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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, December 12, 2012

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, December 12, 2012

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

● (1405)

[English]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the first nations of northwestern Ontario are concerned that their rights have been trampled by Bill C-45, the government's omnibus budget bill. Concerns include leasing of reserve land, on-reserve voting rights and scrapping the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which reduced protection of millions of our lakes and rivers to less than 200. No longer protected are northwestern Ontario rivers like the Kaministiquia, or the Nipigon River, home of the largest speckled trout in the world.

Chiefs point out the Prime Minister promised that his government would never approve unilateral changes to the Indian Act. They are right. The government has not adequately consulted with first nations. However, neither has the Prime Minister consulted with scientists, academics, small businesses, Canadian workers, NGOs, provincial premiers, or Parliament, including his own backbenchers, so first nations chiefs are in good company.

The PM does seem to consult frequently and widely with CEOs of banks, foreign oil companies and dictators of communist countries.

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QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, following question period today, you will have the honour of presenting 25 outstanding Canadians with Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee Medal. These 25 individuals have come from across the

country. They were nominated by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs for this well-deserved and prestigious honour.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs is a non-partisan organization, implementing strategies to improve the quality of Jewish life in Canada and abroad, increase support for Israel and strengthen the Canada-Israel relationship.

I reviewed the accomplishments of these outstanding citizens and I can attest to the dedication and commitment they have to their communities, their province and their country. One common trait the recipients share is their long-standing dedication to volunteerism and devotion to their fellow citizens. They are an example for all citizens, and most deserving of this honour.

I ask all members of the House to join me in expressing our congratulations to these distinguished recipients and our thanks for their continued service to Canada.

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SEASONS GREETINGS

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is one of life's most beautiful ironies that at this darkest, coldest time of year, people of all backgrounds come together to celebrate the spirit of hope, unity and goodwill, which unites and sustains us as Canadians.

This holiday season marks a crucial milestone for people of many faiths. However, whether faith based or those of a purely secular bent, we all eagerly await the chance to reflect on life's blessings and build cherished memories with family and friends.

Let those of us who sit in the House seize this spirit to reconnect with the diverse communities, which remain the source of Canada's greatness and let us all rekindle that abiding sense of civic duty, which remains the supreme motivation of our shared service.

I am certain all members will join me in wishing every Canadian a safe, prosperous new year. May 2013 bring tidings of joy, peace and renewed purpose to us all.

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CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court interprets statutes by referring first to the text of the law and when the statutory text is unclear, to Parliament's publicly stated intent as laid out in the legislative history.

Statements by Members

However, when interpreting the Constitution, the court adopts an inferior approach in which the intent of the framers is frequently ignored and the court instead consults with a different kind of extraneous evidence regarding present day Canadian values.

One reason offered for this departure from the sensible rules the court normally applies is that the documentary record regarding the Charter of Rights is simply too vast and too disorganized to permit ready consultation.

To assist with this problem, I am working with the Canadian Constitution Foundation to create, online, a sortable and word searchable database of all documents relating to the debate over the adoption of the Charter of Rights 30 years ago. This work in progress already contains over 100,000 pages of primary documentation. The website will go live on Constitution Day, 2013.

With this resource in hand, it is hoped that our courts will find it possible to more accurately and predictably enforce the rule of constitutional law.

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CAPE BRETON EVENTS

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize two very special events that took place in my riding.

On November 24, the ninth Annual Festival of the Greens Holiday Gala helped raise \$91,000 for the Cape Breton Regional Hospital's labour and delivery unit. This event was an immense success, attended by more than 550 guests.

That same day, I also attended the eighth Annual Appreciation Dinner for the Cape Breton Cancer Centre, which was held in the Iona Legion. This event raised almost \$30,000 to date to assist with the Cape Breton Regional Hospital's patient care fund, helping cancer patients with unforeseen expenses while they are receiving treatment. Over a hundred people gathered to show their support.

The great success of these events would not have been possible without the help of our organizers, sponsors, donors, volunteers and the many generous guests who attended. I would like to thank all those involved from the community for their contribution. Many lives will be improved as a result of their generosity.

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● (1410)

SEASONS GREETINGS

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the end of the year is a fitting time to reflect and share in the festive spirit with family, friends and neighbours, as well as to express appreciation for the hard work done by those around us.

As chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, I would like to thank all the members of that committee, including all of our clerks, analysts and staff who support the work of the committee. We have had a very busy and productive session and I sincerely appreciate all of their efforts.

I would also like to thank my very hard-working office staff, both in the constituency and in Ottawa, who work so diligently

throughout the year to ensure that the needs of Edmonton—Leduc constituents are met. Therefore, I thank Debbie Healy, Samantha Johnston, Kim Dohmann, Carmel Harris, Lene Jorgensen and Trevor Rogers for all that they do.

I would remind all members to exercise safety during this holiday season. There is always an option to get home safely, whether by calling a friend, a cab, taking public transportation or using a service like Operation Red Nose and the wonderful volunteers who work there.

Once again, Merry Christmas, Joyeux Noel et bonne année à tous mes collègues.

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[*Translation*]

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the year draws to a close, it is time to take a look at the Conservatives' record. They have wreaked havoc on eastern Quebec.

There is the upcoming closure of the employment insurance processing centre in Rimouski, which will result in the loss of 37 jobs, and its relocation to Thetford Mines for no reason, which was decided behind closed doors.

There is the closure of the ecotoxicology department at the Maurice Lamontagne Institute and the firing of its eight researchers, as well as the pending closure of the Maurice Lamontagne Institute library, which serves UQAR, ISMER and other research centres. It is the only French-language science library specializing in marine sciences.

There is the closure of the Canada Revenue Agency office in Rimouski. Its three employees will no longer be there to serve the public.

In addition, Lake Témiscouata, the Neigette River, the Trois-Pistoles River and all other waterways in the region will no longer be protected by the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

Lastly, with winter approaching, people with seasonal jobs in tourism, the fishery, agriculture and forestry are wondering if they will be forced to work an hour away from home and at 70% of their previous salary.

They have all fallen prey to the ideological and reckless cuts of a government that bandied about the slogan "Our regions in power", but which seems to be doing all it can to impoverish them.

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[*English*]

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S HISTORY AWARD

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to this year's Governor General's History Award winners.

The teaching of history in our great country is much more than an academic pursuit. It reminds us that behind this vast land are stories of amazing sacrifice and achievement.

Statements by Members

One of six winners for excellence in teaching was Daraius Bharucha, a resident of Ajax who teaches at Bill Crothers Secondary School in Unionville. He and his colleague Stefano Fornazzari San Martín use multimedia to connect their students' family experience of immigration with major periods of Canadian history through a project called "My Place in Canadian History: Digital Storytelling with Historical Thinking Concepts".

[Translation]

The Sir John A. Macdonald Prize was awarded to François-Marc Gagnon, Nancy Senior and Réal Ouellet for their magnificent edition of the *Codex Canadensis and the Writings of Louis Nicolas: The natural history of the New World, Histoire Naturelles des Indes Occidentales*. What a gorgeous book.

Published at the beginning of the 18th century, the *Codex Canadensis* documents the flora, fauna and aboriginal life in New France, a true reflection of our Canadian renaissance.

[English]

I encourage all members and all Canadians to give the gift of Canadian history this Christmas, to share the beauty of the *Codex canadensis* and to celebrate our GG's history award winners.

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EMPTY STOCKING FUND

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about a wonderful Christmas tradition in Saint John, the Empty Stocking Fund.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of this community fundraising institution, which has worked to ensure that children in need do not go without at Christmas in the Saint John area.

The Empty Stocking Fund began when local reporter "Dutch" Ervin resolved that every child should experience the magic of the season. What started out as a modest "pass the hat" in the newsroom has continued with the support of the *Telegraph-Journal* and Rogers. This tremendous community effort has raised millions of dollars with the help of many talented children and hard-working volunteers, and they ensure that 100% of the funds raised go to meet the needs of the children.

This year alone saw \$149,000 pledged during the broadcast. I want to let people know that they can still contribute and remind those who have not yet honoured their pledges to please do so.

Most of all, I want to thank the many people involved throughout the years for helping to make a child's Christmas memorable.

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RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with mixed emotions that I rise today to thank one of the cornerstone members of my team, Karen Boyce, in her last day of work before she moves on to a well-deserved retirement.

Karen began working in my constituency office shortly after I was first elected in 2002. She retires today undoubtedly as one of Canada's best constituency assistants.

Over the years, Karen has helped thousands of people in my community access the services and benefits they were entitled to, sorted through complicated cases reaching every corner of the globe and even sent faxes in the middle of the night to ensure she reached embassies across the world.

Karen worked every day with the simple goal of improving the lives of the people in our community. The hallmarks of her work include competence, knowledge, patience and compassion. She has always been a steadying influence, whose counsel has been invaluable to me and her colleagues alike.

I thank Karen from the bottom of my heart, as do the constituents of Windsor West, the staff and her colleagues. We will miss her dearly and wish her a well-deserved retirement.

* * *

● (1415)

TZU CHI CANADA

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our country is strengthened by the many charitable organizations that do important work in our communities.

Today, I rise to recognize the work of Tzu Chi Canada, founded by Mr. Gary Ho in 1992.

Based out of my hometown of Vancouver, Tzu Chi Canada has now grown across the country with over 40,000 members and 11,000 regular donors with branches in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Montreal and even here in Ottawa.

This year, Tzu Chi Canada celebrated its 20th anniversary, having raised over \$45 million for Canadian charity and international relief work from Haiti, Indonesia and, just recently, New York City.

With a focus on charity, volunteers with Tzu Chi work tirelessly across Canada to serve those in need.

On behalf of our government, I thank Tzu Chi Canada and its CEO, Mr. Gary Ho, who received a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in Ottawa today, for all the work it has done over the past 20 years. Once again, I congratulate Tzu Chi Canada on 20 wonderful years.

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[Translation]

GENDER PARITY

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to bring attention to the many women who are fighting to break the glass ceiling that too often prevents competent women from reaching senior positions within professional hierarchies.

The Women On Board - Femmes Au Conseil directory helps boards of directors and recruitment agencies find and contact highly qualified candidates.

Statements by Members

All candidates are seasoned board members who have sat on boards of various types of companies, committees, organizations and non-profits.

This program is definitely a positive step towards enabling accomplished women to contribute their expertise to the country's largest boards of directors.

A directory is set to be released in Montreal, and Quebec City can count on my support for a similar endeavour to help the YWCA, the Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Québec and its Actions, Femmes et Leadership committee.

I hope that all women will accept the promotions they are offered, because they are well deserved.

* * *

[English]

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker,

The lights are shining brightly and the Christmas tree is up,
The presents are being wrapped, but fees may go up,
A Grinch has appeared to dampen the season,
He won't be deterred, he won't accept reason,
A new tax, he says, is what he will bring,
If he has the chance, his carbon tax will sting,
But we will oppose, with every breathe we contain,
This NDP carbon tax, they advocate with disdain,
Jobs and growth are the things that we fight for and believe in,
Which is what Canadians want on this Christmas season.

I wish everyone a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

* * *

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker,

Twas the week before Christmas and things were a mess;
The bulging new deficit had the P.M. under stress;
"These numbers are awful, I can't believe them myself;
"Nigel, I need some answers, go get me that elf";
But the Minister of Finance could not shed much light;
He told the Parliamentary Budget Officer to go fly a kite;
"These cabinet expenses, we have to cut them and grind them;
"Tell the minister from Labrador, if anyone can find him;
"We should be roasting chestnuts and decking the halls;
"But the opposition just wants to be busting our robocalls"
Things got even worse than bad meat that's infected;
Transport Canada layoffs left Santa's sleigh not inspected;
Christmas would be scuttled like the F-35 plan;
Three years of that BS got flushed down the can;
Santa needed a saviour, someone decked out in red;
A wily old veteran with white on his head;
He called in a favour, they inspected the sleigh;
The member for Toronto Centre just saved Christmas Day;
There were presents under trees and smiles on kids' faces;
He did a great job as Santa on an interim basis.

* * *

● (1420)

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA**Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker,

It's two weeks before Christmas and all through this House,
the NDP has been silent, as silent as a mouse.
For they are afraid to speak of their sneaky carbon tax plan,
knowing if Canadians found out there would be an NDP ban.
But we all know of their true intention — to propose once again,
this carbon tax when people are paying less attention.
This new tax would cause the costs of things we love to rise,
people's electricity bill this time of year would grow twice its size.
Canadians can count on us to keep taxes low,
so they continue to buy Christmas cakes, trees and sleds for the snow.
We will make sure the NDP leader's carbon tax is way out of sight,
So Happy Christmas to all and to all a good night.

* * *

[Translation]

CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker,
day after day, the Conservatives would rather insult Canadians'
intelligence than govern. Like good little parrots, they read the lines
written by the Conservative politburo, without even changing a
comma.

Unfortunately, these ridiculous attacks prevent them from
focusing on what is important: representing their constituents'
interests, especially when these constituents are suffering because of
the Conservatives' cuts.

[English]

Last month, I had the opportunity to visit communities in the great
territory of Yukon. There, I spoke to many citizens concerned about
the impact of Conservative cuts and the signs coming from Ottawa.

In Whitehorse, for example, the Canada Revenue Agency office
closed on September 28. This was not just back-office cuts, the
whole office was shut down. Since then, the member for Yukon has
used five statements to attack the NDP. Not once has he mentioned
this closure here in this House.

When seniors, families and businesses are being hurt by
Conservative cuts, the New Democrats stand up for all Canadians,
even if their members do not.

* * *

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker,
religious and ethnic communities from around the world come to
Canada to find freedom, peace and a better way of life.

Canada has a long tradition of pluralism, tolerance and respect for
the traditions of others. It is truly wonderful that all faiths can
celebrate openly here in Canada.

However, political correctness is diluting Christmas in a well-intentioned but unnecessary attempt to be inclusive. How can we as a society join together to celebrate Diwali, the Chinese New Year, Hanukkah or Vaisakhi but, at the same time, rob Christians of the true meaning of Christmas?

As a Sikh, I am not offended when Christians celebrate Christmas in a traditional way. Rather, I am pleased to celebrate with my Christian friends. True diversity means respecting the traditions of all Canadians, including those of the Christian majority.

I ask all members to please join with me in wishing everyone a very merry Christmas.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Ms. Joan Crockatt, member for the electoral district of Calgary Centre.

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NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Joan Crockatt, member for the electoral district of Calgary Centre, introduced by the Right Hon. Stephen Harper.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Mr. Erin O'Toole, member for the electoral district of Durham.

* * *

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Erin O'Toole, member for the electoral district of Durham, introduced by the Right Hon. Stephen Harper.

ORAL QUESTIONS

•(1425)

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Friday the Prime Minister approved the sale of Nexen to China. On Monday the Conservatives voted unanimously to clarify the Investment Canada Act. The Conservative members must therefore agree with the NDP that greater transparency and more public hearings are needed, as well as a clear definition of what a net benefit to Canada is.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister listen to his own MPs and propose substantive amendments to the legislation? This is not about exceptional circumstances or guidelines. We are talking about a piece of legislation, and only Parliament can amend a law.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our announcement last Friday included plenty of clarifications for the markets, and the markets responded appropriately.

We also maintained the flexibility, in certain cases, to protect Canadians and the Canadian economy, which is, of course, the responsibility of the Government of Canada.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, only Parliament can create and repeal legislation.

[*English*]

In the wake of the Nexen debacle, the chief economist of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce said:

It's important that we get our rules up to date and done right...because if we don't we're going to be scaring off some significant potential trade partners and investors

Why is the Prime Minister ignoring—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Why is the Prime Minister ignoring business leaders? Why is he ignoring his own MPs? Why is he making it up as he goes along? Why does he not respect the will of Parliament and bring the law here to be debated openly and amended to protect Canada and our resources?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, *The Gong Show* over there continues.

The Leader of the Opposition presented a motion in which he purported that his party represented the views of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. Now he gets up and pretends to represent the views of the Alberta and Canadian business communities. I can give a list a mile long of people who supported this government's decision.

What they do not support is shutting down the oil sands, as the NDP favours. They do not support a carbon tax. They do support the responsible and balanced approach of this government.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we did present a motion supporting the Alberta and Calgary Chamber of Commerce, and Conservatives voted for it, because they know that both the Calgary Chamber of Commerce and the NDP are right on this issue.

Now the Prime Minister admits that a deal like Nexen is not a net benefit for Canada and that foreign state-owned enterprises should not own a controlling stake in major oil sands companies. If that is true, why did he approve Nexen? What were the exceptional circumstances for giving away our raw natural resources to a foreign power?

Oral Questions

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, the reason we supported the express position of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce was that it was virtually identical to the position of the Conservative government. It was, of course, not at all the position of the New Democratic Party.

The Leader of the Opposition started off his questioning today by saying that we were somehow blocking necessary foreign investment and now has concluded by saying we should shut it all down. That is why Canadians favour the balanced and sensible economic management of this government.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Chamber of Commerce said, and what our motion said—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. This is taking up a lot of time. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor. We have to get through the questions or we will have to find the time somewhere else.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, it read:

Amend the law, clarify the net advantage for Canada, the net benefit for Canada, and reciprocity: none of those things have been done.

That is what the Calgary Chamber of Commerce said, and that is what we said.

Fearmongering and buck-passing is what the F-35 file has been about. It has been a debacle since day one. When is the government going to come clean with Canadians and admit that it has misled Canadians from day one on the F-35 file?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The Auditor General, as we know well, released a report in which he questioned some of the assumptions and some of the work that had been done by officials on the details. Therefore, the Minister of Public Works and the Minister of National Defence have worked with an expert panel to put together more information on this. Obviously, that will be released shortly. However, we remain fully committed to ensuring that our air force has the planes it needs to do its job when the CF-18 begins to be retired later in this decade.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the report is clear: the cost of the F-35s continues to skyrocket.

The program has been a fiasco from the beginning: no tendering process, no clear requirements, and a bunch of ministers passing the buck in an attempt to hide their incompetence and their arrogance.

Are the Conservatives going to repeat the same mistakes with their famous seven-point plan, or will they commit to launching a real competitive process in order to get the best plane for taxpayers' dollars?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the government has not spent any public money on the acquisition of any aircraft, and we are committed to ensuring that the air force has the right aircraft when it needs them at the end of this decade.

At the same time, we are contributing to the development of this aircraft, which is benefiting the aerospace industry in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. We are committed to helping our industry.

[*English*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the F-35 issue is a fiasco that has happened without anyone taking any responsibility for it in the government. The Prime Minister says that a few officials may not have provided enough information, but that is not, in fact, what either the Parliamentary Budget Officer or the Auditor General of Canada had to say. What they said was that information in the hands of the government was not brought forward to Parliament, was not brought forward to those making decisions and was not brought forward in a timely fashion in a way to end the incompetence, the contempt, and in fact, the corruption of a process that no one on that side wants to take responsibility for.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General said no such thing, and if there is any corruption here, this would be the first time corruption has occurred without any funds actually being spent. Not only have no funds been spent on the acquisition, but no money has been lost on the acquisition, unlike the \$40 million we are still looking for—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

• (1435)

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the record, and I would ask the Prime Minister to go back—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. The hon. member for Toronto Centre has the floor.

Hon. Bob Rae: This stuff does not bother me, Mr. Speaker. Let us get on with the real issue.

The Auditor General's report showed two sets of information, two sets of books, being presented to Parliament and being presented in an attack on the Parliamentary Budget Officer. That is what the Prime Minister is condoning. That is what the Prime Minister is saying is absolutely no problem. I guess what the Prime Minister of Canada is telling Canadians is that it is okay to mislead Canadians. It is okay to tell them untruths during an election campaign. It is okay to give misleading information to Parliament. All of that is okay. It is okay for the Minister of National Defence to attack those people—

The Speaker: The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General said absolutely no such thing. This government has provided the information at its disposal to Parliament. The government has provided the information at its disposal to the people of Canada. The government remains committed to a thorough assessment of the numbers that have been presented by the Department of National Defence, and the government remains committed to the Canadian aerospace industry and to providing the Canadian military with the planes they need.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just repeated the exact same mistakes. The Prime Minister should read the Auditor General's report again. The Auditor General clearly said that the information the government had was not given to the Parliament of Canada. That is exactly what the Auditor General said.

Does the Prime Minister think it is fine that Parliament did not receive the necessary information? That is exactly what this government did.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General did not say that. On the contrary.

The government gave the available information to the people of Canada and to Parliament. The Auditor General questioned the due diligence behind this information, which is why we appointed a panel of experts to review the figures. This panel will present its findings in the near future.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the leaks to the media about the KPMG cost audit and the cabinet discussions do not in any way change what is really happening: the Conservatives are once again making arrangements to have a single supplier replace the CF-18s.

They told us that the statement of operational requirements that was tailored to the F-35 would be set aside, but are the Conservatives going to commit to presenting a new statement of operational requirements in order to finally implement a real tendering process?

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members know, the National Fighter Procurement Secretariat is set up to manage this process. It is working on meeting the Auditor General's recommendation, which was for the Department of National Defence to update Parliament and Canadians on the cost estimates for the F-35. Furthermore, its ongoing work will be to do a full options analysis to ensure that we get the right plane at the right cost for the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker,

You can dance, you can sing

Like a puppet on a string

But you ain't in control of a single thing

It is "Crazy Talk", Mr. Speaker. Chilliwack could have been singing about a whole bunch of them over there, but most notably, of late, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence. He has been doing his duty, repeating the PMO talking lines,

revising history, championing secrecy, and generally misleading Canadians.

When will the Conservatives embrace accountability and hold an open competition?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have explained to the member before, and if he is familiar with the procurement process, we are in a pre-acquisition phase. We have hit restart on this process, and we are doing a full options analysis. The secretariat will be undertaking this full options analysis. Until that is complete, until we have the full costs for the aircraft, we will not move forward with an acquisition.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works, with the F-35 has now "lost that loving feeling", while the Minister of National Defence has "been through the desert on a horse with no [plane]".

The Prime Minister and his merry band of travellers have been misleading Canadians for years on rising costs, on the lack of industrial benefits and on the engineering flaws. If they are serious about looking at other options, will they stand up now and tell us which other planes they are looking at to replace our CF-18s?

• (1440)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the National Fighter Procurement Secretariat is set up to manage this process. It will be the one undertaking the full options analysis, and its work will be made public.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since they have set aside the statement of requirements, and they are going out visiting some showrooms, will they consider the Saab Gripen? It has a maximum speed of Mach 2, a combat radius of 800 kilometres, and a thrust-to-weight ratio of 0.97. Is that being considered by the Conservatives?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I feel strongly about the integrity and independence of the work being done by the National Fighter Procurement Secretariat. It will undertake the cost and capability analysis of all the fighter aircraft options that are out there to replace the CF-18s. We look forward to its work, and I am sure it will call in all of the expertise needed to do that analysis.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question seemed simple to me.

Are the Conservatives considering any fighter jets other than the F-35?

For example, the Dassault Rafale has a maximum speed of Mach 1.8, a combat radius of 925 km and a thrust to weight ratio of 1.1.

Are the Conservatives considering that option?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the National Fighter Procurement Secretariat will be the one doing the full options analysis. I have complete confidence in the integrity and due diligence of the group doing the work. I am sure that when it does the full options analysis in looking at the costs and capabilities of all of the aircraft available to replace the CF-18, it will call on the necessary expertise when needed.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is fascinating to see just how difficult it is to get a clear answer to a simple question.

Are the Conservatives considering any fighter jets other than the F-35? For example, the Eurofighter has a maximum speed of Mach 2, a combat radius of 601 km and a thrust to weight ratio of 1.25.

Are the Conservatives considering that option?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, we are in the pre-acquisition phase at this point. We have hit reset on this process. The National Fighter Procurement Secretariat is doing the due diligence necessary to ensure that a full options analysis will be undertaken. I am sure that it will call on the expertise necessary to do the full technical analysis of the aircraft available to replace the CF-18.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us see again if the Conservatives know where they are going with this.

How about the Boeing Super Hornet? It has a maximum speed Mach 1.8, a combat radius of 722 kilometres and a thrust-to-weight ratio of 0.93. Is that being considered by the Conservatives?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the National Fighter Procurement Secretariat is in charge of doing the due diligence necessary. It will be undertaking a full options analysis. I am sure that it will call on the necessary experts to provide the technical expertise. Perhaps the member could give it some advice.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again and again we get no answers and the Minister of National Defence sits there refusing to even answer questions, refusing to answer for misleading Canadians on the F-35 for the past two years or for why the Department of National Defence is so single-minded about its love for sole sourcing. He once even said that there was a contract for the F-35s and that any number other than \$9 billion was being made up.

Is the minister now ready to stand up and apologize for making the largest procurement fiasco in Canadian history?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been no one in the House who has stood by and

stood up for our Canadian armed forces more than the present Minister of National Defence.

I will just remind the hon. member that one of the things the Auditor General did say was that no money was misspent. Why is that? It is because no money has been spent.

● (1445)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not seem to be able to stand up for himself.

The Minister of National Defence once boasted that the F-35 was the best and only aircraft for the Royal Canadian Air Force. He once even entered the cockpit and mugged for the cameras.

The defence minister is the one responsible for the replacement of the aging CF-18s. Does he stand by his claim that the F-35 is the only plane, or will he apologize to Canadians for misleading them?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as soon as the Auditor General's report was tabled and he raised concerns, we immediately took action to reset this process. We have put in place the National Fighter Procurement Secretariat, which is managing this process. That includes independent oversight, which is very important. It will ensure that we get maximum due diligence in the decision-making process leading up to the acquisition of the aircraft to replace the CF-18s.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence said:

—let us look at the actual contract. What the Canadian government has committed to is a \$9 billion contract for the acquisition of 65...aircraft.

Since there never was a contract and may never be a contract, and since the government has lost all confidence in the Minister of National Defence, as point one of the Minister of Public Works' seven-point plan, will the minister who speaks for the Minister of National Defence apologize for her colleague's contempt of Parliament and ask him to resign?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is ridiculous. The Minister of National Defence has done an outstanding job and we are all very proud of him.

There has been no money spent on the acquisition of any new aircraft. As soon as the government received the Auditor General's report, we hit reset on this process. We are undertaking a transparent process to ensure that we have the full cost of aircraft to replace the CF-18. We are doing a full options analysis to ensure that we have all of the information on cost and capability.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only thing about the F-35 that is working is the ejector seat because, since the Minister of National Defence sat on it, he has been missing in action. The fighter jets are clearly not the only thing that can be stealthy around here.

Oral Questions

It is not complicated. The F-35s were supposed to cost \$9 billion. This amount increased to \$29 billion and now they are going to cost \$40 billion or \$45 billion. We should have had \$9 billion in economic spinoffs, but now we will not even break even.

When will the Prime Minister do the honourable thing by kicking his minister out of cabinet and replacing him?

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General also said that no money was misspent and that is because no money has been spent on the acquisition of any fighter aircraft. We have pressed reset on this process. We have established the secretariat to manage the process moving forward. It is ensuring that there is transparency and due diligence in the decision making leading up to replacing our CF-18s. We look forward to that work and we will not be making an acquisition until all of that work is done.

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burrin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for two years Liberals stood up and opposed Conservative plans to sole source the CF-18 replacement. For two years the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence attacked the patriotism of anyone who dared question the cost of the F-35. The Prime Minister fought an election stating, “the contract we’ve signed shelters us from any increase”. He now admits there never was a contract. The F-35 represents Conservative deceit and incompetence.

When will the Prime Minister fire his defence minister and finally agree to hold an open and competitive transparent competition?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that it was actually the Liberal government in 1997 that signed the MOU to be a member of the JSF—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Public Works and Government Services has the floor.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that as soon as there were concerns raised about the cost estimates that were provided by the Department of National Defence, we reset the process. We have created a secretariat to oversee the process, including independent oversight and we have called on KPMG to also provide us with advice.

* * *

●(1450)

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after several months of delays and confusion surrounding the CNOOC takeover of Nexen, we expected the Conservatives to act seriously and responsibly, as other G8 countries have done, and clarify the definition of “net benefit”. Last week, however, instead of establishing clear public policies for Canadians and investors, they only added to the confusion and politicized the rules around foreign investments.

Can the Minister of Industry tell us exactly what he means by “exceptional circumstances” and “net benefit”?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is funny to see how confused the NDP is about its own position. Clearly, the NDP members are trying to muddle everything in an attempt to camouflage their irresponsible policy. We on this side are trying to have a debate on foreign investment, although we know that the NDP wants to block all foreign investment.

We have taken a clear stand. We have clarified the guidelines to illustrate how we will exercise our discretion in the future. This has been welcomed by the markets and by Canadians. The NDP members are about the only ones who do not seem to get it. However, Canadians can count on a responsible government when it comes to foreign investment.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year, 563 Canadian companies were taken over by foreign investors. The NDP opposed only one takeover.

[*English*]

Of 563 takeovers in Canada last year, the NDP has opposed one: your sellout of Canada’s raw natural resources to Nexen.

The Speaker: I have to, once again, remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition to not address his comments directly to colleagues but through the Chair.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ideological opposition of the NDP to foreign investment is well-known and often expressed here by the critic of that party.

What makes this intervention particularly bizarre is that we know that the NDP, which has said so in election campaigns, is actually against the development of the oil sands entirely. New Democrats get up and masquerade somehow that they understand this industry and are defending the interests of Canadians. People know the only government that will defend the interests of this industry and Canadians is this government.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in failing to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Oral Questions

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, in failing to apply basic principles of sustainable development such as polluter pay in all of our development in Canada, the Conservatives are leaving the largest ecological, economic and social debt in history on the backs of the next generation. We will stand up and have that debate with them because Canadians agree with us.

The Conservatives are destabilizing the Canadian economy. We have lost the manufacturing sector. We will stand up for the future.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at this time of merry Christmas, I wish serenity now to all members of the House.

As this government has done on foreign investment in making sure that we are able to attract foreign investment in a way that protects the interests of Canadians while ensuring that this country is not run by foreign governments, we are and will continue to do the same thing for the environment and the economy.

We are the first government to make progress on actually reducing greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time we are making sure that we develop our resources and provide good, high-paying jobs.

* * *

• (1455)

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister simply does not understand the difference between the takeover of a Canadian company by a foreign company and the takeover of a Canadian resource by a foreign power.

It is not that CNOOC purchased Nexen. It is that the government of China now owns our national resources. Under the FIPA, they can buy whatever they want in the oil patch.

The Conservatives have sold us out. That is the tragedy of this deal. They have not respected Canada's right to control its own resources.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has been very clear. In the oil sands or in other areas of the Canadian economy, we will not permit foreign governments to own a substantial portion of our resources. We have been crystal clear on that.

The FIPA with China is absolutely clear as well. Every such transaction in the future will be subject to the government's discretion in the Investment Canada Act and we will exercise that discretion to protect Canadians.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have met hundreds of veterans throughout Durham and Canada, and I know that they are some of the hardest working and most talented people around. They have an incredible training expertise and the best work ethic of any Canadian. Because of the strong fiscal management of this government, Canadian businesses are hiring.

Will the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs please update the House on what our government is doing to encourage more Canadian industries to hire our veterans?

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that great new MP is absolutely right. Our veterans, and the member is included among them, are some of the best-trained, most hard-working members of our community.

Today, the Minister of Veterans Affairs joined with CN Rail to announce the creation of 2,000 new jobs. CN Rail will be creating 2,000 new jobs next year and they are looking to fill those positions with our veterans. However, that is not all. Our government further announced that we are going to partner with corporate Canada and the True Patriot Love Foundation to find even more Canadian businesses who would be lucky to hire Canada's veterans.

I call on Canadian industry to stand with our government and—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

* * *

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the holidays are a difficult time for Canadians still looking for work in a shaky economy.

The minister's so-called reforms are failing. Front-line services are worse, Service Canada offices are often shut down, and people are now forced to wait longer than ever to access EI.

Money is tight and the bills are due now. Canadians cannot afford to wait for the minister to keep slowly rolling out her reversals. Why will she not tell us today what she will do to clean up the mess that she created?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do want to help Canadians, particularly those who have been unfortunate enough to lose their jobs through no fault of their own.

That is why we are automating and streamlining EI processing so they will get better, faster, more efficient service. That is why we are up to 99% registration for EI online now to speed up that process.

We are doing more to help Canadians because we believe the best way to help them is to help them get a job. We are providing them with training and more information about jobs in their skill range in their areas. It is a shame that the NDP is not supporting us in those efforts to help Canadians get back to work.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that there will be fewer closures of Service Canada employment insurance offices in Conservative ridings.

Previously, regions that voted for the right party were promised services. Today, services are being taken away from those that did not vote for the government. That is straight out of the Duplessis era. Workers across Canada have the right to be treated equally.

Will the Conservatives stop using public services to buy votes?

• (1500)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we need an efficient employment insurance system to respond quickly and appropriately to the needs of the unemployed.

In Montreal, there used to be two Service Canada offices within one block of each other, which was not efficient. That is why we are overhauling the system to better serve Canadians in need.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in addition to punishing Quebec, the Conservatives are attacking workers who do not have access to the Internet.

With the closure of many Service Canada Centres in the regions, unemployed workers will have to submit their claims online. Many outlying areas do not have good Internet service because of the Conservatives' lack of leadership. This means that many workers will just give up. Employment insurance is not a luxury for people who lose their jobs.

When will the Conservatives finally take employment insurance seriously?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to help unemployed workers.

Through our efforts, 99% of unemployed workers can now submit their employment insurance claims online. It is a much more efficient system, a system that delivers results more quickly.

It is very important to acknowledge that there are still more than 600 Service Canada offices across the country, and unemployed workers can obtain services there.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the irresponsible closures of Immigration Canada offices throughout the world, including those in Buffalo and Tokyo, are resulting in much longer wait times.

The closure of the office in Dhaka, Bangladesh, has added an average of six months to the wait time. Six months is a long time. By closing offices, the Conservatives have cut services, period.

When will they admit that their cuts are reducing the services offered to Canadians?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is completely wrong.

In fact, we have actually expedited the processing of applications, particularly for permanent residents. When our government came to power six years ago, it took seven or eight years for applications for permanent residence to be processed, whereas now it takes only one or two years. We expect that, in the future, any fairly straightforward applications for permanent residence will be processed within less than 12 months. We will continue to improve online services for clients throughout the world.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservative financial incompetence has added \$140 billion to the national debt, bringing it to a staggering \$600 billion.

For the Conservatives, lavish TV advertising is more important than food safety; celebrating the War of 1812 is more important than providing dignified funerals for veterans. The Conservatives are cutting funding for low-income Canadians while the Minister of Finance is doubling his advertising budget to \$16 million.

Instead of cutting support for the poor, why does the minister not cut his own wasteful advertising budget?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are proud of Canada's heritage. We are certainly obligated to communicate to Canadians on health and safety issues, and indeed we are proud of the fact that we have created nearly 900,000 net new jobs in this country since July 2009.

We have the lowest debt burden amongst major developed countries. We have cut our deficit in half and are still going strong to reduce our deficit. The Liberals simply do not have an economic plan.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has not only been mean to the fishermen of Atlantic Canada, but it is treating them as criminals.

In Cape Breton, after their fishing season, it denied them EI, forcing these hard-working families to use food banks and welfare. Some are reinstated, but not all. The government must stop its cruel shakedown of these fisher families, because of its \$600 billion incompetence in the Canadian economy.

Will this minister end the witch hunt and return all moneys owed to these fishing communities?

Oral Questions

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation to Canadians to uphold the laws of this land, including the laws that govern employment insurance. There are criteria that determine whether a person is eligible. The CRA did some investigations. It had some concerns about certain cases. We are trying to uphold the law and are pleased that several of the cases involved have been cleared.

We do want to make sure that the EI system maintains its integrity so it is there for all Canadians who need and deserve it.

* * *

• (1505)

[*Translation*]**AIR TRANSPORTATION**

Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the holiday season is upon us, and many Canadians will be travelling all over the country to visit loved ones. Unfortunately, passengers are not protected, because sometimes flights are too full, planes are delayed and flights are simply cancelled. People are not compensated, and this is unacceptable. The NDP has a solution: compensate travellers when their rights are violated.

Will the Conservatives support our initiative to offer passengers fair and equitable treatment?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to hear that the NDP has a solution for snowstorms, ice storms and all other unforeseen circumstances at airports. We want all Canadian travellers to have a wonderful holiday season with their families and to be able to travel safely to wherever they need to go.

However, I have a hard time believing that the NDP member knows how to manage everything that has to do with air transportation in Canada.

* * *

SPORT

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the hopes of getting a better response, I would like to talk about Mathieu Giroux, who was a gold medallist at the Olympic Games in Vancouver, and who is someone we should be proud of as a role model for young people.

On Monday, I wrote to the minister to ask him to find a compromise that would allow Mathieu to complete his studies and continue his athletic career. The speed skating federation cut him from the national team because it was physically impossible for him to finish his studies while training in Calgary at the same time.

My question is simple: what steps has the minister taken with the federation since I made my request?

[*English*]

Hon. Bal Gosal (Minister of State (Sport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want all of our athletes to succeed at the world level.

These decisions are best left with the national sports organizations, because they are responsible for preparing athletes for competition. Our government is proud to support our national sports organizations at a record funding level.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday our government delivered on one of its commitments and tabled the fair rail freight service bill.

This fulfills a key commitment following the recommendations that were made by the rail freight service review panel. This bill gives companies that ship goods by rail the right to a service agreement with the railways.

Can the Minister of State for Transport update the House on this important announcement?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome the member for Calgary Centre to the team, a team that knows that a competitive rail supply chain is vital to Canada's economy.

The fair rail freight service bill has already received strong support from industry across the country. Let me quote the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association:

These measures will create the conditions for improved railway performance... [It] will help re-balance...the business relationship between shippers and railways.

Industry can rest assured that we are getting the job done.

* * *

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for more than 10 years the government has promised that Downsview Park would be Canada's first urban national park. Now that Downsview Park is being amalgamated into the Canada Lands Company, does this mean that the government is planning to sell off the park?

Would the minister confirm today that she will not deprive the community of its much treasured park simply because it was set up by a Liberal government, or because the Conservatives are short of money because of their financial incompetence?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yes, I can verify that. I know that Downsview Park is important to the people of Toronto. This change in governance was really about good governance, and I know that the Canada Lands Company has an excellent reputation, particularly in the Toronto area. I look forward to the work it will do and the good governance and good management of the Canada Lands Company.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a month ago, the Conservatives hid the cuts they are making to the Aluminum Technology Centre located in my riding. I have learned that the centre's operating budget will be cut by 10%. This is creating a climate of uncertainty, and some researchers have apparently already chosen to leave the centre. This translates into a net loss of expertise for my region.

The secondary and tertiary processing of aluminum are crucial to the economic development of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

Will the government reverse its decision and reinstate the full budget of the Aluminum Technology Centre?

● (1510)

[English]

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find the question surprising because no government in the history of our country has supported science all across the nation in all sectors, from basic to applied science, more than our Conservative government.

That said, no party has ever voted no to science and research as often as the member and his party. We will take no lessons from a socialist party on how to support science and research.

* * *

[Translation]

PENSIONS

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a year after the closure of the White Birch Paper plant in Quebec City, pensioners have been forced to accept huge cuts to their pensions. This is a cruel blow for these workers, who are facing uncertainty with Christmas just around the corner. Yet the Conservatives are still refusing to do anything to help them.

What are the Conservatives waiting for to make the protection of workers' pensions a priority when a bankruptcy occurs? Will they make workers a priority as we pursue economic growth?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, certainly we do want to make sure that pensioners are protected. Industry Canada looks after that, and we have actually brought pensioners up above where they were under a prior government. We continue to work with our provincial partners, making sure that pensioners are protected at all levels.

* * *

[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's labour minister is asking her federal counterpart to defer passage of Bill C-377. She has asked for a meeting in order to discuss this issue with the Minister of Labour because Quebec is concerned, with good cause, about this bill's repercussions on labour

relations, which is her responsibility. Furthermore, Quebec already has legislation requiring unions and employers to be more transparent.

Does the minister intend to respond to the Quebec minister's letter, meet with her and ask the federal government to defer passage of Bill C-377?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the letter I received from my colleague in Quebec, of course I will be speaking with and meeting with her in the new year on a whole bunch of different matters. We have lots to discuss.

I do appreciate receiving her views, but as we know, this evening we will be voting on a private member's bill and we have made our intentions clear.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of two ministers from the great province of Saskatchewan: the Hon. Jim Reiter, Minister of Government Relations and Minister Responsible for First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs; and the Hon. Russ Marchuk, Minister of Education.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

● (1515)

DECORUM IN THE HOUSE

The Speaker: As the House prepares to adjourn for the Christmas holidays, the Chair would like to make a short statement about order and decorum.

In recent months, for a variety of reasons, the atmosphere in the chamber has been at times difficult. This is perhaps not surprising since the House is made up of members who are committed and whose strongly held views are freely expressed on a daily basis.

The House is also an inherently adversarial forum that tends to foster conflict. As a result, sometimes emotions get the better of us and we quickly find ourselves in situations marked by disorderly conduct. Tone and gestures can cause as much of a reaction as the words used in debate. Lately, it appears that at different times the mood of the House has strayed quite far from the flexibility, accommodation and balance that ideally ought to exist in this place.

[Translation]

My task as Speaker is to ensure that the intensity of feeling expressed around some issues is contained within the bounds of civility without infringing on the freedom of speech that members enjoy. The Chair tries to ensure that our rules are adhered to in a way that encourages mutual respect.

[English]

However, all members will recognize that ultimately the Speaker must depend on their collective self-discipline to maintain order and to foster decorum. My authority to enforce the rules depends on the co-operation of the House.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Our electors expect all members to make greater efforts to curb disorder and unruly behaviour. So I urge all members to reflect on how best to return the House to the convivial, co-operative atmosphere I know all of us would prefer.

This would be a great help to me and my fellow Chair occupants, about whom I would also like to say a few words.

[English]

I would like to take a moment to salute, on behalf of all of us, the excellent work of our Deputy Speaker, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, and our assistant deputy speakers, the members for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock and Simcoe North.

[Translation]

Often under trying circumstances, my colleagues in the Chair have soldiered on, doing their best to uphold the finest traditions of this chamber. As all honourable members are aware, unusual events arise frequently in the House. Thus the task of reading the will of the House is often left to Chair occupants—whether an unexpected sequence of events occurs or an expected sequence of events does not.

[English]

Since the House resumed its sittings in mid-September, we have witnessed our fair share of instances where the House has been faced with unforeseen situations but has, nevertheless, found its way with the help of our chair officers. I want to say that the three gentlemen who share duties in the Chair have, in my view, upheld the highest standards of professionalism and impartiality while trying to facilitate the orderly conduct of the House business.

Only those who have had the privilege of serving in the Chair and presiding over the deliberations in this chamber can truly understand to what degree the role involves as much art as science. I am very proud of the way in which the Chair occupants conduct themselves and I want, on your behalf, to thank them for their dedication to the institution and for their ongoing hard work.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FEDERAL ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

The Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to section 21 of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act to lay upon the table a certified copy of the report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of Alberta.

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

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for recognizing me on a point of order.

Earlier, during question period, the Minister of Labour gave an unsatisfactory answer.

In a letter addressed to the federal minister, the Quebec labour minister talked about the urgency of the situation in the following terms:

This bill would therefore establish a precedent that opposes the principles and administration of labour relations in Quebec and, according to some experts, would also constitute a violation of the division of powers in this area.

I seek the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the taking of the deferred recorded divisions on the motion at report stage and at third reading of Bill C-377, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (requirements for labour organizations) be deferred until after a meeting of the Minister of Labour of Canada and the Minister of Labour of Quebec.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is not consent.

* * *

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF CANADA

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2011-12 annual report of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The Mental Health Commission of Canada continues to act as a focal point for mental health in Canada.

This year, the commission achieved an important milestone with the release of the mental health strategy for Canada entitled, “Changing Directions Changing Lives”. I would like to extend my appreciation to the commission for its work.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the documents entitled: Seven-Point Plan: Status Report, National Fighter Procurement Secretariat, December 2012; Evaluation of Options to Sustain a Canadian Forces Fighter Capability: Terms of Reference, Government of Canada, December 2012; Next Generation Fighter Capability: Annual Update, National Defence, December 2012; Next Generation Fighter Capability: Life Cycle Cost Framework, KPMG, November 2012; Next Generation Fighter Capability: Independent Review of Life Cycle Cost, KPMG, November 2012; Canadian Industrial Participation in the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Program, Industry Canada, December 2012.

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 37 petitions.

* * *

● (1520)

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, 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 Section of ParlAmericas respecting its participation at the Parliamentary Forum on the Margins of the Summit of the Americas held in Cartagena, Colombia, April 10 to 13, 2012.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, 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 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the bilateral visit to India, February 17 to 26, 2012.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to the 2012 pre-budget consultations.

[English]

On behalf of all committee members, I thank the dedicated committee staff for their hard work, contribution, support and collaboration during the study. They are: our two clerks, Jean-François Lafleur and Suzie Cadieux; our analysts, Mark Mahabir, Daniel Benatuil, Brett Stuckey, Marc Leblanc, Adriane Young and, of course, the indomitable June Dewetering; and our administrative support, Chantale Gilliland and Sebastian Moreau. On behalf of the entire committee, I thank them for all their hard work.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats are presenting a minority report. We produced a minority report because we do not believe that the report's recommendations present a comprehensive solution to the most important issues that we are facing today and the issues that we heard during the budget hearings. In this unstable economic climate, we need a comprehensive strategy. We did not hear that coming forward.

Budget 2013 needs to be about job creation, getting Canadians back to work now and addressing the persistently high unemployment situation that has persisted since the 2008 recession. We need to address the skills mismatch that our economy is facing and very weak productivity growth.

Routine Proceedings

In our minority report, we are presenting recommendations promoting jobs and skills development in a balanced economy, closing the infrastructure gap with strategic investments, building a sustainable vision for Canada's energy economy and supporting Canadian families.

Most important, we need a commitment to open, transparent and accountable government. Canadians want real consultation and partnership from their government. They deserve better.

[Translation]

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

The report is entitled "Labour and Skills Shortages in Canada: Addressing Current and Future Challenges".

[English]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my NDP colleagues, I am pleased to rise in the House today to table a supplementary report to the report just tabled by my colleague. The report on skills and labour shortages, although taking a fairly comprehensive look at the issue, fell short in its recommendations in very serious ways.

We heard from witnesses over and over again that we needed much more accurate information with respect to the labour market. Therefore, we are calling on the government to provide that kind of labour market information, including reinstating funding for sectoral councils. There needs to be much more consultation with first nations communities and to work in partnership with those communities. Again, our supplementary report speaks to those deficiencies as well.

With respect to post-secondary education and the federal government's support for post-secondary education institutions, as well as the students at those institutions, the report fell short and our report supplements those recommendations in some detail.

* * *

● (1525)

[Translation]

AERONAUTICS ACT

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-468, An Act to amend the Aeronautics Act (agreement with provincial authority).

She said: Mr. Speaker, 40 years ago, on March 27, 1969, Jean Marchand, a minister in Pierre Elliott Trudeau's government, officially announced the expropriation of a parcel of land as big as the island of Laval to build an international airport.

Routine Proceedings

Ottawa kicked out 3,000 families. We are talking about an area of 39,255 hectares to build the Mirabel airport on the most productive arable lands in Quebec. What became of this airport? It has been stripped of all commercial flights and passengers, who were ironically transferred to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau airport. Since then, the people of Ahuntsic have been forced to endure aircraft noise.

Another era, another city. Neuville is a community of men, women and children who have created an excellent quality of life for themselves over the years. They have also had rules to protect their land. Developers created a company for the purpose of building a private airport on land in Neuville. They had to comply only with federal regulations and were then able to get around the fact that the land they had chosen was protected agricultural land. They also disregarded municipal zoning and the regional county municipality's land use rules.

Can a population be stripped of the right to control its own land? No. I am introducing this bill, which would amend the Aeronautics Act, so that the Governor in Council may make regulations respecting the location of airports only with the approval of a province.

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

* * *

[English]

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE IN REGULATIONS ACT

Hon. Peter Van Loan (for the Minister of Justice) moved that Bill S-12, An Act to amend the Statutory Instruments Act and to make consequential amendments to the Statutory Instruments Regulations, be read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

[Translation]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I think there is unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the remainder of the debate pursuant to Standing Order 66, on the motion to concur in the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, presented on Wednesday, March 28, 2012, be deemed to have taken place and the motion be deemed agreed to on division.

The Speaker: Does the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

PETITIONS

The Speaker: I see many members rising on petitions. We are going to keep the time very strict to try to accommodate everyone.

The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present over 5,000 petitions from people all across the country who acknowledge that the medium age of entry into prostitution is 12 to 14. The petitioners call on the House to request that Parliament amend the Criminal Code to decriminalize the selling of sexual services, that it criminalize the purchasing of sexual services, and that it provide support to those who desire to leave prostitution. This would be a help to the criminal laws we are trying to put in.

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present three petitions. The first petition is with respect to banning the importation of shark fin. The petitioners point out that the importation of shark fin to Canada should be banned. They believe that measures must be taken to stop the global practice of shark finning and to ensure the responsible conservation and management of sharks.

● (1530)

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I wish to present is signed by thousands of petitioners. They are calling on the House of Commons to save the coast guard. The Kitsilano station is one of the busiest search and rescue stations in Canada. The highly trained crews—

The Speaker: I will have to stop the hon. member there to try to accommodate everyone.

The hon. member for Random—Burin—St. George's.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions on the same subject, and that is the cuts that have been made to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

These cuts are impacting many people in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly in the riding of Random—Burin—St. George's. Services they have become used to having as a result of being fishers in a very volatile environment are now being cut by the Conservative government. The petitioners are asking the government to reconsider and to reinstate those services they have relied on since they have been fishing.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today signed by constituents in my riding of Burlington. The petitioners ask the House of Commons not to condone the discrimination against girls through sex-selection abortion.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to present a petition signed by people from across Canada calling for safety devices to be added to the sides of all large trucks and trailers in order to prevent cyclists and pedestrians from being injured or killed.

[English]

HISTORIC SITES

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two sets of petitions to file today, each of them involving thousands of signatures.

In the first case, the petitioners are arguing for the continuation of federal funding for the Motherwell Homestead in Saskatchewan, which is an important historical feature in our province.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): The second petition calls upon the government to provide adequate funding for the Indian Head tree farm and the prairie shelterbelt program.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to present this petition from British Columbians.

The petitioners point out that herbicide-tolerant, genetically modified alfalfa needs to be registered but has already been approved for human consumption and environmental release in Canada. The petitioners are concerned that genetically modified alfalfa is currently planted and that unwanted contamination from genetically modified alfalfa is inevitable.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to impose a moratorium—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have risen on numerous occasions to present petitions from people in Manitoba, Ontario and B.C. who are concerned that every year thousands of dogs and cats are brutally slaughtered for their fur. The petitioners point out that Canada should join the U.S.A., Australia and European countries in banning the import and sale of cat and dog fur and that it should support Bill C-296.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present three petitions signed by dozens of Canadians, not only from Guelph in southern Ontario but from across Canada. The petitioners wish to register their concern regarding human trafficking, which poses a serious threat to some of Canada's most vulnerable citizens, including youth, females and first nations.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to address this matter by developing and implementing a national action plan regarding human trafficking.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to table today on the grave subject of the sexual exploitation of children, and in particular, on child pornography.

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition today on the very important topic of safety for both pedestrians and cyclists. The petitioners call upon the government to introduce regulations for side underrun guards for large trucks and trailers to prevent cyclists and pedestrians from being pulled under the wheels of these vehicles. As well, they are asking the government to harmonize Canadian vehicle safety standards with UNECE Regulation No. 73, which requires side guards on all trucks and trailers in Europe.

DENTAL MERCURY

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a stack of petitions on the topic of dental mercury. The petitioners request that the government recognize that the World Health Organization recommends phasing out dental amalgam. They call upon the government to assume global leadership by recommending the phasing out of dental mercury and the phasing in of non-mercury alternatives, within Canada, at the next mercury treaty negotiations.

• (1535)

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition. The petitioners ask that the House condemn the discrimination against females that is occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have four petitions. The first petition asks the Canadian government to set national carbon emission targets and a national renewable energy policy.

PARKS CANADA

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition asks the Government of Canada to not reduce the hours of operation of the Rideau Canal and Trent-Severn Waterway.

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition asks the federal government to ensure that there are mandatory side guards on trucks and trailers to prevent cyclists and pedestrians from being pulled under heavy trucks.

Routine Proceedings

INCOME TAX ACT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition is with respect to unions. It asks for public disclosure legislation.

[*Translation*]

ROAD SAFETY

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 37% of all collisions involving cyclists are fatal. Today I am presenting a petition calling for side guards to be added to trucks in order to protect cyclists.

[*English*]

SEX SELECTION

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from constituents who are concerned about gender selection because of ultrasounds that reveal the sex of a child. The petitioners are calling upon the House to condemn the discrimination against females that is occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

[*Translation*]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by all Vietnamese communities in Canada in support of human rights in Vietnam. The petitioners are calling on Canada to send special rapporteurs and ambassadors with the following objectives: to investigate arbitrary arrests; to urge Vietnam to release its political prisoners and conscientious objectors; and to persuade the Vietnamese government to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

[*English*]

VISITOR VISAS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition that asks that when visitor visas are being issued for weddings, graduations, birthdays, funerals and other family gatherings and family needs, they be given more consideration.

SEX SELECTION

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by people who are asking the House to condemn discrimination against females that occurs through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition signed by Canadians who are concerned about human rights in Vietnam. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to send special rapporteurs and embassy representatives to investigate the situation in Vietnam, to urge the Vietnamese government to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to urge the release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today from Winnipeg. Thousands of these continue to pour in. The petitioners are urging the government to reconsider and restore funding to the Experimental Lakes Area, which is an important source of research on the ecosystem of lakes.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition wherein the petitioners are pointing out that millions of girls have been lost through sex-selective abortion. They are calling upon the House to condemn the discrimination against females that is occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from people who are concerned about road safety for cyclists. The petitioners are asking the government to introduce a regulation requiring side underrun guards for large trucks and trailers to prevent cyclists and pedestrians from being pulled under the wheels of these vehicles.

SEX SELECTION

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians believe that sex selective pregnancy termination is morally wrong, but based on a recent poll, 92% of them believe that it should also be illegal. I have a petition from many Canadians across Canada asking that the government condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex selective pregnancy termination. I call upon members to support motion M-408.

[*Translation*]

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition about improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists across Canada, especially with regard to large vehicles.

[*English*]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions today. The first is from residents of Vernon and Kelowna. Although the Canada-China investment treaty has been signed, it is not yet ratified. They urge the government not to sign the treaty in its current form and not to ratify it.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of Montreal, Oshawa, Surrey and Gabriola Island who urge the government to decline to approve the northern gateway project.

Routine Proceedings

● (1540)

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

The first petition regards impaired driving causing death. The petitioners want tougher laws and the implementation of new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my second petition regards sex selection.

It is noted that the Conservative government has condemned sex selection, as have the other parties. The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to support legislation that condemns girls being eliminated through sex selection.

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition from Canadians calling on the Government of Canada to introduce regulations under the Motor Vehicle Safety Act requiring side underrun guards for large trucks and trailers. They are also calling on the government to harmonize Canadian vehicle safety standards with ECE Regulation No. 73.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

In the first petition, the petitioners point out that Canada used to promote the right to equal protection and equal benefit of law. Therefore, they are calling on the House of Commons to condemn discrimination against girls through sex-selection pregnancy termination.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, with a total of about 300 signatures from across Canada, half of which are from women, is regarding human rights in Canada. The petitioners are asking the House to amend the 400-year-old definition of human being to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

[Translation]

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. The first asks the government to protect cyclists and pedestrians by installing side guards on trucks and trailers.

GATINEAU PARK

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition concerns the protection of Gatineau Park by adopting legislation that will provide the necessary legal protection to ensure its preservation for future generations.

HOUSING

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to present a petition signed by Canadians across the country who are asking the government to take action and adopt a national housing strategy.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions today. One is signed by the people of Louis-Hébert, who are expressing their disapproval of the March 2012 decision by CIDA to drastically reduce funding for Development and Peace programs by \$35 million.

The petitioners are asking Parliament to commit to contributing 0.7% of GDP to international development and to restore funding to Development and Peace.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition has to do with saving the infrastructure of the Experimental Lakes Area.

[English]

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present calling upon the Government of Canada to introduce a regulation under the Motor Vehicle Safety Act that requires side guards and to harmonize Canadian vehicle safety standards with ECE Regulation No. 73, which requires side guards.

[Translation]

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition, in compliance with our rules, from 371 people from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, who are calling on the government to maintain funding for Development and Peace, to ensure that this non-governmental organization can continue to do work around the world that promotes Canadian culture.

[English]

HEALTH OF ANIMALS ACT

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present. The first petition has hundreds of signatures in support of my Bill C-322, which would prohibit the import or export of horses for slaughter for human consumption.

FISHERIES ACT

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the House of Commons to adopt section 35(1) of the Fisheries Act and to keep it as it currently is to emphasize habitat protection.

Routine Proceedings

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last petition calls for the House of Commons to undertake a countrywide consultation to review the federal environmental assessment process.

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition this afternoon from Canadians who are calling on the Government of Canada to adopt a national public transit strategy.

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I am presenting a petition today calling on the government to introduce legislation on road safety and motorized vehicles to protect cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians in the case of accidents.

* * *

• (1545)

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 1020, 1024, 1025 and 1034 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question No. 1020—**Hon. Gerry Byrne:**

With regard to appointments within the Department of Justice between April 1, 2010, and March 31, 2011: (a) how many people were appointed; (b) to what position was each person appointed; (c) for each appointment, who was the delegated or sub-delegated official responsible for making the appointment; (d) on the basis of what criteria did the Department determine whether to implement an advertised or non-advertised appointment process; (e) for each appointment, which of the criteria in (d) were met or not met; (f) for which of the appointments was an advertised appointment process implemented; (g) for each advertised appointment, in what media outlets was the appointment advertised; (h) on what dates were each of the advertisements in (g) posted in each media outlet; (i) for each advertised appointment, what was the title of the position as stated in the advertisement; (j) for each advertised appointment, what was the description of the position as stated in the advertisement; (k) for each advertised appointment, what were the essential qualifications as listed in the advertisement with respect to (i) language proficiency, (ii) education, (iii) experience; (l) for each advertised appointment, what were the asset qualifications as listed in the advertisement with respect to (i) language proficiency, (ii) education, (iii) experience; (m) for each advertised appointment, which of the essential qualifications were met by the successful candidate; (n) for each advertised appointment, and for each essential qualification, on the basis of what documents did the Department determine that the successful candidate met or failed to meet the essential qualification; (o) for each advertised appointment, which of the asset qualifications were met by the successful candidate; (p) for each advertised appointment, and for each asset qualification, on the basis of what documents did the Department determine that the successful candidate met or failed to meet the asset qualification; (q) for each advertised appointment, which of the essential qualifications were met by each unsuccessful candidate; (r) for each advertised appointment, for each unsuccessful candidate, and for each essential qualification, on the basis of what documents did the Department determine that the essential qualification was met or not met; (s) for each advertised appointment, which

of the asset qualifications were met by each unsuccessful candidate; (t) for each advertised appointment, for each unsuccessful candidate, and for each asset qualification, on the basis of what documents did the Department determine that the asset qualification was met or not met; (u) for each non-advertised appointment, who was the successful candidate; (v) for each non-advertised appointment, who were the unsuccessful candidates; (w) for each non-advertised appointment, what were the criteria according to which the candidates were evaluated by the Department; (x) for each non-advertised appointment, which of the criteria were met by the successful candidate; (y) for each non-advertised appointment, and for each criterion, on the basis of what documents did the Department determine that the successful candidate met or failed to meet the criterion; (z) for each non-advertised appointment, which of the criteria were met by each unsuccessful applicant; and (aa) for each non-advertised appointment, for each criterion, and for each unsuccessful candidate, on the basis of what documents did the Department determine that the criterion was met or not met?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1024—**Mr. Frank Valeriote:**

With regard to Industry Canada, what grants and contributions under \$25,000 did it award from January 1, 2011, to the present, including the recipient's name, the date, the amount and the description?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1025—**Mr. Frank Valeriote:**

With regard to the Department of Justice, what grants and contributions under \$25,000 did it award from January 1, 2011, to the present, including the recipient's name, the date, the amount and the description?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1034—**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:**

With regard to the changes made by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to the Interim Federal Health (IFH) Program: (a) what accounting was made of the impact of the IFH changes on those who would no longer be covered by the IFH Program with respect to morbidity on (i) April 25, 2012, (ii) July 18, 2012; (b) what accounting was made of the impact of the changes on those who would no longer be covered by the IFH Program with respect to mortality on (i) April 25, 2012, (ii) July 18, 2012; (c) what amount of cost-savings did the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) calculate that the changes would result in (i) on April 25, 2012, (ii) on July 18, 2012; (d) what were all of the assumptions that CIC made in arriving at the cost-savings referred to in (c) (i) and (c) (ii); (e) what information was included in the cost-benefit analysis made by CIC with respect to the changes made on April 25, 2012, including with respect to (i) monetized benefits, (ii) monetized costs, (iii) net benefits, (iv) unmonetized benefits, (v) unmonetized costs, (vi) unquantified benefits, (vii) unquantified costs, (viii) risks, (ix) uncertainties; (f) what information was included in the cost-benefit analysis made by CIC with respect to the changes made on July 18, 2012, including with respect to (i) monetized benefits, (ii) monetized costs, (iii) net benefits, (iv) unmonetized benefits, (v) unmonetized costs, (vi) unquantified benefits, (vii) unquantified costs, (viii) risks, (ix) uncertainties; (g) what has been done to (i) communicate the changes to all relevant health professionals and institutions across the country, (ii) revise the administration of the program within CIC, including any training and monitoring, (iii) revise the contract for the administration of the program; (h) what were the costs of (i) communicating the changes to all relevant health professionals across the country, (ii) revising the administration of the program within CIC, including any training and monitoring, (iii) revising the contract for the administration of the program, including any penalties or additional training or administrative costs; and (i) how will federal funding available to the provinces and territories be modified as a result of the changes, broken down by province and territory?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

REPORT STAGE MOTIONS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: As I committed to do on November 29, 2012, I am now prepared to provide the House with a more comprehensive ruling on the points of order raised on November 28 by the hon. House leaders for the official opposition and the government regarding the report stage proceedings on Bill C-45, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures.

[*Translation*]

In making their interventions, both House leaders made two kinds of arguments. First, they made what the Chair would characterize as strictly technical procedural points related to the mechanics of report stage for Bill C-45. At the same time, they shared other views with the House on broader issues, such as the role of the Speaker in general and in relation to report stage, the role of the House and of the Speaker in a majority setting, and the role and rights of independent members in relation to report stage.

In its earlier ruling on some of the purely procedural matters raised in these points of order, the Chair outlined the rationale for its selection for debate and grouping for voting purposes of motions at report stage of Bill C-45, in particular motions to delete. Motions to delete were a preoccupation for both House leaders: the opposition House leader wanted the Speaker to select them all and allow separate votes on all of them, while the government House leader did not want me to select any of them, to avoid votes altogether.

[*English*]

As I explained to the House on November 29, there are several precedents to justify not only the selection of motions to delete for debate at report stage but also to justify their grouping for voting purposes. These are long-standing practices of the House.

References made by the opposition House leader to rulings by Speakers Jerome and Fraser, while of interest, failed to take into account the evolution of our procedures as they relate to report stage, particularly the very clear direction included in the notes to Standing Orders 76(5) and 76.1(5) since 2001. These notes outline the desire of the House to circumscribe report stage and instruct the Speaker to select motions for debate in accordance with certain criteria to ensure that report stage is not a mere repetition of the committee stage.

As I stated in my ruling on November 29, *Debates*, page 12611:

In the absence of any specific guidance from the House with regard to motions to delete and other matters raised in the points of order, the Speaker cannot unilaterally modify the well-established current practice.

Speaker's Ruling

Despite the brevity of the ruling, the Chair believes it puts to rest any ambiguity that may have been perceived with regard to the Chair's approach to the fundamental procedural aspects of selection and voting processes as they relate to motions at report stage.

With regard to the broader issues raised by the two House leaders, the Chair intends to address them thematically, beginning with a discussion on the role of the Speaker.

[*Translation*]

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Second Edition, at page 307, states that it is the duty of the Speaker:

...to ensure that public business is transacted efficiently and that the interests of all parts of the House are advocated and protected against the use of arbitrary authority. It is in this spirit that the Speaker, as the chief servant of the House, applies the rules. The Speaker is the servant, neither of any part of the House nor of any majority in the House, but of the entire institution and serves the best interests of the House...

[*English*]

O'Brien and Bosc further states that:

Despite the considerable authority of the office, the Speaker may exercise only those powers conferred upon him or her by the House, within the limits established by the House itself.

Speaker Milliken provided useful insight into this role when on April 27, 2010, on page 2039 of *Debates*, he stated:

—the Chair is always mindful of the established precedents, usages, traditions and practices of the House and of the role of the Chair in their ongoing evolution.

[*Translation*]

This not only confirms that it is not just written rules from which the Speaker's authority is legitimately derived, as suggested by the opposition House leader, but that the evolutionary nature of procedure must be taken into account. It was on this basis of the House's longstanding acceptance, and in fact expectations, of the practices at report stage, in conjunction with the need for adaptation to the current context, that the amendments for Bill C-45 were grouped for debate and voting purposes in the manner that they were.

● (1550)

[*English*]

Nor does the role of the Speaker in this regard vary from Parliament to Parliament, as has been suggested by the government House leader, who said:

It may be justifiable in a minority Parliament for the Chair to accept any questions for the House to decide, because it is difficult to predict the intentions of the majority of members. This is not the case in a majority Parliament in general.

Let me be clear: the Speaker does not make decisions based on who is in control of the House. Report stage motions are not, and never have been, selected for debate and grouped for voting on the basis of who the Chair thinks might win the vote on them. This is why, in the case of Bill C-45, the Chair rejected the proposal made by the government House leader that I group certain motions, to use his words, "in a manner that recognizes the anticipated will of the House".

Speaker's Ruling

[Translation]

The Chair is and will continue to be guided by procedural imperatives in all of its decisions, not by somehow substituting the Speaker's prediction of the likely outcome of a vote for the expressed will of the House itself.

[English]

This brings me to a discussion of the role of the House as a whole.

The role of the House in the legislative process must be seen in the larger context of the accountability of the executive branch to the elected members of the legislative branch. Speaker Milliken, in a ruling given on April 27, 2010, which can be found at page 2039 of *Debates*, stated:

In a system of responsible government, the fundamental right of the House of Commons to hold the government to account for its actions is an indisputable privilege and in fact an obligation.

[Translation]

He continued:

...it is why that right is manifested in numerous procedures of the House, from the daily question period to the detailed examination by committees of estimates, to reviews of the accounts of Canada, to debate, amendments, and votes on legislation.

[English]

The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, at page 250, puts into context how our practices have attempted to strike an appropriate balance between government and opposition. It states that:

—it remains true that parliamentary procedure is intended to ensure that there is a balance between the government's need to get its business through the House, and the opposition's responsibility to debate that business without completely immobilizing the proceedings of the House. In short, debate in the House is necessary, but it should lead to a decision in a reasonable time.

The underlying principles these citations express are the cornerstones of our parliamentary system. They enshrine the ancient democratic tradition of allowing the minority to voice its views and opinions in the public square and, in counterpoint, of allowing the majority to put its legislative program before Parliament and have it voted upon.

In advocating a much stricter approach to the report stage on Bill C-45, the government House leader seemed to argue that the existence of a government majority meant that the outcome of proceedings on the bill was known in advance, that somehow this justified taking a new approach to decision-making by the House and that anything short of that would constitute a waste of the House's time.

This line of reasoning, taken to its logical end, might lead to conclusions that trespass on important foundational principles of our institution, regardless of its composition. Speaker Milliken recognized this when, on March 29, 2007, at page 8136 of *Debates*, he stated:

[Translation]

...neither the political realities of the moment nor the sheer force of the numbers should force us to set aside the values inherent in the parliamentary conventions and procedures by which we govern our deliberations.

Speaker Fraser on October 10, 1989, at page 4461 of the *Debates of the House of Commons*, also reminded the House that decisions on legislation are for the House alone to make, stating that:

...we are a parliamentary democracy, not a so-called executive democracy, nor a so-called administrative democracy.

[English]

I would now like to turn my attention to the issue of the role and rights of independent members in the context of report stage.

While acknowledging that some accommodation for the participation of independent members was necessary, the government House leader was critical of the current state of affairs, which he claims can allow a single independent member, as the government House leader put it, "to hold the House hostage in a voting marathon".

As all members know, this year the House has had to deal with thousands of report stage motions when considering the two budget implementation bills, which resulted, in the case of Bill C-38, in around-the-clock voting. While this is not unprecedented, it is the first time it has happened since the rules governing report stage were changed in 2001. As is often the case in the midst of such consuming procedural challenges, frustration surfaces, our practices are examined and remedies are proposed.

• (1555)

[Translation]

As I have indicated, the note to Standing Orders 76(5) and 76.1(5) already provides guidance to the Chair with regard to the selection of amendments at report stage, and in particular, states the following:

For greater certainty, the purpose of this Standing Order is, primarily, to provide Members who were not members of the committee, with an opportunity to have the House consider specific amendments they wish to propose.

[English]

It is no secret that independent members do not sit on committees in the current Parliament. In light of recent report stage challenges and the frustrations that have resurfaced, the Chair would like to point out the opportunities and mechanisms that are at the House's disposal to resolve these issues to the satisfaction of all members.

The Standing Orders currently in place offer committees wide latitude to deal with bills in an inclusive and thorough manner that would balance the rights of all members. In fact, it is neither inconceivable nor unprecedented for committees to allow members, regardless of party status, permanently or temporarily, to be part of their proceedings, thereby opening the possibility for the restoration of report stage to its original purpose.

For inspiration on the possibilities, members need only to remember that there are several precedents where independent members were made members of standing committees. Short of that, there is no doubt that any number of procedural arrangements could be developed that would ensure that the amendments that independent members wish to propose to legislation could be put in committee.

Thus, it is difficult for the Chair to accept the argument that current report stage practices and rules are somehow being used in an untoward manner by independent members when simple and straightforward solutions are not being explored. Were a satisfactory mechanism found that would afford independent members an opportunity to move motions to move bills in committee, the Chair has no doubt that its report stage selection process would adapt to the new reality.

[Translation]

In the meantime, as all honourable members know, and as is stated at page 307 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition:

It is the duty of the Speaker to act as the guardian of the rights and privileges of Members and of the House as an institution.

[English]

Accordingly, unless and until new satisfactory ways of considering the motions of all members to amend bills in committee are found, the Chair intends to continue to protect the rights of independent members to propose amendments at report stage.

Finally, as we prepare to adjourn for the Christmas holidays, the Chair invites all members to reflect on how best to strengthen public confidence in this institution and on how best to balance the competing interests with which we will always grapple.

[Translation]

I thank all hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ENHANCING ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: There are two motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-42. Motions Nos. 1 and 2 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

I shall now propose Motions Nos. 1 and 2 to the House.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-42 be amended by deleting Clause 1.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-42 be amended by deleting Clause 22.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to bill C-42 at report stage and to speak to the two amendments that we have just moved.

Government Orders

First, I will begin by paying tribute to the women and men of the RCMP who work everyday to help keep our communities safe. I acknowledge the essential service they provide, often in the face of great danger and ignoring many of the individual challenges which surround their work in order to do their duties.

In particular, I acknowledge the loss of two constables this year, Constables David Brolin and Derek Pineo, who lost their lives in accidents while on the job serving all Canadians. I also take this opportunity, while I am on my feet, to wish all the public safety officials, detective services and emergency services, who will be working when many of us are celebrating, a very happy but also a very safe holiday season.

Bill C-42 is before the House this session and we on this side supported it at second reading because we all must acknowledge that despite its proud history and its ongoing exemplary service, the RCMP faces some very serious challenges. What we are all hearing in our constituencies, and have all heard in testimony before the public safety committee, is that there are at least three major challenges.

Among these challenges facing the RCMP is, first, the loss of public confidence. For many years, the RCMP has been an icon in our society and the trust levels still remain very high, as they should. However, anytime our national police force begins to lose public confidence, we must all be concerned and we must address the causes of that loss of confidence. The causes centre around a number of unfortunate and high-profile incidents involving the RCMP, which have resulted in deaths or serious injuries to the public.

Some of this loss of confidence is to be expected whenever there are these serious incidents and, because the RCMP is charged with the use of force, many times these will inevitably be challenging situations. Some of that loss of confidence is a direct result of public concern about the structures to which we hold the RCMP accountable. In particular, members of the public are concerned about the police investigating themselves in these serious incidents. That loss of confidence in the accountability measures is not only a loss of confidence by the public, it is also a loss of confidence by serving RCMP members who have every bit if not more of an interest in independent investigations which will establish either their responsibility or non-responsibility in these incidents.

We also have serious evidence before us of a second challenge. That is a flaw in the culture of the RCMP. That flaw is that the RCMP has become a workplace with a culture that all too often has tolerated harassment in the workplace and specifically sexual harassment. When we have more than 200 women, who have served or who are serving in the RCMP, who sought to join a class action lawsuit alleging that they had faced sexual harassment on the job, then this is an important issue for the House of Commons to address. The magnitude of the problem cannot be denied.

Government Orders

Finally, it has become clear that there is a problem in the management of human resources and labour relations in the RCMP. This is a flaw that many have acknowledged is responsible for failures to deal with these other challenges in an effective manner. It cannot be denied that procedures are long, complicated, time consuming and fail to bring about changes needed to address problems both with individual behaviour and with more systemic problems. Therefore, again, it is a challenge which we must address in the bill before us.

The Conservatives presented Bill C-42 to the House just before the summer recess and suggested that it was the solution for addressing these challenges. On this side of the House, we responded that we felt the bill did attempt to address the challenges faced by the RCMP, but that it left lots of room for improvement at committee. Therefore, we supported Bill C-42 at the second reading stage in the hope that we could comprehensively address these major challenges. Now that the bill has been returned to the committee, after the Conservatives opposed and rejected every amendment to strengthen the bill, we have little choice but to oppose its moving forward at this time.

We have proposed two amendments at report stage that will allow us to discuss some of the amendments already rejected at the committee stage. The first of those deletes the short title which we believe, as is becoming a tradition here in the House, is one of those overly political titles applied to bills. In this case, it is overly political in our view because it is called the “enhancing the RCMP accountability act” when in fact Bill C-42, in its unamended form, would fail to address that accountability challenge. Therefore, we do not believe the bill would accomplish this goal. I will say a bit more on that in just moment, but that is why we have proposed deleting the title, which would lead the public to believe that this challenge had been met.

• (1600)

Second, we have proposed deleting clause 22 so the RCMP act would retain its original wording in what is section 33 of the actual act. What it does is state clearly that the power to deal with grievances remains exclusively with the commissioner. In fact, what has happened in Bill C-42 is that the government has chosen to enhance the powers of the commissioner at the expense of everyone else working in the RCMP, even in respect to the new review body that is being created. Therefore, further concentration of power in the hands of the commissioner and the Minister of Public Safety is the answer proposed in Bill C-42 when almost every independent witness we heard before the committee said that the problem was exactly the concentration of power in the hands of the commissioner and the minister.

When we asked what consultation had been done on the bill, the answer we received led me to believe that the minister, the RCMP commissioner and a senior RCMP leadership simply put their heads together and came up with a solution that gave them responsibility for resolving the problems. We could not find any of the witnesses who appeared before us who had been consulted about the changes included in the bill. We believe those witnesses provided some very good solutions and good ideas about how to address these challenges.

The approach adopted in the bill, as unamended, relies very much on the model of the Royal Irish Constabulary. It is a 19th century model, dating from 1822, which was designed as a paramilitary model to help police and the Irish population that saw the British as an occupying force. Is this really the model we need for a modern RCMP? It ignores the lesson of the other British model of municipal policing, which was also established in the 19th century for the metropolitan police of London, based at Scotland Yard.

The municipalities throughout our country have taken that model and developed it very effectively into a local community policing model, which has an independent board that keeps policing at arm's-length from a political minister and has very good accountability measures built into that model. Bill C-42, as unamended, sticks with the old paramilitary model instead of learning the many lessons we have learned at the municipal level in Canada about how to improve accountability and responsiveness to communities and how to create a more healthy workplace.

Witnesses at the public safety committee spoke out against these additional powers for the RCMP commissioner and the lack of independent oversight. Mr. Tom Stamatakis, president of the Canadian Police Association, said:

—extraordinary powers in this regard...go beyond what one might find in other police services across Canada.

For example, in Ontario, a police officer who is subject to a disciplinary process retains the right to appeal the decision to the independent Ontario Civilian Police Commission.

As well, we heard from Mr. Robert Creasser, from the Mounted Police Professional Association, who had similar kinds of remarks.

It became obvious to us in the NDP, after hearing the witnesses and experts, that the bill retained its deep flaws and would not meet those challenges referred to. It even fails to look at previous advice offered by Justice O'Connor in the Maher Arar inquiry. It fails to take into account the recommendations from the task force on governance and cultural change in the RCMP from 2007. It fails to take into account the recommendations from the former chairs of the RCMP Public Complaints Commission.

It is clear the bill could have been fixed, that solutions were out there. In order to play a constructive role, the NDP put forward amendments in four areas.

The first of those was in the area of harassment. We proposed a simple amendment to add harassment to the training responsibilities of the commissioner. That was rejected by the Conservatives. Therefore, Bill C-42, which purportedly addresses the problem of sexual harassment, does not even have the word “harassment” in the bill.

Second, we proposed measures to strengthen the independence of the new proposed civilian review and complaints commission. The commission would report to the minister and would make only non-binding recommendations. We need a truly independent commission that can make binding recommendations.

Government Orders

Our third recommendation was to create a national civilian investigative body to ensure that the RCMP would no longer be placed in a conflict of interest of investigating itself. The bill addresses this partially by allowing provinces, which have independent commissions, to investigate the RCMP. However, only four provinces have those measures in place.

• (1605)

Finally, we introduced amendments that would have created balanced labour relations within the RCMP, including creating power for the independent review committee to deal with grievances. The concentration of power in the hands of the commissioner is part of the problem, not part of the solution.

Given the long time between major revisions of legislation like the RCMP Act, 25 years in this case, there is a great responsibility on us to get it right this time. As Bill C-42 stands unamended, we will be opposing its moving forward in the House.

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I first want to extend season's greetings and merry Christmas to my colleagues whom I have been working with at the public safety committee. We have worked very well together. Although we do not agree on a lot, we found a way to work together very cordially. I just want to extend my appreciation for that and my wishes for the season.

I am disappointed to hear my hon. colleague's comments. He identified some of the main challenges that we as a government identified in working together with our colleagues who have been active police officers. We have 13 of them in our caucus. We have worked together with the commissioner and stakeholders to best address some of the challenges within the RCMP.

The bill is not perfect because, to really address this, we need to see a cultural change within the RCMP. Nonetheless, what we are proposing are fundamental changes supported by others. We heard testimony supporting our changes in the public complaints area and support for our addressing serious incident investigations. Here I would point out that no witnesses came forward to support the NDP proposal to create one body to investigate police. Hence, I am surprised that my colleague would even mention it. I am wondering why he is even bringing it up at this time.

• (1610)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to thank the hon. parliamentary secretary because I believe in the public safety committee. Despite our differences, we have found a way to work co-operatively to make sure things move through in a timely fashion. I do appreciate the hon. member's season's greetings and wish her the same.

The idea of a national civilian investigation body was first put forward by our hon. House leader in a private member's bill and received lots of positive comments and support. The reason it was not addressed directly in committee was that it was ruled out of the scope of the bill because the government did not seem to think it was necessary.

However, only four provinces have independent commissions that can investigate the RCMP, leaving six provinces where, when serious incidents happen, the RCMP will be forced into the conflict

of interest of having to investigate itself. This creates a crisis of confidence with the public.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP as a whole has phenomenal public support. We recognize the value of moving forward on the issue the member referred to, namely public confidence and so forth. Anything we can do to reinforce confidence is a step in the right direction. Therefore, the Liberal Party supports the bill in principle and its ultimate passing.

If the NDP amendments do not pass, does that mean that the NDP members do not see the merit of the bill moving forward to deal with the RCMP at this stage?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my remarks, we had hoped to work co-operatively with the government to put sufficient teeth in the bill to address those challenges facing the RCMP. It is not just an issue of our amendments. They were based on the testimony of independent witnesses who came before committee, and also on the recommendations of Mr. Justice Major in the Maher Arar inquiry, and the government's own commission appointed in 2007, often referred to as the Brown commission, on how to reform the RCMP. It is not like there are no suggestions or support out there for tougher action on these problems.

Given that we only get to do this about once every 25 years, it is our conclusion that we should get this right and help restore the public's confidence and that of the rank and file RCMP members, and have a healthy workplace.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the many incidents that my friend referred to, such as the Robert Dziekanski case and that of Ian Bush, nothing good happened in those moments when something went wrong. I suppose the silver lining might be that we could reform the way the RCMP is investigated, that it not be put in that conflict of interest, which the officers themselves do not want to be in.

We have had all of these reports. The government has this one opportunity to get this right. Hearing from those expert witnesses standing up for the people who serve us so proudly across this country and for the communities they serve, I am absolutely confounded that the government has decided to miss this opportunity that only comes along every so often to help those families who are victims and those communities that need the RCMP to do its job, and the RCMP who need those communities to do their jobs.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, the essential things we are talking about are public confidence and the members who serve every day in the RCMP trying to keep us safe. If they do not have a healthy workplace and the assurance that there is a balance in the human relations policy allowing them to do their jobs without being held to some impossible standard, or one not allowing them to respond effectively to accusations made against them, then it is very difficult for them to serve the public.

Government Orders

Once again, I know that those in the protective services will be working through the holidays when the rest of us are celebrating, and what we are trying to do in this bill is to create the best workplace we can for the RCMP rank and file.

• (1615)

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill C-42, the enhancing Royal Canadian Mounted Police Accountability bill. I will be speaking to the amendments adopted by the committee and reported back to the House of Commons and how they will strengthen the legislation.

Many of our members have already spoken extensively about the other issues raised in my colleague's speech. Needless to say, I do not agree with him. There was quite a bit of liberty taken with the facts in his presentation. I do not intend to rehash those. I think we can go back to *Hansard* to see what the true statements are in respect to the legislation, and how the legislation actually responds to the concerns of individual provinces. The types of amendments the member is suggesting are in fact exactly the kind the provinces rejected as too centralizing and outside the accountability they want to see brought back into the RCMP at the local level.

Here, I would reflect on why this bill is so important. It is no secret that the RCMP has endured its share of troubles over the last few years, including charges of harassment. To its credit, the RCMP has recognized the need to transform the institution by enhancing governance and modernizing its operations, including its organizational culture.

The next phase of the transformation process must come through legislation. It has been nearly a quarter of a century since Parliament amended the RCMP Act in any significant manner. In the interim much has changed, not just in terms of the globalization of crime but also in public expectations of greater transparency.

All in all, this bill would go a long way toward improving the accountability of the RCMP to Canadians and its own members.

The committee has approved several housekeeping changes, but there were also three substantive additions that I would like to recap briefly. These concerns were raised by witnesses before our committee, and I am proud that the committee worked together to further strengthen Bill C-42 based on the feedback we received.

The first concerns the rules in clause 11 around hiring retired RCMP officers as reservists. As members may recall, the reserve program provides the commanding officer with important staffing options. Reservists, for example, can help fill temporary vacancies, transfer corporate memory and mentor new recruits. Apart from all of that, senior officials have noted that reservists also reduce overtime work by regular members. In addition to making the workplace more efficient, the use of reservists can also improve safety and health. The amendment adopted by the committee permits the hiring of retired RCMP officers as reservists for six months or more without compromising their pension entitlements.

The second major amendment adopted by the committee addresses the issue of immunity for the commission chairperson under clause 35, and was specifically raised by the chairperson during testimony.

As members may recall, the proposed legislation would provide immunity to all those performing the duties, powers and functions of the commission. That policy was meant to include all members, including the chairperson. However, as the committee rightly pointed out, the bill did not explicitly note that the chairperson would also have immunity. The amendment adopted by the committee amounts to a few words, but they are important.

The final change concerns the powers of the RCMP commissioner around complaints initiated by the chairperson of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, also in clause 35. This was raised during testimony as a potential improvement. The committee adopted an amendment to clarify that the RCMP commissioner cannot refuse to investigate such complaints, thereby further enhancing the independence of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, CRCC.

Taken together, these three substantive amendments have strengthened an already robust new framework to enhance accountability for the RCMP. The committee did enjoy the support of the New Democrats during second reading and for certain amendments during the committee stage, and that is why I was surprised to hear one of the NDP members mentioning that the NDP would not support this important bill.

• (1620)

I am even more disappointed to see two report stage amendments brought forward by the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca. I will speak briefly to the two report stage motions.

The first motion would delete the short title of the bill. Our government believes that the short title clearly captures the intent of the legislation and, therefore, we do not support the removal of clause 1, as we view this motion to be more about politics than about substance.

The member also moved that we delete clause 22, which addresses the RCMP Commissioner's authority to make final and binding decisions regarding serious grievances and appeals. Also under this clause, the commissioner is authorized to delegate this power in the event that he or she is not able to make the decision directly. This is consistent with existing authorities under the current RCMP Act. It also makes it clear to RCMP members that the grievance process is the primary source for resolution of labour issues within the RCMP. That is why these clauses are worded in that particular way.

It is important to note that judicial review continues to remain an option for members who are not satisfied with the outcome of their case. There needs to be some finality to a decision and that is what the legislation would do. If there are any concerns about the decision that the commissioner has made, that can always go to a judicial review. That type of judicial review process is familiar to anyone who has done administrative law. This is not anything unusual. In fact, it is a very clear, well-established way of ensuring that the body charged with making the decisions has the final authority, and the judicial review process ensures that the decision-maker stays within the bounds of his or her authority. As such, we do not support its removal from the bill.

Government Orders

It has been almost 25 years since the RCMP Act was substantially revised and it is now time to act. The government has consulted extensively with Canadians to develop legislation that meets the expectations of all Canadians for greater accountability of the RCMP. With the amendments adopted by the committee, I do believe we have achieved our goal. We now have before us an opportunity to inject new flexibility and efficiency into rigid management systems, to rebuild a culture of trust and to reinforce the faith of Canadians in the RCMP.

This party will be voting in favour of this legislation. I call upon the NDP to join with us in supporting the legislation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech. In committee, the official opposition proposed a number of amendments to the bill. Unfortunately, they were all rejected. This bill is a response to numerous cases of sexual harassment, which is sad. That is how the government presented the bill, saying it would target sexual harassment, among other issues.

However, something is bothering me and many of my colleagues: why is there no mention at all of the term “sexual harassment” in the bill? Why is it not mentioned, since this is the issue that the bill seeks to address?

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews: Mr. Speaker, I think all of us have heard the allegations of harassment and sexual harassment within the ranks of the RCMP. The purpose is to ensure there is a system in place that effectively and efficiently deals with those types of grievances. Rather than focusing on the form of a statute, we need to look at the substance of the statute. I would say that a careful, thoughtful analysis of the statute ensures that matters of harassment, including sexual harassment, fall within the confines of the jurisdiction that the bill would provide to the relevant decision-maker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to this particular bill, I will take advantage of this opportunity to ask the minister a question that is important to the province of Manitoba.

We in Manitoba believe that we need an RCMP presence to deal with a wide variety of issues. We have an RCMP office in the city of Winnipeg. Could the minister provide some comment on what he believes is the future of that office? I realize there might be an issue of relevancy here but I know that many residents of Winnipeg are somewhat concerned about the future of that office.

• (1625)

Hon. Vic Toews: Mr. Speaker, knowing the member as I do, I believe that any matter that he would bring forward would never be irrelevant. It would always be with the best of intentions to ensure that the questions are timely and focused, not only on the specific statute but the needs of his constituents.

I am not aware of any plans to deal with a particular building in the province of Manitoba. The Government of Manitoba, for years, has been a very strong partner in ensuring there is appropriate policing in the province of Manitoba. Many Canadians may not realize, of course, that the RCMP is not only a national police force

but functions as a provincial police force in provinces like Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. As well, it performs the municipal policing function. Therefore, there are actually three levels of policing in the RCMP.

We certainly see a strong relationship with the Manitoba government and we want that relationship to continue. It has evidenced it by signing the agreement it has.

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the minister feel the same sense of frustration that I and many of us do on this side of the House when day after day we hear opposition members ask about sexual harassment and harassment within the RCMP? We have before us a good bill and, with the amendments, a better bill that would respond not only to harassment but civilian complaints and serious investigations, but the NDP will not support it. My concern is that, when we come back in the winter, they will keep asking questions about ways to fix these problems that they refuse to support.

Hon. Vic Toews: Mr. Speaker, I share some of those frustrations but, given my age, I have stopped trying to understand why these things happen. They just do.

What I am particularly concerned about is whether the legislation in fact addresses the central concerns that were raised in respect of the issue of harassment and sexual harassment. If one goes through the legislation, not even very carefully but at least reads it, it is clear that the issue of sexual harassment and harassment is addressed in the context of the legislation and also the broader framework of the commissioner's authority and those who are responsible for making decisions regarding the conduct of RCMP officers.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to take the opportunity to express warm season's greeting to my colleagues on both sides of the House.

I will say at the outset that the Liberals will be supporting Bill C-42 at report stage and at third reading.

Fundamentally, it is because, even though the bill is not by any means perfect, we find there are no compelling reasons not to support the bill and not to take the step forward in trying to solve a problem that has appeared to have become a little bit intractable over the years and which is undermining the credibility of one of our finest national symbols, which is, of course, our great national police force, the RCMP, which is composed of thousands of Canadians, some police officers and some civilians with a strong ethic of public service whose reputation, unfortunately, is being tarnished by the actions of a few who are not following the codes of conduct and not behaving properly as members of the RCMP. On top of that, their misconduct appears to take far too long to be addressed.

That is what the bill is about. It is about changing the culture of the RCMP. I believe it was Mr. Brown who said that the current set of procedures, the current way of managing problems within the RCMP is just not up to the task of what has become a major organization.

Government Orders

One of the things that happens when organizations get very big as things progress and so forth is that they tend to become very bureaucratized. That is very much what has happened within the RCMP around how to deal with misconduct. Over the years, procedures have been created such that a case of misconduct goes through a hearing, then maybe another hearing and the problem never seems to be resolved, certainly not on a timely basis, and this leads to frustration.

I will now comment on what I observed at committee, especially during the amendment process. I observed that the NDP brought a particular model to the problem. It is not a criticism of the model but it struck me as being very much a labour-focused model, which is based on the notion that management's latitude must always be restricted in the interests of labour within the organization.

There is nothing wrong with standing up for the rights of labour, especially in large organizations where we need unions, we need associations as a kind of counterpoint to the power of a large organization. However, when it comes to managing large organizations, we need effective leadership. We cannot have effective leadership if those leading the organization, in this case the commissioner, has his or her hands tied.

Leadership is not a bureaucratic process. It is an art form and it requires making judgments. If every time the leader of an organization wants to make a decision or make a judgment call, he or she is constrained by having to, for example, adhere 100% to the recommendations of a particular committee within the organization or an advisory board, then I cannot see that leadership in that organization would be effective.

That does not mean that leaders must not seek input from advisory bodies and so on, but to suggest that they must adhere to 100% of the recommendations is a constraint on leadership.

I noticed that, when we received witnesses, the witnesses who were representing RCMP officers, sort of within a union context, they saw the problem of harassment and the root sources of harassment within the RCMP very differently from the way, for example, Commission Paulson sees it. They said that the reason for harassment was because the line officers in the management structure had too much power and that there was a kind of cronyism that had set in. By definition, if we accept that assumption, then we need to restrict the powers of management that much more.

• (1630)

This point of view is diametrically opposed to the basic principle at the heart of this legislation, which is to give the commissioner and managers down the line more latitude, more power, to resolve disputes quickly and to take effective action if someone is found guilty of misconduct and not behaving properly according to the ethics and conduct code of the RCMP.

I think that there is a fundamentally different way of looking at this problem. However, I must say that we come down on the side of giving more authority to the commissioner to deal with these problems. If he or she does not deal with these problems, we can be very certain that the media will bring them to the attention of the minister, the government and the opposition. Outside pressure will be brought to bear on the management of the RCMP. Therefore, it is

not as if the RCMP has no accountability to the broader society in which it operates.

It was brought up many times that a sexual harassment code was not included in the legislation. However, members have to understand that when we are dealing with enabling legislation, we do not include that level of detail. I have never seen it where we would include policies and codes in enabling legislation.

I take the point that we are trying to address the problem of sexual harassment in the RCMP as well as other problems of misbehaviour. However, the bill does provide the minister with the authority to create a harassment policy. Of course, that harassment policy will be the subject of great interest on the part of the opposition and the media, which will make sure that it is a proper policy and that it is strict enough. Again, there will be some accountability in that respect.

According to some, the bill may have fallen short with the new commission, which will look into public complaints against the RCMP, in that it could have had its power enhanced. The scope of its power could have been broader. There is no doubt about that. For example, Justice O'Connor thought that review bodies should have the authority to look at issues involving national security and how the RCMP dealt with issues of national security. In that respect, this new body for receiving civilian complaints does not have the same scope of power as the Security Intelligence Review Committee.

One could argue that things could have been pushed a little further in that respect. One could also argue that the commissioner would have an obligation to implement 100% of the recommendations of the civilian review commission or of the external review committee.

We could argue that point, but based on what I said at the beginning of my speech, these may not be shortcomings because the commissioner must retain some leadership freedom. We do not feel that these shortcomings, if they are shortcomings, compel us to vote against the bill.

• (1635)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we proceed to questions and comments, 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 Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, Employment Insurance; the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, small and medium-size businesses.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety.

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague on the Liberal side for his comments and would like to extend my season's greetings to him. It has been a pleasure to work with him over this last year and I certainly appreciate his very well thought out and articulate comments on the bill.

In committee, we heard witnesses. We certainly heard the positive parts of the bill and we heard some critiques, and we responded to that. I might have missed this in his comments, but could the member comment further on the issue of police investigating police?

Government Orders

We tried to address that in the bill. However, the fact is that there is a mechanism for police who are involved in serious incidents. There is an outside body and several choices whereby they can be investigated, and it would not be the police investigating themselves. I wonder if the member could comment on that. Again, I apologize if I did miss it in his speech.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, I did not address it directly, but there are mechanisms. My understanding is that “serious incidents” has not been clearly defined in the legislation and that is something that we should look out for. However, in the case of serious incidents, the new civilian review agency would have the power to look at those situations. Other than that, it could be the review agency of another police force. If one does not exist in a province, it could be another police force that would look into the incident, according to my understanding.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's last remark about who would investigate serious incidents is incorrect in the bill and that is the fact that we were raising. The new civilian complaints body does not have that authority, neither does anyone else for six provinces. Only in four provinces does that responsibility get passed down to the province.

On the question of sexual harassment, my recollection at committee is that the member supported our amendment to add sexual harassment to the bill. We said it should be added to the section on training. Therefore, instead of treating sexual harassment as a disciplinary matter, there would actually be a commitment in the RCMP to take it up as a training matter and improve the workplace at the front end rather than punishing people at the back end on the question of sexual harassment.

I believe the member supported that amendment at committee. If I am wrong, he should correct me at this point. However, if he did support that amendment, it is hard to understand how he is now supporting the bill.

• (1640)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say how much I respect my hon. colleague's previous experience before being elected in dealing with police forces. He brings a lot of experience and insight to this process.

It is a logical conclusion that training on how to deal with sexual harassment or what constitutes sexual harassment will drop naturally out of this process. I trust that will be the case. If it is not, I am sure that we will have questions for the commissioner the next time he appears before the committee as to what—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Questions and comments. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety.

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to speak because both of my hon. colleagues are wrong in terms of who will investigate serious incidents.

What our bill does, and we received overwhelming support for this plan, is that there would be investigative bodies within specific provinces. Yes, not every province has an investigative body, but investigative bodies that are established in provinces would take over the investigation of serious incidents within the RCMP. If there

is no investigative body, then it would be another investigative body within that province, so maybe a jurisdictional police, a department, again, outside of the RCMP.

The third option would be the RCMP, but we believe that both of these steps would address the issue of police investigating police. I am happy to have the opportunity to inform both of my hon. colleagues of that part of the bill.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, my understanding was actually the same as the parliamentary secretary's. Maybe I did not express myself properly.

If there were a civilian review agency in a particular province, that could be used. However, if there were not, a police force in that province could undertake the investigation. What I neglected to say to clarify matters was that the other police force in that province would not be the RCMP, but would be a different force. I apologize if I did not make that clear and I thank the hon. member for bringing that up.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we can see from these initial exchanges in the House, Bill C-42 is very substantial and complex. In fact, even those who studied it in committee sometimes are proposing minor changes. So, it is an honour for me to rise today as the official opposition deputy critic for public safety to defend the NDP's position and explain why we will vote against Bill C-42.

Before I get into the substance of my remarks about processes and what happened in committee, I want to say it was a real pleasure and honour for me to work on Bill C-42. This gave me the opportunity to meet members of the RCMP, and I made friends along the way. I met courageous men and women who poured their heart out to explain their position on the bill. Today, I want to sincerely thank them for doing so. They have enabled me to learn more about the RCMP, which is not present in Quebec. That is why we are somewhat less familiar with it, even though it is a national police force.

The NDP supported Bill C-42 at second reading so that this legislation would be studied in committee, because we had many questions about it. We felt that a lot of work remained to be done on this bill. At the time, I very much appreciated the Minister of Public Safety's speech, particularly when he said he was open to amendments from all sides of the House. For us, it meant that the door was wide open to improve a bill that really deserved to be examined. It was also a way of showing Canadians that, regardless of the side of the House on which we sit, we can work together to ensure that bills are the best they can be once we have reviewed them in committee and returned them to the House.

Government Orders

As I mentioned earlier, we supported Bill C-42 at second reading and we were very pleased to study it in committee. In this regard, the first thing I want to mention is that the committee had very little time. Sometimes, we even had to invite several witnesses at once. This meant that we could not ask them very many questions, which was quite unfortunate. Bill C-42 is huge and it deals with many provisions of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act. We therefore did not have time to update this legislation, even though it would have been necessary. I was deeply saddened that the debate was cut short. We did what we could with what we had. We tried to work with that.

The second point I want to mention is the time allocated for committee review. Some RCMP members who worked on a similar bill over 20 years ago told us that, the last time the government amended the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act, the process took over 10 years. By contrast, we had only a few weeks. I think we worked too quickly. However, that is not really a problem since at least we are still here today to spend a little more time on this legislation.

I also found it sad that none of the amendments proposed by the opposition were accepted. The only amendments that were accepted were those proposed by the government. What I found even sadder was that most of these amendments had to do with correcting spelling or translation mistakes. They were not substantive amendments. They merely sought to correct spelling mistakes and typos. It seems as though the bill was drafted in a rush, on the back of a napkin, and that the government then wanted to correct the mistakes it found. That was also a sad thing to see.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives did not take a serious look at the points made by witnesses in their testimony. That is the work that we, as the official opposition, decided to do regarding Bill C-42. We really wanted to take a closer look at what witnesses told the committee, and we wanted to work with them to make substantial and important amendments to give more substance to the bill.

Today, we are back in the House and, considering that none of our amendments were accepted and that the work in committee was done so quickly, we cannot support this legislation. I will explain why a little later on in my speech.

It is also important to mention that RCMP members were not consulted before Bill C-42 was drafted. My colleague, the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, pointed this out at the beginning of his speech, and it is important to remember that.

• (1645)

They were presented with a fait accompli. They were told what was going to be done and what would be introduced. The government did not even deign to ask the members of our national police force what they thought. I am extremely disappointed about this.

Again this morning, I spoke with members of the RCMP. In particular, I spoke with Mr. Gaétan Delisle, who represents the Quebec Mounted Police Members' Association and is someone who has filed several hundred grievances for RCMP members from all parts of Canada. In fact, he is still doing so strongly and passionately.

We talked about some of the clauses in the bill. It can be quite difficult to understand what is in this bill.

We looked at clauses 31.3 and 31.4, and we had a hard time figuring out what they involved. Eventually, we figured out that these clauses really had to do with the grievance process and the possibility of using notes, reports and other material in filing a grievance.

Bill C-42 does not deal just with sexual harassment. I would also like to mention here, for the information of members who do not sit on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, that a very large part of Bill C-42 involves workers' rights.

From now on, they will not be able to use certain important notes or documents in filing their grievances. This applies specifically to one particular case in the RCMP's code of ethics, which says a member cannot disobey a lawful command, except if he can prove that the command is illegal or breaks a law.

Without access to certain documents, notes or reviews as evidence, it cannot be proven that such a command may be illegal, at the end of the day. This is a huge protection for workers that is being taken away, and I think it is totally wrong. We were told in committee that Bill C-42 took rights away from workers. I still cannot believe that no one has been able to remedy the situation.

However, what can we do? This is the way things are; we do not have a majority.

Because I cannot raise all the issues in Bill C-42 that should be discussed, I want to talk about sexual harassment. In this bill, which is supposed to resolve the sexual harassment issue, there is no reference to harassment or sexual harassment.

This is incredible. In fact, this is one of the reasons why we are moving a motion to remove clause 1, the title, because it has no connection with the content of the bill.

Credible witnesses appeared before the committee to give us their views on sexual harassment in the RCMP. As I mentioned earlier, the Quebec Mounted Police Members' Association told us how important it was to mention it in the bill. That would have helped to protect workers in the RCMP, but it was not done.

The committee also met with Ms. Séguin of Quebec's Groupe d'aide et d'information sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail. She spoke passionately about her work, which involves protecting employees who are victims of harassment, regardless of their line of work. She was shocked that there was absolutely no mention of sexual harassment in the bill.

We in the official opposition tried to propose amendments of substance to remedy the situation. Some of our amendments sought to make it mandatory for all members of the RCMP to take training on harassment, in connection with the RCMP Act. Part of the work should have involved education and helping RCMP members do that work.

Government Orders

In conclusion, I hope that I am asked a number of interesting questions because I still have so many things to say about Bill C-42. That being said, I have to reiterate that, unfortunately, for these reasons, we will be unable to vote in favour of Bill C-42.

• (1650)

[English]

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not view the committee meetings as unproductive and too short. In fact, my recollection was there was at least one meeting where we all finished asking questions of the witnesses and had a bit of time left. We were given ample opportunity to ask fulsome questions and we received great feedback from the witnesses.

My question, though, for the hon. member is this. We have talked at length about the issue of sexual harassment, how to deal with it and the attempts this bill makes to modernize the RCMP so it can deal with sexual harassment. We also talked at length about how no government had recognized, even my hon. colleague on the Liberal side when his party was in government, that bills do not have this level of detail of using terms like harassment or sexual harassment. It is not the norm.

After hearing that, would the NDP reconsider its position? I understand that maybe the members did not realize that. Why throw the bill out because one word is missing, which is actually will not help with the bill, and instead support it so we can address sexual harassment in the RCMP?

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for her comments about the NDP's position on this bill.

The bill does not deal with sexual harassment at all, or very little. The fact that the words are not even mentioned in the bill shows that the government could not care less about addressing the issue.

Regarding sexual harassment in the RCMP, what intrigues me about the Conservatives' approach is its complete lack of consistency.

On November 8, 2012, a motion was put forward in the Senate by a Conservative senator. The motion requested the production of a report on harassment in the RCMP. On the one hand, they present this kind of motion, and on the other, they introduce a bill that pretends to address sexual harassment in the RCMP.

Honestly, why are the Conservatives so inconsistent?

• (1655)

Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues, I too am quite shocked that the words "sexual harassment" are nowhere to be found in the bill.

The NDP put forward amendments. What can we do? It really is a problem: there have been very serious cases of sexual harassment in the RCMP. Something must be done.

How would the NDP tackle this very serious problem?

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Pontiac for his excellent question.

This is indeed a very serious problem, not just in the RCMP but in any workplace. Sexual harassment in the workplace is not part of the job. It is not something that should happen on the job. We should be opposed to harassment, no matter where it happens. Naming the problem is a very important way to acknowledge that it exists.

I am not saying that there are huge numbers of sexual harassment cases in the RCMP. I am saying that we have to tackle problems as they are and with the right kinds of tools. My colleague asked an excellent question.

Among other things, people in the RCMP need to be educated and should be asked to take training on harassment. A number of issues could have been resolved in this bill, and I would like to come back to what was mentioned earlier. For instance, a completely independent civilian body should be set up to take care of complaints within the RCMP. The police should not be investigating the police, especially in cases of sexual harassment.

Many of the amendments that were presented were designed to solve the problem and ensure progress toward transparency, independence, and a more modern RCMP. Unfortunately, the Conservatives voted against every one of our amendments.

[English]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak to Bill C-42 on behalf of my constituents from Surrey North.

Surrey has the largest RCMP detachment in the country. The men and women who work in my city, RCMP members and civilian members who work with them, do a wonderful job. Not only that, my office meets with them on a regular basis to deal with some of the local issues that come up in my constituency. I am very thankful to them for providing that wonderful service to the citizens in Surrey.

First, it should be a priority of the House and the government to restore public confidence in the RCMP. A functioning, effective RCMP that holds the public trust is critical to building safer communities across the country.

On this side of the House, we support the stated intent of the bill and we hoped to make some amendments in committee that would address some of our concerns. I will talk about that a little later on, as to what happened. I have stood in the House, time after time, and called on the government to step up and deal with problems that years of Conservative mismanagement have caused in our national police force.

The goals stated in the preamble of the bill, transparency, improving conduct, strengthening the review and complaints body and dealing with the climate of sexual harassment that exists in the RCMP, are all good goals. We hoped that we could make some amendments at the committee stage to improve the bill and make it more effective, so we could deal with the issues the RCMP had been dealing with for a number of years.

For those reasons, we supported the second reading of the bill, because we thought we would actually get to address some of those real issues plaguing the RCMP. Unfortunately, every amendment the NDP put forward in committee to improve upon the very things I talked about were turned down, without even simple consideration.

Government Orders

We would have thought that maybe one amendment might have made sense to them. We have seen this in many other committees. I sit on the international trade committee, as well as other committees, including the public safety committee. Not one amendment from the opposition, out of the thousands and thousands of amendments that have been brought forward in committees, has been accepted by the Conservative government.

One would think that out of the thousands of ideas we have presented maybe one would fit the Conservative ideology, but that is not the case. It is very unfortunate. This was an opportunity for the Conservatives to right the wrong of the mismanagement of the RCMP over the last six or seven years. This just did not happen.

The reputation and the respect of the RCMP has been built over the years, but let us look at what has happened over the last six or seven years. The Conservatives have totally mismanaged those issues.

One of the amendments that the opposition put forward basically added mandatory harassment training for RCMP members, specifically through the RCMP Act. Another amendment we brought forward was to ensure a fully independent civilian review body to investigate complaints against the RCMP.

In my province of British Columbia, that has been an ongoing issue, where the police investigate themselves. Canadians deserve clarity on this. Conservatives have the opportunity in this bill to bring that in to help Canadians have the RCMP be accountable and transparent. Again, the Conservatives have, and I hate to use these words, missed the bus on this part of the amendment.

We wanted to add provisions to create a national civilian investigation body that would avoid police investigating police. We also wanted to create a more balanced human resources policy by removing some of the more draconian powers proposed for the RCMP Commissioner and by strengthening the external review committee in cases involving possible dismissal from the force.

● (1700)

What did the Conservatives do? Again, they voted down every single one of those amendments. Those amendments would have provided some form of clarity and transparency to Canadians. Yet the Conservatives chose not to accept any of those recommendations or committee amendments.

The Conservative government is ignoring calls for more balance and standing by its argument that putting more power in the hands of the RCMP commissioner to fire individual officers would curb ongoing issues at the RCMP and that the RCMP commissioner should have the final say on all dismissals. Expert witness after expert witness explained that the legislation alone would not help to foster a more open and respectable workforce for all and that the concentration of power in the hands of the commissioner is part of the problem, not the solution. We need to see an ongoing effort from the RCMP and the government to modernize the RCMP, and the bill would lack the transparency and accountability necessary for that change.

Basically, the bill would not go far enough. My colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca and a number of other NDP members have called upon the government to be more transparent and more

accountable. The Conservatives had this opportunity to make the RCMP, our national police force, more accountable and more transparent, yet again they missed the opportunity. My colleagues have also talked about having a safe work environment for the men and women who work in our force. Clearly, the Conservatives have missed that opportunity.

It is clear that sexual harassment is not only a problem, it is a symptom. It is endemic to the internal culture of the RCMP. The Conservatives' approach would not make women in the RCMP a priority, which is necessary if we want to deal substantially with this problem. My primary concern is that, over and over, we see the Conservatives attempting to gloss over the real issues within the RCMP. They implement quick fixes instead of truly taking the steps necessary to fix the force for the sake of those serving in the force, and to restore public confidence in the RCMP ultimately for the safety of our communities.

The scope of the problem of sexual harassment in the RCMP is massive. More than 200 women, both current and former RCMP officers, are seeking a class action suit against the RCMP on the grounds of sexual harassment. That does not include the individual lawsuits that could be filed by them. My NDP colleagues and I pushed for the minister for months to prioritize the issue of sexual harassment in the RCMP. Unfortunately, Bill C-42 would not directly address the systemic issues in the culture of the RCMP. It is clear that the bill by itself would not change the current climate in the RCMP.

I have a lot to speak about on this particular issue, but in summary I will say a few things. The Conservatives had an opportunity to fix the RCMP, to address the issues of sexual harassment and of transparency and accountability. They have clearly not taken advantage of the opportunity to do that. I stress that in my community of Surrey and in communities across the country, crime and violence are a reality. A few weeks ago in the Lower Mainland, a known gang member was shot and killed in broad daylight.

This kind of violence is unacceptable, but instead of investing in measures to prevent crime in our communities by supporting the work of the RCMP, the Conservatives are making it harder for police to do their jobs. We have come to know that 42 RCMP office support staff in B.C. have received notices stating that they could lose their jobs.

● (1705)

We need to be supporting the work of the RCMP, not making its job harder. The government has put forward a bill that seems to finally acknowledge some of these problems, but it simply does not address the major issues that we need to address. An effective RCMP is a matter of public safety and real action is long overdue. The Conservatives have failed Canadians again.

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the majority of my colleague's comments.

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It is very disappointing to see the NDP once again oppose an important piece of legislation that would give the RCMP the tools that it needs to fight things such as sexual harassment. The NDP is introducing this amendment to change the short title of the bill, which is enhancing RCMP accountability, which is appropriate. It is not called making perfect the RCMP or fixing all problems within the RCMP or there will never be any other issues within the RCMP. Those are not the title. The title is enhancing accountability. The bill is a balanced and practical approach that would give the RCMP the tools that it needs to help change some of the things that need to be changed within the organization.

How can that member in good conscience rise in the House and say that he supports ending harassment and sexual harassment within the RCMP and yet vote against this important tool, which the RCMP has asked us for?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I have talked to many citizens, not only across this country but in particular in the city of Surrey. As I pointed out, we have the largest RCMP detachment anywhere in the country.

It surprises me to hear the member talk about sexual harassment. The words “sexual harassment” are not even in the bill. That tells me that the Conservatives are more concerned about ideology rather than addressing the real issue of harassment in the RCMP.

The member talked about accountability and transparency. Accountability and transparency have to start with the Conservative government, which has not been accountable and transparent at all. We have seen that with the F-35s. If the government really wanted the RCMP to be accountable and transparent, it would respect the will of the people who want an independent body investigating the RCMP.

The Conservatives have clearly failed on this measure.

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I notice the member made reference to the size of the RCMP community in Surrey, B.C. Surrey is a beautiful area of our country.

We recognize the valuable role that the RCMP plays in our communities. There is no doubt that the government could have done more. We do not question that. There are issues related to sexual harassment and others that we in the Liberal Party would like to see the government do more about.

The majority of the RCMP members that my colleague is talking about who live in the Surrey area would likely want to see the bill in principle move forward. Would he not agree with that? That is maybe why the NDP should join with the Liberals and support the bill in principle in terms of it going forward, recognizing that a lot more still needs to get done.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the first part of my colleague's question. Surrey is a beautiful city. However, I do not agree with the second part of his comments.

We had members of the RCMP appear at committee who were not supportive of this legislation. I have talked to many citizens in my community who want an accountable and transparent investigation process when members of the RCMP are involved in an incident.

The bill does not address that. Unfortunately, again, the Conservatives had an opportunity to right a wrong. Over the last six years they could have taken steps to correct that. They have failed.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that we have not learned any lessons from the public commission for complaints against the RCMP. Former head Paul Kennedy put forward a number of significant proposals. While the legislation would improve the situation somewhat, it does not go nearly far enough to provide the tools that such a commission would need.

I wonder if my hon. friend has any comments on his testimony.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right.

The RCMP and the people of British Columbia, because we have the largest RCMP force, have been asking for an independent body to investigate the RCMP when they are involved in incidents. We have had a number of high-profile incidents where the call is loud and clear from the public that we need an independent body to investigate the RCMP.

The government had an opportunity to address these issues, which are of concern in our communities. Again, the Conservatives failed to do that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before addressing Bill C-42, now before us, I would like to wish a happy holiday to all hon. members, to our support staff, including the pages, clerks and officers of the House, to our listeners and to you, Mr. Speaker. This is probably my last speech in the House in 2012.

In my previous speech on Bill C-42, I said I was pleased with the introduction of this legislation in the House. The issue of harassment is a public and urgent concern for Canadians. We put a lot of pressure on the Department of Public Safety to make the issue of sexual harassment in the RCMP a priority. That is why we supported this bill at second reading, in the hope of improving it and proposing amendments in committee to make it acceptable and efficient, so as to adequately tackle the issue of sexual harassment.

The first version of the bill did not deal directly with this systemic problem, which is deeply rooted in RCMP corporate culture. The wording of the bill introduced at first reading would not have changed the existing climate within the RCMP.

Government Orders

When the bill was drafted, the Minister of Public Safety did not seem to take into consideration the various recommendations of the Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP. As I mentioned, we still supported the bill at second reading to properly study it and improve it in committee. Unfortunately, the study in committee did not go very well. I am really disappointed by the government's lack of co-operation on this issue.

The Conservatives did not really want to co-operate with us to ensure a balanced representation of the various views and positions. The government presented 12 witnesses to the committee, while we could only have seven. Moreover, in my opinion, the Conservatives' witnesses were not completely independent. All but one of the witnesses, who represented the government or the RCMP, presented the government's position without any real nuances. We feel the witnesses selected by the Conservatives did not come to express a completely independent opinion.

The Conservatives were also in no hurry to call the witnesses that we wanted to appear before the committee. The first witness was called to appear only at the fourth meeting, and most of our witnesses were called only on the last day scheduled to hear evidence. In a way, the Conservatives forced us to present all our amendments on the last day scheduled to hear our witnesses. They also asked us to present our amendments three and a half hours later, on the same day. That did not leave us much time to assess and examine the recommendations made by witnesses.

We also wanted to table amendments, based on the witnesses' recommendations, in order to make the legislation much more effective, so that it would achieve its objective. Such behaviour on the part of the Conservatives is totally unacceptable and impedes the work of Parliament.

We also proposed a number of amendments that were rejected by government members without any discussion. We proposed to include mandatory training on harassment for RCMP members in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act, but that was also rejected. The Conservatives simply do not want to hear a dissenting opinion, or even recognize its validity.

The director of the Groupe d'aide et d'information sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail de la province de Québec appeared before the committee and said: "With the 32 years of experience we have, we have found out that when companies do have a clear policy, when employees do know what is acceptable and not acceptable, it makes it much easier for management to deal with the problems." But the Conservatives preferred to ignore this important testimony.

It is also disappointing that the minister did not ask for a clear policy on sexual harassment in the RCMP, with specific standards of conduct and criteria for assessing the performance of all employees. Such a policy is necessary to provide a basis for a much fairer disciplinary process. The director of the Groupe d'aide et d'information sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail de la province de Québec also spoke eloquently on the importance of such a policy.

● (1715)

They chose to ignore her evidence and stubbornly insisted on a magic solution that will not resolve all the RCMP's problems.

We too put forward an amendment that would guarantee the independence of the body set up to investigate complaints in the RCMP. Once again, the answer was no. We also proposed adding provisions to establish a civilian investigative body, to stop the police from investigating themselves. Once again, this amendment was thrown out. Yet all Canadians are asking for such a provision. Trust in police investigations has to be rebuilt. When a police force investigates another police force, there may well be a conflict of interest or a perceived conflict of interest.

If the Conservatives do not want to listen to Canadians, perhaps they will listen to a former commissioner of the RCMP Public Complaints Commission. He believes that the bill is not in line with the review procedures established by Justice O'Connor and that it will not meet the needs of Canadians or the RCMP.

I would like to remind the House that Justice O'Connor mentioned in the Arar inquiry that it was important for Parliament to set up an oversight agency for the RCMP. It would appear that his recommendations have simply been gathering dust.

The bill would give the RCMP commissioner new authority, the authority to decide on appropriate disciplinary measures. This would include the authority to appoint and dismiss members as he chooses.

During my initial speech, I also said that the approach by the public safety department was a simplistic solution to a much bigger problem: they were just giving the commissioner final authority for dismissing employees. This is why we proposed an amendment to create police forces that were better balanced in terms of human resources, by removing some of the more extreme powers held by the RCMP commissioner and by strengthening those of the external review committee in cases of possible dismissal from the RCMP.

As I said earlier, while Bill C-42 may give the commissioner greater authority to set up a more effective process for resolving harassment complaints, and greater authority over disciplinary matters, it cannot provide the RCMP with the genuine cultural change that it needs to eliminate not only sexual harassment, but also cases relating more generally to the discipline and behaviour of RCMP officers.

Commissioner Paulson himself stated that legislative measures alone would not be enough to retain the public's trust, and that far-reaching reforms would be needed to address the serious underlying issues in the RCMP and foster a work environment that is more open, more co-operative and more respectful for all.

It is obvious to the NDP that the department lacked leadership with regard to dealing with the broader issue the RCMP is facing. Commissioner Paulson told the Standing Committee on the Status of Women that the issue goes well beyond sexual harassment. This situation must change. I believe that the minister should have taken the extensive experience of the RCMP commissioner into account.

In conclusion, if the Conservative government really wanted to modernize the RCMP, it would have agreed to implement the recommendations from the oversight agencies and proceed with an audit of the RCMP by a group of independent auditors that would have reported directly to Parliament. NDP members attempted to amend the bill so that it would deal with issues raised in the evidence heard, but the Conservatives refused to get on board.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1720)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House for the following travel motion. I move:

That, in relation to its study on Bill C-47, An Act to enact the Nunavut Planning and Project Assessment Act and the Northwest Territories Surface Rights Board Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, seven members of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development be authorized to travel to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, in January 2013, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the hon. chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

ENHANCING ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, as reported (with amendment).

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Châteauguay—Saint-Constant on his speech, which is indicative of his expertise on this issue.

We have pointed out many times the extent of the government's lack of openness. It is not at all transparent—even though that is what it expects of others—especially when it comes to amendments presented by our party in committee.

Government Orders

I would like to have a little more information about the amendments, but above all about the loss of job security for whistleblowers who speak out about sexual harassment, something that concerns me a great deal.

• (1725)

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question, which I may not have clearly understood. Was he talking about harassment complaints filed by RCMP employees?

Unfortunately, we found that the harassment of female RCMP officers by male officers is a major problem, and that female officers probably have some difficulty being heard and breaking the silence. Will the proposed legislation improve these people's lives? We doubt it.

Instead of giving this mandate to police forces, it would have been much wiser to create a civilian investigative body to deal with these issues, listen to female officers and investigate sexual harassment complaints. Female officers would probably be much more comfortable with this type of structure.

The establishment of a totally independent civilian investigative body would certainly have been more appropriate for dealing with this type of whistle-blowing and would have helped officers who may find it hard to report a fellow officer to do so confidentially.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his eloquent speech on this topic and for raising the example of the group from Montreal, which deals with harassment training and testified eloquently that the government's focus on discipline would not solve the problem. Firing a few bad apples does not change the culture inside the RCMP. That is why we moved a motion asking for training to be inserted in the law, so that the RCMP commissioner will have a specific legislated responsibility to make sure there is harassment training in the RCMP as the main way to improve the climate.

I would like to hear the member's comments on that, because I think the group from Montreal whose job is to work with employers to create a better workplace was quite eloquent in saying that training is needed.

[Translation]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and for his excellent work during the committee review of Bill C-42.

The member himself proposed this change to the bill to provide training to RCMP officers in order to make them more aware of their obligations regarding sexual harassment. During her testimony before the committee, an expert on this issue fully supported this measure to raise police officers' awareness.

The best way to do so is to give them training on their obligations, the rules to follow, the content of the legislation and the aspects that they need to consider. The hon. member is absolutely right: the best way to raise police officers' awareness is to train them in this regard.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Resuming debate. Is the House ready for the question?

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 590*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Weland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Bellavance	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Brahmi	Brosseau
Caron	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Fortin	Freeman
Garrison	Genest
Giguère	Godin
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Kellway	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Mulcair	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Papillon
Patry	Pécllet

Perreault
Plamondon
Rafferty
Ravignat
Rousseau
Scott
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Turmel — 101

Pilon
Quach
Rankin
Raynault
Sandhu
Sellah
Sitsabaiesan
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Aspin
Bateman	Bélanger
Bennett	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Casey
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Cotler
Crockatt	Cuzner
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dion
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
East	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Foote	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
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
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Pacetti
Paradis	Payne
Penashue	Poillievre
Preston	Rae
Raitt	Rajotte

Government Orders

Rathgeber
Reid
Richards
Saxton
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Shory (Sorsor)
Smith
Sorenson
St-Denis
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Regan
Rempel
Ritz
Scarpaleggia
Seeback
Shiple
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)

Sopuck
Stanton
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Valeriotte
Van Loan
Warawa
Watson

Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 184

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 lost. I therefore declare Motion No. 2 lost.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the results of the previous motion to the current motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the vote and will vote against the motion.

[English]

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals agree to apply and will be voting in favour.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois will vote no.

[English]

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, Thunder Bay will be voting no.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, we agree to the application and the Green Party will be voting yes.

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

(Division No. 591)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht

Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Armstrong
Bateman
Bennett
Bergen
Bezan
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chisu
Clarke
Coderre
Crockatt
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Dreeschen
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Foote
Gallant
Glover
Goodyear
Gourde
Harper
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lamoureux
Lebel
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Mayer
McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Oliver
Opitz
Pacetti
Payne
Poilievre
Rae
Rajotte
Regan
Rempel
Ritz
Scarpaleggia
Seeback
Shiple
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Smith
Sopuck
Stanton
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Valeriotte

Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Amblar
Anders
Andrews
Aspin
Bélanger
Benoit
Bernier
Block
Braid
Brison
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Byrne
Calkins
Carmichael
Casey
Chong
Clement
Cotler
Cuzner
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dion
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra
Eyking
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Hsu
Jean
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lauzon
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
May
McCallum
McGuinty
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Norlock
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Paradis
Penashue
Preston
Raitt
Rathgeber
Reid
Richards
Saxton
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sorenson
St-Denis
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Kesteren

Government Orders

Van Loan	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 — 185	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Bellavance	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Brahmi	Brosseau
Caron	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Fortin	Freeman
Garrison	Genest
Giguère	Godin
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Kellway	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Mulcair
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Papillon	Patry
Pécelet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Rousseau
Sandhu	Scott
Sellah	Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel — 100

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

● (1815)

STRENGTHENING MILITARY JUSTICE IN THE DEFENCE OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed from December 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-15, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that the question be now put.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the previous question at the second reading stage of Bill C-15.

● (1820)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 592)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Aspin
Bateman	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinoooge	Butt
Byrne	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Casey	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coderre
Cotler	Crockatt
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dion	Dreessen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Foote
Fortin	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
Hyer	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy (Calgary Southeast)	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
May	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole

Government Orders

PAIRED

Pacetti	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Plamondon	Poilievre
Preston	Rae
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Ritz
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Smith	
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	St-Denis
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Valeriot	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	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— 189	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Brahmi
Brosseau	Caron
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Freeman
Garrison	Genest
Giguère	Godin
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Rousseau	Sandhu
Scott	Sellah
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Turmel— 95	

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The next question is on the main motion.

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the results of the previous motion to the current motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the vote and the NDP will vote against the motion.

[English]

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals agree and will be voting yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the motion.

[English]

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, Thunder Bay—Superior North will be voting yes.**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, the Green Party will be voting yes.

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 593)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Aspin
Bateman	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
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	Coderre
Cotler	Crockatt
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dion	Dreesen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Government Orders

Dykstra	Easter	Christopherson	Cleary
Eyking	Fast	Comartin	Côté
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Crowder	Cullen
Flaherty	Foote	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Fortin	Galipeau	Day	Dewar
Gallant	Gill	Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Glover	Goguen	Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Goodyear	Gosal	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Freeman
Gourde	Grewal	Garrison	Genest
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Giguère	Godin
Hayes	Hiebert	Gravelle	Grogulé
Hillyer	Hoback	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Holder	Hsu	Hassainia	Jacob
Hyer	James	Julian	Kellway
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Lapointe	Larose
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Latendresse	Laverdière
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Liu	Mai
Lake	Lamoureux	Marston	Martin
Lauzon	Lebel	Masse	Mathysen
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	Leef	Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Leitch	Lemieux	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Leung	Lizon	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Lobb	Lukiwski	Nantel	Nash
Lunney	MacAulay	Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie	Papillon	Patry
May	Mayes	Péclet	Perreault
McCallum	McColeman	Pilon	Quach
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Rafferty	Rankin
McLeod	Menegakis	Ravignat	Raynault
Menzies	Merrifield	Rousseau	Sandhu
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	Scott	Sellah
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Nicholson	Norlock	Stewart	Stoffer
Obhrai	O'Connor	Sullivan	Thibeault
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon	Toone	Tremblay
Opitz	O'Toole	Turmel— 95	
Pacetti	Paradis		
Payne	Penashue		
Plamondon	Poilievre		
Preston	Rae		
Raitt	Rajotte		
Rathgeber	Regan		
Reid	Rempel		
Richards	Ritz		
Saxton	Scarpaleggia		
Schellenberger	Shea		
Shipley	Shory		
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)			
Smith			
Sopuck	Sorenson		
Stanton	St-Denis		
Storseth	Strahl		
Sweet	Tilson		
Toet	Toews		
Trost	Trottier		
Truppe	Tweed		
Uppal	Valcourt		
Valeriotte	Van Kesteren		
Van Loan	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— 189			

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on National Defence.

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

* * *

[English]

INCREASING OFFENDERS' ACCOUNTABILITY FOR VICTIMS ACT

The House resumed from December 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, 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 stage of Bill C-37.

● (1825)

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

(Division No. 594)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Brahmi
Brosseau	Caron
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Angus	Armstrong
Ashton	Aspin

Private Members' Business

Atamanenko	Aubin	Perreault	Pilon
Ayala	Bateman	Plamondon	Poilevre
Bellavance	Benoit	Preston	Quach
Benskin	Bergen	Rafferty	Raitt
Bernier	Bevington	Rajotte	Rankin
Bezan	Blanchette	Rathgeber	Ravignat
Blanchette-Lamothe	Block	Raynault	Reid
Boivin	Borg	Rempel	Richards
Boughen	Boulerice	Ritz	Rousseau
Brahmi	Braid	Sandhu	Saxton
Breitkreuz	Brousseau	Schellenberger	Scott
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Sellah	Shea
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge	Shiple	Shory
Butt	Calandra	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Calkins	Cannan	Smith	Sopuck
Carmichael	Caron	Sorenson	Stanton
Carrie	Cash	Stewart	Stoffer
Charlton	Chicoine	Storseth	Strahl
Chisholm	Chisu	Sullivan	Sweet
Chong	Choquette	Thibeault	Tilson
Chow	Christopherson	Toet	Toews
Clarke	Cleary	Toone	Tremblay
Clement	Comartin	Trost	Trotter
Côté	Crockatt	Truppe	Tumel
Crowder	Cullen	Tweed	Uppal
Daniel	Davidson	Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)	Van Loan	Wallace
Day	Dechert	Warawa	Warkentin
Del Mastro	Devolin	Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Dewar	Dionne Labelle	Sky Country)	Wilks
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre	Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Dreeshen	Dubé	Williamson	Yelich
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Woodworth	Young (Vancouver South)
Dykstra	Fast	Young (Oakville)	
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Zimmer — 253	
Flaherty	Fortin		
Freeman	Galipeau		
Gallant	Garrison		
Genest	Giguère		
Gill	Glover		
Godin	Goguen		
Goodyear	Gosal		
Gourde	Gravelle		
Grewal	Groguhé	Andrews	Bélangier
Harper	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Bennett	Brison
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Byrne	Casey
Hassainia	Hayes	Coderre	Cotler
Hiebert	Hillyer	Cuzner	Dion
Hoback	Holder	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Easter
Jacob	James	Eyking	Foote
Jean	Julian	Hsu	Hyer
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Karygiannis	Lamoureux
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	MacAulay
Kerr	Komarnicki	May	McCallum
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake	McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Lapointe	Larose	Pacetti	Rae
Latendresse	Lauzon	Regan	Scarpaleggia
Laverdière	Lebel	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leef	St-Denis	
Leitch	Lemieux	Valeriote — 31	
Leslie	Leung		
Liu	Lizon		
Lobb	Lukiwski		
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)		
MacKenzie	Mai		
Marston	Martin		
Masse	Mathysen		
Mayes	McColeman		
McLeod	Menegakis		
Menzies	Merrifield		
Michaud	Miller		
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)		
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)		
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)		
Mourani	Mulcair		
Nantel	Nash		
Nicholls	Nicholson		
Norlock	Nunez-Melo		
Obhrai	O'Connor		
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon		
Opitz	O'Toole		
Papillon	Paradis		
Patry	Payne		
Péclet	Penashue		

NAYS

Members

Andrews	Bélangier
Bennett	Brison
Byrne	Casey
Coderre	Cotler
Cuzner	Dion
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Hsu	Hyer
Karygiannis	Lamoureux
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	MacAulay
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Pacetti	Rae
Regan	Scarpaleggia
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
St-Denis	
Valeriote — 31	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

BLUE SKY POLICY

The House resumed from December 5 consideration of Motion No. 387.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 387 under private members' business.

Private Members' Business

● (1835)

[English]

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

(Division No. 595)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Aspin
Bateman	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Casey
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Cotler
Crockatt	Cuzner
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dion
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Foote	Fortin
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Hsu	Hyer
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lamoureux	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	Mackay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	May
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Mourani	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Pacetti
Paradis	Payne
Penashue	Plamondon
Poillievre	Preston

Rae	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Regan	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Ritz	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)	
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
St-Denis	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trotter	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Valeriot
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
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 — 188

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Brahmi
Brosseau	Caron
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Freeman
Garrison	Genest
Giguère	Godin
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Papillon	Patry
Pécelet	Perreault
Pilon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Rousseau	Sandhu
Scott	Sellah
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Turmel — 95	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion adopted.

* * *

RADIOCOMMUNICATION ACT

The House resumed from December 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-429, An Act to amend the Radiocommunication Act and the Telecommunications Act (antenna systems), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-429 under private members' business.

• (1840)

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

(Division No. 596)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Brahmi
Brison	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Garrison	Genest
Giguère	Godin
Gravelle	Grogulé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Mulcair	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rae
Rafferty	Rankin

Ravnat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Tunnel	Valeriote— 130

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Aspin	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeschen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komaricki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Poillievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trotter
Truppe	Tweed

Private Members' Business

Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 154

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1845)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The House resumed from December 10 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights considering the extension of time to consider Bill C-394, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (criminal organization recruitment).

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you will find agreement that the order made on Monday, December 10, pursuant to Standing Order 97.1, respecting the deferral of the recorded division on the motion to concur in the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights scheduled to take place later today be discharged and the motion deemed adopted on division.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government whip have unanimous consent to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: On division.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried on division.

(Motion agreed to)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed from December 11 consideration of Bill C-377, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (requirements for labour organizations), as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions on the motions at report stage of Bill C-377 under private members' business.

[Translation]

The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motion No. 2.

• (1850)

[English]

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

(Division No. 597)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Garrison
Genest	Giguère
Godin	Gravelle
Groguié	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hsu	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Mulcair
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rac	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)

Private Members' Business

Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Valeriote — 129

Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Turnel

Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 151

Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 defeated. I therefore declare Motion No. 2 defeated.

[*Translation*]

The next question is on Motion No. 3.

[*English*]

A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 4 and 5.

● (1900)

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

(*Division No. 598*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Aspin
Benoit
Bernier
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Dechert
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Gallant
Glover
Goodyear
Gourde
Harper
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Connor
Opitz
Paradis
Penashue
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Saxton
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country
Weston (Saint John)

NAYS

Members

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Del Mastro
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
Obhrai
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Aspin
Benoit
Bernier
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Del Mastro
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
Obhrai
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Gallant
Glover
Goodyear
Gourde
Harper
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Norlock
O'Connor
Opitz
Paradis

Private Members' Business

Payne	Penashue
Poillievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer— 152

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Garrison	Genest
Giguère	Godin
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Mulcair	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rae

Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Turmel	Valeriote— 130

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 3 carried. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 4 and 5 carried.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC) moved that Bill C-377, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (requirements for labour organizations) (with amendments) be concurred in at report stage.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 599*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Aspin	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Brunoogoe
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Dechert	Del Mastro
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)

Private Members' Business

Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Gallant
Glover
Goodyear
Gourde
Harper
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leef
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Connor
Opitz
Paradis
Penashue
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Saxton
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 151

Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
Obhrai
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Foote
Freeman
Genest
Godin
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu
Jacob
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rae
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Valeriote — 131

Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking
Fortin
Garrison
Giguère
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hyer
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Quach
Rafferty
Ravignat
Regan
Sandhu
Scott
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Turmel

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brison
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen
Davidson
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélangier
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Brahmi
Brousseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Coderre
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé

Private Members' Business

● (1915)

[English]

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

(Division No. 600)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Daniel	Dechert
Del Mastro	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Penashue	Poilievre
Preston	Raït
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson

Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)

Wilks
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 147

Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Bélangier	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Brahmi	Brison
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Coderre	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Garrison	Genest
Giguère	Godin
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)
Leslie	Liu
Lobb	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Mulcair
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Pécllet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rae	Rafferty
Rankin	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Turmel	Valériote
Weston (Saint John) — 135	

PAIRED

Nil

Private Members' Business

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the delay there will be no private members' business. Accordingly, the order will be rescheduled for another sitting.

* * *

● (1920)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise with tidings of good cheer. That means no NDP carbon tax this year and that we have much else for which to be thankful.

First, I thank everyone in the precinct and back in our constituencies who have helped make 2012 such a productive year for all members of Parliament. We have had a busy but quite productive year in the House. In fact, by the end of this week I anticipate that Parliament will have seen 35 government bills complete the legislative steeplechase.

We have had some interesting days and even a couple of memorable nights in the House in 2012.

Let me thank you, Mr. Speaker, and your entire team of chair occupants, as well as the clerks at the table. You have all been very busy with lots of votes and other interesting action.

Just as important are all the other support staff who are not here in the chamber. I thank them as well for all their efforts in the past year.

I also want to thank our team of pages who are about to have a well-deserved rest from their studies and their work here. I am sure their time with us means that each one of them will be taking at least one interesting story back home for the holidays, but before that they should ensure to study hard for those remaining exams.

I have appreciated working with the two hon. members who are my opposition counterparts, as well as their own predecessors. One moved from a role as a very constructive and positive House leader to become a leader of his party and another is now seeking to repeat the same move in the Liberal Party.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not thank the Conservative team as well for their support in advancing our government's agenda through the House.

I hope everyone will have the chance to have a restful break over Christmas and then a fruitful month connecting with constituents in January.

I am looking forward to 2013 being another hard-working, orderly and productive year in the House of Commons.

I believe the House leaders of the other parties have a few comments to add.

Following those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find unanimous consent to dispose of a motion which reflects the fact that the work plan we agreed to as House leaders for this week has been implemented on an expedited basis. Therefore, I do anticipate you

will find unanimous support for this motion after the other House leaders speak.

[*Translation*]

I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, during the debate this day pursuant to Standing Order 66(2) on the motion to concur in the Seventh Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Chair shall not receive any quorum calls, dilatory motions, requests for unanimous consent, or amendments; and that at the end of the time remaining for the debate, or when no member rises to speak, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division be deemed requested; and

And the important part of the motion reads as follows:

That when the House adjourns today, it shall stand adjourned until January 28, 2013, provided that, for the purposes of Standing Order 28, it shall be deemed to have sat on Thursday, December 13 and Friday December 14, 2012.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to join in offering thanks both to yourself and all the folks who work around you for ably guiding us through these sometimes difficult waters.

We must also thank those who are not with us here, all the parliamentary precinct staff, whom without which we would not be able to do our jobs as members of Parliament.

Also, of particular note are the pages who not only have their responsibilities here at the House helping us do our work, but also must study and complete their exams. Large thanks from Canada's official opposition and all members of Parliament for their exceedingly good work and good graces at helping us out at all times.

I will keep my remarks brief because there is nothing more dangerous than standing between a group of politicians and various flights home to their families and constituencies. I would like to wish all my colleagues on both sides of the House the very best of the season and that they spend some time with friends and family and restore that energy and passion for the work we do on behalf of all Canadians.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my Liberal colleagues, I would like to wish you and your family a very merry Christmas and a holiday season with your family that enables you to experience some moments that are perhaps a little quieter than those of the last few months.

[*English*]

On behalf of my colleagues in the Liberal Party, I join my two colleagues who have just spoken and wish happy holidays to the many people who support the work we do in Parliament and in the House of Commons. Some of them are visible. Madame O'Brien and the clerks who work at the table have done a terrific job.

I share the comments made regarding the professional, helpful work done by the pages who come from every region of Canada to spend a year with us in the House of Commons. I too wish them luck in exams and a peaceful, pleasant holiday season. I look forward to seeing them in the new year.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to send wishes for a happy holiday to all the members of the House of Commons, to all the staff who work behind the scenes and support our work, such as the interpreters who do such a remarkable job, security staff and housekeeping staff, as well as all those who do important work so that we can represent our constituents.

We look forward to seeing everyone in good health in 2013.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today you called for the House to run smoothly and for decorum. I would therefore greatly appreciate it if my colleagues would listen for a few minutes while I send out some holiday wishes.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, I would like to wish you personally, Mr. Speaker, and all the deputy speakers, a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. For the members whose parties are not recognized in the House, the work you do is very important. You give us the floor so we have an opportunity to express our views and represent our constituents.

I would also like to send best wishes to all members of Parliament. Like my colleagues in the other parties, I would like to thank all the House of Commons staff very sincerely.

Over the last few weeks and months, some of the votes have taken a long time and on a number of occasions things got rather chaotic in the House. These people helped us immeasurably, and we thank them.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I share the sentiments of my colleague from the Bloc Québécois. I would just like to say:

[English]

Happy Hanukkah. Merry Christmas. Let us take the peace of this season back with us when we get here so we can treat one another with the love and respect we all deserve. God bless us, every one.

The Speaker: Before we put the question on the motion, on behalf of the Chair occupants and the table staff, I return the very good wishes that have been conveyed to us. We have a great procedural team here. For those who have worked on House management issues, you will know what type of work goes on behind the scenes to make this place run well and we have a great team that does that.

I also thank the pages, not too much as I do not want it to go to their heads, but we have a great group this year and they have done a lot of work, especially around the clock as we had in some of those interesting moments.

Does the hon. government House leader have unanimous consent to propose his motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: Merry Christmas.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1930)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed from December 7 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my comments, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you, the staff and my colleagues on the other side a merry Christmas and a happy New Year for 2013. I look forward to working with all of you. I should also say that I will be splitting my time with the member for Newmarket—Aurora.

Over the past year, we have all observed the ongoing blood-letting by the Assad regime in Syria. Since we last debated this issue in this very chamber, the situation on the ground has deteriorated with Assad now making indiscriminate use of air power against his own cities. Violence on the ground continues to escalate, while the humanitarian and economic situation deteriorates daily.

Unfortunately, the devastating impact of the Syrian conflict is not only contained within Syria's borders, but is causing instability and insecurity throughout the region and across the globe. Every day an increasing number of refugees flee to countries, including Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Thousands of others have fled to Egypt and north Africa.

Earlier this week, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees reported that there were over half a million registered refugees. The actual number of refugees is estimated to be much higher. In addition, over 1.2 million individuals have been displaced inside Syria, and this number is expected to grow as the violence continues.

Canada is proud to be providing support to help address the needs of those affected by the ongoing violence. Just today, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced an additional \$10 million in humanitarian assistance to address the needs of those affected by the crisis in Syrian, including the thousands of refugees who have fled to neighbouring countries. This brings our total humanitarian assistance in response to the Syrian crisis to \$22 million.

The minister also announced that Canada would be providing another \$5 million in material support to Jordan to assist in handling the large influx of Syrian refugees. This is in addition to the \$6.5 million that Canada committed this past summer for assistance to Jordan. Canada will also provide the Jordanian armed forces with \$1.5 million worth of personal protective equipment to guard them against potential chemical weapons or biological incident arising from Syria.

It is, therefore, more for humanitarian reasons, and, in fact, the regional stability, that Canada will continue to work with the global community to end the crisis, and we must do it on two fronts.

Routine Proceedings

First, we must work toward ending the financial and material support that continues to prop up the Assad regime, and we must do this through coordinated effective sanctions. Sanctions and other forms of external pressure, particularly from those in the region, are the only ways to cut out financial support for the Assad regime.

This is why our government has implemented 11 rounds of tough sanctions targeted against the Assad regime and its supporters. This is why the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and officials at all levels continue to take every opportunity, both bilaterally and at the United Nations, the G8 and the Friends of the Syrian people, for other nations to implement tough, effective sanctions against the Assad regime. We continue to raise this issue at every opportunity with Russia, with China and with those in the Middle East.

If we eliminate material and financial support for the regime, we remove the tools that enable them to attack innocent civilians in a desperate attempt to hold on to power.

Second, the international community must also continue to work together to support the formation of a credible, viable and unified alternative to the Assad regime.

It was for that reason that the minister was in Morocco today at the fourth meeting of the Friends of the Syrian People where he met the U.K. Foreign Secretary Hague and the leader of the newly formed Syrian National Coalition for opposition and revolutionary forces, Shaikh Moaz al-Khatib, a rebel leader who continues to take a proactive and responsible position on the crisis in Syria.

Today, the message to the new opposition coalition is to continue to reach out to all sectors of the Syrian opposition, especially those members of the opposition within Syria itself, and of all of Syria's diverse community. All Syrians will have a role to play in any successful post-Assad political foundation.

As Canadians, we believe that people around the world seek the same universal goals of freedom and democracy. We all share aspirations for a better life and a opportunity for prosperity.

● (1935)

The pressure for freedom and opportunity is felt strongly throughout the region. If long-term security is to prevail, that pressure cannot be ignored or passed by. Even the most brutal tactics cannot quell the universal human aspiration for a better life.

Our government will continue to do what it can to protect and encourage those with the courage to stand for their rights. Canada will stand with those who seek to improve the lives of their people.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments. Maybe he can elaborate on some of the things he wanted to say in response to my questions.

I want to underline the fact that we are debating this subject in light of the report from the foreign affairs committee and a motion that was passed asking the government to do three things. The first was to provide more aid and assistance. There was an announcement today from the Minister of Foreign Affairs on that. However, I underline the point made at committee, which was that it should have included Turkey. It would be helpful to understand why Turkey was not one of the recipients in that announcement today.

Second was to fast-track those who have family members here in Canada so that the refugees presently in camps in the border regions of Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon might be able to come to Canada. I did not hear an announcement on that from the government. It was in our motion from the committee. I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary could tell us where the government stands on that. It was certainly something that was prioritized in the motion we passed at committee.

Finally, part of the committee report and the motion was that we support Mr. Brahimi's mission. Mr. Brahimi is the special UN envoy who is in Damascus trying to find some sort of agreement among all the parties.

If the member could explain that for us, it would be most helpful.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his work on the foreign affairs committee on this very important issue and for putting forward the report.

When the UN representative was appointed, we said that we would be fully supportive of his efforts. We will continue to support his efforts.

As for Turkey, we have already said that we will be supporting Turkey and will offer it all the assistance it requires. We are working with Turkey to address the issue of refugees. However, it is up to Turkey to seek assistance. Turkey is going through the NATO route, as was stated.

Canada will remain committed to helping the people of Syria.

● (1940)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear anything from the parliamentary secretary about CIDA and the money that has been raised by Syrian communities, especially in Canada. They called on the government and met with the minister. They have asked to have matching of dollar to dollar.

I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary has an announcement to make. The communities are looking forward to it, as they are joining us here tonight.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, we understand the role the diaspora has played and will continue to play during this crisis. Our government has announced aid. My colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, will continue with her speech, and she will answer all of those questions.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are now 21 months into the crisis in Syria and the situation is growing more desperate by the day. The number of Bashar al-Assad's victims continues to rise, with over 40,000 people now estimated to have been killed since the outbreak of violence in March 2011. Earlier this week the United Nations High Commission for Refugees announced that the number of registered Syrian refugees had surpassed the half-million mark, and the actual number of refugees is estimated to be much higher.

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Civilians are desperately fleeing the aerial bombardments, the artillery shells, and other forms of ongoing violence to neighbouring countries, including Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, which have generously been offering their support. Thousands of others have also fled to Egypt and North Africa. Over 1.2 million are reported to be internally displaced within Syria and this number is expected to rise as the violence continues unabated.

These stark numbers, which reflect the real human suffering that is a consequence of the conflict in Syria, coupled with the intensifying indiscriminate attacks of the Assad regime on civilians, make it painfully clear that Assad will cling desperately to power regardless of the cost to Syria and the Syrian people, regardless of what is right, regardless of how many lives are lost.

Canada has commended and continues to commend the generosity of neighbouring states and others in the region that have been left to deal with the impact of Assad's actions. These states have welcomed and are supporting those fleeing the violence in Syria. We recognize the immense pressure the influx of refugees is placing on host countries and communities and are working with our humanitarian partners to provide support to refugees and their host countries.

The humanitarian situation cannot be allowed to deteriorate further, and yet it will if nothing is done to address the ongoing violence. We call on all parties to allow free access to those providing humanitarian assistance for vulnerable populations.

The Assad regime must not be allowed to continue its abuses against its own people. The conflict must come to an end. A political transition must take place. The region must not be permitted to become inflamed in this mess caused and exacerbated by the Assad regime, which must be held to account for its murderous rampage against its own people, against its own civilians. The Syrian people have risked their lives for freedom and democracy. It is time for a new, responsible and democratic Syria with a free and inclusive society to take its place as a prosperous and peaceful agent for positive change in the Middle East.

To this end, Canada has repeatedly condemned the savagery of the Assad regime and continues to support the Syrian people in their valiant struggle for a better, brighter future. Our efforts to pressure Assad to end the oppression of his own people is multi-faceted. They are intended to maximize pressure on the regime while supporting the Syrian people.

We have now implemented 11 rounds of sanctions against Assad and his supporters, sanctions that target the regime, not the Syrian population. The Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and officials at all levels continue to press the international community at every available opportunity, particularly those who stand in the way of a solution to the crisis in Syria, including Russia and China, whom we have pressed to end their support for the regime and to support a transition of power. We continue to impress upon these nations and the Security Council that if we work together to cut off the financial and material support for the Assad regime, then it will crumble.

Canada is also leading the way in supporting a Syrian-led resolution to the crisis. We are encouraged by the newly formed Syrian National Coalition for Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.

Earlier today, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was in Marrakesh, Morocco attending a meeting of the Friends of the Syrian People with foreign ministers, officials and opposition leaders. This is the fourth such meeting and the minister has actively participated in all of them.

When it comes to addressing the humanitarian situation caused by the conflict in Syria and helping those in need, Canada is there. We are providing direct support for the Syrians affected by the conflict, whose primary concerns are safety and survival, both for themselves and their loved ones.

● (1945)

Just today, the minister announced Canada's contribution of an additional \$10 million in humanitarian assistance to address the needs of those affected by the crisis in Syria, including the many refugees who have fled to neighbouring countries. This brings our total humanitarian assistance for the Syrian crisis to \$22 million.

We remain concerned about the ongoing crisis in Syria. The population in this state of crisis has immense and urgent requirements, the most immediate being safety, food, shelter, water and basic health services. Compounding this is the arrival of cold weather in the region.

CIDA is providing support to international organizations to not only ensure a coordinated response but also to ensure the needs of refugees in such sectors as protection, water and sanitation, nutritious food, and basic medical care are met. This support includes Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq. The minister also announced that Canada is providing another \$5 million in material support to Jordan to assist in handling the large influx of Syrian refugees. This is in addition to the \$6.5 million Canada committed this past summer for assistance to Jordan.

Syria remains a daunting international and regional challenge. The stakes are very high in both human and political terms. As the death toll continues to rise, and as the risk to regional stability continues to mount, Canada and the wider international community are faced with the demand for action.

The situation cannot go on indefinitely. Canada will continue to work with its international partners and the people of Syria in the search for solutions that address the immediate suffering of the Syrian people and can bring an end to the conflict.

We will remain engaged and committed.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two quick questions.

One is around the fast-tracking of claimants who have family members here but are presently in refugee camps in the bordering regions, which she underlined, around Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan. We still have not heard from the government as to whether it will commit to that. This is different from what the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism announced, which was to simply deal with the files that they had.

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Are they going to in fact get going on the fast-tracking of those who wish to join family members here in Canada? That is what we have done in the past, in Haiti and other places where there have been crises.

Second, just to clarify, there have been news reports today of comments by the Minister of Foreign Affairs about supporting the initiatives in Marrakesh, but there has not been a full endorsement of the opposition. I just want to get a sense from the parliamentary secretary about exactly what the government's policy is. It is joining 100 other countries in recognition, but there seems to be some qualifiers as to whether we are fully recognizing the opposition in Syria.

• (1950)

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, we know that there are other countries that have given an endorsement, but Canada is going to continue to consider. We will be making our own decision.

We are encouraged by steps the opposition has made to become more accountable. For more than a year, our government has been encouraging the Syrian opposition to come together. We applaud them. We congratulate them on the recent announcement that they made. We believe that it really does present a major step forward.

To be really successful, we know that this opposition is going to have to demonstrate that they have the support of all of those religious minorities that are present in Syria. That includes the Christians, the Kurds, the Alawites, the Druze and many other groups who are present there. Although we believe that this is a good step forward, there are still many things that need to be taken under consideration. As I said earlier, Canada will make its own decision on this issue.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a couple of months ago we had an emergency debate on Syria. I rose in the House and said that there was a letter I had sent to the minister regarding matching donations dollar for dollar. The parliamentary secretary at the time, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and other members were jumping up and down saying, "Table the letter". Unfortunately I was not allowed to table the letter, as some members would not allow me to table it.

However, since then we have written to the minister, clearly, publicly, asking the government to work with the Canadian-Syrian diaspora to match, dollar for dollar, the money they raise. They have raised quite a few million dollars.

What has changed from the time they were jumping up and down saying, "Show us the letter", to when the letter went public? Why are they not, right now, moving forward on matching what the community has raised dollar for dollar, and making sure that they address that issue? That is what I would like to know from the parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, every time we are in the House for an emergency debate, I hear that member talk about letters he has sent. I personally have never seen the letter.

Our government is taking action. We have provided humanitarian assistance and are working with our partners in Syria to ensure that humanitarian assistance gets to the people who need it. We are

working to provide money for the neighbouring countries where many of the refugees are headed. We want to ensure they have the medical and food supplies they need.

It is a horrible situation, but that is why our government has taken action. To date, we have provided \$22 million. With the minister having announced the additional funds today, we are working hard to see the humanitarian contributions made.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the civil war in Syria began in early 2011 with Syrians gathering to call for political reforms and the reinstatement of civil rights. They also called for an end to the emergency law, which has been in place since 1962. The demonstration and clashes with police have deteriorated into an all-out civil war and calls for the ouster of President Bashar al-Assad and his regime.

Since August, 2011, the Government of Canada has initiated a series of increasing sanctions. These sanctions range from freezing the assets of Syrian individuals to the prohibition of import or export of goods and services, except for food. Unfortunately, these sanctions do not have any effect on members of the al-Assad regime.

On October, 2011, I proposed a motion in the House, which read:

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

Unfortunately, members on the other side of the House did not see fit to support my motion. Over the past 21 months the people of Syria have watched their world dissolve around them. They have seen their homes and shops destroyed with bombs and gunfire. They have witnessed the deaths of their friends, neighbours and loved ones. They have waited in terror for the loved ones who have been arrested and taken to one of the 27 torture centres. When the fear and waiting finally take their toll, hundreds of thousands have fled to neighbouring countries.

Syrian Canadians are calling on their government to help their friends and loved ones in Syria. The Liberal Party of Canada and the Syrian Canadian Council are urging the government to match, dollar for dollar, moneys raised by the Syrian Canadian community through recognized charitable organizations. These moneys would help to provide food, shelter, blankets and medical aid to the hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that more than half a million Syrians have claimed refuge in the neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and the North African countries. Many Syrians who have fled their homeland did not register with the UNHCR when they first left Syria, feeling that they could live on their own resources as the conflict would be short. Unfortunately, their resources are now running out and the host communities and/or their families can no longer support them. Also, more than 2.5 million Syrians inside Syria will be in need of humanitarian assistance as winter approaches.

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I received the following email from Tarek. He wrote, “The Assad regime is still punishing Syrian people for demanding their freedom and basic rights.... It is targeting schools, mosques, shopping areas and, most importantly, bakeries. In the second largest city in Syria, Aleppo, people are pleading with the world for any supply of wheat, flour and food”.

I received another email from Selma. She wants Canada to make a commitment to protect refugees and internally displaced people. This includes the commitment of humanitarian aid to refugees in refugee camps in surrounding countries. She writes, “The threat of infectious disease also continues to grow with the conflict. As a result, aid must also include medical support [a]nd support specifically for women who have faced sexual violence, as this is a continuing trauma”.

Canadians are a generous people and in times of crisis they dig deep to help their fellow man. All Canadians want is a little leadership from their government. It is time for the government to step up to the plate and give Canadians a vehicle to help those who are suffering in Syria. When will the Conservative government match, dollar for dollar, the money that has been and is being raised by the Syrian Canadian community to help the people of Syria?

The seventh report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development states, in part, that the committee “supports the Government’s efforts to expedite family reunification for Syrians who are sponsored by Syrian-Canadians and who face individualized personal risk”.

• (1955)

In answer to a question on Friday, December 7, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism stated in part, “we have accelerated some 200 applications that were outstanding for family reunification by Canadians who have made applications for reunification of Syrian nationals”.

The committee was not only supporting the government’s acceleration of existing applications, but was calling for the government to expedite new family reunification applications for individuals who faced personal risk and were sponsored by Syrian Canadians.

After the 2004 tsunami, the Liberal government established a protocol to be used in case of natural or man-made disasters. The most important tenets of the protocol were, “To fast-track immigration to Canada of family-class individuals whose applications were being processed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and to fast track to Canada family-class applications for individuals from the area affected by the natural or man-made disasters” and “To issue Visitor Visas to immediate family members from the affected area so they can join their relatives in Canada, on a temporary basis”.

The government used this protocol in the wake of the earthquakes in Haiti and China. Why will it not use it now?

I have received a number of emails from concerned Syrian Canadians. I would like to read some of them into the record.

Noura writes, “The most important step...is to facilitate the reunification and the sponsorship of families who have loved ones suffering in the warstricken area. The new Syria will not forget the

countries and people who have helped it in its pursuit for freedom, dignity, fairness and the right to live an honourable life”.

Selma wants Canada to help by, “Allowing Syrian refugees to enter Canada as refugees as it is apparent the Syrian state structure has collapsed and there is no argument to support that citizens of Syria are safe where they are”.

Rami writes, “I call on the Canadian government to help ease the process of transition for Syrians applying for student permits by providing emergency grant funding to assist them in making the transition. Efforts are already underway with groups such as Jusoor trying to establish sponsorship programs for Syrian students applying to continue their education in Canada”.

Motaz just asks a simple question, “Why don’t we open our door to accept some of the refugees?”

I wish I could answer Motaz’s question, but I cannot. Maybe the minister can. Canada has a long history of opening its doors to refugees.

In recent history, we have opened our doors to: 12,000 Czech refugees after the Prague Spring; 13,000 Chileans fleeing the persecution and the authoritarian rule of General Pinochet; 20,000 Soviet Jewish refugees who were being denied the right to express and practise their religion; 4,420 Ugandan Asian refugees following Idi Amin’s expulsion of Asians from Uganda; 60,000 Vietnamese boat people; 5,000 Bosnian Muslims who were victims of the Yugoslavian civil war, which was characterized by ethnic cleansing and genocide; 5,500 Albanian Kosovars; 3,900 Karen refugees from Burma; and almost 4,000 Iraqi refugees.

What is the government waiting for? The government does not seem to have an answer. In fact, it does not seem to be any logical answer. Canadians want their government to act. They want their government to show some leadership in this situation.

Selma, who I mentioned earlier, further writes, “Canada has a legacy of being an international protector. We have lost that recently but we can try to regain that for the sake of the preservation of humanity. Canada has relatively good relations with China and Russia, two supporters of the current Syrian regime. The Canadian government should use such relations to mobilize the international community against the actions of Bashar al-Assad”.

Over its term in office, the government has almost always come late to the party. Its retreat from the international stage has cost Canada dearly. We were unable to gain a seat on the United Nations Security Council and this has limited our ability to influence members of the international community.

Unfortunately, Russia and China, two permanent members of the Security Council, have continuously voted against applying any sanctions against the al-Assad regime. This has ensured that the international community must stand by and watch the regime murder its citizens.

The right to protest and voice one’s dissent is guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

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● (2000)

One Canadian woman who was born in Syria has become an outspoken activist online. She has protested, posted updates and made comments against the al-Assad regime. Unable to silence her, the al-Assad regime has taken her brother into custody in Syria to be questioned about his sister's political activities. His family does not know where he was taken. While the al-Assad regime cannot actively silence a Canadian citizen, it is using the implied threat of detention and torture of her family members to silence her.

How many other Canadian citizens are having their charter rights denied by the Syrian regime because they fear for the safety of their loved ones? Will the government take the principled stand and recognize the Syrian opposition coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people?

Once again, Canada is late coming to the table. Of the 193 United Nations member states, more than 100 have recognized the Syrian opposition coalition. Today, the United States recognized the Syrian opposition coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, who are signalling to the coalition that radical groups cannot play a part in Syria's eventual political transition. Canada has not done so. We are waiting because the minister has some concerns about the opposition, including its ability to send clear messages, to include religious minorities, and the minister also insists that no extremist groups be involved with the coalition. The minister has no hesitation about continuing to recognize the al-Assad regime, which is sending a clear message to the world that it will hang on at all costs. If that means bombing men, women and children, so be it. When will the government get its priorities straight?

Members of the Syrian National Council and the Syrian Canadian Council met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs in July. During their meeting, they asked the government to do the following:

1. Expedite the processing of family members sponsored by Syrian-Canadians and Syrian permanent residents in Canada, giving priority to those displaced or in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.
2. Accord priority processing to already submitted immigration applications from persons normally residing in areas affected by the fighting especially those who have been displaced.
3. Canada to admit a limited number of political refugees who face grave danger in Syria and in the surrounding countries, especially those with family members in Canada.
4. Canada to facilitate issuing temporary resident permits to the families of Canadians of a Syrian background living in Syria and neighboring countries, especially those who need protection against retributions by the Syrian regime.
5. In keeping with measures undertaken in similar circumstances in the past, permit Syrian temporary residents in Canada to remain in Canada and to take employment to enable them to support themselves. If the situation in Syria is not resolved within a reasonable period, it would be consistent with Canada's humanitarian Immigration practices to permit such persons to apply for permanent residence in Canada.

The Syrian Canadian Council and the Syrian National Council have requested a meeting with the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. They are waiting for an answer. When will the minister meet to address their concerns? When will the government take all possible steps to help the citizens of Syria?

● (2005)

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and participate in this evening's very important debate on the situation in

Syria. As all members know, the events that have unfolded there over the last year are no less than a tremendous human tragedy. Bashar al-Assad, a brutal dictator who is waging war against his own people, is now resorting to indiscriminate aerial attacks against Syrian cities. Tens of thousands are estimated to have been killed, more than half a million refugees have been forced to flee Syria's borders, and 1.2 million people have been displaced internally. Sadly, these numbers are expected to rise as the violence continues unabated.

Today we debate a report that reflects testimony heard by the foreign affairs committee on the situation in Syria. As a member of that committee, I would like to express my appreciation to the officials, experts and members of the community who took the time to speak with us.

I will begin my remarks this evening by reflecting on the generosity of Syria's neighbours and others in the region who have opened their borders to the Syrian refugees fleeing the growing violence. We recognize the considerable burden this has placed on neighbouring states like Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, which have limited resources and capacity to support those who have fled to safety.

Our government remains extremely concerned that the violence in Syria could spill over its borders into neighbouring countries. In addition to incidents of cross-border fire and shelling, in June of this year we witnessed Syria's audacious downing of a Turkish military plane. In the strongest terms we condemn that aggressive and unjustified attack, and as a NATO ally we continue to stand with the Turkish people and their government.

At Turkey's request, most recently NATO allies agreed to augment Turkish air defence capabilities by deploying Patriot missile defence batteries. It is important to note that this deployment is purely defensive and not intended to enforce a no-fly zone. No one seeks the escalation or spread of the conflict in Syria, least of all Turkey or its NATO allies. Canada supports this request and we commend the restraint demonstrated by the Turkish government in the face of repeated provocations by the Assad regime. We have been in regular contact with the Turkish government and the Minister of Foreign Affairs has personally extended an offer of assistance on a number of occasions to the Foreign Minister of Turkey and the Turkish ambassador.

The situation in Syria also threatens the delicate stability of Lebanon, where we have seen repeated outbreaks of violence as a direct consequence of the Syrian conflict. There has been cross-border fire as Syrian forces have clashed with rebels. The recent gunfights between opposing factions in the north of the country are the result of long-standing tensions, but these incidents have increased in frequency and seriousness. A considerable influx of Syrian refugees has also strained the capacity of the Government of Lebanon to maintain stability.

In August, the minister met with Lebanon's Prime Minister and expressed Canada's sincere gratitude for the role Lebanon has played in hosting Syrians seeking asylum from the violence ravaging their homeland.

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Meanwhile, Syria continues to receive military support from Iran, one of its few remaining allies. In doing so, Iran has demonstrated a reckless disregard not only for the welfare of the people of Syria but also regarding the risks of a proxy war, which could destabilize the entire region. This should come as no surprise: Regimes that rely upon force to retain power at home will rely upon force to advance their interests abroad. Canada has repeatedly condemned Iran's ruthless abuse of human rights within its borders, its interference in the affairs of its neighbours, its support for terrorism and its support for the tyrannical regime of Bashar al-Assad.

In addition, we are particularly concerned about the emergence of terrorist groups on the ground, including foreign fighters. Despite a shared antipathy toward the Assad regime, these actors should not be confused with those in the opposition who seek a peaceful, democratic future for their people. On the contrary, extremists are taking advantage of the current instability to gain a foothold, from which, following the fall of the Assad regime, they would seek to impose a vision antithetical to the very ideals the majority of the opposition are risking their lives for, the ideals of democracy and human rights, including the rights of women and ethnic and religious minorities.

Canada and the rest of the world are incredibly alarmed by recent reports suggesting that the Assad regime might consider the use of chemical weapons in the current conflict. As the Assad regime increasingly loses control over parts of its territory, we are greatly concerned that it could turn to such weapons in a last desperate attempt to cling to power.

● (2010)

We have been consistent and very clear. The international community will not tolerate the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime on the Syrian people. We urge those countries with leverage to do what they can to prevent the Syrian crisis from entering a dangerous new phase. Ultimately, Assad and his supporters will be held accountable.

The brutality and recklessness of Assad and his regime threatens not only the stability of the region but, first and foremost, the security of the Syrian people. We will not stand by in the face of injustice perpetrated against innocent men, women and children and the wanton destruction of the ancient heritage of a proud civilization.

In May of this year, Canada expelled all Syrian diplomats in Canada in response to a ruthless massacre in the town of Houleh, which claimed 300 lives, including 49 children under the age of 10, according to the special representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The representatives of a regime so cowardly that it would resort to the slaughter of innocent children are not welcome in Canada.

Our government has imposed 11 rounds of tough sanctions on the Assad regime. These sanctions do not target the people of Syria, but Assad and his close allies. We stand steadfast with the Syrian people who have risked so much for freedom and democracy. We call on those who continue to support this despicable regime to abandon it and, instead, stand with their fellow Syrian men and women who are yearning for peace and freedom.

As both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have stated on numerous occasions, we continue to urge the UN Security Council to likewise adopt binding international sanctions that will increase the pressure on Assad to end the bloodshed. Again, we call on those countries in a position to influence Damascus to press the regime to abandon its violent path and allow an inclusive Syrian-led political transition to occur.

Canada will persist in these efforts, together with like-minded partners, to oppose the savagery of the Assad regime. The ongoing violence must stop immediately and the Syrian people must be free to realize for themselves a better and brighter future.

Members can rest assured that our government and all Canadians continue to support the brave men and women of Syria in their struggle against repression.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are of course all very concerned about the situation in Syria. As my colleague mentioned, the situation in the camps around the country, along with threats and fear of the use of chemical and biological weapons against civilians are very worrying. Just today, heavier weapons and more offensive weapons were used against the civilian population.

Aside from the fact that people are living in refugee camps outside of Syria, and beyond their fears for the future, the situation inside the country is still absolutely tragic. Even though options are difficult and limited from many points of view, there is one thing we could do: we could facilitate family reunification and set up a special program for Syria, as we have done for many other countries, such as Iraq and Haiti, so these people can quickly come to Canada.

I would like to ask my honourable colleague why the Government of Canada is taking so long to move in this direction.

● (2015)

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, I share the hon. member's concern about the possible use of chemical weapons in Syria. It would not surprise me if that brutal regime did something so heinous.

Our government has actually provided more humanitarian relief to Lebanon, Jordan and other countries in the region on a per capita basis than any other country in the world. Earlier today, more humanitarian relief assistance to Jordan was announced by the Minister of International Cooperation of an additional \$5 million. I hope that will help. We will continue doing more as and when it is necessary.

With respect to the acceleration of family-class immigrant applicants, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism has announced that we are accelerating those applications and will continue to review the situation as it unfolds.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said that I jumped up and down and mentioned a letter. Let me point out to the parliamentary secretary that the Liberal leader sent a letter on August 23, 2012 to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of Immigration.

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I just want the parliamentary secretary to deny that this was done or confess and say that the government is ignoring calls from the Syrian community and just does not want to match dollar for dollar. Has the government received it, yes or no?

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, the “tone” of the hon. member, and I use that term loosely, is rather unfortunate. People are dying every day for the cause of freedom.

Our government has, as I mentioned—

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Other communities are matching dollar for dollar. Will you say yes or no?

● (2020)

Mr. Bob Dechert: Maybe I will just wait until the member finishes ranting, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned earlier, our government is supplying more humanitarian relief on a per capita basis than any other country in the world, including an additional \$5 million today for Jordan. We are responding to the need as quickly as we can.

That member did not bother to show up at the committee meetings a few weeks ago when we were studying this—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is out of order. A member attending or not attending somewhere should not be mentioned. I would like you to rule on that, please.

The Deputy Speaker: I have two comments. First, that is probably not a proper point of order. Second, the comment by the parliamentary secretary was not about the absence of persons from the chamber. It was about an absence elsewhere. That clearly is not a breach of parliamentary rules.

The parliamentary secretary can continue.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, had that member come the day the committee was studying—

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to point out that I am not a member of that committee. The parliamentary secretary keeps saying that. He is way out of line.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, that member has shown up on other occasions. He did not on that particular occasion. The point I wanted to make was that had he been there, he would have known that we received comments from members of the Syrian-Canadian community about the funds they had been raising. We thanked them for the funds they had raised, but they were not clear about the amount that had been raised. The Canadian government has gone far beyond any amount the Syrian community has raised to date, to my knowledge.

We always stand ready to consider what more can be done. Canadians are encouraged to donate through the International Red Cross, which Canada has also done for humanitarian relief.

Our government will continue to assess the situation, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs has done today, and to provide humanitarian assistance, as necessary, to support the countries in

the region that are doing such a good job caring for those people who have fled the violence in Syria.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things Canada is doing, because of our deep concern about what is going on in the region, is imposing a number of sanctions. The parliamentary secretary talked about 11 sanctions we have put on the Assad regime. I wonder if he could speak to those sanctions.

What we do not want to do is impact the people of Syria who are fighting for freedom and democracy. We want to see that happen. We believe in freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Could the member tell us about those sanctions on the Assad regime that are so important? I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could tell the House what steps Canada has taken.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, Canada has moved 11 times, from the very early stages of the violence in Syria, to put specific sanctions on the Assad regime and on particular individuals within the regime. In addition, more sanctions were announced earlier today against several more members of the Assad regime. Another 10 individuals and three entities were added to the list of designated persons who are subject to prohibitions on dealings under existing Canadian sanctions.

We continue to call upon Russia, China and the United Nations to put further sanctions on the Assad regime through the United Nations Security Council. We believe that if they were to do that, those sanctions would have a real impact on ending the violence in Syria. We continue to call upon our colleagues at the United Nations to make sure that the United Nations Security Council passes those sanctions resolutions.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that the situation in Syria is worrisome. People all over are worried right now. They are worried that the situation will spread and affect other countries in the area. But above all, this is an absolutely horrible and worrisome situation for Syrians themselves.

We are talking about 30,000 civilians who have been killed since the start of the events, countless people injured, homes destroyed, hunger, cold and fear. Fear is a very big factor in this situation.

I want to quote Mariam Hamou, from the Syrian community in London. When she appeared before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Ms. Hamou said:

● (2025)

[*English*]

Torture has been reported in every city and town and affects every family. I do not want to get into the chilling details of what goes on, but I will share with the House one story that just sends chills down my spine. Women are being systematically raped in Syria.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Beyond the dead and wounded, it is a matter of human rights violations and sheer terror. We must put an end to what is going on, as the member from Ottawa Centre said a little earlier in this debate. We must continue diplomatic efforts and put all the necessary pressure on both the countries that think like us and those that do not. We must also do more to help.

We were all pleased to learn today that Canada would increase assistance for refugee camps in the surrounding countries, and we hope that this assistance will continue, because the situation continues and is getting worse and worse with winter approaching. I will come back to this issue a bit later.

As for Syrians in Syria, I would like to quote Faisal Alazem, who lives in Montreal in my region. This is what he told the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development:

Domestically, many members of the Syrian Canadian community are worried about the fate of their families in Syria or those exiled out of Syria, and they therefore request that in keeping with Canada's long-standing tradition of concern for the displaced and persecuted, our Canadian government facilitate bringing their family members to join them in Canada. Many members of the Syrian Canadian community are concerned that no priority processing or family reunification program is in place to assist their families affected by the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Such measures were taken in 2007 for Iraq; they were taken for Algeria; and they were taken in 2010 for Haiti, after the earthquake.

He asked this question, and we did as well: why is there no priority program? We were told that the process had been expedited slightly. Yet, I remember that no effort was spared after the earthquake in Haiti. The government created a special program, and everyone worked together to bring people home and reunite families as quickly as possible.

In keeping with our long-standing Canadian tradition, why can we not do the same thing for Syria?

As Faisal Alazem said, it is important to the people of Syria and it is also important to the people living in refugee camps in neighbouring countries. The United Nations predicts that by the end of the year, which is just around the corner, there will be 700,000 refugees living in neighbouring countries.

As I was saying earlier, winter has arrived. Some people believe that winter over there is not so bad. This morning it was 3°C in Aleppo. When you live in a house that is not built to Canadian standards, or in a tent, and it is 3°C, that is pretty cold. And life is very difficult with children who are malnourished, frightened and traumatized.

Yes, we are helping Syria. I was pleased to learn today that we will provide more aid. We were all pleased. However, these efforts must be sustained. We must also work with other countries and encourage them to provide additional aid. This is an urgent matter, and we must not allow this opportunity to save lives to pass us by.

● (2030)

[English]

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to read a letter that was sent on August 23, 2012 to the ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, CIDA, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. This was sent from the leader of the Liberal Party and it reads, “Members of the Liberal

caucus met this week with representatives of the Syrian-Canadian community”. It encourages them to come up with \$2 million in aid. It also says that:

The Syrian-Canadian community has also expressed the need for additional humanitarian funding to help those on the ground. As the situation in Syria continues to deteriorate, we urge the government to consider implementing a program to match contributions, similar to the program that assists with the humanitarian situation in the Sahel region in West Africa.

It goes on to ask to expedite immigration as well. I seek unanimous consent to table this letter so that my colleagues across the way might have it.

My question to my colleague is very simple. The government is stepping up and talking about all kinds of things it is doing. I wonder if my colleague would agree or disagree with me that the government should do more, especially in the case of immigration. People in Canada want to sponsor their extended families, parents, grandparents, spouses, and bring them to Canada. Should they be allowed to come to Canada on an expedited basis and given a ministerial permit or visitor visa and have their application continue from here?

Second, does she agree or disagree with me that the government has failed the Syrian Canadian diaspora in matching donations dollar for dollar? The community has advised me that it has raised close to \$4 million. I am sure that the representatives who went to committee told the members this, but it went in one ear and out the other. I read it on the record very clearly.

However, I ask for consent to table this letter.

The Deputy Speaker: It is improper to ask for that. The motion under which this debate is being conducted is very specific and states that requests for unanimous consent are out of order. Therefore, no, you do not have permission to do that.

[Translation]

You have not asked the hon. member for Laurier-Sainte-Marie a question.

[English]

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, I had two questions. Should we expedite immigration cases from Syria?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Lavergère: Mr. Speaker, I agree that we should be doing more in terms of the family reunification program and the priority processing of files, among other things.

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt when he was making his comments. If I heard correctly, he was asking that the government put forward \$2 million.

However, the government today has added \$10 million, for a total of \$22 million, into humanitarian aid to help the people in Syria. We are working with our humanitarian partners. We want to see all of that aid get into Syria and help the people there. We know that there are needs and so we have stepped up.

If the member had come to committee, he would have heard the testimony—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, if my colleague across the way would take the wax out of her ears and listen, she would have heard that this letter was written on August 2. If she wants to quote me, she should quote me correctly. This letter was sent to her boss—

The Deputy Speaker: That is a matter of debate. He will be given the opportunity to come back with a question if he wants to.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation.

• (2035)

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, as I said, what we heard from the Syrian community was that it was uncertain how much money had been raised or collected. Canada stepped up to the plate quickly to help the people in Syria. We are very concerned.

I ask my colleague who sits on the committee if she does not feel that Canada has urgently met needs. We continue to assess the situation. Does she not think that this should be a non-partisan issue and work with the Canadian government to get the assistance to the people who need it in Syria?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Lavergère: Mr. Speaker, there is a completely non-partisan aspect to this issue. We all want to help the Syrian people; we all agree on this. As I said in my statement, I was pleased to learn that Canadian aid has been increased to \$22 million, but I still think that this could have been done a few months ago.

I was talking about winter, a very real situation that means that our foreign aid must be on the ground at the most crucial time.

It is also my opinion that we have to work with our partners to encourage the entire international community to contribute more. I also believe that we can do more in terms of family reunification.

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member's background, as we know, was in foreign affairs before she was elected as a member of Parliament. One of the issues that we need to be seized with is around governance. I would like to get her opinion.

In light of the fact that we are obviously seeing a state come apart because of the conflict, what does she think Canada can do when we reach the point that we all know is coming, which is when the regime is no more and the war is over?

Many Syrian Canadians as well as everyday Canadians want to know that Canada has a plan for helping to re-establish stability in Syria. With her background in diplomacy, what does she think we

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could offer in terms of helping Syria deal with the governance question when the conflict ends?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Lavergère: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for this very interesting and essential question.

Over the past few years, when speaking about the Egyptian revolution or Tunisia or Libya for instance, we have all too often made the mistake of saying that, once the toothpaste is out of the tube, everything is resolved and we do not have to concern ourselves with it anymore. Unfortunately, Canada has been completely absent in the post-revolutionary and post-war periods in these countries, and we see that the situation is not so straightforward.

It is also urgent that we have a plan for going forward. How are we going to help Syria set up stable, democratic and equitable institutions that respect human rights in every way? If we want the country to attain stability and peace, this is the most crucial thing. Weapons, airplanes and the like are one thing, but genuine security is built on democracy and human rights. This is the only way to guarantee security over the long term.

We were active in a number of countries, such as Libya. We could have stopped earlier, but we agreed on the first stage, at least. Now, we are no longer there to help the country rebuild, even though we have experience, in terms of federalism for instance, that could be very useful to a number of these countries. Unfortunately, the government downloaded its responsibilities and took away some of the extraordinary tools that Canada had, such as Rights and Democracy, an organization that could do this work in the field, and now Canada is playing an ever-diminishing role in this regard.

• (2040)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. Seeing no further debate and pursuant to an order made earlier today the question is deemed put and a recorded division is deemed requested.

Pursuant to Standing Order 66 the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, January 30, 2013, at the end of the time provided for government orders.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Parliamentary Secretary who will be replying to the question and taking part in the debate today. She is always present and I know that just because the file is a complete disaster does not mean that she will not give a professional, noble answer. I would also like to wish her happy holidays.

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On behalf of the NDP, I am pleased to be able to once again raise this important issue, since it has not yet been completely resolved. Indeed, on October 2, 2012, I rose during question period to ask the government two questions.

A few weeks ago already, in the face of mounting evidence gathered by the opposition, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development finally admitted that the former working while on claim pilot project was more beneficial for some unemployed workers than for others. In light of that statement, I asked the minister what she planned to do to resolve the problem now that she was aware of it.

The minister replied, and I quote, “a number of employers across the country are in need of Canadians' skills and abilities. They have jobs to offer people who have these skills and abilities. The problem is that these people are not accepting these jobs or do not know that they exist.”

But what Canadians learned three days later, late in the afternoon of Friday, October 5, while everyone was heading out for the Thanksgiving long weekend, was that amendments would be made to the famous working while on claim pilot project.

The minister announced:

Under the adjustment announced today, those EI recipients who were working while on claim between August 7, 2011 and August 4, 2012 will be given the option of reverting to the rules that existed under the previous pilot project. This change will go into effect January 6, 2013, but it will be applied retrospectively to August 5, 2012—the start of the new pilot program.

Beginning January 6, 2013, eligible claimants must make the request to revert to the old pilot parameters within 30 days of their last EI benefit payment. For claims that have already ended, claimants will have 30 days from the introduction of this option.

The Minister's words were clear: these adjustments affected only employment insurance claimants who were working during their benefit period between August 7, 2011 and August 4, 2012.

First, I want to say that it is very admirable that the minister acknowledged that there are flaws in the proposed EI reform. It is natural to try some initiatives and then realize in hindsight that certain amendments are needed. Policy development should be an ongoing improvement process.

However, my concern is that the government offered an inadequate solution to a major problem that was taking money from the pockets of hundreds of thousands of part-time workers who were benefiting from this pilot project.

The proposed amendments affect too few people in a short period of time. They do not address the problem to solve it once and for all. This seems to be another band-aid measure to placate the public, but the government still has the overall idea of reforming the system to restrict access to EI and reduce benefits.

What does the minister have to say to the pilot project participants who are not eligible to choose between the old and new calculation methods, and what will she have to say to unemployed workers who will work part-time in 2015? When everyone's salary is cut by 50%, will she tell these people that she put off solving the problem and now they are paying the price?

• (2045)

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the hon. member regarding her concerns for seasonal workers.

[Translation]

The employment situation of all Canadians is a matter of great concern for this government.

[English]

As the hon. member knows, our country faces ongoing labour and skills shortages. Therefore, it is important that we make changes now to ensure the employment insurance program is working effectively for Canadians.

The extra five weeks pilot project was always intended as a temporary measure. It was brought in during Canada's economic action plan to help people during the downturn of the recession. The purpose of the EI pilot project is to conduct a test for a defined period, up to three years, in order to accurately assess the labour markets impacts on new approaches that are designed to assist the unemployed.

The extended EI benefits pilot project was designed as a temporary measure to define and provide an extra five weeks of EI benefits for claimants in 21 regions with higher than average unemployment rates as a result of the economic downturn.

The pilot project came to its scheduled end on September 15, and even earlier in regions where there was a sustained period of economic recovery whereby the unemployment rate remained below 8% for 12 consecutive months.

This considered, all EI claimants, including those who are seasonal workers, can still continue to benefit from other recent EI measures introduced by our government. In fact, we are pleased that nearly 900,000 net new jobs have been created since the downturn of the recession, and over 90% of those were full-time.

[Translation]

We have also introduced, through economic action plan 2012, a new national working while on claim pilot project.

[English]

Previously, EI claimants could earn the equivalent of 40%, or \$75, of their weekly benefits without seeing a reduction in their benefits. However, if their earnings were above that threshold, their benefits were reduced dollar for dollar. This created a disincentive to accept work beyond the earnings threshold. Under the new working while on claim pilot project that came into effect on August 5, eligible claimants are able to keep EI benefits equalling 50% of every dollar earned while on claim, up to 90% of the weekly insurable earnings used to calculate the EI benefits amount. The intent is to encourage claimants to accept all available work while receiving EI benefits and earning some additional income while on claim.

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[Translation]

We know some concerns have been raised about this new pilot project, and we have listened. That is why we recently announced adjustments to the new pilot project.

[English]

This will allow individuals to temporarily revert to the rules that existed under the previous pilot project.

As our government is focused on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity, we are committed to supporting workers and ensuring that EI enables a strong and competitive workforce for all Canadians in every region of the country.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct some of what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour just said. It is not the workers who are seasonal, but the work. The workers are prepared to work throughout the year, but the work remains seasonal.

On October 2, I asked a second question in the House. I asked the minister about the fact that unemployment experts were not consulted about changes to the program.

This is even more of a problem now that winter has arrived and Christmas is approaching. Social inequality is growing in Canada. The minister cannot ignore this fact. Thousands of Canadians are having trouble paying their bills, heating their homes and feeding their children.

The economy remains fragile and the unemployment rate is not declining as quickly as the Conservatives had hoped. This means that hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers will find it difficult to make the money last until the end of December, and hundreds if not thousands of these people will be using food banks.

Seasonal work has been most affected. There are jobs in Canada, but the reality is that the jobs are not distributed evenly throughout the year or throughout the regions. We have to live with that, and the minister must take that into account in her reform.

Could the minister listen to everyone who has a stake in employment insurance and announce major adjustments to the reform?

• (2050)

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, our government is making significant investments to help Canadians in every region of the country find work. Pilot projects are an important feature of the EI program but we need to remember that they are only one part of a bigger pie designed to encourage Canadians to stay active in the job market.

We have introduced the new working while on claim pilot project that allows EI claimants to accept all available work while receiving EI benefits and rewards them for their additional work.

Our government is committed to ensuring EI enables a strong and competitive workforce in every region of the country. We are proud

of our economic record and our nearly 900,000 net new jobs created since the downturn of the recession. We are proud to have the strongest job record in the G7. I wonder why the opposition continues to not support this great economic plan?

[Translation]

SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to have to speak rather quickly in order to talk about everything that could be relevant to the question. I would like to revisit a question I raised in the House in October 2012, when I said the following:

Mr. Speaker, the economic recovery is still fragile and, yesterday, instead of announcing tangible solutions to support SMEs, the minister hauled out of mothballs his worn-out promise to reduce red tape, which has not produced any results in six years.

Yesterday's announcement certainly cannot be called a recovery plan. It is nothing more than a normal goal for a modern country, and it does not hide the lack of a real vision to help our SMEs and stimulate the country's economy.

We are waiting for a real plan for SMEs. What is the minister waiting for to come up with one?

I would like to revisit this important question. I will now share a few highlights of the response given by the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism. First he congratulated me on my appointment, and I thank him for that. Then he went on to say, "I have been waiting since April to be asked a question about entrepreneurship."

Let me quickly tell the minister that that is not true, because I had already put questions to him regarding excessive fees for credit cards weeks and months before, but the minister had not bothered answering my questions.

The minister then said, "For us, entrepreneurship is a priority, not just today but every day." Again, this is a kind of cynicism that, unfortunately, is very prevalent in this government. It also appropriates economic issues as though not all members of this House were hoping to see the Canadian economy get firmly back on track.

The minister added, "That is why we are reducing the amount of paperwork that governments impose on entrepreneurs." What a surprise, he used the plural and said "governments". Why? Is the federal government preparing a plan that will impose standards on the provincial governments? We do not really know, but there is still not even a hint of a plan for small and medium-size businesses.

The next day, my colleague, the industry critic, said, "We want to make things easier for our SMEs, but the the application of random principles like the abolition of a rule before creating another seems much more like improvisation. This is not an economic recovery plan."

On the government's website, in a January 2012 document entitled *Cutting Red Tape and Freeing Business to Grow*, we can read the following under the heading "Message From the Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism)": "This is why we are proposing to give the Office of the Auditor General of Canada the mandate of reviewing and reporting on the government's progress in reducing regulatory administrative burden through its One-for-One Rule...".

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Plus one minus one equals zero. We cannot reduce by adding one rule and taking away another. Yet this is the basis for the minister's announcement in the introduction to this document, which has some good points. So we are talking about the Red Tape Reduction Commission that worked on this issue. Why did the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology not study this matter? Why was that mandate given to a committee outside of Parliament?

Some very good people sit on that committee, including Bernard Bélanger, the president and chairman of the board of Premier Tech. There are essential recommendations on Web 3.0. That is very important, because if we integrate Web 3.0 properly, we could at last see small and medium-size businesses reduce their paperwork. However, we do not really know how this could be achieved.

However, on the website of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, there is an explanation of the administrative reforms. These reforms are broad—and they are referred to as highlights—and so many requests will be made to regulatory bodies, that I am afraid we will have red tape on the red tape related to the process designed to reduce red tape. On the face of it, it really looks like a mess. Therefore, we need answers.

This evening, we have four minutes, and I hope someone on the other side of the House will be able to give us some real answers about how red tape will be reduced.

• (2055)

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the member concerning the recently announced red tape reduction action plan.

Successful entrepreneurs make successful economies, fuelling innovation and productivity gains, and driving job creation and economic growth.

Ensuring an internationally competitive business environment in which entrepreneurs can thrive has been, and will continue to be, a top priority for our government.

Today, Canada is internationally recognized as one of the best places in the world to do business. A solid fiscal standing, with the lowest debt among the leading G7 countries, a competitive tax regime and a robust regulatory system have distinguished Canada at a time when many countries are struggling with rising debt and an increasing tax burden.

Within this solid business infrastructure, the state of entrepreneurship in Canada is relatively strong. However, unnecessary red tape stifles economic growth and job creation. It is a hidden tax that weighs heaviest on the entrepreneurs least able to bear it: small business owners.

If Canada is to maintain its competitive edge, increase productivity and spur innovation, we must constantly strive to improve the conditions for doing business. Thus, we have announced our red tape reduction action plan that promises to further enhance Canada's global reputation.

Most important, our plan responds directly to the needs and concerns entrepreneurs have raised about red tape, saving small businesses both time and money.

The systematic reforms contained in the action plan are game-changers for doing business in Canada and are among the most ambitious of their kind today. Our red tape reduction action plan will cut red tape, make it easier to do business with the federal government and improve service and predictability.

The action plan is a comprehensive response to the Red Tape Reduction Commission's recommendations. The reforms will update the government's regulations and show results through annual reporting.

Principal among the systematic reforms to be implemented over the next three years are the adoption of a one-for-one rule and the application of a small business lens. The one-for-one rule will require regulators to offset new administrative burden costs imposed on business with equal reductions in administrative burden.

Small business owners are at the very heart of Canada's entrepreneurial drive. Yet, because of their more limited resources, small business owners bear a disproportionate burden of red tape.

We are going to change that by introducing a small business lens to regulations. This means that the federal government will be required to assess the impact on small business to demonstrate efforts to keep costs down.

All in all, there is a checklist that regulators will have to fill out and publish. The checklist will drive efforts to minimize burden on small business, avoid duplication and communicate regulatory requirements in clear, plain language.

We are talking about is reducing the time and money small business owners spend filling out forms and reporting information to government. We are trying to find a smarter, less costly way to do business.

Red tape is a costly, hurtful burden on small businesses. Reducing red tape, especially when everyone is looking for ways to keep costs down, is an important thing for government to do. That is what we are doing, so small businesses can do what they do best: innovate, create jobs and grow the economy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, this is disappointing. Once again, the main idea is “plus one, minus one, equals zero”. It does not mean less. The rest is a vague intention about how to do it. Reducing red tape is a highly technical endeavour. The government must explain how to achieve that goal.

The other important thing is that the government cannot do what it is doing and say that reducing red tape qualifies as an economic plan. When we sit down with business people, we talk about fundamental issues, such as specific tax cuts for small businesses and a true job creation tax credit of more than \$3,000. Again, I mean a real tax credit, not \$1,000 applied to employment insurance. We can talk about making it easier to transfer businesses between members of the same family. Making it easier for small businesses to have access to research and development support would also qualify as an economic recovery plan for small businesses, as opposed to merely reducing red tape, particularly since we still do not really know how small businesses can actually do it.

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, today Canada is internationally recognized as one of the best places in the world to do business.

Our red tape reduction action plan promises to further enhance Canada's reputation. Reducing red tape is an important way in which

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the government can help entrepreneurs and small business do what they do best: innovate, create jobs and grow the economy.

On another note, as I am the last speaker in the House of Commons before the Christmas break, I would like to thank you, the Speaker, the Clerk, the House officers, pages and staff, everyone that allows all of us as parliamentarians to do our jobs well for Canadians.

I want to wish all, as well as my constituents at home in Simcoe—Grey and people across the country, all Canadians, a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year. Merry Christmas, Mr. Speaker.

● (2100)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 9 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, this House stands adjourned until Monday, January 28, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9 p.m.)

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