. Over the summer I had the extraordinary fortune to visit Pier 21 in Halifax. It is a museum that means a lot to me as both my parents came into Canada through Pier 21. To have been able to go back there as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and see where my parents came into Canada many years ago was truly an honour. This, too, is a spectacular museum.

Private Members' Business

We should all be very proud of the work that our national museums do in helping maintain our Canadian history.

• (1855)

We have continued to support the arts and culture sector. People are noticing.

The Canadian Opera Company said that the Canadian government has steadfastly demonstrated its dedication to developing a country where creativity and innovation are supported and that it remains extremely grateful for the government's continued support. It talked about this in the context of Canada's economic action plan that was introduced by the Minister of Finance and passed by this House.

The Canadian Museums Association said that it was "very pleased with this budget" and that "museums are being identified as important generators of jobs and growth in Canadian society".

We support and value the arts, not only because of what they bring to Canada culturally, but because of their importance to the Canadian economy. The hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber mentioned the importance of the artistic community and the arts to Canada's economy. The arts represent some \$46 billion in economic activity and about 635,000 Canadian jobs. To put that into context, that is twice the size of Canada's forestry industry. What we do for the arts is extraordinarily important to the Canadian economy.

In recent years, Canada has been the birthplace of some major global entertainment companies, such as Lionsgate Entertainment. There are other stunning Canadian success stories throughout the arts and culture sector.

Make no mistake that the arts are a massive economic generator in Canada. That sector is a source of jobs, investment, growth, and strong economic activity.

For all of those reasons, our Conservative government will continue to invest in arts and culture. We are going to continue to do that in programs that we think work for our artists, programs that work for our economy and help continue to generate economic activity.

The member talked about the fairness of this proposal. We have to look at what is being proposed in the context of other industries. I was glad that he brought that up.

Let us look at income averaging. As a former insurance broker, I am glad he brought up insurance brokers. There are great times and there are bad times. Income averaging for insurance brokers probably would have been a good thing for me in my career. It also would have been a good thing for farmers and car salesmen. There are many industries in this country that would benefit from income averaging. The dilemma is that this bill would decide who the winners and losers are, which industries are more important than others.

Our tax system has been, and should continue to be, based on fairness. One of the things that a government cannot and should not do is try to pick winners and losers in the tax system. We are not going to do that. We are going to continue to focus on creating jobs and opportunities. We will continue to introduce taxes for all Canadians, not just for one sector and not another.

Professor Kevin Milligan looked closely at the proposal and concluded the following:

[T]he NDP's tax policy proposals still need some more rehearsal time... [I]ncome averaging is an extremely clumsy apparatus for supporting the arts — to the extent it would even help at all. Let the debate on support for culture flourish, but let's keep income averaging out of it.

He mentioned that because, as was mentioned by one of the speakers, income averaging was tried in the 1970s and 1980s and it was abandoned as something that was not only unfair, but it was unworkable, hard to administer and actually did not achieve the results it sought to achieve. For those reasons, we have abandoned income averaging in the past.

Our government is going to continue to support arts and culture. That sector is extraordinarily important for economic activity. It is also a very important source of Canadian pride. When we see the success of our artists and our museums, we are very proud.

• (1900)

Again I thank the hon. member for bringing this forward and giving us an opportunity to discuss it further. I too look forward to some of the debate going forward.

• (1905)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for bringing forward this proposal. It is helpful for us to debate changes to the Canadian tax system because the reality is that we have not had a meaningful study or evaluation of our personal tax system in Canada since 1971 with the Carter commission. The reality is if we were to try to find one word that would sum up what has changed in Canada since 1971 in terms of the Canadian and global economies, that word would be "everything". Therefore, we do need a meaningful study, review and reform of the Canadian personal tax system.

Unfortunately, we are having these kinds of one-off discussions around the tax system due to the lack of leadership on the government side to take this important issue seriously and have a meaningful debate and discussion about changes that would build a fairer tax system and, potentially, a more globally-competitive one at the same time.

The parliamentary secretary said that the tax system should be based on fairness. He also said that we should not be picking winners and losers. I cannot help but go back to those comments and reflect on recent Conservative government policy in some ways, because he is saying that the taxes should be based on fairness and that we should not be picking winners and losers.

Recent boutique tax credits introduced by the Conservative government, whether for volunteer firefighters or family caregivers or, going back a bit further, the disability tax credit, discriminate against the lowest income Canadians because they are non-refundable tax credits. As such they do not benefit low-income Canadians. That is not consistent with the idea of a tax system based on fairness. I also do not think it is consistent with the idea that we would not pick winners and losers. The reality is that the Conservatives are picking winners and losers and the losers are low-income Canadians, which is absolutely inconsistent with the principles the member just articulated.

Private Members' Business

If we simply made those tax credits refundable we would include low-income Canadians in the category of Canadians and Canadian families who would benefit from them. I would ask the parliamentary secretary and the government to reflect on that. If fairness is the principle, if not picking winners and losers is the principle, then we ought to at least make those tax credits fully refundable to start.

Now I want to speak specifically to Bill C-427 and the idea of income averaging for artists, because it is important to realize that all of our cultural artists, such as musicians, painters, sculptors and authors, face huge challenges and tremendously cyclical income curves over the period of their careers. They will work for years and not make any money, and then one year will have a really good year and be in a top marginal tax bracket. That is why I think we should move this to committee and have it studied. It is important to realize that this is an important issue for our cultural community, that the current system, as it stands, is not fair and that changing it to reflect the incredible variance in incomes of cultural creators makes a lot of sense.

Where I would agree in some ways agree with the Conservative parliamentary secretary is that we ought to consider income averaging in other areas. However, his idea is that if we are not doing it for everyone right now then we cannot do it for anyone. I think that is wrong. Income averaging in the cultural community can actually create a model that can ultimately be applied more broadly.

I will give an example. A few years ago I met with a constituent who I think had a grade 7 education. He was a physical labourer who had been injured in the workforce. After that injury, he went to workers compensation in Nova Scotia to apply for compensation.

• (1910)

He fought for his compensation for four years and ultimately was compensated. I think at the time he got over \$100,000, which at that time put him in the top marginal tax bracket. As such, he was taxed at the highest marginal tax rate, after having had basically no income for four or five years. In that case I would argue that having been deprived of his income or capacity to work for those years because of a workplace injury and then having received a lump sum cheque to compensate for that lost income, he ought to have been able to qualify for income averaging.

I am using that example not as a reason why we should oppose the bill but why we should both support the bill and consider income averaging more broadly. That is where I agree with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Heritage. There are other groups within society that could benefit from this.

That brings me back to the original point. Why are we not having a more thorough discussion on the need to reform our Canadian tax system and taking a look at issues of fairness? For example, yesterday in the House we debated the issue of income inequality and equality of opportunity. There are direct impediments in our tax system to equality and upward mobility. Moreover, there do exist areas where members of the Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party, the Liberal Party and the Bloc would agree. These are some areas where if common sense were applied to the Canadian tax system, it would yield a simpler system. We could actually have a simpler tax system.

I understand the argument that this bill would create a more complicated tax system, but it is difficult to understand the Conservatives' point that they are opposed to any complications in the Canadian tax system when they continually introduce boutique tax credits, which actually further complicate the Canadian tax system. I studied taxation in university, and I remember it was an open book exam. I remember the size of the textbook. The Canadian tax code was pretty voluminous way back then. I shudder at the thought of what the Conservatives have done to that puppy since 2006.

The reality is that income averaging for artists makes sense. That is why in 2008, in our Liberal platform, we actually called for this. We said:

Support for Canada's arts and culture must also extend to support for artists themselves. That is why a Liberal government will provide income averaging for artists drawing on the inspiration of Quebec's income-averaging provisions. This will ensure that the tax system will better reflect the peaks and valleys of the artistic work cycle. This is an important tool for helping this country's writers, artists and musicians continue to excel.

Of course, Quebec has led the way on this. I have been acquainted with and introduced to the Quebec culture by having married a Quebecker. Prior to that, as an anglophone born and raised in Nova Scotia, I was not aware of groups like Les Trois Accords, or films like *C.R.A.Z.Y.*, or *La Grande Séduction*, or programs like *Tout le monde en parle*, as an example. What I am very much impressed with and what I think all Canadians can learn from is what Quebec has done to support, foster and strengthen culture. I say this because when two million Quebeckers watch *Tout le monde en parle* on a Sunday night, it is a lesson to the rest of us as to what happens when we actually get behind a cultural entity. The reality is that there is a network of stars that far too many anglophone Canadians have not had the opportunity to enjoy and be immersed in. Having married into a Quebec family, I have had that great luxury and privilege.

We can learn from what Quebec has done in this area. I thank my colleague from the province of Quebec for having brought this forward. He is someone with great experience in this area. I hope that the Conservatives actually demonstrate some flexibility in recognizing that we can learn from this and move forward. This can be a start toward a fairer tax system and perhaps income averaging that can apply outside of cultural areas in the future.

• (1915)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak in support of Bill C-427.

Before I comment directly on the bill, I want to commend my colleague from Montreal for his work on this issue. He is a two term national vice-president of ACTRA, an accomplished actor, singer, songwriter, composer, director and writer. I really cannot think of a better person in the House to work on this issue.

Private Members' Business

I had a nice surprise yesterday that that really speaks to why I strongly support Bill C-427. Between the ages of 15 and 25 I played music professionally and often considered making music my career. Yesterday a former The Raspberry Jam band mate, Randy Kee, posted some old VHS footage on YouTube, which brought back memories of the time when playing music was probably the most important thing in my life.

In addition to allowing me to take a trip down memory lane, the video made me think not only about the artists with whom I worked but also the artists I currently admire and those in my community who really work hard but sometimes struggle to get by. The bands I am thinking of are 3 Inches of Blood, Fera, Wintersleep, Japandroids, Hey Ocean! Mother Mother, and perhaps Maria in the Shower. They might be groups that members entertain themselves with during the evenings. These bands are important to our community. They speak to different parts of the community. The entertainment that I mentioned goes right across the spectrum and is important to support.

We need to support our artists not just in words but financially. We need to take as much pride in our artists as other countries, and we need to back up our words with legislation like Bill C-427.

At its core, Bill C-427 concerns income averaging for artists. It would allow artists to average income for the purpose of federal taxation over a period of two to five years, producing significant tax savings on a flexible scale. Importantly, the bill proposes to exempt from taxation the first \$10,000 in income derived from royalties, residuals and other special payments.

My colleague has outlined this in much more detail but I just want to give three reasons why I think the bill needs to be passed.

The first concerns the direct benefit to artists, like those I just mentioned. The bill would create greater overall tax fairness for this specialized group of taxpayers who are significantly disadvantaged under the current federal tax code. This concrete support acknowledges financial difficulties faced by developing and emerging Canadian artists and would put measures in place to counter the lack of access to certain government programs such as EI and CPP.

If we are able to make the private member's bill law, it would really show that the Canadian government is putting its money where its mouth is.

The second reason the bill should be passed is really a symbolic one, that we need to recognize the integral role that artists play in our society and how they boost our cultural identity.

The third reason is economic. We can see the House of Commons starting to focus and really zero in completely on the economy as we face economic difficulties abroad and really struggle in dealing with these in Canada. In that regard, we have heard some figures from the other side of the House that really underestimate the contributions artists make to our Canadian economy.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, the overall economic footprint of Canada's cultural sector is around \$85 billion a year. We heard a number quoted a few minutes ago of \$40 billion, but the Conference Board of Canada, which is not an extremely left-leaning organization, has estimated it at \$85 billion. When we look

at the impact on the overall Canadian economy, it is about 7.4% of Canada's GDP. When we look at this in terms of other industries, it really has a fairly massive impact.

• (1920)

We always talk about our trade deficit and how we import more than we export, but what could be more exportable than cultural products. These days people upload things to iTunes and sell them wherever they like. It is a very transportable good, film or music and as we move more toward a knowledge economy, this is something we need to encourage. Our neighbours to the south have done this in tremendous ways and we need to catch up.

Despite the potential contribution as well as actual contribution of the \$85 billion, Statistics Canada indicates the average annual income of an independent Canadian artist is only about \$37,500. This is significantly less than tradespeople, contractors and virtually every other variety of independent employee in the Canadian economy.

I was a musician until I was about 25 and used to joke about sleeping on couches, or having lots of people living in a house or driving in stinky vans. I guess that is the fledgling part of the industry. It might be fun when people are 25, but it is not fun when they are 45. These types of measures would encourage more people to stay in the arts and make it more of a viable career, which would only be good for Canada.

In the past, the government has portrayed of life of artists as a series of galas or soirees, but for most Canadian artists it is survival on the very edge of the poverty line. The measures being proposed today would go some way to alleviate that.

The measures contained in the bill are affordable as well. The government would forgo less than \$25 million in tax revenue per year, but the benefits would be enjoyed by over 55,000 Canadians. Therefore, it really is the best kind of measure, where we are not spending a large pile in comparison to the rest of the budget, but spreading it out over a large number of people and boosting them up a little, which makes a big difference. It seems to be a very effective measure.

These benefits lead me to think about countries that really care about their artistic talent and ways that smaller countries can punch way above their weight. The country I think of often is Ireland, which has a small population but a worldwide reputation for everything from poetry to songs. The Irish have forever had one of the most generous taxation schemes, which has paid off in spades. While this legislation is different than the Irish measures, it is the spirit that is important, recognizing the cultural and economic contributions of artists and how we can support that most effectively.

Private Members' Business

Numerous jurisdictions at home and abroad use income-averaging measures to recognize the special circumstances of certain groups of taxpayers in cyclical or seasonal industries whose livelihoods do not follow the steady, predictable formula of a salaried job. Income-averaging models specifically targeting artists exist in dozens of European Union economies, including France, Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and a number of our other key trading partners.

In Canada, as has been mentioned but is worth restating, income-averaging models have been employed at various times to support east coast fishers, investment in resource exploration projects and other high-risk fields of work. It is often associated with physical labour, but it is good to stretch the mind a little to think about how this could benefit those who are not engaged in that kind of work, although lifting band equipment can fall into that category maybe.

In 2004 the Government of Quebec enacted Canada's only permanent income-averaging system, once again leading the way in terms of supporting artists.

This is widely supported right across Canada. Not only do we have an excellent spokesperson presenting the bill this evening, but ACTRA and other organizations are enthusiastically supporting this concept. The House should support the bill and I was happy to speak to it this evening.

• (1925)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join this evening's debate on this private member's bill that has been brought forward by the hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber for consideration in the House this evening.

Prior to my current position as Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, I was very honoured to serve between 2008 and 2011 as the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage. In that capacity I had the opportunity to meet the hon. member prior to his election. We talked about a range of issues that artists encountered. He was a very good and strong spokesperson in his capacity. We did not always agree, as we do not always agree on everything today when it comes to policy. However, I know he is sincere in what he has put forward with respect to arts and culture in Canada, even if we may from time to time differ on exactly what the right course may be.

Admittedly, the member knows more about acting than I do. He has a number of significant credits to his past and perhaps in his future. However, when it comes to taxes, I may trump him a bit on that. My education at university was in that. I came from business before being elected here. I have spent quite a bit of time dealing with the finance side of things in business, at university and in this place, as I served on the Standing Committee on Finance for a number of years.

I note the member for Kings—Hants talked about having a study on taxes. We did have a study on taxes at the finance committee a few years ago and we focused on that as part of our prebudget consultations. We looked at methods of taxation, how to make the tax system more efficient, more effective and fairer because we all wanted to see fairness in the tax system.

The member mentioned a couple of things of which I have to take note. Specifically, he and his party have talked a number of times about refundable tax credits and transforming a whole range of current programs from their current system to refundable tax credits. There are numerous reasons why that is a bad idea, not the least of which is the enormous cost, of which the members have not proposed any means of paying for, which would ultimately lead to higher taxes for all Canadians if we were to do that. It would also threaten a number of the programs that people who do not qualify for non-refundable tax credits rely on, programs like the working income tax benefit program, child tax credits, GST and HST rebate cheques, housing support and OAS. So many programs that are funded out of general revenues by the government would be impacted by changing how these tax credits work, and the Liberal Party members have proposed no means of paying for these things.

While the members put it out as kind of a fuzzy, feel-good thing that they would like to give more free money to everybody, I think a lot of Canadians know there is no such thing as free money from government. It does not exist. In many cases it comes from one pocket and goes in the other, with the cost of government subtracted from it before it arrives in that pocket. Or it comes from a neighbour, parents or other family members or from businesses. Overall, it just becomes a weight on the national economy.

To speak to this bill directly, there are principles in the tax system that are very important. One of them is generally accepted accounting principles, or GAP, which I had an opportunity to speak to the member about a couple of days ago. One of the principles that the tax system is founded on is the matching principle, which basically states that income or expenses that are incurred in any given period are recognized in the period for which they are incurred. In other words, we do not take an expense from 2006 and put it against our income for 2012 and we do not take income from 2008 and put it into 2012. We match our income and our expenses to the period for which they apply and it is on that basis that our tax system is built. If we do not base it on generally accepted accounting principles and just cast them away, then our whole system of marginal tax rates, the progressive nature of our tax system and the very treasury itself and how much revenue it collects in any given year would be significantly impacted.

• (1930)

This is a costly bill. As I said when I spoke to the member, if we were to look at doing this for artists, we would have to look at doing it for a number of professions, because I think an awful lot of folks in various occupations do have cyclical incomes.

My colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, named a few industries. Certainly the one that came to mind immediately for me is realtors. I have talked to realtors about this. They would love to have the ability to move their income from good years to bad years and pay less tax. The problem with doing that is we would then have to put more weight on other Canadians whose income is not cyclical. We would have to charge them more taxes to supplement people whose incomes go up and down. That is not fair.

Adjournment Proceedings

The government has done a number of things for lower income Canadians, including low income artists. We have removed almost a million low-income Canadians completely from the tax rolls. They pay no federal income taxes at all. That is a significant accomplishment.

We also reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, which is a tax that absolutely every Canadian pays, regardless of what income they do or do not have. That was one of the most advantageous taxes to reduce to help people who were on the lower end of the income scale. It was important. I believe even the NDP at one time supported reducing the GST and then voted against it when it came to the House of Commons, but I digress.

It is very important also to recognize that regardless of whether an individual is an artist, a realtor, an insurance broker or whatever in the Canadian economy, all Canadians contribute to our society. They contribute to our tax system. They contribute to making our country stronger. They all deserve a fair tax system based on a clear set of guiding principle. That is what has guided the tax system.

That is why essentially I would oppose the bill. I do not think the Minister of Canadian Heritage has taken a definitive position, but I would personally oppose it because I think it runs contrary to clear guiding principles on which our tax system is founded.

If want to take a broader look at this, if we want to start looking at income averaging and so forth, as the member for Kings—Hants said, it would be a very significant restructuring of the Canadian tax system because it is not based on that foundation. Indeed, marginal income tax rates, for example the non-refundable deduction, the top line deduction that every Canadian claims on their tax return, all of these things would have to be adjusted in order to allow for a new system in which Canadians, not just artists, could income average.

I mentioned that I served as the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage. One of the things we did during that period of time, and I am very proud of both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Canadian Heritage for their very clear direction, was to invest significantly in the arts.

We have a number of programs and range of means in which we do that. It has resulted in a much stronger Canadian arts industry. For example, Canada Cultural Spaces, the Canada Council for the Arts, there were significant increases to both of those funds. We have the Canada music fund, the Canadian film and video production tax credit, the Canada arts presentation fund and the Canada arts training fund. We introduced a new tax credit for kids in the arts to help their parents support them. All of these programs have come together and have built a very strong cultural sector. I can speak for my own community. The arts sector is so important in Peterborough. It contributes so much, and I think it will continue to do that.

I am proud this government has sought to support the arts in Canada and I congratulate the member for his contributions to the Canadian arts system.

• (1935)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been over four years since the Prime Minister stood in this House and promised healing and reconciliation for aboriginal people of Canada as part of the apology. Since that time, the government has moved in exactly the opposite direction.

Astonishingly, the Conservatives started by killing the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and then slashed the funding for first nation, Inuit and Métis organizations delivering health and healing from coast to coast to coast in this country.

Just this month, funding cuts targeting aboriginal political organizations and tribal councils appear to cut core funding by 10%, or much more for some organizations, by also capping funding at \$500,000. These cuts will also eliminate the political advisory roles of tribal councils, further silencing first nation voices.

How can the Conservatives continue to download responsibility on our first nation governments with no new resources, and then cut their already limited capacity at the same time?

This approach not only flies in the face of the government's commitment to reconciliation and co-operation, but it is also setting first nations up to fail. It will be the aboriginal people across this country already denied access to basic services who will pay the price for this cynical approach.

[*Translation*]

The funding for health care programs and services provided by organizations such as the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada has been cut or eliminated completely.

[*English*]

These cuts are occurring in numerous program areas, including the aboriginal diabetes initiative, the aboriginal health human resources initiative, the national aboriginal youth suicide prevention strategy, the aboriginal health transition fund, the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder program, the maternal and child health program and the blood-borne diseases and sexually transmitted infections HIV-AIDS program.

Adjournment Proceedings

[Translation]

We are also aware of the fact that a high percentage of the cuts to staff at Health Canada will be made in the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch.

[English]

Cuts to aboriginal health promotion and disease prevention programs are misguided and inappropriate, and will actually increase health costs over the long term while perpetuating gaps in health outcomes for first nation and Inuit peoples.

These cuts will significantly erode the ability of Health Canada, specifically the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, to fulfill its mandate to address the gaps in health outcomes between first nations and Inuit and the non-aboriginal population.

[Translation]

With regard to the key health indicators, first nations and Inuit have lower incomes and are highly vulnerable to communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis, and to chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease. They also have a significantly lower life expectancy.

[English]

I urge the government to act now and reverse these short-sighted cuts.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to discuss our government's strong record of working to improve health outcomes for first nations and Inuit. Our government's priority is to protect front-line health services for first nations and Inuit communities. Our government has taken action to improve the health and quality of life of first nations across Canada. We have invested over \$30 million a year in aboriginal health research and over \$2.2 billion in the first nation and Inuit health program.

On National Aboriginal Day in June, the Minister of Health was proud to announce, jointly with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, a new long-term aboriginal health project that will help aboriginal communities find meaningful health solutions that will lead to healthier communities.

This year's budget provides \$330.8 million over two years to build and renovate on-reserve water infrastructure and to support the development of long-term strategy to improve water quality in first nation communities. We are also committed to working with aboriginal communities and organizations, provinces and territories to improve the mental health and well-being of aboriginal people in Canada.

This builds on our government's commitment to improve access to important mental health services for former students of Indian residential schools and their families. Since 2007, we have provided more than \$165 million through the Indian residential schools resolution health support program. This is making a difference in aboriginal communities and complements some of the work previously done by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

We are making significant investments to support mental health services for first nations and Inuit, including counselling, addiction

and suicide prevention, crisis response services and treatment. We are also working closely with our partners, such as the Mental Health Commission of Canada, which recently released Canada's first-ever national mental health strategy. This strategy helps highlight the mental health of first nations, Inuit and Métis as a top priority.

In closing, our government has made significant investments toward improving the health status of aboriginal people in Canada. Improving health outcomes for first nations and Inuit remains a key priority for our government, and we will continue to work toward this goal with the provinces, territories and aboriginal leadership.

● (1940)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, what is so distressing is that I do believe that the minister and the government understand that disease prevention and health promotion are indeed front-line services. The Conservatives' continuing narrative is that they have not cut front-line services when the preventable injuries, suicide and substance abuse are so much higher than the national average. The health promotion disease prevention programs and services funded by FNIHB through contribution agreements like those that we have listed have been essential in both measuring and reducing these health gaps.

It is appalling that now the TB rate in the Inuit population is 284 times the rate of the Canadian-born non-aboriginal population and that an epidemic of prescription drug addiction is confronting the northern communities.

The government has to get with the program. It has indeed cut front-line services, and the cuts have to be reversed.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that our government's priority is to protect front-line health services for first nations and Inuit communities. Our government takes the health and well-being of first nations and Inuit very seriously.

Important front-line health programs and services for first nations such as community-based health promotion and diabetes and youth suicide programming have been protected. We will provide \$330.8 million through our economic action plan this year to build and renovate water infrastructure on reserve and to support the development of a long-term strategy to improve water quality in first nations communities.

Adjournment Proceedings

We are continuing to work with aboriginal communities, organizations, provinces and territories to improve the mental health and well-being of aboriginal peoples in Canada. We are investing in Health Canada's Indian residential schools resolution health support program. Emotional and cultural support services are accessible to eligible former Indian residential school students and their families. In short, our record clearly shows that we are committed to working with all partners to improve the lives of aboriginal people. We will continue to do so.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss a question I raised a while ago. We have passed legislation since then in which the mandatory one-year detention as well as some of the concerns that I had expressed during question period have been addressed in part.

I want to reinforce a couple of points. One is with regard to image and to highlight the creation of a crisis where one really did not exist. That is what led to the legislation being introduced and ultimately passed by the House of Commons. I am referring to a newspaper article which was accompanied by a big picture showing the *Ocean Lady* and the Prime Minister standing beside the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. Seventy-six Tamil refugees had landed on the west coast back in 2009. That sent a very powerful image across the country. It made a lot of people significantly upset. Actually two ships were involved.

These were the images that were relived when the government came forward with its anti-smuggling legislation. Some very strong actions were being taken by the government. The line was that it was getting tough on human smugglers, profiteers and so forth. In reality, it had more of a negative impact on refugees. Quite often refugees are victims. In this particular case, they showed up and the government made them victims again.

I appreciate that some amendments were brought forward. We believe that judicial oversight is critically important when dealing with the whole refugee file. There has to be a process that is fair not only to Canadian society, but also to the refugees.

Canada has a very strong role to play throughout the world in terms of trying to deal with the refugee issue. We take in a very small percentage of the overall number of refugees throughout the world, but we do play a significant part in terms of our population and the number that we do bring in. Canadians as a whole support our doing so.

Having said all of that, one of the outstanding issues I have has to do with the tour we took to visit the detention centres. I would look to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to provide comment on that. There is quite a bit of difference between detention centres. The one in Vancouver is in the basement of the airport. The one in Toronto, I would suggest, is the ideal type of detention centre.

I do not want to change the topic, but perhaps the parliamentary secretary could give us his thoughts on that particular issue. Maybe he could also address the issue of the two boats, in terms of the numbers. However, I am quite interested in his thoughts on the detention centre in Vancouver.

● (1945)

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the member for Winnipeg North. Let me try to answer the last part of his question first, that being is the whole aspect of detention.

The member is correct. He and I both travelled to Vancouver, Laval and also Rexdale, Toronto, to view the detention facilities at all three of those locations.

He mentions Bill C-31. Part of the reason we actually did the tour was based on a number of witnesses called for by the official opposition, but also by his party, who came forward with respect to the study on the safety and security of our borders that the committee is currently working on. Witness after witness from the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party came forward and made all kinds of overtures about what they felt the conditions of the detention facilities were.

I think I have the support of the member for Winnipeg North on this. We looked at all three facilities. None of the facilities are similar in nature in terms of how they are organized and run. However, I know we would both agree that the treatment of the individuals who were under detention at those facilities is far superior than any one of their witnesses was prepared to commit and admit to at committee. Therefore, I have a deep appreciation for our ability to go on the tour of these three facilities to understand what they were all about and to see the treatment of those individuals who were detained there for specific reasons.

The member mentioned the *Sun Sea* and the *Ocean Lady*. What happens about two or perhaps three times every decade is that ships come in from offshore because smugglers believe they can take advantage of the people who are on those ships. They force them to pay enormous, ridiculous amounts of money to stuff them onto these boats and then bring them to Canada because we had the reputation of having a system that was broken with respect to refugees. The ships would come here because it was believed to be so easy. The smugglers told the people on these ships to claim refugee status in Canada and that they would be automatically granted refugee status. Those people, who wouldn't have identification, were smuggled onto these ships and brought across. It was very unsafe. The member has seen these ships. He knows how unsafe they are.

I wish that when the Liberal Party was in power for 13 years and had the opportunity, it would have changed the immigration system and addressed the issue of those who are claiming refugee status here. The refugee system was broken.

Both Bill C-11 and Bill C-31 get at the very heart of what the problem is. That is that over 60% of those who apply for refugee status in Canada are either bogus claims, withdraw their claims or go back to their country of origin because they had learned that this was a system they could take advantage of.

I wish we would have had the Liberals' support at committee and with the bills that we passed in this legislature. We have Bill C-43 coming up to get rid of foreign criminals in this country. I hope the member will consider supporting that.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1950)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, fortunately I believe that politicians of all political stripes learned a lot from the *Komagata Maru*, which was a boating incident that took place 99 years ago. We recognized that the refugees on the boats that end up on our shores do have a legitimate case to be made in terms of applying for asylum in Canada. We also recognize that in terms of the two boats that we are making reference to from back in 2009.

Having said that, the Vancouver detention centre only houses or detains people for 48 hours, I believe it is. Outside of that, they have to go into provincial facilities, which are more traditional types of jails.

Therefore, my question is this. Does the member recognize that Vancouver is unique and that it is a situation that should be addressed sooner as opposed to later?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, very quickly, I think we are addressing these issues. Part of the reason we are having a security study and part of the reason Bill C-31 was put in front of the House and was duly passed, without the support of either of the opposition

parties, was to get at the very root and heart of what the member is suggesting.

The member can feign indignation all he wants about the process and what he thinks should happen and what the conditions are. Even if they come here as mass arrivals, people get treated fairly and they get treated well. The fact is that we have people who deserve refugee status in Canada, and it is not those who jump the queue and put themselves in a position to prevent those who are true refugees from getting that designation and permanent residency here in the country and starting a new life.

I reach out to the member. It is time that he started working with us rather than against us in reforming an immigration system that was long overdue for change.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:54 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Wednesday, September 26, 2012

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS			
Cable Public Affairs Channel		Mr. Paradis	10455
Mr. Plamondon	10451	Ms. Nash	10455
Lifesaving Award		Mr. Paradis	10455
Mr. Komarnicki	10451	Government Accountability	
Violence against Women		Ms. Murray	10455
Ms. Chow	10451	Mr. Clement	10456
Endowment Incentive Program		Ms. Murray	10456
Ms. Bateman	10452	Mr. Clement	10456
Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day		Foreign Investment	
Mr. Scarpaleggia	10452	Ms. Murray	10456
Firearms Registry		Mr. Paradis	10456
Mr. Anders	10452	Employment Insurance	
Cable Public Affairs Channel		Mrs. Day	10456
Mr. Cullen	10452	Ms. Finley	10456
Cable Public Affairs Channel		Mr. Toone	10456
Mr. Rajotte	10452	Ms. Finley	10457
Human Rights		Mr. Godin	10457
Mr. Obhrai	10453	Ms. Finley	10457
Franco-Ontarian Day		Mr. Cleary	10457
Mr. Gravelle	10453	Ms. Finley	10457
Child Pornography		Mr. Tremblay	10457
Ms. Findlay	10453	Ms. Finley	10457
Women's Support Centre in Ste-Julie		Mr. Cash	10457
Mrs. Hassainia	10453	Ms. Finley	10457
National Forest Week		Mr. Stewart	10458
Mr. Galipeau	10453	Ms. Finley	10458
Cable Public Affairs Chanel		Mr. Atamanenko	10458
Mr. Garneau	10454	Ms. Finley	10458
The Environment		Ms. Charlton	10458
Mr. Hayes	10454	Ms. Finley	10458
Pork Industry		Foreign Investment	
Mr. Allen (Welland)	10454	Mr. Goodale	10458
The Environment		Mr. Paradis	10458
Mr. Leef	10454	Employment Insurance	
		Mr. Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte)	10458
		Ms. Finley	10459
		Mr. Coderre	10459
		Ms. Finley	10459
		Food Safety	
		Mr. Allen (Welland)	10459
		Mr. Ritz	10459
		Ms. Brosseau	10459
		Mr. Ritz	10459
		Pensions	
		Ms. Mathysen	10459
		Mr. Clement	10460
		Ms. Blanchette-Lamothe	10460
		Mr. Clement	10460
		Foreign Affairs	
		Ms. Bateman	10460
ORAL QUESTIONS			
The Economy			
Mr. Mulcair	10454		
Mr. Harper	10454		
Mr. Mulcair	10455		
Mr. Harper	10455		
Mr. Mulcair	10455		
Mr. Harper	10455		
Foreign Investment			
Ms. Nash	10455		

Mr. Baird	10460	Ms. Michaud	10464
The Environment		Mr. Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	10464
Ms. Quach	10460	Petitions	
Mr. Kent	10460	Rights of the Unborn	
Ms. Leslie	10460	Mr. Bruinooge	10464
Mr. Kent	10460	Abortion	
Ms. Leslie	10460	Mr. Cullen	10464
Mr. Kent	10461	International Aid	
Ms. Chow	10461	Mr. McKay	10464
Mr. Anderson	10461	Terrorism	
Food Safety		Mr. McKay	10464
Mr. Valeriote	10461	Rights of the Unborn	
Mr. Ritz	10461	Mr. Galipeau	10465
Pensions		Saint-Lambert Train Station	
Ms. Sgro	10461	Mrs. Groguhé	10465
Mr. Menzies	10461	Rights of the Unborn	
Justice		Mr. Eyking	10465
Ms. Ashton	10461	Mr. Watson	10465
Mr. Nicholson	10461	Abortion	
Ms. Boivin	10461	Mr. Dubé	10465
Mr. Nicholson	10462	Rights of the Unborn	
Public Safety		Mr. Simms	10465
Ms. James	10462	Mr. Woodworth	10465
Ms. Bergen	10462	Motor Vehicle Safety	
National Defence		Ms. Borg	10465
Mr. McKay	10462	Rights of the Unborn	
Mr. MacKay	10462	Mr. Hiebert	10465
Privacy		Abortion	
Ms. Borg	10462	Ms. Laverdière	10465
Mr. Paradis	10462	Rights of the Unborn	
International Cooperation		Mr. Lizon	10466
Mr. Allison	10462	Abortion	
Mr. Fantino	10463	Ms. Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	10466
Quebec City Armoury		The Environment	
Ms. Papillon	10463	Mr. Hyer	10466
Ms. Ambrose	10463	Rights of the Unborn	
Foreign Investment		Mr. Miller	10466
Mr. Hyer	10463	Dementia	
Mr. Paradis	10463	Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	10466
Presence in Gallery		Rights of the Unborn	
The Speaker	10463	Mr. Anderson	10466
Points of Order		HIV-AIDS	
Oral Questions		Mr. Martin	10466
Mr. Godin	10463	Rights of the Unborn	
		Mr. Trost	10466
		Abortion	
		Mr. Trost	10466
		Rights of the Unborn	
		Mrs. Hassainia	10466
		Rights of the Unborn	
		Mr. Anders	10466
		Genetically Modified Alfalfa	
		Mr. Atamanenko	10466
		Health of Animals Act	
		Mr. Atamanenko	10467
		Rights of the Unborn	
		Mr. Lauzon	10467
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
State of Canada's Forests			
Mr. Anderson	10464		
Foreign Affairs			
Mr. Obhrai	10464		
Interparliamentary Delegations			
Mr. Chisu	10464		

Abortion	
Ms. Ashton	10467
Rights of the Unborn	
Mr. Benoit	10467
Mrs. Davidson	10467
Cellphone Towers	
Mr. Sullivan	10467
Abortion	
Ms. Latendresse	10467
Rights of the Unborn	
Mr. Sweet	10467
Nuclear Weapons	
Mr. Sweet	10467
Saint-Lambert Train Station	
Mr. Nantel	10467
Abortion	
Mr. Nantel	10467
Rights of the Unborn	
Mr. Albrecht	10467
Child Nutrition	
Mr. Albrecht	10467
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lukiwski	10467
Motions for Papers	
Mr. Lukiwski	10468
Request for Emergency Debate	
Arctic Ice	
Ms. Leslie	10468
Speaker's Ruling	
The Speaker	10468
Arctic Ice	
Mr. Bevington	10468
Speaker's Ruling	
The Speaker	10469
GOVERNMENT ORDERS	
Helping Families in Need Act	
Ms. Finley	10469
Bill C-44. Second reading	10469
Ms. Charlton	10471
Mr. Cuzner	10471
Mr. Dechert	10471
Ms. Charlton	10472
Mr. Sullivan	10475
Mr. Bezan	10475

Mr. Cuzner	10476
Mr. Nantel	10476
Mr. Cuzner	10476
Mr. Calandra	10478
Mr. Dubé	10478
Ms. Bennett	10479
Mr. McColeman	10479
Mr. Sullivan	10481
Mrs. Gallant	10481
Mr. Easter	10481
Mr. Dubé	10482
Mr. Albrecht	10482
Ms. Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	10482

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Corrections and Conditional Release Act	
Bill C-350. Report stage	10483
Motion No. 1 agreed to	10484
Mr. Lauzon	10484
Motion for concurrence	10484
(Motion agreed to)	10485
Corrections and Conditional Release Act	
Bill C-293. Third reading	10485
Motion agreed to	10486
Special Committee on Subsection 223(1) of the Criminal Code	
Motion	10486
Motion negatived	10487
Reflecting the Realities of Canadian Artists Act	
Mr. Benskin	10487
Bill C-427. Second reading	10487
Mr. Simms	10488
Mr. Shipley	10489
Mr. Calandra	10489
Mr. Brison	10490
Mr. Stewart	10491
Mr. Del Mastro	10493

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Aboriginal Affairs	
Ms. Bennett	10494
Mr. Carrie	10495
Immigration	
Mr. Lamoureux	10496
Mr. Dykstra	10496

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