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Friday, February 1, 2013

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 1, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

●(1005)

[*English*]

FAIR RAIL FREIGHT SERVICE ACT

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC) moved that Bill C-52, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act (administration, air and railway transportation and arbitration), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to support Bill C-52, the fair rail freight service act. I would also like to take a moment, since it is the first time this year that I have spoken in the House, to say that I wish everyone a great 2013 and look forward to passing great legislation, such as the act I am about to speak to.

First, I congratulate the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities for his tremendous work on this important file. I would also like to thank my colleagues, the former Minister of State for Transport, the hon. member for Yellowhead; the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food; and the Minister of Natural Resources for their contributions and support. In addition, there were many more people who contributed to the legislation in order to make it the best legislation possible.

Our Conservative government remains focused on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. The bill advances these priorities. It will help shippers maintain and grow their businesses, while ensuring that railways manage an efficient shipping network for everyone.

[*Translation*]

Canadian businesses count on a reliable rail transportation system.

[*English*]

With 70% of Canada's surface freight moving by train, railways are extremely important to the competitiveness of our economy. In 2010, Canada's major freight rail companies, Canadian National and Canadian Pacific, served approximately 5,000 shippers and transported products to more than 10,000 destinations in North America and around the world.

As my hon. colleagues know, our government launched the rail freight service review in 2008. Its objective was to address ongoing issues raised by shippers concerning the reliability and consistency of rail freight service. We appointed an independent three-member panel to conduct a comprehensive review of service issues and problems related to the rail system in Canada. The panel was asked to submit recommendations to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and reliability of rail shipping in order to support trade and economic growth. The panel held broad consultations across the country, hearing from both shippers' representatives and railways.

Their recommendations proposed the use of service agreements to increase the clarity and predictability of rail service. These agreements would clarify and clearly define the services that railways would provide and how shippers and railways interact. This proposal is based on the idea that by working together to develop these agreements, shippers and railways can improve the efficiency of the supply train rail freight system and in doing so enhance their contribution to Canada's competitiveness in the world economy.

It is worth noting that service agreements are a commercial tool, which our government believes is the best approach to improve the relationship between railways and shippers. We base this view on the fact that shippers and railways have always worked together commercially to define their private business dealings. Sometimes, however, shippers have been unable to negotiate contracts with railways to address service issues. Many shippers would like these agreements to know what service they can expect from the railways in order to manage their businesses and plan for the future.

On March 18, 2011, our government announced that it accepted the panel's commercial approach. In fact, we went beyond the recommendations. We put in place four key measures to improve the performance of the entire rail supply chain. First, we launched a facilitation process to bring together shippers and railways to negotiate a template service agreement and develop a process to resolve commercial disputes. This process focused on improving the private commercial relationship. This six-month facilitation, which was led by Mr. Jim Dinning, took place in 2012.

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Second, we committed to table legislation to give shippers the right to service agreements with railways and to establish a process for obtaining an agreement if commercial negotiations fail. The fair rail freight service act would fulfill this commitment and give shippers the certainty that they would be able to obtain service contracts from the railways.

Third, we committed to establish a body of rail shippers to address logistics and develop standards to improve competitiveness. This group, known as a commodity supply chain table, will soon be established. Finally, we determined the need for an in-depth analysis of the grain supply chain to focus on issues that affect that sector and help identify potential solutions. This study is under way and should be completed soon.

Together, these measures deliver on our Conservative government's commitment to ensure Canada has the rail system it needs, one that supports strong economic growth and long-term prosperity.

It is worth noting why the legislation is needed. Canadians and Canadian businesses depend on rail to transport products to markets, both here in Canada and around the world, and it has to be done efficiently. We drafted the fair rail freight service act by working closely with and listening to the stakeholders involved. Shippers from a wide range of commodities and manufacturing sectors have told us what is important to them and what they need. Rail companies also explained the obligations they have to serve all shippers and the constraints they may face in carrying out their business.

This consultation helped us develop reasonable and intelligent legislation that would reflect the interests of both shippers and railways to meet the needs of the Canadian economy. This consultation also helped us develop reasonable and intelligent legislative proposals that reflect the interests of all the various stakeholders throughout our economy. The fair rail freight service act would create a strong incentive for issues around rail shipping to be settled through commercial means.

● (1010)

By requiring railways to offer agreements to shippers that requests them, the legislation would give the shipper the legal right to ask for a service level agreement. When a shipper requests an agreement, railways would have 30 days to offer one. The agreement would cover the terms of service that the railway and the customers would follow to move the shipper's goods. It could also include communication protocols and performance indicators, such as frequency of service, transit times and the number and type of cars, as elements that the rail companies would provide for their customers. This right to a service agreement would provide an effective tool for shippers to use in their discussions with railways.

In the event that negotiations for such an agreement fail, Bill C-52 proposes a fair, speedy and inexpensive process to establish the service contract. The shipper would be able to go to the Canadian Transportation Agency to ask an arbiter to impose an agreement. To make such a request, the shipper would have to demonstrate that an effort had been made to reach an agreement commercially and that a 15-day notice had been served to the railway prior to the request for arbitration. The shipper would trigger the arbitration and frame the service issues to be addressed. The shipper and the railway would

then each have the opportunity to provide submissions to the arbiter with their views in respect to the contract.

This process, however, would be an interest-based arbitration. This means the arbiter must consider the interests of both the shipper and the railway in establishing the service contract. The legislation would provide guidance to the arbiter on factors to consider when establishing a service contract, including the shipper's transportation requirements and the overall obligations of the railway to provide service to all shippers. The arbiter would have the flexibility to determine the right service contract for each individual case. Every shipper is different. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. In establishing a contract, the arbiter must consider the unique circumstances in each case. As a result, arbitration decisions would be fair and reasonable for both parties.

Finally, the fair rail freight service act would provide a strong enforcement mechanism to ensure compliance with arbitrated service contracts. It proposes the use of administrative monetary penalties to hold railways accountable for their service obligations, as defined in the arbitrated contracts. If a railway breaches its service obligations, the shipper would be able to complain to the Canadian Transportation Agency. If the agency confirms the violation, it could apply a penalty of up to \$100,000 for each violation by the railway.

Taken together, these measures of the right to service agreements, an efficient and speedy process when commercial negotiations fail and strong enforcement for arbitrated agreements would provide shippers with clarity, predictability and reliability when they need to grow their businesses and plan for the future.

● (1015)

Our primary objective is to encourage better commercial relationships between railways and shippers. This legislation creates a very strong incentive for parties to settle agreements privately. In most cases, shippers and rail companies should be able to negotiate terms and agreements on their own. Second, over the last number of years rail companies have improved their service. Shippers themselves acknowledge that service has improved, and I would like to take a moment to congratulate the rail companies for this progress. Despite this fact, we must pass Bill C-52 to solidify and improve upon these gains to ensure that Canada's rail system is well positioned for the future. We must ensure the entire rail system in Canada will be able to support the expected increases in shipping, which is bound to occur due to our government's robust trade agenda.

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As demonstrated by several new and developing free trade agreements, Canada is turning increasingly towards global trade to generate economic growth. This means we need efficient and effective transportation networks to give Canadian businesses a competitive advantage in the world markets.

Before I conclude, I would also like to note that this legislation supports our government's responsible resource development agenda. In our efforts to modernize the grain sector, as we expand Canada's international exports, we need a rail transportation system that can move our resources to global markets efficiently and reliably. This legislation will make an enormous difference for our shippers in the resource sector. It will give grain farmers more predictable service as they work to sell their grain on the international market. It will give lumber mills more reliable service as they expand sales to Asia, and it will improve service to exporters of minerals, such as potash and coal. By improving the reliability and predictability of rail service, we help to strengthen Canada. We help strengthen Canadian companies and help increase Canadian companies' overseas sales. This legislation will create jobs, make Canada more competitive in the world economy and will make Canada a more attractive place to invest.

This proposed legislation offers a strong new tool to enhance the relationship between shippers and railways. Our Conservative government is proud to be taking this strong action to enhance efficiency, effectiveness and reliability of the Canadian rail freight system. I am convinced that these proposed measures will help build an even stronger freight rail system and contribute to Canada's success in international trade.

Bill C-52 will promote growth, create jobs and build prosperity for all Canadians. I encourage all members in this House to vote in favour of this legislation and refer it to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities without delay.

I would like to thank the many stakeholders, parliamentarians, and the shippers and rail companies, for their input in this process. We have come forward with legislation that I think has very broad support and will, as I have said many times already, make our country stronger. We live in the best country in the world, at the best time in history to be alive, and now we can ship our products more easily.

• (1020)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from across the way for his work on this bill.

The government is trying to establish some balance between the shippers and those who provide the products that drive our economy. Of all the goods that we move in this country, 70% go by rail. When looking at the details of what has been presented, the challenge for us is striking a balance when there is a problem. As the member well knows, there have been many years of problems with shippers not being able to get reliable service from the two large rail companies. One challenge is the way in which to resolve that dispute. I am curious as to the specific measures that the government has proposed to resolve disputes between the two. There is a bit of a power imbalance. When railcars do not show up as they have been promised, what recourse does the shipper actually have?

The Coalition of Rail Shippers asked for a clear conflict or dispute resolution model. I do not see anything nearly as strong as what the shippers have asked for in this legislation.

My second question is very specific with regard to penalties. Last year CN alone turned a \$2.7 billion profit. The maximum fine that the government has suggested under this legislation for a rail company to break a contract, such as promising to deliver a number of cars and simply not delivering them, is \$100,000. Would that be incentive enough? Is the stick strong enough to change the behaviour of some of these rail companies that simply abuse the smaller shippers particularly in the country?

• (1025)

Hon. Steven Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, it is correct that historically there have been challenges between railways and shippers. However, we also have to recognize that railways have improved in the last few years. This legislation is designed to ensure that shippers and railways respect each other and that we have a continuous chain of supply.

If there is a problem there is a dispute mechanism, which would not be expensive. It would be done quickly and efficiently. I spoke to that in my remarks. The \$100,000 a day fine is substantial with respect to the worth of CN or CP. They would not be in business long if they were to incur \$100,000 a day, or per violation, too often.

It is still a competitive marketplace, and whomever provides the best service often wins in the end. This is a carrot and a stick approach. We look forward to railways and shippers working together. We are empowering shippers to be able to deal with the railways when they do not act appropriately.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of State for Transport, the minister, the stakeholders and all of the people who were involved in putting this fair rail service agreement together.

I want to follow up on the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley's question. The minister pretty much answered it, but I would like the Minister of State for Transport to reply.

As has been the case in the past, there have been 20 or 30 shippers who have had an issue with either CN or CP. If there were 20 at one time, it is my understanding that the fine would be \$100,000 per day per complaint, which would be about \$2 million a day. Could it be assumed that the shareholders of the two railways would be the most encouraging people to get that resolved sooner rather than later?

• (1030)

Hon. Steven Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question and for pointing out that the fine is per violation. It could add up very quickly and would damage any business. Therefore, it is not in anyone's interest, especially the railways', not to fulfill the service agreements.

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I know the member comes from a resource-rich area. He may be interested to know that David Lindsay, the president and CEO of Forest Products Association of Canada, is very supportive. The wheat growers, the barley growers, the canola industry, people who use the railway for shipping, are supportive. I have dozens of quotes from stakeholders who are supportive of the legislation. The legislation will help the economies of Prince George and communities like it.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, why did it take them five years to table this bill? Why did they wait, given all the work that has been done by the member for Trinity—Spadina, who introduced a private member's bill?

What was the motivating factor? Why did they take so long to partially correct the problem? Changes will need to be made. It seems to me that five years is a long time to finally table this sort of bill.

[English]

Hon. Steven Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, I suppose it depends on how we judge time. There is geologic time; there is Ottawa time, and then there is real time. Given that this is a serious piece of legislation that affects the economy of the country, we do not want to rush it. We want to make sure it is balanced and that we take stakeholders into consideration. We are trying to be as fair as possible to everyone involved, so in Ottawa time the legislation has been done in the equivalent of a nanosecond in real time.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in an earlier answer to the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, if I heard him correctly, the minister used a phrase to express that the transportation sector is a competitive sector, that there is competition in the transportation industry, presumably between the railways. I would ask the minister, is that not exactly the problem here, that there is no competition? The shippers are captive and it is because of that captive shipper situation that legislation like this is in fact necessary.

Hon. Steven Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, the member for Wascana says there is no competition. Well, there is competition because there are at least two. It is a duopoly, for the most part. In that framework the railways have had a lot of power, absolutely, and the shippers have not had a lot of recourse. This fixes that problem and does it in a very collaborative manner. Shippers appreciate it, and if the railways do not appreciate it now, they soon will.

[Translation]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Gatineau.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to share his time with the member for Gatineau?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: It appears, objectively, that the member does have consent to share his time.

● (1035)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it is with some pleasure that I rise today to address Bill C-52, which is perhaps not the best named act I have ever seen.

The naming suggests that the problems shippers face across this country will now be solved. For those of us who come from the resource regions of this country, for years we have sat with shippers in forestry, farming, chemical and manufacturing industries as they have petitioned us, as members of Parliament, to do something about the situation. Recently the Coalition of Rail Shippers was asked and polled as to what its satisfaction was with the service they were receiving from the competitive duopoly, as described by the minister. Eighty per cent of those polled described serious and significant problems with their access to rail. That is not great.

While Bill C-52 is an improvement over the status quo, it has been five to six years promised and in the waiting. We see today what I can at best describe as a half measure. As the minister pointed out, as critical as rail service is to the Canadian economy, I think we could emphasize it even more. Seventy per cent of all the goods Canadians manufacture and sell in this country go by rail. An efficient economy, which we see with some of our European partners, would have an even higher percentage. It is the most efficient way to move things across borders and large tracts of land, which are two things we contend with here in Canada.

The minister described the near monopoly as a duopoly. I will take a moment on this, because I think it is important for Canadians to realize that if, for the Conservative government, the definition of a competitive marketplace is what we have in the rail shipping industry, we have a problem. Not only are there only two significant shippers available to those who are looking to move their product, but in many regions of the country there is only one. The line going to their freight yard, farm or lumber yard is controlled and wholly owned by one shipper. If one has a problem with that company, the status quo is terrible.

Members have seen it time and again. I can think of one particular mill in my riding in northwestern B.C., in Fort St. James, that has crawled through perhaps one of the toughest times the lumber market has ever seen since B.C. started shipping wood. It has managed to have a partnership with the union, get concessions on wages and have a great partnership with the community. It finally got to a viable place after years of struggle and against all odds. This is one of those communities for which it would be an understatement to say it relies on this industry.

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At the end of the day it cannot get cars to move its products to market. It has product. It has someone willing to purchase that product. In between stands a rail company that does not seem to care that it made a contractual promise to deliver so many cars on such and such a date. The mill is waiting days and weeks for the cars to show up. The wood is stacked up in the yard and they cannot sell it.

The mill has turned to me as the member of Parliament. We approached the government with appeals and have said we need two things. One, we need both the carrot and the stick. We need a way for companies to deal with the shippers in a timely and cost-effective manner so that the conflict resolution model is not onerous and expensive. Again, smaller companies get penalized under this system.

CN and CP have had many years now of extraordinary profit. Since it was privatized under the Liberal government in the late 1990s, CN has gone on to see record profits and is now run primarily out of Texas. Most Canadians do not realize that, just because the cars have a Canadian flag on the side, where the cars actually go and to whom and when is not necessarily decided under Canadian interest.

This legislation would allow the government to look to a company and say that even though it received \$2.5 billion profit last year, we are going to really hit it hard by charging a \$100,000 fine only if we find a serious and significant problem, only if the company looking to move its product is willing to pursue this all the way through the quasi-judicial process. At the end of the day maybe it will get fined.

To CN and CP, these very large companies, it may be an easy equation to let them go through that dispute resolution, pursue it all the way through. It is more efficient and cost-saving for CN and CP to just ignore it. At the end of the day the worst case scenario is they would get a \$100,000 fine.

●(1040)

That might just be the cost of doing business, because these companies could turn more profit in sending those cars somewhere else even though they have a signed contract.

What is frustrating for a lot of these farmers is that they have contracts and they assume that those contracts mean something and then at the end of the day they do not, because they are beholden. The power imbalance is too great.

The Minister of State for Transport is attempting to readjust the power equation a bit. He mentioned as much in his answer to one of the questions. It has to be recognized that, in that key and critical relationship between those who make the goods and those who ship the goods, there is a disparity of power. We need to rebalance the tables a bit.

Often New Democrats talk about the underdogs, or people who have lost their jobs, or people who have fallen through the social safety net that the government continues to tear up. The underdogs we are talking about here are often major manufacturing outfits in Canada, very significant large farming interests. One would think they would have a lot of sway and power with the government, but for some reason the major rail companies that exist in this country, the duopoly, seem to be able to pull the string on the government and essentially get what they want.

We waited six years. I know the minister said it was a nanosecond in Ottawa time or in geological time. I am not sure which, but five or six years is not a priority for a government. There have probably been 90 or 100 bills on crime and punishment from the current government. This is the first one on rail, and yet rail moves 70% of the product that we sell around the world. For the government to call it a priority, I would hate to see what the government thinks is not a priority because this legislation has been a while in the waiting.

Some people listening might think this is one of those rural-urban issues that only really affects those living in the resource sections of our country, those places that grow the trees and mine the rock and produce the energy and whatnot. Nothing could be more further from the fact. This is one of those issues that crosses over the interests of all Canadians, because if we are unable to move our products in a reasonable time to market either within a province, between provinces, across borders, to those international ports in Prince Rupert, Montreal, Halifax and beyond, it hurts everybody. When things are not reasonable and we cannot find a way to solve the problems of this power imbalance between these two companies centrally and all of the shippers involved, it hurts everybody. It hurts people right across the board.

The government is seeking to get a balance. While this legislation is worthy of consideration at committee, we hope and pray that the government is open and interested in amendments to achieve the balance that the minister talked about in his comments. I come from communities that rely on that line. It is our connection to the world. It is our connection to a viable and secure economic future. When that line is disrupted for whatever reason—either through contracts that are not fulfilled by the rail companies or some geological disruption, to take some of the minister's line—it is absolutely critical to us because in today's economy, as competitive as it is, getting products to market in a timely and efficient manner is absolutely essential. We are competing with the world, and we can, but we need a good infrastructure system.

We used to have governments in Canada, of either more progressive or more conservative persuasions, that believed in the necessity to have that strong infrastructure. That was a role of government to pursue and enable the growth of the country. It was a Conservative government at the beginning that initiated the dream of a rail line across this country and drove that last spike. However since those times the present version of the Conservatives believes that the role of government is slightly different.

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Here obviously what government must do is play referee on what we would argue is an unbalanced playing field. To this point, looking at a \$100,000 fine for companies that are turning billions in profit perhaps suggests to the companies that the incentive is not there. When cars do not show up, when cars show up damaged and not useful and late and unable to ship the product that they are contracted for, most reasonable Canadians would say there is a dispute that would have to be filed through court. If it is the only company they can ship with, then how often are these companies going to go hard at it? Therefore they come through us. They come through MPs who represent these various constituencies and implore us to do something about it.

This legislation is the government's attempt to do something about it. It has taken us a few steps. We insist that the government be open to taking us the rest of the way, so that at the end of the day we get it right this time, because we do not take on this issue very often in Parliament. Even though it may be a nanosecond for the government, this is years of frustration for industry; this is millions if not billions of dollars lost to the Canadian economy.

• (1045)

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member referred to an individual in his riding who has had frustration with the railways. That is fair enough.

The best thing to do then is to support this legislation, because this legislation does even out the power disparity to which he referred. It also does it in a way that will hurt. It is up to \$100,000 per violation, and it can go up day by day. The process through the quasi-judicial method that we have suggested is not an expensive method. It is designed to be quick, efficient and cost-effective.

If the member is very concerned about it taking six years, may I ask if his party would delay this legislation another six years, or will the New Democrats pass it with unanimous consent?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, according to his own math, another six years would be another nanosecond of time. However he overestimates the power of the official opposition, just in terms of our ability to stand against legislation. As I said in my comments, we think the bill is worthy to go to committee and be seen through the amendment stage.

We are trying to imagine, and I hope the committee is actually able to get this, that the Coalition of Rail Shippers could be brought to the table to go through actual scenarios and see if, under this new regime, it would be any better.

We do not want to see this legislation passed and have those same phone calls from those same farmers, same lumber companies and same mining companies saying that we passed this legislation, that the rails are not showing up, that they do not have their cars again and the dispute resolution system is going to cost them x , that it will take this long and it is not worth it and they are back to square one. We want to get this right, because again, we do not do it very often.

In terms of sending it to committee for that study, we think that is worthy. We hope the government will be open to all witnesses right across the spectrum and will actually listen to what is being said, so that if we need to strengthen this legislation, which we believe we do, then the government is actually open to that, which has not been

past practice in this place with the government. Maybe there is a change of heart in the air.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in light of this last exchange between the minister and the House leader for the NDP, I wonder if there is the beginning of a consensus on the floor of the House, that we could agree to a fairly short debate at second reading on the bill on the understanding that when the bill does get to the transport committee for hearings, we all agree that every single shipper who wants to be heard on this matter would have the opportunity to present to the committee and get a fair hearing about whether shippers think this legislation is good enough or not.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, something I forgot to mention in my comments, and I know my colleague from Saskatchewan would share this, is that the member for Trinity—Spadina has been going around, community by community and coast to coast, talking to those very shippers that he mentioned, and has an incredible catalogue of who, under the current situation, is suffering under the regime and what kinds of improvements may be there.

Regarding openness from the government, that is not necessarily for me to say, as the government has the majority on that committee in terms of the breadth of our study and whether we actually allow people both agreeing and not. It seems to me that we would be interested in that process being open. That has not been our experience with the government. If that is what it is looking for in Bill C-52, then clearly the official opposition is willing to work with the government on this issue.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a previous transport critic, I faced many, many interest groups over the years from 2008 to 2011 wanting to see this in place, as well as the absolute intransigence of the government at that time to put it forward. The nanosecond was stretched out quite long over that time.

What has changed? The Canadian Wheat Board has now gone. We are probably dealing with a situation where there is more pressure on the government to act for the small concerns on the Prairies, and I think that is good, but if we are taking this to committee, we really need to take a look at what has happened to the wheat and grain industry across this country since the demise of the Wheat Board and that single desk, which had allowed more pressure on the rail industry.

• (1050)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it was incredible to watch time and again the ideological battle by the government against grain farmers who voted consistently to keep the Wheat Board. Somehow the Conservatives had a mandate to get rid of it even though farmers, consistently in 13 consecutive votes, said that they wanted to keep it.

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The realities facing farmers, particularly now that the government does not feel it has to have this pitted battle with the Wheat Board on those ideological grounds, maybe has finally opened up the flood gates. The reality now of bringing Bill C-52 to the table was also the reality three or four years ago. It is somewhat better according to the minister, but according to the people moving the product, 80% of them think things are still intolerable and not acceptable.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues the House who gave me the opportunity to participate, along with my colleague, the House Leader of the Official Opposition, in the debate on a bill that is extremely important for the country. In my opinion, Canada was built on the railway.

If there is something that MPs, aside from the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina, do not talk about in this House very often, it is rail service, which is not necessarily seen as a priority. It is sad to see that, since the rise of the automobile, we talk less and less about the railway, on which Canada was built. It is a subject that is overlooked. From a transportation perspective, it is a big mistake to have allowed the railway to slowly be forgotten over the past 50 years.

In Gatineau, our infrastructure takes a beating. Temperatures between -40°C in the winter and $+40^{\circ}\text{C}$ in the summer and a large number of heavy trucks and other vehicles damage our infrastructure. Our bridges and roads are constantly in need of repair, if they do not need to be replaced completely. This creates urban sprawl. It is difficult to deliver goods.

I was shocked to see the statistics related to Bill C-52, given the tireless efforts of the NDP member for Trinity—Spadina, who even introduced a private member's bill in this regard. People may not be aware that 70% of our goods are transported by rail. Of course, this is a whole sector of trade.

We have a government that prides itself on always being there for the economy and on having action plans. However, the government needs to take action rather than just talking about its action plan.

I asked the Minister of State for Transport a question about the fact that this has taken five years. I would like to believe him and I find it quite amusing that the government refers to time in terms of what is happening here. Five years may go by quickly, as though it is only nanoseconds, but at some point, we should not be satisfied with this type of situation.

One thing that frustrates me about this House is how long everything takes. When we know that the stakeholders are in agreement, when we know what the problem is, we have to stop playing petty politics and simply resolve the matter. That is why we were elected in the first place and why we are here in this House. Our job is to get these things done.

The leader of the second opposition party wants us to speed up the process. No one opposes the idea of speeding up the process as long as we know that everyone is willing to really listen to the complaints and suggestions. When we complain or make suggestions, it is not to play petty politics, but to ensure that, at the end of the process, we have legislation that makes sense and meets the needs of small

businesses. It should be noted that this bill affects small and medium-sized businesses.

Let us move away from the duopoly for a moment. I like the expression the minister of state used. This is a great idea for a new Parker Brothers game, but this game will not necessarily be fun for small and medium-sized businesses. It verges on what I would call forced negotiations. It is hard to negotiate when you have a sword hanging over your head.

Considering that rail service is the driving force of our economy, there is a serious problem here. As parliamentarians, we must try to solve this problem regarding the balance of power. Indeed, this will serve small and medium-sized businesses, but at the end of the day, who will it really benefit? It will benefit our constituents, all Canadians who need these products and services, who need them to get to the right place safely and quickly.

• (1055)

Speeding up the process will save money. So we have a big job ahead of us. Yes, we are always looking for ways to speed things up.

As the House Leader of the Official Opposition pointed out—and as justice critic I see this quite often—it is all well and good to show up with non-partisan proposals guided by the common good and respect for legislation and charters, but we always seem to hit a brick wall. The government does not even bother to find out whether the proposals have merit, which is seriously undemocratic.

For some members of the House, these are extremely important issues because they affect their constituents who have small and medium-sized businesses and who use rail services. These people have a few things to say about this issue. If we listen carefully we will see that they may have something worthwhile and important to say, which can benefit the debate. It does not help to always be so paranoid and think that people only ever speak to take down their opponent. On the contrary, sometimes they speak to enlighten the debate and improve the situation.

As the House Leader of the Official Opposition so eloquently explained before me, the NDP plans on supporting the bill at second reading so that it can be sent to committee. I truly hope that the government will pay close attention and that enough expert witnesses will be invited to guide parliamentarians from all parties, so that they can draft a report on the committee's deliberations. Then, when we return to the House, the official opposition will be reasonably satisfied that this was taken seriously, that we were listened to and that the people who have a vested interest in this bill were heard. If that is the case, we will have the best bill possible to help the rail service, an industry that is fundamental to this great, beautiful country we call Canada.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: As it is time to move to statements by members, the hon. member will have a period of questions and comments when we resume debate on the bill.

The hon. member for Don Valley East.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***ARTS AND CULTURE**

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on January 23 this year I had the pleasure of introducing the Minister of State for Transport and the Minister of Labour to the Royal Conservatory of Music's Glenn Gould School.

Students of music go through these schools to perfect their craft and will also contribute to Canada's rich musical heritage.

Named after the iconic Canadian pianist, it was announced that this school will be receiving \$1.75 million of funding from the Canadian government, as well as \$1.6 million for the National Youth Orchestra Association of Canada and \$300,000 for the Canadian Opera Company.

These institutions are vital to the cultural vibrancy of Canada and enrich the lives of countless young Canadians in Don Valley East and elsewhere.

This supports future Canadian cultural leaders in the arts.

* * *

• (1100)

LAMBTON HOUSE

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the residents of the Warren Park area in my riding in marking 165 years since the opening of Lambton House, an historic landmark that was once at the heart of the Humber River mill industry.

Residents of Parkdale—High Park may remember that in 1954, when Hurricane Hazel swept through Toronto, Lambton House was a critical site in mobilizing rescue initiatives.

Historians like Madeleine McDowell, who helped prevent its demolition, Michael Freeman, who helped found Heritage York, and countless volunteers have worked so hard to preserve and restore this site so it can be enjoyed for generations to come.

I look forward to joining Heritage York tomorrow night in celebrating the rich history of one of the great landmarks of Parkdale—High Park.

* * *

QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I had the privilege of hosting a ceremony honouring the recipients of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medals.

From ages 13 to 94, from volunteer service to military service, from philanthropy to the arts, Oshawa's best and brightest took centre stage at the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 43. The ceremony was an opportunity to recognize and honour the contributions the 30 recipients had made to Oshawa. Their dedication to the community and the example they provide is an inspiration to us all, and they have helped make Oshawa a better place.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Royal Canadian Legion for hosting the event and the volunteers, especially the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 43 Women's Auxiliary, who helped make this special evening possible.

The evening was indeed memorable for all the recipients, with their friends and family on hand to share in this once in a lifetime event.

I was honoured to be able to take part, and I would like to once again thank all the volunteers for their hard work and the recipients for their contribution to Oshawa.

* * *

FRANK ZAKEM

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, Frank Zakem passed away at the age of 82. He was revered by Prince Edward Islanders.

Frank was fond of saying that there were three types of people: those who made things happen; those who watched things happen; and those who did not know what happened.

Frank was clearly in category number one. He was a city councillor and then mayor of Charlottetown. He was the charter president of the Hillsborough Rotary Club and a Paul Harris Fellow. He helped create the Rotary Youth Parliament.

He spent much of his career in leadership roles at Holland College and in the administration of then premier Joe Ghiz. He was truly a mentor to many in public office, including my wife Kathleen and myself.

Frank authored three books, held an honorary degree from UPEI and was a member of the Order of Prince Edward Island. His wife of 50 years, Janet, and his boys, Steven, Kenneth, Bruce and Albert, can be rightly proud that Frank Zakem left everything he touched better than he found it.

I count myself among the many who are grateful to have been in his company.

* * *

LUCY MIESKE

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured to pay tribute to the life of Lucy Mieske, who passed away Monday at the age of 98.

A life as long as Lucy's, when it is lived as well and as fully as she lived, is something to be celebrated. Lucy was a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a great-grandmother of 10, and here is something we do not hear very often, and a great-great-grandmother.

As members can imagine, family was important to Lucy and she was important to her family.

Today I want to commemorate Lucy's contribution to her community. She lived her whole long life within a few miles of her birthplace in beautiful Vennacher and like a tree that spreads its roots and canopy every more widely with the passage of the years, she provided a rootedness and a foundation for the entire community and a sense of continuity between the past and present.

Statements by Members

Across Canada communities are defined by people like Lucy Mieske, and carry on, richer with each passing generation, because of people like her. We honour Lucy today and pray that she will always be remembered.

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[Translation]

ST. LAWRENCE SHORELINE EROSION

Mrs. Sana Hassainia (Verchères—Les Patriotes, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents come to see me about erosion problems affecting their property along the St. Lawrence River. Even though each case is unique, they all have one thing in common: government inaction and indifference.

In the 1960s, the federal government built stone and concrete walls to protect land from wave action. Such walls were built in Verchères, in my riding. For many years, the government maintained these walls to ensure that they remained in good condition. A few years ago, the government stopped doing that maintenance, leaving people to grapple with the problem on their own.

The government ignored the pleas of riverside residents, deciding instead that fighting erosion was no longer a priority.

The longer the government waits, the more this costs people and the greater the impact of erosion. The Conservative government washed its hands of this problem and is now trying to download it onto Quebec. The government has lost all credibility.

Erosion is the federal government's responsibility. The federal government built the walls, and it is responsible for taking care of them.

* * *

●(1105)

[English]

OUTSTANDING ONTARIO PHYSICIAN

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is another great news story from the great Kenora riding. Dr. Yvon Gagnon, a well-respected general practitioner from Vermilion Bay has been honoured with the Council Award by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario for demonstrating excellence in the medical field.

Dr. Gagnon is the founder of the Points North Family Health Team in the Vermilion Bay area, providing leadership and quality health care for residents and their families who reside outside of the urban centres and away from the larger health facilities.

As a former nurse in many northern communities, I appreciate the great work that Dr. Gagnon does for our constituents. His passion to provide excellent health care sets a high standard for physicians across the region.

Health care in the rural areas of my riding is critical to constituents, and that is why our government has invested in programs like the student loan forgiveness program to get quality physicians and nurses in the north.

Dr. Gagnon and his achievements are just another example of what is so great about the great Kenora riding.

* * *

CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my purpose in politics is, in my own small way, to help expand freedom so that each can earn success, take responsibility for their life and own their destiny.

With the debt crises in Europe and the United States brought on by excessive government spending, Canada will need to have a strong, free economy where citizens are unencumbered by the heavy weight of government and can earn and enjoy the success of their efforts.

For this to be possible, government should only do what only government can do, and free people should do the rest. We have moved in this direction with lower taxes, spending restraint and the elimination of red tape. The result is 900,000 net new jobs, 75% of them in the private sector and 90% of them full-time. The OECD and IMF say that Canada will lead the G7 in economic growth.

Freedom works.

* * *

[Translation]

HEART MONTH

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, February is heart month in Canada. Cardiovascular disease causes many preventable deaths. Heart disease and stroke take one life every seven minutes and are the leading cause of death among women.

Many factors contribute to heart disease, including lack of exercise and poor nutrition. Sodium is also a major factor. Canadians consume double the amount recommended by Health Canada. By reducing sodium intake, we can prevent at least 10,000 deaths and 23,000 cardiovascular disease events per year. That is why we need a national sodium reduction strategy, such as the one laid out in Bill C-460, which was introduced by my colleague from Vancouver East, to help people make informed choices about heart health.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents and Canadians across the country share a great pride in our nation's history. Over the next few years, we will commemorate many significant events and remember the people who fought and sacrificed to make Canada the strong nation it is today.

Statements by Members

We have already begun commemorating the conception of our country during the War of 1812 and we will soon begin to look back on the centennial of the First World War and its key events, such as Vimy. We, of course, cannot forget the 200th anniversary of our founding father, Sir John A. Macdonald.

Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition does not think Canadians should commemorate these important events. In fact, he said that our attempt to bring attention to this great history was an act of “jingoism”.

We wholly reject these comments by the leader of the NDP and on this side of the House we will continue to proudly celebrate our nation's history here in the capital and across the country.

* * *

• (1110)

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today marks the beginning of Black History Month. It is an opportunity for Canadians to learn more about their neighbours of African descent, their full, rich, unknown and undiscovered stories. It is a history that stretches back as far as Mathieu Da Costa and the so-called black Loyalists, the men and women who stood by their British brothers and sisters as free persons and built a nation known as Canada.

There are names such as Dr. Anderson Ruffin Abbott, the first black Canadian-born licensed surgeon, who also served with thousands of other African Canadians in the American Civil War, and who was part of select few who stood vigil over Abraham Lincoln, keeping notes on his condition until his death.

African Canadian history did not start with the immigration wave of the 1950s and 1960s, nor did it start with the underground railroad. African Canadian history is older than Canada itself.

This Black History Month, I urge all Canadians, from the House and beyond, to take a moment to learn something new about their neighbours. They might just be surprised.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the many achievements and contributions of people of African and Caribbean descent have helped make Canada the culturally diverse, prosperous and free country it is today. That is why the month of February is celebrated across Canada as Black History Month.

This year, we are paying special tribute to the achievements of black Canadians in the area of law enforcement, both past policing pioneers and present leaders, who have distinguished themselves by their commitment to serve and protect Canadians. That brings to mind two from my riding, Ted Upshaw and the late Robbie Jones, a lifelong friend of mine, who both served this country and their community as valued police officers.

Canadians from throughout Canada will be participating in events and festivities taking place in their communities this year to celebrate Black History Month. We encourage everyone to take the time to

recognize the vital role that black Canadians have played in building Canada and in shaping our national identity.

I also want to congratulate a new group in my riding, called Community Strong, a group dedicated to its community and dedicated to cultural development.

* * *

DAURENE LEWIS

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this the first day of Black History Month, I stand in the House to honour Canada's first black female mayor.

Daurene Lewis was many things: a role model, mentor, community leader, businesswoman and educator. She was also an inspiration for many Nova Scotians and a resident a Halifax West whom I deeply respect and admired.

Sadly, Ms. Lewis died Saturday, at the age of 69.

As the Halifax *Chronicle Herald* correctly stated:

...she was the champion of a fine world where all of us are respected as persons and judged on our merits. And where leadership is about being creative, stretching your abilities and doing a good job as the representative of everyone, of the whole community.

I would ask all my colleagues to join me in extending condolences to her family and in saying a fond farewell to Daurene Lewis, a truly inspiring woman.

* * *

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's news on economic growth is another indication that Canada is on the right track and that our government's economic action plan is working. With over 900,000 net new jobs created since July 2009, Canada has seen a better recovery than other G7 nations. We will continue with our plan to create jobs and foster growth and long-term prosperity.

Unfortunately, the leader of the NDP and his party do not share these same priorities. Their priority is a \$21-billion carbon tax that would hurt the economy and hurt Canadian families. Canadians do not want to pay more for their gas, groceries, and electricity. They reject the NDP's hidden tax scheme.

When will the NDP leader come clean and admit that his \$21 billion carbon tax would hurt Canada's strong economic growth and raise the cost of all goods and services consumed by Canadians?

* * *

[Translation]

ABORTION

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since I came to the House, I have seen and heard plenty of Conservative rubbish about abortion.

However, nothing prepared me for the appalling letters that were sent this week. Three Conservative members, male of course, wrote to the RCMP asking them investigate certain instances of abortion that they feel constitute murder. These three pathetic musketeers are out to dismantle women's rights and obviously have not understood that this issue was settled a long time ago.

Threatening women who have opted for this procedure with imprisonment because they can do as they choose with their bodies and labelling them as murderers when they are already in emotional turmoil is irresponsible, dangerous, unworthy of a member of Parliament and downright disgusting.

If the Prime Minister is telling the truth and does not want to reopen this debate, he needs to break his complicit silence and clearly tell these backward-thinking members that this type of action is unacceptable. Otherwise, the weight of their offensive actions will also rest on his shoulders.

* * *

• (1115)

[English]

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just the other day, the NDP leader spoke up in the House about job prospects for Canadian students. Without any sense of irony he called on the government to do more to help make jobs available to them. Of course, our government's priority is job creation and economic prosperity. In fact, the Canadian economy has created more than 900,000 net new jobs since the end of the recession. That is the best record of all G7 countries.

What the NDP leader failed to realize is that while he was calling on us to do more to help make jobs available, his cornerstone policy would kill thousands of jobs and put hardworking Canadians out of work. The NDP leader's \$21 billion job-killing carbon tax would raise the price of everything from gas to groceries to electricity. His job-killing carbon tax would stop economic growth and put so many Canadians out of work.

Canadian students deserve better than the NDP leader's \$21 billion carbon tax that would kill jobs and economic growth. That is why our government will always stand up against this disastrous NDP policy and continue to stand up for Canadian students.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while Conservative talking points claim otherwise, the reality is that our economy continues to struggle. Growth is stagnating. Debt is mounting. Youth unemployment is still at record highs, and six of the biggest banks had their credit ratings cut. Yesterday, we saw new mass layoffs of hundreds of workers from Best Buy, Future Shop and Sears.

Oral Questions

With signs of economic trouble all around, why are the Conservatives not changing direction to deal with these new challenges?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that there are many Canadians looking for work, but there are a lot less than there were just a few short months ago. We have seen 900,000 net new jobs created. That is a very good start, but it is why our party and our government are committed to doing even more to create jobs, hope and opportunity.

We saw in the November economic growth rates a substantial increase in economic growth. We remain committed and focused on even more, so that every Canadian will have the dignity of a job and the pride of being independent.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not tell us that employment is still not back up to pre-recession levels. As our slowing economy means more and more Canadians are being laid off and thrown out of work, Conservatives are rigging the system with quotas and bonuses so fewer and fewer people qualify for EI. They have directed staff to treat every EI applicant as if he or she were breaking the rules.

Why are the Conservatives treating unemployed Canadians like fraudsters?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it will not come as any surprise to members that I totally reject the premise of that question.

We have made a number of reforms to employment insurance to ensure we provide people with the skills and supports they need to move into the labour force. That is something that is tremendously important. HRSDC was able to stop \$530 million in ineligible payments last year. However, the employment insurance program still lost millions of dollars due to fraud. We have an important responsibility to the workers who paid the premiums to ensure that their taxpayer dollars are used with great respect and responsibility.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. These so-called reforms are actually hurting people. The Conservatives are turning employment insurance denial into a growth industry. What is next? A set of steak knives for the agent who cuts the most people off EI, or maybe bonuses for the longest application delays?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Libby Davies: Why have the Conservatives forgotten that EI belongs to the workers who paid into it? When will they stop treating the victims of this economic slowdown as though they were criminals?

Oral Questions

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the member for Vancouver East. I do not have a lot of respect for that question and the way she put it.

We are making reforms to employment insurance to help more Canadians move from employment insurance back into the labour force so they can provide for themselves and their families the dignity of a job. We provided substantial supports in that regard. There are no quotas; the member opposite is completely wrong. The only people who lose if the opposition stops us from rooting out EI fraud are the hard-working Canadians who are paying the price.

• (1120)

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learned this morning that Service Canada has employment insurance reduction quotas. We are talking about \$40,000 a month per investigator.

The Conservatives believe that all unemployed workers are fraudsters. That is why they are asking staff to cut benefits as much as possible for workers who have paid into employment insurance all their lives and who have just lost their jobs.

Why is the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development treating all unemployed workers like criminals?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely false. Departmental employees do not have individual quotas.

It should be noted that the department stopped \$530 million in ineligible payments last year. However, the employment insurance program still lost hundreds of millions of dollars as a result of fraud.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the minister does not understand is that Service Canada staff are there to help claimants, not hunt them down like criminals.

Employers and employees pay into employment insurance. It is not another slush fund that the Conservative government can use as it sees fit.

The Prime Minister is meeting with the premier of Quebec today. Can the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs confirm that the issue of quotas will be discussed?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the employment insurance program, it is very important to note that, once again, the NDP is supporting the bad guys. If the opposition prevents us from rooting out EI fraud, the only ones to lose out will be the Canadians who are playing by the rules.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there were major job losses in Canada yesterday with the closure of Best Buy, Future Shop and other retail operations. The sales staff in those stores were largely young people; smart, tech savvy and getting their first job experience. Now, those jobs are gone, hundreds of them.

At a time when youth employment remains at punishing recession-like levels, draining more than \$1 billion every year from Canadian incomes, what new initiatives is the government prepared to launch to give some hope and some help to jobless young Canadians?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has brought forward a comprehensive job strategy to help all Canadians move back into the labour force. The good news is that more than 900,000 Canadians have found work since the bottom of the recession.

Statistics Canada released economic growth numbers for November and the economy grew well in November, but there is still much work to be done. We are going to build on initiatives that we have made such as the youth employment strategy, which has helped 50,000 students; a permanent increase to Canada's summer job program, which helped 36,000 students; the pathways to education program, which helped 10,000. However, every single time we stood up to help young people, the Liberal Party voted against these important measures.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite that spin, 225,000 fewer young Canadians are working today than before the recession, 45,000 more are jobless, and 185,000 more have just given up altogether. For young Canadians, there is still a recession.

Will the government stop increasing job-killing EI payroll taxes at the rate of \$600 million every year and will it provide specific incentives to hire young Canadians, especially in their first jobs? Will those things be in the budget?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm to all members of the House and to all Canadians that job creation and economic growth for every single Canadian looking for a job will continue to be the centrepiece of this government's economic strategy.

When it comes to young people, we have one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in the G7. If we look at some countries in Europe, they have staggering youth unemployment numbers. As long as there is a single young person in Canada looking for work, this government will remain focused on ensuring that they have the dignity of a job and the pride of independence.

Oral Questions

●(1125)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even worse than young Canadians, the education and job numbers for aboriginal people are appalling. That is partly because the government has a cap on the number of first nation youth who can get into post-secondary education every year, and the federal investment in the K to 12 learning of first nation children on reserve is only a fraction of what provincial governments invest per child in non-aboriginal kids. No amount of jiggery-pokery with the arithmetic will change that hard fact.

Will the government fix both the gap and the cap in this year's budget?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has a strong record when it comes to supporting aboriginal Canadians. We have helped fund over 100,000 first nation students. We are consulting with first nations on a first nation education act. We have built or renovated 260 schools on reserve in this country. We are focused on improving the lives of aboriginal Canadians, and just as important, on improving accountability and transparency. However, the Liberal Party has not supported our efforts in that regard.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Employment insurance reform will be a central issue at the meeting between the Conservative Prime Minister and the Quebec premier. Since the changes were announced, workers have been protesting throughout Quebec to criticize the Conservatives. They did not consult the provinces before making their changes; that is the minister's job.

What will the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs do to resolve this problem that the Conservatives have created?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the employment insurance reforms are designed to help people find work within their skill set and in their region.

The employment insurance system has been under federal jurisdiction since 1940. We want to continue working with all of the province to meet our common goal of creating jobs.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I take it that since the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs will not take to his feet and answer questions about intergovernmental affairs, it means he is doing his job as well in the new year as he was in the last. The Prime Minister meets with the Premier of Quebec today on the heels of breaking news about troubling quotas being put on the backs of Canadians who need their services. This is on top of previous decisions to reduce eligibility and cut benefits.

Given that he has not consulted the provinces, can the minister tell us if the Prime Minister will ask the Premier of Quebec today for her views on Conservative cuts and quotas to the employment insurance program?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to set the record straight, I am the minister responsible for employment insurance. I can say that we are making it more responsive to the needs of Canadians who want to find work. We are helping them identify those jobs.

As for the rest of what the member said, let us face it, there are no individual quotas for employees of HRSDC who are looking at EI. If it were up to the opposition, then the only people who would lose out are those who are paying into the system and following the rules. The opposition does not want us to root out the fraud in the system.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just before Christmas the minister announced consultations would start on first nation education. Dates and locations for these meetings were picked by the staff at the department and published on the website. Now first nation educators are saying they would like some of those dates to be moved to allow them more time to develop their proposals, but the government answer is no.

Improving economic outcomes for all aboriginal peoples depends on a respectful relationship. Is this how the government works with willing partners?

●(1130)

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in December the minister launched an intensive consultation process that will take place with first nation parents, students, leaders and educators from coast to coast. The first of these intensive consultation sessions took place last week.

The minister has written to every community to invite them to these sessions. Their input will be critical to the development and planning of a first nation education act, which will help ensure that first nation students have the same ability and access to a quality education as every other student in Canada.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in order to rebuild the relationship with aboriginal peoples, concrete action is needed. That is what we proposed yesterday in our motion: to make aboriginal issues a priority in budget 2013. However, the Prime Minister did not make this a priority in his speech to his caucus.

For the sake of clarification, can the minister responsible tell us if he supports this motion and if he will put words into action?

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, much like economic action plan 2012, budget 2013 will focus on jobs and opportunities for all Canadians, including first nations.

The protection of aboriginal treaty rights and consultation with aboriginals are recognized in our Constitution and our statutes. Canada has accepted the declaration describing the aspirations of aboriginal peoples, and this represents an important step towards strengthening relationships with aboriginal peoples.

We continue to make significant investments in the lives of first nations people.

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*[English]***ARCTIC COUNCIL**

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with the chairmanship of the Arctic Council, it looks like the Conservatives may once again tarnish Canada's reputation on the world stage. The effects of climate change and the massive loss of Arctic sea ice are creating urgent issues in the Arctic, which require international co-operation. However, last week in Norway the Arctic minister said Canada's focus will be on business.

Why is the government wasting the world's time by using this important forum to advance corporate interests?

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is coming from a member who openly mused last week in Yellowknife, where I was, that the Northwest Territories did not need any more jobs.

Canada's north is home to world-class reserves of natural resources. This represents tremendous economic potential, not just for northerners but for all Canadians. That is why we are working with aboriginal groups, the territorial governments and the private sector to ensure those resources are developed in a sustainable manner.

We have strong laws and regulatory frameworks to protect our environment in the north. We want northerners to be able to benefit today and for generations to come from jobs and economic growth in the north.

ETHICS

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition is quite pleased that the minister for science and innovation reversed course on his policy of hiding the details of a \$20 million government loans program. Of course, this happened only after the Conservatives were caught red-handed by the NDP.

Now that the minister has decided, or appears, to embrace transparency, will he inform the House what other programs or funds he needs to give full disclosure on?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the independent community futures development corporations have been around for 25 years. These corporations are subject to contribution agreements with the government and are subject also to audits.

However, on the question of jobs, we have had in this country almost a million net new jobs since July 2009. The OECD and the IMF have said that Canada will be among the leaders in the G7. Taxes are going down and jobs are going up.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister responsible for the southern Ontario fund for investment in innovation defended his \$20 million slush fund. However, the NDP's questions made the minister realize that its concerns were justified, and he decided to do an about-face. Finally, a Conservative minister who is willing to listen to NDP advice about transparency for a change.

Why did they set up this slush fund? And why did they insist on defending the indefensible in the House yesterday?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, these organizations have been around for 25 years, are subject to audits and are held to account.

● (1135)

[English]

However, on the broader question of job creation, we have a low-tax plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity, which is succeeding across this country. It is the reason the president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said the Canadian miracle is something that Americans and the rest of the world need to follow.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, Canadians are fed up with the succession of Conservative ministers who get caught with their hands in the cookie jar and do not even get a rap on the knuckles for their blatant ethics violations.

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner also believes that this farce has gone on long enough and wants more powers to impose penalties. She is not asking for a study, she is asking for real powers.

Will the Conservatives grant her request?

[English]

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was our government, in fact, that created the Conflict of Interest Act, after 13 years of Liberal scandals and mismanagement. We look forward to reviewing recommendations from the ethics committee once the report is completed.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the rules are not worth the paper they are written on if they are not enforced, and that is where the government is at.

They may claim that ministerial ethics rules should not apply to Conservative ministers, but the Conflict of Interest Act and the Prime Minister's guidelines for ministers have specific rules laid out. The Ethics Commissioner has made it clear that the Conservatives broke those rules. Canadians deserve much better from their ministers.

Since the House leader will not explain this rule breaking, will he explain, now, how a minister writing on behalf of a Conservative donor who does not live in his riding is the job of a local MP?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I read letters from the member for Timmins—James Bay, the party's ethics critic and the party's heritage critic, supporting an application from AVR Radio. They did this after the executive vice-president and the president of AVR Radio made financial contributions to the NDP. I do not believe these executives from AVR Radio live in either of their constituencies. Perhaps the member should examine those questions.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has agreed to compensate the provinces for the seniors who are forced to turn to social assistance as a result of the government's disastrous plan to change the age of eligibility for old age security to 67. Similarly, it must also agree to compensate the provinces for employment insurance, since its attack on seasonal workers will push many of them to social assistance.

Will the provinces yet again be stuck with the bill for this government's anti-social policies?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that could not be further from the

truth. By helping people find longer-term jobs in their region and in their area of expertise, we hope that the provinces will see lower social assistance rates. That is our goal.

There is a shortage of skilled workers across the country. That is why we are making an effort to connect people to jobs.

* * *

[English]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Senate reform bill, Bill C-7, is a unilateral attempt to impose on Canada a stalemate between two elected chambers in addition to terribly under-represented Alberta and British Columbia. Dangerous for Canada, the whole plan is on shaky constitutional grounds.

Will the Minister of State for Democratic Reform announce today that this ill-conceived Senate reform will finally be referred to the Supreme Court, something the Liberal Party has been requesting since June 2007?

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will take no advice and no lessons from the Liberals. That member, in the time that his party was in government, did nothing to advance Senate reform. Our government tabled the Senate reform act to limit the terms of senators and to give Canadians a say in who represents them in the Senate. We are committed to making the Senate more democratic, accountable and representative of Canadians.

I would remind the member that this legislation is already being considered by the courts.

* * *

● (1140)

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week I heard from a constituent who called his wireless provider in early December to cancel a cellphone contract that was set to expire in January. A few days ago, he received a notice saying he would continue to be charged until February, an extra month.

Consumers are fed up with this kind of treatment. They are sick of getting bullied into sticking with unfair and unfavourable contracts with threats of huge cancellation fees.

When will the government start defending consumers and put a stop to outrageous fees for cell phone contract cancellations?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been taking huge steps, since 2008, to make sure that we enhance competition and investment in this country in terms of wireless technology.

Oral Questions

My colleague knows that the issue he has raised is under CRTC's watch. The CRTC is conducting a public proceeding to determine whether intervention is required to develop a national wireless services consumer protection code. It would be inappropriate for me to comment at this time, since the CRTC is an independent regulatory agency which operates at arm's-length from the government.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our closest allies have delivered a stinging rebuke to the Conservative government for its security lapses and failures.

In the aftermath of Jeffrey Delisle's espionage, which went undetected for four years, our closest allies are thinking twice about sharing their intelligence with us. This is a real threat to our national security and our relationship with countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.

I have a simple question. What is the government doing to address this situation?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie), CPC): Mr. Speaker, one would hope that the NDP had enough respect for our judicial system and the fundamental rights of accused in Canada not to interfere in a matter that is before the courts. It would be inappropriate for me to discuss this matter, as it is before the courts.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's testimony contradicts what the Minister of National Defence said about how the Delisle case has not affected our ability to exchange intelligence with our allies.

The Brigadier General said that the minister was not aware of the extent of the damage when he made those comments, but the fact is that our allies are threatening to shut us out of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing community. If that is not a negative consequence, I do not know what is.

What measures will be taken to repair the relationships that have been seriously damaged by this incident?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie), CPC): Mr. Speaker, French or English, my answer will be the same.

Clearly, the question she is asking deals with a matter that is currently before the courts. She should realize that it would be completely inappropriate for me to discuss a matter that is before the courts, so I will refrain from doing so.

* * *

[English]

ABORTION

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Canadian women were horrified to read a letter from three Conservative members of Parliament who equate abortion with

murder. The Prime Minister claims that he does not want the abortion debate to be reopened, yet time and time again members of his caucus put this issue on the front page.

A woman's right to choose is not up for debate in Canada, directly or otherwise. Will the Prime Minister clearly tell his caucus that abortion is not murder?

Mrs. Susan Truppe (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made it very clear yesterday that we are not reopening the debate on abortion.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, abortion is legal in Canada, but the Conservatives persistently continue to attack women's right to choose.

Asking the RCMP to investigate some abortions as homicides is repugnant and unacceptable.

Women's right to choose is non-negotiable. The Prime Minister said that the Conservatives would not reopen the abortion debate.

If that is true, can one of the MPs responsible for the letter to the RCMP confirm that they will stop their attacks on women's rights?

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question has been asked and answered, but I will say it again more slowly. We are not opening the debate on abortion.

* * *

● (1145)

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, day after day the NDP leader talks down the Canadian economy and attacks Canada's economic record. If the NDP had its way, big government and big union bosses would dictate private businesses' every move. The NDP would impose massive tax hikes, bankrupting businesses and throwing Canadians out of work.

Could the Minister of State for Finance please explain how the NDP's anti-business, high-tax agenda threatens Canada's economy and Canadian workers?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the NDP, we actually believe in the Canadian economy. We continue to support the Canadian economy to help it grow. We believe that by leaving more money in Canadians' pockets, they can actually help the Canadian economy grow and help grow jobs. In fact, through what we have put forward in policies, Canadian families have over \$3,000 more per family in their pockets.

Unlike the NDP, we will encourage Canadians to invest. Through that, through the businesses in Canada, we have created over 900,000 net new jobs since the end—

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding, 60 employees of the Sherbrooke Best Buy lost their jobs yesterday when the store closed its doors without notice.

The closure of this store shows that, despite what the Conservatives would have us believe, Canada's economy is stagnant, and good jobs are hard to find and keep. That is precisely why our social safety net exists: to help people like the struggling Sherbrooke Best Buy workers.

Since the Conservatives are unable to create conditions that foster economic growth and job creation, will they at least stop ransacking employment insurance?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our thoughts are with the families and the workers. Nevertheless, I repeat that we have implemented an economic action plan for the economy as a whole.

Some 900,000 net new jobs have been created since the recession. That is because we have built the framework and created a pro-business environment. Our approach has received international recognition.

A \$21 billion carbon tax is obviously not the way to keep businesses open or to attract new investment.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding, Pontiac, the Conservative employment insurance reform is affecting workers in the forestry and tourism industries badly.

The unemployment rate in two of the four RCMs in my riding is over 10%. Unemployed workers are looking for work, but jobs within an hour's drive are scarce.

Employers need these skilled workers, but the minister's changes could result in an exodus of workers, which could destroy my region's economy and heritage.

The minister says that she did not change anything, but where I come from, the consequences are undeniable.

What does she have to say to the many Pontiac families that have been affected?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our reforms simply clarify the responsibilities of employment insurance recipients. They must make a genuine effort to find suitable work in their region and in their field.

We are helping these people find such jobs through our job bank and our enhanced job alert service. As always, however, employment insurance is available to those who cannot find suitable work.

[*English*]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not only are the Conservatives turning a blind eye to all those being thrown out of work, they have now set quotas for more cuts.

It does not matter that people have paid into EI their whole life, the Conservatives have now set quotas for EI investigators to further reduce EI benefits. In fact, they are required to save almost \$150 million through those quotas.

Oral Questions

After failing to create jobs, why are they reducing EI eligibility and instituting quotas for further gutting of EI?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Here we go again, Mr. Speaker. Once again, the NDP is protecting the bad guys.

HRSD was able to stop \$530 million in ineligible payments of EI last year. Even with that, the employment insurance fund still lost hundreds of millions of dollars more due to fraud by people the NDP are now protecting.

The only people who lose if the opposition stops this rooting out of fraud in EI are the Canadians who are playing by the rules.

• (1150)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of calling EI recipients bad guys, this minister needs to be honest with Canadians.

The Conservatives are forcing hard-working Canadians to travel farther and accept less pay for their work. They cut benefits and reduce eligibility. They fail to create jobs, but take absolutely no responsibility. Instead, they set quotas for cutting more people off EI and quotas for reducing benefits.

Service Canada staff should be rewarded for helping people in need, not receive bonuses for cutting people off EI. Why are the Conservatives adding insult to injury for out of work Canadians?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the insulting going on is by the NDP and it is directed toward those Canadians who are claiming EI, who are responsibly looking for a job and who are playing by the rules. Those are the people who are being insulted by the NDP.

We are helping Canadians get back to work with our economic action plan, with an enhanced job alert system and with a much broader job bank.

However, we must root out the fraud that is in the EI system. It is costing hundreds of millions of dollars and that cost is being borne by workers and employers. That must stop.

* * *

LABOUR

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month the Minister of Labour announced, with much fanfare, the support for the healthy workplace guidelines recommended by the Canadian Mental Health Commission. As usual with the government, it was all lip service and no action.

Will this minister take the lead, put her money where her mouth is and will she implement the guidelines in the public service now?

Oral Questions

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has been a personal example of why we need to have this type of workplace safety and psychological health and safety measures, not only in the public service, but also for the public.

I encourage the member opposite to look at what the minister has done to ensure that Canadians understand how important it is to be focused on the workplace on psychological and workplace safety.

The minister is doing an outstanding job. I encourage the member opposite to support her in her venture.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Arctic is one of the most fragile and sensitive regions in the world. Moreover, 2012 was a devastating year for the loss of sea ice, spring snow cover and the melting of Greenland's ice sheet.

As the Minister of Health takes the helm of the Arctic Council, will she allow the continued gutting of environmental protection, or finally stand up for responsible environmental stewardship?

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a new year and I get one more chance to talk to my colleague opposite about her government's record on climate change, including the fact that under the Liberal government our greenhouse gas emissions rose by 30%.

By contrast, our government has put in place a sector-by-sector regulatory approach, including being one of the first countries in the world to regulate the coal-fire electricity sector where we have seen our greenhouse gas emissions actually decrease while our economy grows. We have taken numerous actions in the Arctic on climate change and in adaptation and mitigation. We are the ones getting the job done.

* * *

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative war on science has a new target. This time it is the National Research Council. NRC research and spinoffs drive Canadian innovation, but now we hear it is on the chopping block, folded into something called "Advantage Canada".

Could the minister tell us what will happen to the 1,005 scientists working at the NRC and how many of these scientists are going to be fired?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are taking the steps to transform the NRC into a customer-focused world-class organization in science and innovation. When it comes to science, we do not have any lessons to take from the NDP. Indeed, we put eight billion new dollars in science and technology since 2007. Guess what? The NDP voted against this new funding.

• (1155)

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives say one thing and do another. They say that they want research and development to flourish, yet they refuse to come clean about their plans for the National Research Council. They are hiding behind closed doors and planning to dismantle one of the country's premier research organizations.

What are they trying to hide? How many scientists are in danger of losing their job?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we cannot be any more transparent. In our last budget, we said that we are making changes to the National Research Council to transform it into an industry- and market-focused organization that stimulates economic activity. It is as simple as that.

Speaking of transparency, how can the NDP explain voting against all of the new funding measures? We have invested \$8 billion in new money in science and technology since 2007, and the NDP always voted against that funding. They should be transparent and explain their about-face to Canadian voters.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Keystone XL project would create massive jobs and economic growth across Canada and the United States. Canada benefits from increased development and getting a world price for our oil, while the U.S. will benefit from energy security from an important ally. The NDP members are, of course, opposed to the Keystone XL. They are opposed also to Canadian jobs and opposed to Canadian growth.

Could the parliamentary secretary inform the House on the latest endorsement of this important economic project?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Cariboo—Prince George for his great work on this file. Canadians need to know that *Nature* magazine, the voice of the environmental scientific community and the most cited scientific journal in the world, has endorsed Keystone XL pipeline. It argues that the president should face down critics of the project and approve this important project. While this well recognized voice on environmental issues joins Canada's side, the NDP continues to oppose a project that will create 140,000 jobs for Canada.

Canadians know that we need to diversify our export markets. When will the NDP finally stop supporting foreign interests that want to destroy Canadian jobs?

*Oral Questions***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the unrelenting horror in Syria continues with yet more mass atrocities, as hundreds of bodies are pulled from rivers around Aleppo and beyond. Yet, when over 50 countries called on the UN Security Council to refer the criminality in Syria to the International Criminal Court, Canada was absent. The Minister of Foreign Affairs announces the matter should be left up to the Syrian people, contradicting the government's former and correct position that Assad must be held accountable for his actions.

When will the government reconsider its position and join this urgent international call for justice on behalf of the Syrian people under assault and pursuant to our international legal responsibilities?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month, 50 countries did call for Assad to face justice at the International Criminal Court.

I am pleased that they join me, because I did it six months ago when I said, "What Assad needs to be facing is the International Criminal Court to face charges for committing crimes against humanity". I did that on July 6, 2012.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a drug shortage in this country that is only getting worse. The shortage is now forcing physicians to change their patients' prescriptions. Worse still, pharmacists are being forced to spend more and more time dealing with the effects of the shortage, which is putting them under pressure and reducing services to Canadians. It is completely unacceptable and extremely dangerous.

Despite repeated calls from the NDP, the minister refuses to act. When will she take action to solve this urgent problem?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, drug shortages is a very complex global problem. Our role is to enforce the safety of drugs before they enter the market.

In the past, shortages have resulted from decisions made by the provinces and the territories to sole-source drug contracts. To solve this problem, all levels of government will have to work together. That is why at last year's health ministers meeting, it was encouraging to hear that all ministers agreed to work collaboratively on the file.

* * *

• (1200)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has taken strong action to ensure that prisoners are held accountable for their actions.

Shockingly, a group of convicted criminals in Canada has attempted to form a prisoners union. Apparently the purpose of this

prisoners union is to protect convicted criminals from unfair labour practices while they are incarcerated.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety please update Canadians on our government's position on this matter?

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the suggestion that prisoners should have the right to unionize is just plain wrong. Most Canadians would see it as plain wrong.

We welcome the common sense decision of the Public Service Labour Relations Board that unions are indeed not necessary for convicted criminals.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 2006, over 22,000 family farms have disappeared. This is a very sad part of the Conservatives' record. While small and medium-sized farms are struggling, the Conservatives continue to attack risk management programs.

The NDP believes that it is time to create a national food strategy in order to secure the economic future of family farms and rural communities.

Will the Conservatives finally play a real leadership role in the protection of family farms and seasonal industries, which are the heart of Canada's economy?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are proud that our agenda includes a national food and agriculture strategy.

Our trade approach, which focuses on scientific principles, is enabling us to have a greater presence than ever before on the markets. We are providing high-quality, safe Canadian products to those who need them, both within Canada and outside our borders. In order to feed the world, we must learn to obtain better yields with less. With biotechnology, we will be able to do so.

* * *

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the economy, the Conservatives' supposed priority, will be discussed today in Quebec City by the Prime Minister and the premier of Quebec. Premier Marois will specifically address employment insurance reforms, which are hitting families in all regions very hard. Quebec accounts for 40% of all seasonal workers because of its economy and geography.

Will the government show the openness it claims to have and agree to review its ideological reform of employment insurance?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that employment insurance has been a federal jurisdiction since 1940.

Employment insurance is available for seasonal workers, as it always has been, if they can prove that they are looking for reasonable employment in their field and in their region. If they cannot find a job, even with the help we provide, employment insurance will be there for them as it always has been.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is sad to see that the minister is so unmoved by the disaster she herself has created.

The Premier of Quebec has been clear that she plans on initiating discussions on respecting Quebec's areas of jurisdiction, manpower training and the Criminal Code and on the firearms registry, Ottawa's funding for Churchill, protecting culture, and immigration authority.

Will the government use today's meeting to resolve these issues, or even some of them, and to clearly show that its so-called openness is not just a sham?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has achieved nothing in the House in over 20 years. The Bloc has not been able to resolve anything. We have resolved some major issues: the fiscal imbalance, a seat for Quebec at UNESCO, sales tax harmonization and the Old Harry offshore oil reserve. That is action, and we will continue in that same direction.

I want to reassure Quebecers and Canadians. The one thing we will not do is engage in the same old constitutional bickering, because no one wants that. We are open to advancing the federation, but not if that means engaging in the same old constitutional bickering.

* * *

● (1205)

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise a point of order arising out of question period.

During my question, the Minister of Health made a very personal and, I think, a very inappropriate comment for a minister, or any member for that matter. I would like to give the Minister of Health an opportunity to withdraw the personal comment she made that was offensive.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the Minister of Health going to respond?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Mr. Speaker, can the member clarify what I said?

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the Minister of Health look at the record and maybe she can come back to the House and respond. A number of my colleagues very clearly heard a personal comment that was inappropriate, and I think she should remember that. If she does not, she should look at the record.

The Deputy Speaker: The chair will look at the record as well.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

PORT OF NANAIMO

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is signed largely by people from Nanaimo who are calling on the Prime Minister of Canada, the Premier of British Columbia and first nations to stop the privatization of the Port of Nanaimo, by withholding the approval of agreement between the Nanaimo Port Authority and the Pacific Northwest Marina.

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the second petition, petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to put forward an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act. The petitioners point out that Canadians have a right to make informed choices about the food they eat by having adequate information provided on food labels. Therefore, the petitioners ask that the Food and Drugs Act be amended around mandatory labelling for genetically modified foods.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition regarding climate change and extreme weather events.

Both 2011 and 2012 proved to be years of extremes. In 2011, the United States experienced four extreme weather events that caused losses of \$1 billion U.S. each. We have also had climate change wake-up calls in Canada: the 1996 Saguenay flood and the 1998 ice storm.

The petitioners call on the government to accept the signs of climate change, table a comprehensive climate change plan and determine the impacts of the changing climate on extreme weather events and the projected cost to climate-proof assets.

[Translation]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians across the country know that Canada needs a housing strategy. I am therefore pleased to present a petition signed by people from Regina, Saskatchewan, asking all parliamentarians to vote in favour of Bill C-400.

[English]

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is from people who are very concerned that every year hundreds of thousands of dogs and cats are brutally slaughtered for their fur in a number of Asian regions. The petitioners call on Canada to join the U.S., Australia and the European Union in banning the import and sale of dog and cat fur. The petitioners call on all of us to support Bill C-296 from the 41st Parliament.

• (1210)

PENSIONS

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents who are very concerned about old age security. The petitioners want to ensure that the age of eligibility for collecting OAS remains at 65 and that the OAS keeps pace with the cost of living and is available to everyone.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the question of privilege raised yesterday by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

[English]

I listened to his question of privilege that he raised to remind the House about his ability to access information from the government and government officials, which was being prevented by some sort of decree from the Prime Minister's Office suggesting to all civil servants, or at least the ones he was dealing with, that they could not respond directly to an inquiry from a member of Parliament.

The reason I have some sympathy for this is that I have had the exact same experience. I have approached the Department of Fisheries and Oceans or the Department of Transport to seek some basic information on behalf of constituents and been told that they are not allowed to speak to me. They say they must go through the Prime Minister's Office and that the Prime Minister's Office must first vet my question as to whether or not it is appropriate, and then vet the response as to whether it is appropriate as well. That takes the idea of civil servants into a whole new realm of definition, as if they work predominantly for the Prime Minister's Office as opposed to the Canadian people.

Privilege

As a representative in the House, my friend has raised a question of privilege suggesting he is unable to perform his work and duties as a member of Parliament if the government has a policy and directive that prevents him from gaining the most simple and basic information required to answer questions on behalf of his constituents. I want to be clear: We are not talking about state secrets here, but basic, simple information that Canadians have paid for, because they in fact fund the civil service. It is not the privilege of the Prime Minister's Office to direct where those answers should go.

There are some struggles, though, that we find with this as a question of privilege. I will first quote from O'Brien and Bosc from page 109 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, who explain:

In order to find a prima facie breach of privilege, the Speaker must be satisfied that there is evidence to support the Member's claim that he or she has been impeded in the performance of his or her parliamentary functions and that the matter is directly related to a proceeding in Parliament.

I think the last sentence is important for all members. The test is that our work here in Parliament must be what is impeded by the actions of the government.

On May 15, 1985, Speaker Bosley gave a ruling regarding the question of privilege raised by Douglas Frith, then the hon. member for Sudbury, Ontario, who claimed that his ability to serve his constituents was being infringed or impeded by a departmental directive restricting the release of information about a government program. In his ruling, Speaker Bosley explained the following:

...it has been recognized many times in the House that a complaint about the actions or inactions of government Departments cannot constitute a question of parliamentary privilege.

He added:

...the purpose of parliamentary privilege is to protect our speech in the House, the institution itself, and the institution and Members from threats, obstructions and intimidations in the exercise of our duties.

...I would have great difficulty in finding this matter to be within the realm of parliamentary privilege.

In Speaker Bosley's ruling and also in the guides we as parliamentarians use, while this case has merit in terms of what the government is doing to members of Parliament and as a result to Canadians, it is difficult to find the exact question of privilege the member seeks.

There was a similar case on October 9, 1997. Speaker Parent gave a ruling regarding a question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Wild Rose, I believe a then Reform member and later Conservative member, concerning information allegedly denied to him by an official of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. Speaker Parent went on to explain:

In order to fulfill their parliamentary duties, members should of course have access to the information they require.

He continued:

The Chair is mindful of the multiple responsibilities, duties and constituency related activities of all members and of the importance they play in the work of every member of Parliament. However, my role as your Speaker is to consider only those matters that affect the parliamentary work of members.

He went on to say that:

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I have concluded that this case constitutes a grievance on the part of the hon. member, but since this situation has not actually precluded the hon. member from participating in a parliamentary proceeding the Chair cannot find that a case of a contempt of parliament has occurred.

By saying this I do not want to diminish the nature or seriousness of the complaint raised by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier. I believe he may have a real cause for grievance. If the government is indeed purposefully withholding information from this member, it is putting him in a situation where he is not fully able to defend the interests of the constituents he has been elected to represent.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

As I said yesterday, many of my colleagues also faced obstructions from civil servants who have previously been quite open to allowing members access to information that the public has. MPs are referred to the Prime Minister's office or the PCO in such a way that it becomes impossible for them to obtain information that is essential to their work.

[*English*]

This is a very serious situation and one that continues to get worse, not better, but it needs to be addressed through other means available to us.

I do want to point out that in determining whether the question raised by the member for Ottawa—Vanier is a question of privilege, we have to examine the effect the incident or event had on a member's ability to fulfill his or her parliamentary duties. In this case, I think members will agree that although this is, without a doubt, a deplorable incident, the member's ability to fulfill his parliamentary duties likely has not been affected.

The Deputy Speaker: I would advise the member that there may be other interventions on this issue. Once those are completed or it is clear there are no further ones, there will be a ruling from the Chair.

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[*English*]

FAIR RAIL FREIGHT SERVICE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-52, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act (administration, air and railway transportation and arbitration), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: There remain five minutes of questions and comments for the member for Gatineau.

Are there any questions or comments?

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a question that has been raised in this debate—we listened to the minister speak earlier, just to remind people because we have had a bit of a break in the debate—is that this is an attempt to have some sort of balance of power between the shippers in Canada, which are seeking to move their products, of which 70% in Canada are moved by rail, and the railway companies, of which there are

predominantly two. As the minister himself said, it is a competitive duopoly. In many parts of the country, it is not even a duopoly; it is a monopoly because there is only one service available.

So, in achieving some sort of balance of power between these two groups, the minister has suggested that there would be a tribunal of sorts, a way for dispute resolutions to be worked out.

However, when we look into details of the bill, we are now discovering that the dispute resolution mechanism, that way of solving those problems when the rail cars do not show up and the contracts are broken, will only be available to new contracts that are signed, as opposed to existing contracts.

I do not know how the minister can feel so confident that his bill would allow the Canadian economy, which relies on that freight being shipped, to progress in a better way if all those problems that have been existing for many years cannot get solved because the resolution is not offered to any contract that is already in existence.

I wonder if my friend could illuminate where that might be a problem in solving the real challenges we face.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

[*English*]

As the English would say, he is right on the nail, direct. That is one of the major problems with the bill.

I repeat, for those who did not hear the speech either from my colleague or myself, that we will be supporting the bill at second reading to be sent to committee; hopefully, to solve those types of problems, because this is a major issue.

[*Translation*]

I was saying in my speech that it is a matter of carefully balancing everyone's interests. The hon. member mentioned it. In some places, there is basically a monopoly. The use of a dispute resolution mechanism that involves a tribunal is not necessarily a good idea when the balance of power favours one side.

• (1220)

[*English*]

That is not necessarily most conducive to solving the problem.

I do again hope that the other side of the House will be able to listen for once, because it does not happen too often. We do bring up those issues in order to ameliorate the situation.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as chair of the Conservative forestry caucus, I have been following this rail service issue for quite some time and talking to the various sectors that use the rail line.

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When we came up with the package to introduce this legislation, it seems to me that we had unanimous support for the bill and its contents from the shipper coalition across Canada and almost every, if not every, sector. To listen to the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley and the member for Gatineau speak, it would appear that they do not agree with the shippers, the very ones the bill would affect. The shippers support it wholeheartedly and want us to get it through. However, the two opposition speakers appear to be saying that this is not what the shippers want. To whom are they listening? Are they listening to the shippers or to some secret voice in their caucus?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate all the work the hon. member has done.

I think we have been talking to the same people. When they talk to the government or government officials, everyone agrees that this is a step in the right direction. However, let us not pretend that the bill is perfect and does not need some slight adjustments.

The message that the official opposition is sending to the government is that it supports the bill. The bill will be examined in committee, but that is just for show. We want to ensure that the stakeholders support the bill. However, they too would like to see some changes made to it.

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to participate in the debate this afternoon on the second reading of Bill C-52, dealing with the issue of the level of railway services across the country. The House has been waiting for this legislation for several years. More importantly, shippers across the country have been waiting for this legislation for a very long time. I am sure we are all very happy that it is finally here.

The Liberal caucus intends to support Bill C-52 in principle at second reading because the shipper community is anxious to get the bill into the standing committee for detailed examination of the precise meaning, from a legal and a practical point of view, of all of the provisions in the bill. Shippers want to ensure, and we need to ensure, that their needs would actually be satisfied by the legislation.

The shippers coalition supporting level-of-service legislation, as it has become known, is a very broad and comprehensive coalition. It obviously involves agriculture, and that is a big and important part of the shipper community, but it goes far beyond agriculture. It also includes the forest products sector, minerals and chemicals, potash and fertilizer, manufactured goods and much more. They have all had common issues and a common problem, which is substandard service from the railways in shipping their products and commodities to market.

The intense debate about railway service levels has been raging across the country since about 2006. In 2007, specific requests were made by the shipper community for a legislated solution. They asked for a legislated solution because a commercial solution did not appear to be available. In 2008, the Government of Canada promised a formal review of railway services. It was not until a year later though, 2009, when the government finally appointed a panel to conduct that review of railway services. The panel worked for about a year, and by October of 2010 it had finished its work and had

written its report. In that report the panel confirmed that service levels provided by the railways were seriously deficient.

To give just one example, and there are dozens referred to in the panel's report, farmers could typically count on getting the service from the railways that they needed, that they ordered and that they paid for, only about 50% of the time. That is obviously not an adequate level of performance by the railways. Similar troubles affected most other shippers right across the broad spectrum of the coalition. The details differed from one industry to another, but the bottom line was the same: the shipper community was being badly served. That is what the panel concluded in the report it wrote in the fall of 2010.

The review panel said that the problem was a serious imbalance in clout and power in the marketplace, an imbalance between the railways on one side and the shippers on the other. The shippers are mostly captive, as I said in the House earlier today. They do not have competitive options for moving their products. They are captive to one particular shipper at any given moment in time. That is what the panel concluded. It said there was little genuine competition, that shippers have no realistic commercial alternatives and that they also have no legal recourse to address the problem.

For the most part, they do not even have access to enforceable contracts that set out both their obligations and the railways' obligations, which are then binding and enforceable on both sides. That would be one's normal commercial expectation. The parties doing business would write up a contract and they would fulfill the terms of the contract or there would be consequences one way or the other. That practice seems to be missing in the relationship between the railways and the shipper community.

● (1225)

According to the panel that was appointed by the government and which reported in the fall of 2010, the playing field is totally tilted in the railways' favour. The panel said that if that imbalance is to be remedied it would be preferable to do it by commercial means. However, if a commercial solution is not readily available, and that is obviously the case by this long process that has gone on since 2006, then the review panel said that there should be legislation and regulations to fix the problem. That is, there should be legislation to require the railways to provide their shipping customers with service level agreements that are readily enforceable.

The railways have said, "That was then and this is now" and claim that things have improved. I think objectively a number of shippers would say that indeed there have been some service improvements over the course of the last three or four years, especially service improvements by CN. Even CN notes that the controversy about bad service and the suggestion of some new legislation or new regulations coming down the pike have, at least in part, brought about that improvement. In other words, there has been a threat hanging in the air that there may be legislation or regulations and the railways have pulled up their socks a bit. It was in response to that threat of legislation, the speculation in the community that there would be legislation, that has in fact contributed to the level of service improvements.

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The review panel's report was done in October of 2010. The government then waited six months before committing to implement its recommendations. That commitment finally came forward in the spring of 2011, ironically just on the eve of the calling of an election.

After the election, action was once again postponed. Instead of bringing the legislation forward in the late spring or early summer of 2011, which was an imminent possibility, the government waited another six months. Then it launched a second review process, this one to be conducted by Mr. Jim Dinning of Alberta. That process started in the fall of 2011 and ran until the spring of 2012, again trying to find this elusive commercial solution to the problem. Unfortunately, Mr. Dinning's efforts were largely for naught and there were no significant results from that process, except for another six month delay. The government then waited another six months, until this past December, to finally table the legislation that we have before us today, Bill C-52.

This has been a painfully long wait. The discussion began back in 2006 and we are now in 2013, so it has been a seven-year process. The shippers are anxious now for action, at long last, to become promptly tangible. I think the House owes them that. We should have a sound debate at second reading on Bill C-52, but it does not need to be a protracted debate. We should discuss it properly and efficiently in the House and then move Bill C-52 as quickly as we can to committee so that we can hear from shippers and others and, on the basis of their evidence and testimony, determine if Bill C-52 is in fact good enough to get the job done.

I hope the government would ensure that there are no restrictions put on the transportation committee in hearing the witnesses that will want to be heard on this very important matter. The shipper community has been waiting a long time. Now that the bill will soon be at committee, the very least that Parliament can do is to give the shippers the opportunity to be heard fully so that all of their comments, recommendations and advice can be taken into account.

The preliminary reviews of Bill C-52 have been reasonably positive. That is encouraging. It would appear that the legislation does provide all shippers the right to have an enforceable service level agreement with the railways without discrimination among different tiers or categories of shippers. If that proves to be the case when we have the opportunity to legally and comprehensively review the legislation, then that would indeed be progress.

● (1230)

The legislation also appears to specify at least some of the mandatory content that each service level agreement must cover. It also appears that it would provide robust penalties if the railways fail to perform up to an acceptable standard.

The shipper community has been quite explicit about the kinds of things they want to see in these proposed service level agreements. It readily admits that with each particular shipper or sector within the shipper community there would be variations from agreement to agreement. Each one would not be an exact cookie-cutter copy of the others. There are logical differences that would need to be taken into account and there is a commercial negotiation process that would need to take place here. However, shippers have specified six subject areas that they think every service level agreement should deal with. It is important to put these on the record so that when we get to the

committee we can examine the legislation to see if these six areas would be adequately covered.

The shippers say that each service level agreement that the railways would be required to provide in negotiation to their shippers should include the following. First, it should include a section covering the services and the obligations. They should spell out what each side is supposed to do to have a successful contract between the carrier and the shipper.

Second, it should include communications protocols so that when they are trying to work out their commercial relationship, or if things go wrong in the relationship, they would all know exactly what they are supposed to do to communicate with one another in an effective way, rather than two ships passing in the night that never quite get around to connecting with each other.

Third, there would need to be performance standards specified in the agreements. What is the acceptable performance to be expected in the circumstances? Fourth, there would have to be performance metrics. In other words, how do you measure the performance against the standards laid out in the agreements?

Five, there would need to be consequences for non-performance. There are obviously penalties provided in the legislation. We will have to examine as to whether they would be appropriate and sufficient to achieve the kind of behaviours that the shippers want to see. Finally, there would need to be dispute settlement mechanisms included in the agreement.

Those are the six areas that the shipper community mentioned. It is important for the committee to examine in detail whether Bill C-52 would cover those areas adequately from the point of view of the shippers.

Finally, I will mention four or five other areas, beyond the nature of the contract that I have just described, where the shippers have said they are not clear about what the legislation seeks to accomplish and whether it would get to the result that the shippers want.

First is the issue of train movement into the United States. To what extent would a service level agreement in Canada also affect the kind of service that is provided across the border by the carrier, in some cases the same railway, when that carrier is operating in the territory of the United States? What would be the impact of service level agreements on cross-border shipments of product? Of course, between Canada and the United States, that is a huge volume.

Second, what would be the relationship between the service level agreements that apply to the main line rail carriers, basically CN and CP, when the product being shipped may originate on a short-line branch railway? Would the service level agreements have any implications for short-line rail operators and their relationship with the main railway operations?

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•(1235)

Third, there is already a section in the Canada Transportation Act, section 113, that provides some description of service requirements imposed upon the carriers. Is there anything in Bill C-52 that diminishes the value or the effect of what is already in the act in section 113? The shippers are very anxious to have that clarified. Obviously they, and we, would not want to see the beneficial impact of section 113 diminished.

The fourth question that shippers have asked is on the matter of practical access to the process. The way the legislation is set up it basically says that the parties should go out and negotiate a contract. If they cannot, then the shipper can go to the CTA and get an arbitrated solution that will then be imposed by regulation. The question from the shippers is whether there will be practical access to that process or whether the process will be so complex, costly and slow that only the biggest shippers will be able to participate in the proposed arbitration proceedings. As a result, the smaller shippers will just find it too complicated, expensive or time-consuming to be able to avail themselves of an arbitration procedure. We will need to examine the practicality of how Bill C-52 will apply to make it accessible to all.

Finally, there appears to be a section in the act that says that if a shipper already has some kind of existing contract with a railway, if they have gone out and tried to negotiate something and put it in place, then the shippers do not have access to the provisions of Bill C-52 unless and until that existing contract expires. That needs to be clarified as well. To what extent are shippers impeded from having any benefit of Bill C-52 because they have already tried in some way to have a contract and have negotiated something, whether or not it lives up to the standards of Bill C-52? Would they be prohibited from trying to get a Bill C-52 solution if they already have a contract in place?

Those are some of the questions that I have heard from the shipping community. By and large they are anxious to see the legislation proceed. They are looking forward to the committee hearings because they want to be heard and they have a number of questions to ask. I think it is incumbent upon the government and upon the House to make sure that we get into those hearings as quickly as possible and that we ensure that every shipper across the country that wants to be heard can have the opportunity to present their questions and their observations to the standing committee.

I welcome the debate this afternoon. I am anxious to see progress on this subject. Everybody has already been waiting far too long. Let us get on with it and try to make a tangible difference in the level of service that is provided to the shipping community, and therefore make a tangible contribution to the well-being and success of the Canadian economy.

•(1240)

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Wascana for his remarks, although I am curious why he feels the challenge between railways and suppliers started in 2006.

I believe it started around 1783 when Liberal Alexander Mackenzie was elected. Things got better with John A. Macdonald. Then they got worse when Sir Wilfrid Laurier was elected. It got

better under Diefenbaker. It got worse with Pearson and Trudeau. It got a little better with Mulroney. It got bad again with Prime Minister Chrétien. If the member wants to talk about the speed of the process, why did his government not do anything in their 13 years, or basically anything in the 20th century, to fix this problem?

Having said that, I am pleased that the member is positive about the bill. I can assure him that all the stakeholders were consulted. I wonder if the member would say, if he is satisfied, that his party will not put up any unnecessary filibustering at committee. This is the best possible bill. I would hate for the opposition parties to try to change it just for the sake of change.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, I do have to suggest that the hon. gentleman's recollection of history is just a little faulty. Alexander Mackenzie was not the prime minister in 1783. It was 1873 that he was the prime minister and he discovered on his desk the first day he walked into the office the Pacific scandal about the railway that was handed to him by Sir John A. Macdonald.

It is a bit of a waste of time to debate those ancient Conservative scandals. It was about the time that Louis Riel was becoming the member of Parliament for my district of the country. In any event, those historical references are fascinating, but it is more important for us to get on with the task of actually dealing with the circumstance today.

The major debate, as the hon. gentleman will recall, before 2006, was not about level of service agreements; it was about a costing review and whether railways were overcharging. There were in fact legal actions going on during the 1990s and the early part of the last decade that resulted in some major refunds to farmers because the railways had been caught overcharging for the freight rates they imposed for the services they were delivering, as substandard as those services were.

Until the middle part of this last decade, the issue was a costing review. In the latter part of the last decade, the issue shifted to this whole discussion about level of service, which brought about the seven year process that I talked about.

The hon. gentleman can be assured that we have no intention of delaying the legislation, either in the House or in committee, with this one caveat. We want to hear what the shippers say. If the shippers' expectations are properly and adequately addressed when we hear the testimony going through the committee, then we will be most anxious to see the legislation passed with whatever subsequent modifications the shippers might recommend.

•(1245)

Hon. Steven Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I misspoke and the member for Wascana is correct. I should have stated the date as 1873. I hope the member understands I am relatively new here and as far as I know, the member for Wascana was part of Alexander Mackenzie's government. I appreciate the correction.

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[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): On a more serious note, Mr. Speaker, my Liberal colleague briefly mentioned penalties. This bill would enable the federal government to collect fines of up to \$100,000. Does he think this would deter a company like CN, which made a profit of \$2.7 billion in 2012? Is this kind of measure one of the amendments he would like to make to the bill?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, on that question and many others, we need to hear what the shippers have to say, because they are the ones who have paid the penalty for bad service up to now.

It is clearly important for any penalties in this kind of legislation to be adequate so they can actually change the behaviour about which the shippers are complaining.

In some of the provisions of Bill C-52, the penalty provisions appear to be significant. In others, they do not. Quite frankly, the question the hon. member raised should be looked at very carefully in committee. Will the enforcement mechanisms, including those penalties, be adequate to solve the problem?

The best solution for all concerned would be for the legislation never to have to be used, that it was there setting the legislative framework, but that the parties were able to find commercial results and not need to have recourse to the legislation. However, the legislation needs to be strong and robust enough to ensure that if it has to be used, it actually does achieve the result the shippers want.

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member for Wascana already knows this, but I would like to assure him that Bill C-52 was crafted based on mountains of consultations with shippers all across the country. That is how the bill was formed. I am sure the member will appreciate hearing the shippers' applause for the bill as their input helped to put the bill together. The member and his party will be able to support it wholeheartedly.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the hon. gentleman's confidence. I have had the pleasure of consulting with many of those shippers myself over the course of the last five or six years. They have been very frustrated by the length of time this has taken, but they are hopeful that it will now come to a successful conclusion. They do though have a number of technical questions, partly for clarification reasons, to understand exactly what the legal and practical consequences will be of some of the wording that is included in the bill. They also have at least some suggestions for improvements where they think some of the areas need to be strengthened.

Bill C-52 is important legislation that should be intended, and I think is intended, to level up the imbalance in the playing field that was described by the review panel that reported in the fall of 2010. We all now need to be focused on ensuring it does accomplish that objective. We will know that when we allow shippers who want to be heard the opportunity to come before the committee, give their testimony, give their approval or criticism whichever it may be. If they have specific recommendations for making the bill better, then I hope the committee will be open to receiving those recommendations for improvements.

● (1250)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

As I said earlier today, I got into politics to, in my own small way, expand freedom so people could take responsibility for their own lives, earn success and own their destiny. To make space for this freedom, I believe governments should only do the things that people cannot do for themselves. It is therefore with great skepticism that I always approach any proposal that legislates government action within the economy. The question is this. Does this legislation represent an action that is needed but that people cannot do on their own? In analyzing the industry of which we speak, I believe it does.

Canada is the second largest with the eighth least dense population of any country on earth. There are 5,500 kilometres separating Cape Spear, Newfoundland from the Yukon-Alaska border. On these vast lands, with much of them thinly populated, the prospect of ubiquitous railway competition is almost impossible. It is not the result of human error. It is the result of physical geography and math. As a result, we have only two class A railways in the country and many communities that require for their economic lifeblood the export of products to far away markets often have only one choice to ship those products.

Seventy per cent of Canada's goods and services are moved by surface freight. However, as I have said, we have only two class A railways to move them and in many places there is only one option. This creates immense economic imbalances between the buyer and the seller of the service. As such, there is a consensus that some redress of this economic imbalance is justified in this rare circumstance. As a result, we have proposed Bill C-52, the fair rail freight service act, which is designed to do as I just described. Allow me to describe the practices that this law would codify.

The legislation would give shippers the right to a service level agreement with a railway. A shipper would now be able to ask their railway for an agreement and the railway would be obligated to provide one within 30 days. This statutory right to an agreement would be an important gain for all shippers, including small and medium-sized shippers. This right would allow shippers to initiate bilateral commercial negotiations with the railway and clarify in writing the service agreement the railway would provide.

These agreements could identify performance standards such as frequency of service, transit times and the number and type of cars that the railway would provide to the shipper. These agreements could also include recovery plans that identified the actions the railway would undertake to recover from service failure or the communication protocols for monitoring service performance and dealing with any service issues that might arise.

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In most cases, shippers should be able to reach an agreement with their railway commercially, but when they cannot, the shipper should be able to go to the Canadian Transportation Agency and ask an independent arbitrator to establish service agreements for them. Furthermore, the shipper should now be able to trigger a fast and efficient arbitration process, thanks to the bill. All he or she has to do is demonstrate that an effort has been made to reach an agreement commercially and give advance notice to the railway before commencing or requesting arbitration.

• (1255)

Shippers get to control the timing of launching an arbitration process. The legislation allows shippers to frame the issues to be addressed in the arbitration process by identifying the services they need. This gives the shipper the ability and the flexibility to ask for what is important to them. Every shipper operates in unique circumstances and has unique needs, and that is why these agreements will take many different forms. Tailoring service agreements to suit circumstances of both shipper and railway will allow for the diverse nature of Canada's transportation economy to continue to flourish.

Let me be clear. The bill is not about forcing our railways into an agreement, but ensuring that their obligations are met. We want railways to continue to manage an efficient, low-cost network to meet the needs of all of their customers in their network. The arbitration will follow a very efficient process to make these decisions. In a market where time means money, shippers have repeatedly asked for a process that is quick and timely so they can focus on growing their businesses.

The bill stipulates that the shipper can get an arbitrated service agreement within 45 days, although this could be extended in unique circumstances by an additional 20 days. In very complex service agreements with the shipper and the railways, the extension would be applied. The point remains that this is a fast process, to ensure we continue the operation of our rail network and get our supplies to where they are most needed.

I should note that the government acted with a great deal of meticulous care in setting up this process. We realize that in the last three decades the federal government has largely gone out of the rail business, through reduced regulation and obviously reduced ownership. This experience with a private sector railway system has been an unmitigated success. We should celebrate every day the success that our railways and their workers have created through this free enterprise system. We should congratulate them for the enormous improvements they have achieved in service standards, particularly when compared to their international peers. At the same time, without reintroducing excessive government intervention into the system, we are redressing a natural market imbalance that is inherent in most rail sectors around the world, and particularly so in a country with our geography and population.

We on this side of the House of Commons understand that a commodity-based economy, spread across vast distances, will require an efficient, effective rail system to move the commodities to their marketplace. That is why we have acted in this bill to provide a system by which our free market rail industry can continue to

prosper and connect businesses with customers, and customers with the goods and services they need.

• (1300)

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for giving such an informative, accurate and superlative presentation on Bill C-52. As proof of that, Mr. Speaker, you saw that everyone clearly understood the value of the bill. They clearly understood my friend's message. Of course, there would be no questions or comments given that situation, so he is to be congratulated.

Let us look at the genesis of the bill and understand that Bill C-52 would not be in the House were there not some disparities in the rail service that has been provided to shippers across Canada by Canada's two railways. The Minister of State for Transport this morning described that as a duopoly, which is just a hair's breadth away from a monopoly. The bill would not be in the House if the relationship between the railways and the shippers was a perfect one.

The relationship has been far from perfect. The shippers could be appropriately called "captive shippers"; there is little or no alternative for shipping their products. These are primarily bulk products from the agriculture, mining, oil and gas and propane sectors. Rail is the most economical and most profitable way to ship bulk shipments across Canada. I am sure that is a point that will not be debated.

I am happy to support Bill C-52 because I have spent some time working with a particular sector that is prominent in my riding, the forest sector. While that sector reaches all across the country, my riding of Cariboo—Prince George, which I am sure my colleague from Prince George—Peace River would agree, could be appropriately called the forest capital of the world. In my riding, and the Peace River, Okanagan—Shuswap, Kelowna—Lake Country, Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, Kootenay—Columbia and Okanagan—Coquihalla ridings, we all have sawmills, pulp mills, fibre mills and pellet mills. I can honestly say that those ridings combined probably ship the bulk of forest products from their locations to the U.S., Asia and abroad.

I serve as the chair of the Conservative forest caucus, and the members I just mentioned are part of that. I can remember, going back six years ago when I took on that position, that we were talking with the CEOs and the leaders in the forest industry across the country. They were telling us about some of the challenges they have; one of them was the rail service they were getting.

There were a number of other things, which our government has successfully addressed. One that we can be very proud of is the green transformation fund, which was a real winner in the forest industry across the country. It helped us to stay in tight competition with our U.S. counterparts. That is good because the U.S. is still our biggest market for forest products. We send the bulk of our products into the U.S. by rail, as we send to the coast for shipments overseas.

Government Orders

I remember this meeting from about four years ago. We had solved most of the problems and challenges and we asked what was left. They said we still need to deal with the service we are getting from the railways.

● (1305)

My colleagues and I made a promise to the leaders of the industry. We said that it was number one on our bucket list, that we would see this fixed. We said that we would get this solved one way or another and we began to work on it.

I will not say we did not have encouragement from colleagues across the way. It is a common interest. I thank them for their assistance.

We pushed that forward. There were a multitude of meetings where we got a very clear understanding of the problems with which the forest product shippers were faced. Also, it became evident that they did not have any means to seek remedy to get those problems fixed. There were problems such as were mentioned today, where an individual was expecting to have 65 railcars on site for the week of July 5, had a promise they would be there, only to find that after the shipper had geared all the production to be shipped that week, there were 37 cars, not 65. When the shipper called up the rail lines to ask where the rest of the cars were the answer was that they had not been able to get them, that they would give them to the shipper as soon as they got them.

That is not good enough. When railways make a promise to shippers that they will have 65 or 75 cars in that particular week, they have to keep that promise because an agreement, honesty and a good working relationship is all about that.

When shippers have cars show up to the pulp mills, where they are shipping rolls and bales of pulp and paper out of their mills and lo and behold there are holes in the roof and it is raining, they know there will be damage to the cargo inside. That is unacceptable. They need to have a way to seek remedy to that.

Shippers can be in production and all of a sudden 27 cars show up that were not ordered. When they phone the rail line, they are told that they probably will need them. If they say they do not need them for two weeks, they are told they already have them. They are then paying demurrage on them every day they are sitting on the site while they are trying to gear production to get them full. They did not ask for them, but they have them and they are paying rent on them until they use them.

The way it has been in the past is if the captive shippers, as I will call them again, were to bring their complaints to the rail lines, they could not seek a remedy that would be lasting. That is why they looked for help from the government. They tried to have a commercial arrangement that would solve things, but that was just simply not possible.

They looked to the government. We were pleased to step in and get this service agreement done so it would satisfy the shippers across the country, while at the same time it would make it something that the rail lines could work with. We know how important they are to moving goods back and forth across the country. It has to be an agreement that works for both sides. I think we have that.

It has been applauded by the shippers' coalition and major shippers across the country, since we put it all together after continuous discussions with them, trying to figure out how we could solve the problem. What would the remedy time be? How long would we give to get the agreement to work, to get the thing fixed? We have fines in there for not having remedies.

I am proud to stand here with my colleagues who have forest industries in their ridings, who were there to make that promise to the forest industry that we would get this fixed. These folks are from all across the country.

Our government has now done it. I want to thank the minister and the minister of state for their hard work in putting this together. I thank the forest industry for giving us the opportunity to put this together for it, to work with it. We thank it for their input.

Let us hope the bill will pass through the House and committee quickly. Maybe it can be approved. It is pretty good right now. At the end of the line, we will bring out the best product that these shippers can possibly expect.

● (1310)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his comments. He has acknowledged some points. I think everyone would agree that there is a requirement for action, that there is a concern. I am glad to see he had a more balanced assessment than the previous speaker, his colleague, the parliamentary secretary. The parliamentary secretary seemed to suggest that we do not need really government involved at all. His mindset is to just let the market decide. However, the member did lay out where he thinks government has a role. I want to get from him the concerns, though, we have had about this process. If we go back to 2007, I think it was—the member might correct me—his government talked about a wait and see approach, that we would try to kind of work things out.

We now have a bill in front of us acknowledging that it did not work.

Would he comment not only on what he thinks should be in the bill but also on the oversight in the bill—that is, to make sure that all the parties involved are going to live up to their commitment? Would he explain to us a bit more about the enforcement of the legislation and how we could actually ensure that products get to where they need to be, for everyone's benefit?

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member for Ottawa Centre agrees that government regulations should be a last resort. That is why we gave the two parties, the shippers and the rail lines, a period of time to try to work this out in a private commercial agreement.

Unfortunately, they were not able to do that.

Government Orders

Based upon that, we knew it had to be done. We have had many talks with the stakeholders. We listened to all sides of the story and looked at the challenges they have and tried to put a bill together based upon the input from the stakeholders on both sides. We think Bill C-52 contains the substance we need, including the period of time from when the complaint is first brought, the time allowed to resolve it and, if not resolved, a brief arbitration period, which can be extended for a short time. At that time, if the railways, for whatever reason, fail to rectify the situation they are subject to fines of \$100,000 per day per complaint. If one single shipper has five complaints about bad rail cars, that would be \$500,000 a day. If we multiply that by the number of forest outfits across the country, it could be significant.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way and I share a common city and we share a common region in northern British Columbia.

He talked about the fact that this legislation is coming, has not been passed yet. He spoke to the importance of the issue and the importance of the issue in the riding, especially to grain farmers and to forestry producers who actually want to ship out product. My brother worked in a mill that literally could not ship out product. It had to shut down its pulp mill, waiting for cars.

Again, because the bill has not been passed yet, I would like the member to emphasize how important it is to get it done.

• (1315)

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Speaker, to my colleague across the way, whether shipping is within North America, south of the border to our biggest market, the U.S., to either coast or across oceans, continuity and reliability in the shipping of our products is so important to our producers. That is what we are trying to accomplish, so that when producers want a specific number of cars in a specific time period, they can count on it. Their whole business and Canada's international trade reputation demands that those cars be there when they need them and that the product be shipped when it is supposed to be.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with my hon. colleague from Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert.

I would like to begin by wishing all of my constituents and colleagues a happy new year since this is my first speech in the House this year. I would also like to congratulate my colleague from Trinity—Spadina for her tremendous and brilliant work on this issue. I am sure that we have her to thank for the fact that the Conservative government decided to do something about this issue.

I would like to go over some facts and talk about why this bill came into being.

Rail transportation is the backbone of Canada's economy because 70% of our goods are shipped by rail. That is why it is critical that rail transportation services benefit both rail transportation companies and shippers.

The cost of rail transportation is also hurting Canadian shippers. Unfortunately, Bill C-52 is silent on the issue of rates because the government ignored the demands of a number of groups of shippers.

Canada's trade deficit continues to grow. It hit \$2 billion in November. We cannot allow Canada's products to lose more ground competing on the world markets.

Rail transportation is essential not only to competitiveness, but also to the domestic economy. We also need rail transportation services to help keep trucks off the roads and to curb our greenhouse gas emissions. Although railways still make up a considerable proportion of surface transportation, frustrated businesses are turning to trucks when possible, and that is devastating to our environment. That is important to note.

We must also look at the economy as a whole, since Canada's trade deficit is increasing. As I mentioned, it reached nearly \$2 billion in November, and our economy cannot afford to lose even more ground in light of the global situation.

The Conservatives' reluctance in the past to do anything for Canada's rail shippers shows their overall attitude towards rail transportation. Whether it is their inaction on new railway safety measures, cuts to VIA Rail Canada or their opposition to bringing high-speed rail service to Canada, the Conservatives refuse to give Canada's railway network the attention it deserves.

The Conservatives are taking a piecemeal approach to this country's transportation infrastructure that shows a lack of interest and a lack of investment. This is the case in my riding, which used to be a railway riding. It no longer is and we have to wonder why. One answer is the clear lack of investment to keep these railways running. Railways and their tracks are increasingly being sold off, when they could be used for other purposes, such as public transportation.

Instead of letting things go and making only occasional investments here and there, Canada needs a comprehensive approach to transportation that is based on a national public transportation and railway strategy. For years, farmers and other businesses have been paying the price for the poor quality of rail freight services, and have not managed to get Ottawa's attention.

The NDP's position is simple. We support businesses and exporters. We are determined to get them the transportation services they need and deserve.

• (1320)

Even though Bill C-52 does not follow through on certain demands from stakeholders, it should receive our support. I am rising in the House today because shippers are happy with it, more or less.

Government Orders

Now it is up to us to fill in the gaps, strengthen this bill for shippers and underscore the NDP's participation throughout the process. As I mentioned earlier, the member for Trinity—Spadina has done some excellent work on this issue.

We will keep working to ensure that we improve our country's rail transportation system and use it for what it was intended: to meet economic and environmental needs.

Unfortunately, Bill C-52 will cover only new service level agreements, and not those that already exist. Many shippers will have to continue to cope with unreliable and unfair service without any access to dispute resolution if their existing service agreements are violated.

Arbitration is available only for shippers who are in the midst of negotiating new contracts. Instead of offering fast, reliable conflict resolution for all shippers, as the NDP is asking for, Bill C-52 is offering a limited arbitration process for a small group of shippers.

The proposed arbitration process may be too costly for shippers. The burden of proof may be unfair if they have to prove that they are in need of services from the railway.

Certain shippers also wanted to tackle the issue of tariffs during the legislative process, but unfortunately the Conservatives made it clear that they would not address that issue until the next legislative review of the Canada Transportation Act in 2014-15.

Obviously, shippers agreed to look at tariffs at a later date and to focus on problems with service level agreements.

It is worth repeating that the mining sector is the second-largest employer in aboriginal communities, after the public service.

Improving rail freight transportation services for mining companies could also be of economic benefit to aboriginal people in certain areas of the country.

The whole question of rail freight is particularly important to rural areas. I come from a rural area. The industries that will be most affected by this are in western Canada, in British Columbia, as well as in Quebec and, to a lesser degree, Ontario. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity for everyone and for parliamentarians to really effect positive change for people in rural areas.

The Prairies are very sparsely populated, for instance. However, this matter is important to the small towns and rural communities of the Prairies, and those are the main groups we should be reaching out to.

Nearly 100 communities depend on the forest industry for their survival. That is the case in my riding, where most forestry-related transportation is done by truck. Why not invest in the railways that exist in my riding to transport lumber?

My colleagues and I would like to see penalties included in the agreements in relation to service levels, in order to compensate shippers for service disruptions, damages and loss of productivity.

Shippers are also afraid, and I agree with them, that this bill will not apply to rail shipments from Canada to the U.S. Why not?

In closing, this is an important piece of legislation. It needs improvements. Of course we hope this government will keep an open mind and accept many of our recommendations.

● (1325)

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Pontiac, who works very hard representing the people in his part of the country, which is a very large riding. Sometimes we feel better when we take a look around us. I feel good looking at my colleague's riding from my beautiful Outaouais region.

I liked his speech for a number of reasons. The message we have been sending the government this morning is extremely important: the NDP will support the bill at second reading to get it to committee.

Having said that, this bill is not perfect. In my opinion, nothing is perfect. In this context, we would hope that our friends opposite are prepared to listen to the different viewpoints of the various stakeholders.

The government presents us with its bills as though they were perfect, necessary and very important. I am always surprised to see how long it takes them to introduce their bills. In fact, we have been waiting for this bill for five years.

Can my colleague explain why it has taken five years? Why has the government taken so long to introduce this bill, which various stakeholders have been asking for?

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Gatineau for his very important question. I must also point out that she does an excellent job representing her constituents. It is great to have neighbours who are so active in their community.

Railways used to cross the Pontiac. As the member pointed out, the crisis in the railway industry has been around for a long time. I truly believe that the only reason the Conservatives are moving on this issue is because of the pressure exerted by the official opposition and the work of my colleague from Trinity—Spadina. They have been confronted by the facts and forced to take action. They have put forward something good, but it obviously does not take into consideration all of the industry's needs.

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I live on Vancouver Island and we have been in pretty desperate straits with regard to rail service. Our passenger rail service has not been in operation for a number of years because of the state of the tracks and the other infrastructure. Our freight service is in jeopardy as well, although it is still operating. However, on Vancouver Island it is an important part of our transportation infrastructure.

In some of our rural communities rail infrastructure is critical for our economy and the environment as well because it helps keep some of those trucks off the road. In Nanaimo—Cowichan we have something called the Malahat and several times a year that road is regularly shut down, either due to accidents or due to weather conditions. The rail service then is even more critical for moving freight. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

• (1330)

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Mr. Speaker, the Pontiac has very similar conditions. We have two roads and in the winter they are often extremely dangerous. Automobiles and large trucks are competing on two-lane roads. Forestry products or wood is being brought far north and mining products are coming from the west. Next to these two roads are tracks that are no longer used. One would think that the safety of my constituents would be well served if the government were to invest in renewing those tracks and making sure that shipping could occur along them.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

SODIUM REDUCTION STRATEGY FOR CANADA ACT

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP) moved that Bill C-460, An Act respecting the implementation of the Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to begin the debate at second reading on Bill C-460, a sodium reduction bill for Canada.

I know that when we choose our private members' bills a lot of thought goes into it because we basically get one shot at it. I did put a lot of thought into what I would bring forward for my private member's bill. As the health critic for the official opposition for the NDP, I tried to think of a measure that would have a very significant impact in improving the health of Canadians.

After looking at a whole number of issues and talking with a lot of people, I decided that this was probably one of the single most important issues that could be brought forward because of the over-consumption of sodium in all of our diets. I selected the bill because there has already been an incredible amount of work done on a sodium reduction plan for Canada. The provinces and territories and experts have basically come together and said that we absolutely have to do something in terms of reducing the amount of sodium that Canadian ingest. That is why I brought forward the bill.

Over-consumption of sodium is a major contributor to heart attacks, strokes and other illnesses in Canada. In fact, StatsCan estimates that Canadians currently consume about 3,400 milligrams of sodium per day, which is more than double the recommended intake of 1,500 milligrams. It is estimated that 77% of the sodium consumed by Canadians comes from prepackaged food.

Private Members' Business

Anyone of us could go into a grocery store and see Canadians poring over labels and trying to figure out what it is that they are eating. People do want to make healthy choices, but the way things are constructed now and the amount of sodium that is in the food that we are eating is really quite astronomical.

The bill seeks to reduce sodium levels in the food supply by implementing the sodium reduction strategy for Canada. This is not a strategy that I came up with, it is a strategy that already exists. It was developed by the expert sodium working group in 2010. It was a group that was set up by the minister. Their report was released in 2010, but it has not yet been implemented by the federal government.

The core of my bill is to implement that strategy. The bill also prioritizes a number of areas where work needs to be done by ensuring that the amount of sodium in prepackaged and restaurant foods is reduced to safe levels. It will improve the labelling of sodium on foods. It will help protect children from being deceived by advertisements for high-sodium foods. Here I want to use Quebec as a model. Quebec has a very successful program around advertising as it affects children. This is a model that we should be using in all of Canada to protect children from the junk food and high-sodium content that they are ingesting without even knowing it.

The bill would establish the Government of Canada as the leader in monitoring and ensuring progress is being made by food companies to achieve sodium reduction plans. All the details about how this will be done are in the bill. It is very clearly laid out. As I say, the core of the bill is to implement the strategy, which already exists from 2010.

In developing the bill, I had tremendous support from across the country. I have been working with different organizations on the bill. I just want to quote from some of them.

Bill Jeffery, national coordinator of the Centre for Science in the Public Interest, has done incredible work on this issue over many years. In fact, he was a member of the sodium working group. In his press conference yesterday, he pointed out that this year as many as 16,000 Canadians will die needlessly of heart attacks, heart failure and strokes caused by excess dietary sodium, three-quarters of which is added to foods by food manufacturers and restaurants.

As well, the Canadian Medical Association and its president, Dr. Anna Reid, said:

Canadians consume an average of 3,400 milligrams of sodium daily, well above recommended levels. High sodium levels in food are responsible for almost one-third of hypertension cases in Canada. Hypertension is a major cause of heart disease (heart attack and heart failure), stroke and kidney failure, and it is an important contributor to premature death, disability and health care costs in Canada. It is estimated that 7.5 million Canadians have been diagnosed with this chronic condition, with an estimated 1,100 new patients being added every day.

• (1335)

It goes on to say:

Private Members' Business

The Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada Act is an important piece of legislation that can lead to healthier lives for all Canadians, and we urge all Members of Parliament to support it.

One of the main advocates of action in this strategy for Canada has been Dr. Norm Campbell who is the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, Canadian Institutes for Health Research chair in hypertension and prevention and control. He is from the University of Calgary.

In his letter, he says:

The bill provides concrete measures for reducing the amount of salt food processors add to food. The measures proposed in the Bill include close government monitoring and oversight and mandatory labelling of foods that fail to comply with sodium targets. If passed, Bill C-460 will for the first time provide Canadians an opportunity to even know if they are even making a healthy or unhealthy food choice.

He goes on at length about what is in the bill, but that is a particularly pertinent comment.

I also point out the breadth and depth of the work that has been done on this issue of sodium reduction. Some members in the House may remember that a year ago we all received a letter that was addressed to the Prime Minister and was signed by 17 major organizations across Canada, including the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Medical Association. That letter was a real convergence of medical and scientific individuals, experts and organizations who came together with a very significant letter to the Prime Minister. In their letter of January 2012, they said:

—we are concerned that recent federal decisions not to endorse the federal, provincial and territorial sodium implementation report, presented at the November 2011 Health Ministers Summit meeting, will be seen as a signal to the food processing industry and food service establishments that our national government is not serious about the need to commit to the 2016, as well as interim, targets. The argument that the sodium implementation plan would fail to garner commitment from industry sends the clear message to Canadians that private interest takes precedence over food safety and [the] health and wellness [of Canadians]...

This was a very thoughtful and well-worded message to the Prime Minister.

In addition, since we have been developing this bill and it was introduced a number of months ago, we now have close to 40 organizations and key experts across the country who are supporting it. They include: the Canadian Medical Association; the Canadian Public Health Association; the Dietitians of Canada; the Canadian Nurses' Association; the Canadian Pharmacists Association; Public Health Physicians of Canada; Canadian Federation of Nurses Union; Hypertension Canada; the Kidney Foundation of Canada; Food Secure Canada; Canadian Institute for Child Health; Canadian Society of Internal Medicine; the Canadian Women's Health Network.

I have just read a very few of the endorsers. These are organizations, and also a number of individuals, that have specifically endorsed this bill.

I am very interested to hear the comments of government members and of other opposition members. Rarely, in public discourse, is there a time when a number of different interests come together where there is a very strong consensus and that is what we have seen on sodium reduction. Let us remember that there was an expert working group put together by the Minister of Health. It

produced a report by consensus. It was a unanimous report. It included industry representatives. That report came out and there was no follow-up from the government.

In addition to that, the provinces and the territories, in their own meetings, have considered this issue. They too have called on the federal government to take action on implementing a sodium reduction strategy.

● (1340)

We see the body and the weight of all of these organizations across the country. It seems to me that we are at a particular time where there is a very broad consensus about the need to take serious action and to show we do put public health and public interests as the top priority. If this plan were implemented, there have been estimates that we could save something like \$2 billion a year in health costs.

I am also concerned about the kids. We think about our kids and what they eat. I know many of us here are parents who have young children and we do the best we can to make sure our children eat well; yet, it is so difficult to do with the array of products that are around us.

When we think about the health of our children as they grow into adults, sodium is not the only issue. There are many factors to a healthy lifestyle. There are things we can do ourselves, and that is certainly something that is part of the bill, by advocating for education and proper information and disclosure. However, it seems to me that the need to ensure there is a sodium reduction plan that is real, meaningful and takes proper steps is absolutely essential.

Many other countries have done this. The World Health Organization lists it as a priority. The sticking point is probably going to be whether it is voluntary or whether there is a plan that has clear target reductions, as my bill would lay out.

We have had a voluntary regime and opportunity now for many years, and frankly it has failed. It is now imperative that we see this as a public health issue that impacts all of Canada and all Canadians. The federal government must demonstrate its leadership and commitment to follow through on the incredible body of work and the plan being produced. That is a duty. It is a public responsibility, and anything less than that is a cop-out.

I want to argue today that continuing on some kind of voluntary path has not produced the results we need to see. The bill would move us in a direction to adopt the plan that was agreed to by the expert sodium working group. It is a reasonable proposition. The steps contained within it are reasonable, and I think it is achievable.

I would encourage all members of the House to not dismiss the bill because it has come from the opposition, but to look at the merits of the bill and who supports the bill. These organizations are non-partisan. They base their decisions on merit. They base their decisions about what they do on evidence, on medical information. When they say they are supporting the bill, maybe they do not agree with everything, every word—if it goes to committee, we will take a look at that—but the principle of the bill and what it is trying to do is there, and it is showing it has very broad support.

Private Members' Business

I am happy we are having this debate, and I look forward to the debate. I certainly encourage all members of the House, from all sides, to look at the bill in all seriousness. I want members to consider what we are here for and what we do to uphold public health, the public interest, to represent our constituents, and most of all, the future generation of kids, who we want to make sure have the best opportunity to grow up healthy in this wonderful country.

• (1345)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for bringing this issue forward. Earlier I noticed a salt shaker on the member's desk, and this addresses the major problem with the bill. It addresses processed foods. The NDP could spend millions of dollars on a sodium registry, but Canadians who want choice can still pick up that salt shaker and put salt on their food. That is why our voluntary approach is better, especially with the education and collaboration, and it is working.

My question is quite straightforward. In the member's bill, Quebec can opt out. I want to ask why. Would this not create a two-tiered sodium system and give Quebec a monopoly on certain products? For Canadians who want choice, especially around Super Bowl, I would not want to see Canadians smuggling potato chips and cheeses across the Quebec border.

I would like the member to address why one province gets treated differently than other provinces.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, actually, this bill is about choice. It is not about banning any foods. It is about proper disclosure of information and allowing Canadians to make healthy choices about what they are eating and to make sure that the industry is very clear about what it is doing.

I am very surprised that the only thing the member can come up with in the bill is this issue about Quebec. We could get into a great discussion now about Canadian federalism, but I think he is aware that a number of bills that come forward in the House are very respectful of Quebec and its role in Confederation. The fact is that a number of bills have this clause to respect the jurisdiction of Quebec.

This is not about creating two tiers but a pan-Canadian strategy working within federalism, a strategy that the NDP has laid out on so many occasions. We have put forward many bills, whether on child care, post secondary education, housing, and now the sodium reduction bill, recognizing how we work as a federation in this country and with Quebec. This bill simply reflects that very strong principle that we have always put forward.

Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from my reading of this, it is make-sense bill. If we give consumers more information about what they eat, they get healthier.

We know that heart disease is one of the number one killers, if not the number one killer, in Canada. Sodium consumption is one of the major contributors. Therefore, it surprises me to hear any resistance from the Conservative benches to this idea. It seems that increasing choice for Canadians just makes sense.

What are the expected impacts on the health of Canadians from divulging this information? Would my hon. colleague have any comments on that?

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, the impact, first and foremost, is that Canadians would have a lot more information about what they are eating, whether their purchases in grocery stores or meals in restaurants. To me, that is very important.

Part of the issue here is to track what is happening with sodium reduction and to make sure that is fully disclosed. I think that more and more people are very interested in what is going on. People do take their own health very seriously. Therefore, within the bill, some of the impacts would certainly be better education and better information.

At the end of the day it is about meeting the targets that have already been laid out in guidelines from Health Canada but are simply not being met. That is the irony of the bill. It is all there. The work has been done and all been laid out, but it is actually not being implemented. It is not that I am creating anything new with this bill but implementing what we already know and what needs to be done.

• (1350)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think everyone in this House can agree that sodium reduction is an important goal when it comes to the health of Canadians. The Government of Canada is committed to helping Canadians move toward healthier diets. We do this in many ways, one of the most notable being Canada's food guide.

[*Translation*]

When it comes to sodium, our government has already taken meaningful action and this approach is working. That is why I will not be supporting Bill C-460.

[*English*]

For a bit of background, the government established a sodium working group in 2007, which included representatives from food manufacturing and food service industry groups, health-focused non-governmental organizations, the scientific community, consumer advocacy groups, health professional organizations and government. The working group produced the report, "Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada".

The report recommended that the government adopt a voluntary approach to reduce the average amount of sodium that Canadians consume from 3,400 milligrams per day to 2,300 milligrams per day by 2016. It was also recommended that the approach engage different kinds of stakeholders, including the food industry, provincial and territorial governments and Canadians themselves.

[*Translation*]

Let us be clear: our government is totally willing to co-operate with our partners in order to achieve that goal. Our government has already begun implementing a voluntary system meant to reduce the average amount of sodium that Canadians should consume.

Our approach is based on three main pillars: increasing awareness and educating Canadians; guiding the industry towards reducing the amount of sodium in processed foods; and research.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

I will discuss our government's approach in more detail a little later.

Bill C-460 references the sodium working group's report but proposes a much more heavy-handed approach. Instead of a voluntary approach, the bill calls for new legislative and regulatory measures to implement the sodium reduction strategy for Canada. Sodium levels in foods would be heavily regulated and industry would be required to report the sodium content in prepackaged food so that a public registry of this information could be established and maintained.

There are several problems with the bill. There would be financial costs to taxpayers, industry and Canadians. There may also be unintended risks to food safety and health. We would also lose the current balance that has been struck between the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders. Finally, the measures proposed in this bill could not feasibly be regulated or enforced. Let me examine each of these issues in more detail.

First, the cost to taxpayers to implement these measures would not be insignificant. New resources and regulations would be required to develop, implement and maintain a public registry for well over 100,000 products sold domestically. It is also not clear how this registry would be used. Foods that are low in sodium are not necessarily healthy foods. We would not want Canadians to think that any food that the registry says is low in sodium is healthy. Additional resources would also be required for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for compliance and enforcement activities.

There would also be a significant burden to industry, the costs of which would likely be passed on to Canadians. Adopting this bill would take money out of the pockets of small businesses across the country and add layers of red tape. This would not be a good approach to take, especially during a time when the economy remains fragile.

The costs of implementing this bill go beyond financial impacts. Let me address two of the key health and safety risks that implementing this bill would pose.

First, the 90-day coming into force period would not afford industry the time needed to extensively reformulate food products. This is a significant oversight, as sodium is not only used for flavouring but also for food preservation and control of pathogens in food. The result could be unintended food safety consequences to Canadians.

Second, the warning statements proposed by the bill may be misleading to Canadians when they are trying to choose healthy foods. Products with no sodium warning statement could be perceived as healthy choices, even though they may not in fact be nutrient-rich foods. Nutrition labelling must cover all the bases if it is to have the desired positive effects.

We already have the nutrition facts table on prepackaged foods that provides information on various nutrients, including the sodium level in a serving of food and the percent daily value. A warning label for sodium alone could divert attention from this valuable tool.

●(1355)

[Translation]

The government wants Canadians to have choices, and to have the information they need to reduce their sodium intake. To achieve that, we need to take more ambitious action than this bill proposes.

[English]

In addition to financial costs and potential health risks, the adoption of Bill C-460 would not respect the important balance with stakeholders that has been struck in the work our government is already doing. Sodium reduction is a shared responsibility among the food industry, the Government of Canada, provincial and territorial governments and Canadians themselves. We need to continue with this balanced approach by engaging with all our partners and avoid shifting the majority of the burden onto any one stakeholder.

Finally, I mentioned that one of the problems with this bill is that the measures being proposed could not be feasibly regulated or enforced. Let me explain what I mean.

In seeking to enable industry to provide Canadians with healthier choices, the Government of Canada engaged interested stakeholders to develop guidance to the food industry to reduce sodium in processed foods. This guidance was released less than a year ago. Bill C-460 calls for this guidance to be put into regulation. Not only is that not feasible, but it is unnecessary. In order to understand why this is the case, I will take the House through the core elements of the guidance.

The guidance serves as a guide for the food industry to reduce sodium in its products by outlining sodium level benchmarks for processed food categories. The benchmarks have two components that must work together to be effective, a sales-weighted average and a maximum limit.

The Government of Canada has recognized that reducing sodium levels in the more popular products within the food category, such as bread, would have a greater impact than only targeting those with the high sodium levels. The sales-weighted average does this by taking into account the sales numbers across an entire food category, so that sodium levels would be reduced in products that are the most popular with Canadians. At the same time, the maximum limit targets the products within a food category that might otherwise remain high in sodium, such as salt and vinegar potato chips, to help decrease their sodium levels as well. It is the combination of the sales average and the maximum limit that will effectively reduce sodium content.

In addition, the guidance cannot be put into regulation as it is not possible to enforce an average. Flexibility is needed to help ensure that the sodium in the more popular foods is reduced while still providing Canadians with the food options they expect.

Private Members' Business

The food industry is an active partner in achieving our collective goal. A regulatory approach is not required.

We can see that there are many concerns with Bill C-460.

[*Translation*]

The Government of Canada adopted a different approach to reduce the amount of sodium consumed by Canadians. Our approach favours awareness and education, so that Canadians can make informed decisions regarding the food they eat.

[*English*]

In February 2012, the Minister of Health announced \$4 million for new activities as part of the healthy eating and awareness initiative. A component of this is a social marketing campaign to raise awareness of healthy eating, including reducing sodium intake. The goal is to both educate and motivate Canadians to make healthy food choices. In addition, the food industry has already demonstrated willingness to put more healthy choices into the Canadian marketplace. As Canadians' demand for lower sodium options grows, industry will respond to that demand. We are also working with industry to collect information. Imposing mandatory reporting is simply unnecessary.

In fact, I am pleased to say that early progress toward the 2016 goal is already evident. The government carried out a small monitoring project to estimate changes in the sodium levels in three food categories that are popular with Canadians: bread, canned soups and cereals. The results of this project indicate that the majority of new products being introduced in these three categories have sodium levels below the 2016 maximum and existing products in these categories have seen reductions that will have them well placed to reach the goal by 2016.

We have already seen the results that the bill says it would achieve. In fact, adopting the bill would jeopardize progress already being made through the current collaborative approaches. The Government of Canada continues to be committed to helping Canadians move toward healthier diets and creating conditions that make healthier choices easier choices. We are already beginning to see positive results. The heavy-handed approach proposed by Bill C-460 is not necessary.

• (1400)

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support Bill C-460 that would implement a sodium strategy that would be clear, concise, accountable, reportable and in fact achieve the goal of reducing sodium intake among Canadians.

Why do we need this bill? Personally, I do not think we would have needed a bill like this if the government had been doing the work it was supposed to do. The Government of Canada has a responsibility, through the Minister of Health, to protect the health of Canadians and to prevent disease where possible. That is the clear mandate of the Minister of Health and the federal government.

As we heard from the hon. member who introduced the bill, high sodium intake creates hypertension or high blood pressure, as it is called, and heart disease and strokes. We know these have caused some of the highest numbers of deaths and disease in this country and cost a huge amount of money.

I noted that my colleague across the way, the hon. parliamentary secretary, talked about costs. The cost to the health care system from hypertension, stroke and heart disease is actually inestimable when one compares it to what it would cost to implement this bill.

In 2007 the government, under the then health minister, set up a sodium working group to look at the issue of the amount of sodium Canadians were taking. The group heard it was three times the amount that Canadians should be taking to keep them healthy and that it should do something about that. That was what the Minister of Health and the government did in 2007.

The sodium working group was set up, and in the interim the then Minister of Health suggested that there would be some voluntary guidelines put in place by industry to bring down the amount of sodium. Why industry? It is because the government cannot come into my kitchen and tell me how much salt I can put in my food. We know that 77% of high sodium intake in this country comes from processed foods. The Minister of Health said that the government would ask processed food manufacturers, the food industry and certain restaurants to look at this and voluntarily diminish it until they heard from the working group.

The working group did that, coming down with its report in 2010, three years later. The working group decided it wanted bring down the current sodium intake by Canadians. It was already clearly defined by the working group that by 2016, 95% of Canadians would actually reduce their very high level of sodium consumption and have a set level of sodium.

In the working group there were the food industry, academics and health care professionals. It is most important to note that there were two levels of government at the table. There were federal and provincial governments. They all had a role to play. The only government that had a role to play in ensuring that regulations were put in place to decrease the amount of sodium was the federal government. The provinces were there at the table because they have to take on the high cost of health care when people get sick, so they have a vested interest in this. Only the federal government could have done the job.

That is why I said that this bill should not have been necessary. In 2010, when the report came down, it was found that the work in the interim that was being voluntarily undertaken by industry to bring down sodium levels was not working. Nothing was happening. In 2010, all of the people and groups within the sodium working group, including health care professionals and the provinces, looked to the federal government and suggested getting an implementation strategy moving.

Nothing happened. In fact, the current Minister of Health moved very swiftly to disband the group so that nothing could happen, so that no follow up could be done. I do not even understand why a minister of health would do that.

This is not new. Members have seen the same Minister of Health and same government, who have a mandate to protect Canadians' health and decrease the amount of disease in Canada where possible, fail abysmally on the sodium strategy. They have done nothing, except to say they will educate people.

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●(1405)

That is good, but education is only one part of any kind of strategy to bring about a decrease in certain risky health behaviours. We all know that. We have seen that with tobacco and with practically every other thing that used to cause death a long time ago and now has changed. There is evidence that tells us that this is how things work.

The minister has had a result from the sodium working group. She has had reports from her own health department. Provinces and territories have asked her to do something about this because voluntary initiatives are not working. The minister disbanded the working group and has done absolutely nothing. This is now five years later. This is 2013. Nothing has happened. Imagine how many people continue to increase their intake of salt and continue to be at risk and get hypertension, heart disease and stroke. Obviously this does not seem to matter.

I heard the parliamentary secretary say that it is totally useless to regulate. One of the tools the government has is regulation. Governments exist for that. They do not exist to tell me how much salt to put in my pot. Governments can educate me but they have the duty and the responsibility to regulate foods for Canadians' safety, to regulate the content of harmful ingredients in any food. Governments around the world have been doing this for years.

Let me tell members what some governments are doing. The United Kingdom has a food standards association that holds the government's feet to the fire as it has now put in regulations to reduce salt consumption by adults. Finland has taken legislative action and is a world leader in population-wide salt reduction primarily through punitive high salt labelling. It punishes industry that goes above the levels. Then there is Ireland, which does not punish but rewards industry. It uses a positive reinforcement methodology where it legislates and regulates and then it advertises those companies that meet the standards. Ireland has used one tact and Finland is using another. At the end of the day, governments are using their legislative authority and their regulatory authority to change the salt content in food.

In Canada we have a medicare system where we pay for everyone's illness and disease when they get sick and they need medically necessary care. The cost to the system will be extraordinary if we do not take steps to do this.

Once again, I do not understand why the government has not done it with sodium. I do not understand why it has not done it with trans fats. The government has had every single advisory group, including the health department, tell it that it must regulate trans fats in processed foods. It has not done it.

Then we have the issue of energy drinks. The president of the United States has taken this on as a personal agenda, to look at what that country can do to regulate or legislate energy drinks. Canadians have died from drinking energy drinks. The minister moved to do one thing. She said the allowable amount of caffeine in energy drinks will be dropped to a certain level, but the point is that even that level is unacceptable. All people asked for was for them to be sold behind the counter in pharmacies, but that is too much for the government to do.

Obviously the government and the minister seem to favour not getting industry angry at them. If the Minister of Industry was doing that I would understand. That is his mandate. The Minister of Health's mandate has nothing to do with industry. The Minister of Health's mandate is to protect Canadians and prevent disease. Why has she not done anything about it? Now the hon. member for Vancouver East has to bring forward a bill to tell the government it must do what it is supposed to do.

The working group talked about governments working collaboratively with health professionals, academia, industry and provincial governments to bring about a strategy. Provincial governments are waiting. Everyone is waiting to see what will happen.

The hon. member has brought forward a bill. I support the bill but nothing is going to come of it. We have a majority government that could and should have the political will to do what it must to help Canadians with their health, to help them prevent disease, to help protect them from illnesses, but that is not happening. I support the bill but I do not think it will get anywhere, and that is a very sad indictment of the Conservative government.

●(1410)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to add to the discussion about Bill C-460, which was introduced by my colleague from Vancouver East. She is the opposition health critic. I wholeheartedly support this bill, which aims to implement the sodium reduction strategy for Canada.

Sodium intake is a serious public health issue in Canada. Health Canada has made recommendations for sodium intake. The recommended daily intake is 1,500 milligrams for an adult under the age of 50. The average Canadian has a sodium intake of about 3,400 milligrams, or more than double the daily recommendation. The department goes so far as to set a tolerable upper intake level of 2,300 milligrams. Without question, Canadians are consuming too much sodium, and we are far exceeding the target amounts.

The government has a role to play, but it also has everything to gain. Excess sodium is eating away at the health of Canadians. Reducing sodium intake to 1,800 milligrams a day would reduce the number of cardiovascular events, such as heart attacks and strokes, by 23,500. High sodium intake is also a significant factor in hypertension, as we all know.

Hypertension in Canada has reached a worrisome level. Forty percent of Canadians have hypertension or prehypertension. A decrease in sodium intake would reduce the number of cases by 30% and could prevent between 10,000 and 16,000 deaths a year. These are alarming figures that require immediate action.

Clearly, these preventable deaths, these cardiovascular diseases and this hypertension epidemic have a significant human cost. The main reason I support this bill is to prevent these human tragedies.

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There is also an economic cost. A study found that, if Canadians reduced their personal sodium intake level to 1,500 mg per day, it would save our health care system an estimated \$1.38 billion. Including indirect costs, these savings could reach \$3 billion. By reducing our sodium intake, we could improve our health and save a significant amount of money. How can one oppose virtue?

Many people are wondering about this topic and why we should have this strategy. Why not launch an awareness campaign so that Canadians stop adding salt to their food? The reason is simple: reducing salt added at the table will not solve the problem since 77% of the salt Canadians consume is from processed and prepackaged food. Salt from food in its original and natural form and salt added at the table represent only 23% of Canadians' daily sodium intake. We therefore have to make improvements in areas where it will have an impact.

The bill's strategy is nothing new. The same strategy was proposed in 2010 by the sodium working group, which was put in place by this government in 2007. This working group was—it has since been dismantled by the minister—made up of representatives of the food processing and food service sectors, non-governmental organizations focused on health, scientific and consumer groups, health professional organizations and various government departments and agencies. It was a very inclusive group made up of all the key stakeholders in the field. This group came up with and recommended the strategy that was presented in 2010 and that is found in my colleague's bill.

• (1415)

What measures will be taken as a result of this bill?

First of all, let us be clear. This bill will not take any products off the shelves. Products containing more sodium than the amount recommended by Health Canada will have to be clearly labelled. This will help consumers make healthier choices. No one will stop individuals from buying an item containing too much sodium. With this bill, consumers will simply be better informed.

I recently came across an issue of the publication put out by the Association francophone des parents du Nouveau-Brunswick. It had a two-page article on the problem of sodium in our food. The point I want to make here is that the article had a four-point sidebar on how to read labels to better understand them, particularly when it comes to sodium content. This example alone illustrates just how much we need a better, simpler labelling system that consumers can rely on in order to make informed choices.

Obviously, the voluntary approach that the government has espoused for the past 20 years is not working. Very few food companies have reduced the amount of salt in their foods, and Canadians' salt intake has not gone down. In Australia, a similar approach has actually resulted in a 9% increase in sodium intake rather than a decrease. A recently published American report found that, used alone, a voluntary approach was ineffective over a period of 40 years.

I am sure that is one of the reasons why many groups of health professionals and health experts support this bill and the need for a national sodium reduction strategy. Three of them are based in Quebec: the Quebec Coalition on Weight-Related Problems, the

Council for Food Progress Initiatives, and Louise Vandelac, director of the UQAM's Institute of Environmental Sciences.

Also supporting this initiative are the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Nurses Association, the Canadian Pharmacists Association and Public Health Physicians of Canada. These groups and associations are on the front lines. They see the devastating effects of high sodium intake, and they want to make sure that consumers have access to healthy food and information to help them make good choices.

The World Health Organization has published several reports on the importance of reducing sodium intake. The 2012 United Nations report on food revealed that Canada was not doing enough to discourage the consumption of foods high in sodium.

We have to do better for Canadians. These are simple measures recommended by the government's sodium working group, a group made up of representatives from many walks of life. There is no reason for the government not to take these simple and important measures to improve the health of Canadians.

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest to the other members who have spoke in the House and I agree with the member for Vancouver East, as does the government, that the average sodium intake in Canada is definitely higher than it should be.

We are committed to the goal of lowering sodium intake from 3,400 milligrams per day to 2,300 milligrams per day by 2016. I am happy to report that early studies indicate that we are already on track toward reaching this goal without heavy-handed legislation or regulations. That is why I do not support this bill.

The Government of Canada currently takes a voluntary multi-stakeholder approach to sodium reduction, as recommended by the report, "Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada". Despite the call from Bill C-460 to implement this report, the bill does not follow the report's key recommendations. It fails to capitalize on the benefits of the current collaborative approach and would increase burden to industry through new legislative and regulatory measures. The bill may also pose risks to food safety and health and carries financial cost to government, industry and Canadians. The measures proposed in the bill ignore the shared responsibility in reducing sodium intake in Canada. For sodium reduction efforts to be effective, responsibility must be shared among Canadians, the food industry and federal, provincial and territorial governments.

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Industry has accepted the challenge of reducing sodium levels, while maintaining food safety and consumer acceptance. In fact, industry has responded to the demands of Canadians and is putting more healthy choices onto the Canadian marketplace. We are already seeing positive progress toward meeting the sodium reduction targets. Data recently collected from a sample of breads, breakfast cereals and canned soup shows that sodium levels have been reduced by 10% overall in these product categories. This is one-third of the way to the 2016 goal.

The fact is that these early achievements have been made without the heavy-handed measures proposed by the bill. Why change things now? We are on the road to recovery, as it were.

As Canadians, we have a critical role as well. It is the responsibility of all of us as individuals to become aware of nutrition issues and what is in our food so we can take more informed choices when we are the grocery store, when we eat at home or when we eat out. However, health is not just about eating; it is also about exercise and fitness.

Finally, this government's role, along with provincial and territorial governments, is to help promote the healthier choice as the easiest choice for Canadians. We do this through a three pillar approach that includes awareness and education for Canadians, guidance to industry and research.

The Government of Canada's current approach to sodium reduction strikes the right balance and respects the responsibilities of all stakeholders. Let me describe some of the work that our government is doing.

As members know, in 2010, our government launched the healthy eating awareness and education initiative to raise Canadians' awareness about the benefits of healthy eating. The goal is to help inform Canadians so they can choose a healthier choice. This initiative promotes plain language messages about healthy eating, sodium reduction and healthy weights for Canadians.

The first two years concentrated on the Nutrition Facts Education Campaign, with a focus on percent daily value. The percent daily value can help Canadians determine if a specific amount of food has a little or a lot of a nutrient, such as sodium. This government has used innovative ways to deliver this campaign with the collaboration of Food & Consumer Products of Canada and its member companies.

Public opinion research results have shown an increase of 5% in the use of the nutrition facts table over a two-year period. In addition, almost half of those surveyed said that having nutritional information available had influenced the decisions they made when buying food.

The Eat Well Campaign was launched in September 2012 and includes messages on sodium reduction. Early findings show consistent positive indicators of intent to change behaviour. The Eat Well Campaign continues to work with the provinces and territories, non-governmental organizations, health professionals and retailers as we move forward.

This demonstrates that, while still in the early stages, the current approach is working. That is why this government continues to

collaborate with various stakeholders and has done so recently to develop guidance to industry to reduce sodium in processed foods.

The Government of Canada released guidance for the food industry on reducing sodium in processed foods in June of 2012. The bill proposes that this guidance be put into regulation. This is unnecessary. Health Canada's guidance notes specific sodium level benchmarks for processed food categories. It is intended to serve as a guide for the food industry to reduce sodium in its products. This will help Canadians reach the 2016 average sodium intake goals.

● (1420)

If passed, the bill would require that benchmark levels set out in the guidance become mandatory limits, with warnings on labels for any prepackaged foods that exceeded these levels. However, the benchmarks are based upon averages for entire food categories, such as breads or cereals. They were not designed to apply to individual foods.

As a result, the requirement for labelling of individual products with warnings stating that the food does not meet Health Canada's sodium reduction targets would be misleading to Canadians and go against the intended purpose of such a label. Furthermore, the guidance cannot be put into regulation as it is simply not possible to enforce an average.

In addition, the bill does not take into consideration food safety or food categories such as prosciutto, which are not expected to follow guidance given the nature of the product.

Indeed, the bill would pose many challenges. While unintentional, implementing the bill may potentially have negative impacts on food safety and health; I repeat, negative impacts on food safety and health. Salt- and sodium-containing food additives play important roles in the preservation of numerous foods, such as processed meats and cheese.

The bill's 90-day coming into force period would require a rapid reduction of sodium. The bill simply does not anticipate the food safety consequences that this could create. For products that cannot meet the sodium levels within the short timelines proposed by the bill, warning labels would be required. These warning labels could very well have negative health impacts that the bill, again, would not address.

A warning label for sodium alone could be very misleading to Canadians. Sodium is not the only nutrient that needs to be considered when trying to make healthier choices. A product without a sodium warning label may be perceived as a healthy choice, but may not actually contain the nutrients required to support a healthy diet.

Warning labels on foods may not achieve the desired health benefits and may not be appropriate, as risk is not associated with consumption of a single food or nutrient but, rather, overall consumption patterns.

This government's approach has been to encourage healthy eating through positive messaging, awareness and education activities, as I have described, not through unnecessary and misleading warning labels. Almost all prepackaged foods already require a nutrition facts label that has nutrient information, including the amount of sodium preserving. This table gives Canadians the information they need to make informed choices.

Finally, the bill would impose a considerable and unnecessary regulatory and administrative burden on the government and on industry. To illustrate, there are upwards of 100,000 prepackaged foods on the Canadian market, and each of these products would fall under the requirement to provide the Minister of Health with information on sodium content. A public registry would have to be established to communicate this information. This enforcement cost would be significant and would require new resources. The added compliance burden to industry would also be significant. This could result in costs being passed on to Canadians. In addition, it is unclear what the database would be used for.

As I stated earlier, a food low in sodium is not necessarily a healthy food. It would be inappropriate and misleading for people to use a registry that did not present the complete nutritional picture as a guide to healthy and unhealthy foods.

Multi-stakeholder efforts to reduce sodium intake in Canada are still in the early stages, and despite this, we are starting to see progress. It will take time for the food industry to adjust its products so they continue to be safe and acceptable to Canadians. While promoting sodium reduction is worthwhile, the bill fails to make the

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case for changing course now to take on such a heavy-headed expense of an unnecessary approach.

For all of these reasons, I cannot support the bill. It is my belief that the majority of the House would agree.

While it is well intentioned, I do not think that all the factual information has been examined. We do not want to take a heavy-handed approach. We want to do as we did with trans fats. We did this voluntary approach in trans fats. It worked. Now the trans fat issue looks very good compared to the way it looked before. We are doing the same thing with sodium intake.

This is an issue that our government takes very seriously, but we want it to work out. We believe that this voluntary approach will work.

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

[*English*]

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, February 4, at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

APPENDIX

**ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS WITH THEIR
CONSTITUENCIES, PROVINCE OF CONSTITUENCY
AND POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS;
COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE,
THE MINISTRY AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY**

CHAIR OCCUPANTS

The Speaker

HON. ANDREW SCHEER

The Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole

MR. JOE COMARTIN

The Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole

MR. BARRY DEVOLIN

The Assistant Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole

MR. BRUCE STANTON

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

HON. ANDREW SCHEER

MR. NATHAN CULLEN

MS. JUDY FOOTE

HON. ROB MERRIFIELD

HON. GORDON O'CONNOR

MS. NYCOLE TURMEL

HON. PETER VAN LOAN

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

First Session—Forty-first Parliament

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Ablonczy, Hon. Diane, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs)	Calgary—Nose Hill	Alberta	CPC
Adams, Eve, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs	Mississauga—Brampton South	Ontario	CPC
Adler, Mark	York Centre	Ontario	CPC
Aglukkaq, Hon. Leona, Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council	Nunavut	Nunavut	CPC
Albas, Dan	Okanagan—Coquihalla	British Columbia	CPC
Albrecht, Harold	Kitchener—Conestoga	Ontario	CPC
Alexander, Chris, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence	Ajax—Pickering	Ontario	CPC
Allen, Malcolm	Welland	Ontario	NDP
Allen, Mike	Tobique—Mactaquac	New Brunswick	CPC
Allison, Dean	Niagara West—Glanbrook	Ontario	CPC
Ambler, Stella	Mississauga South	Ontario	CPC
Ambrose, Hon. Rona, Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women	Edmonton—Spruce Grove	Alberta	CPC
Anders, Rob	Calgary West	Alberta	CPC
Anderson, David, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board	Cypress Hills—Grasslands	Saskatchewan	CPC
Andrews, Scott	Avalon	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Angus, Charlie	Timmins—James Bay	Ontario	NDP
Armstrong, Scott	Cumberland—Colchester— Musquodoboit Valley	Nova Scotia	CPC
Ashfield, Hon. Keith, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway	Fredericton	New Brunswick	CPC
Ashton, Niki	Churchill	Manitoba	NDP
Aspin, Jay	Nipissing—Timiskaming	Ontario	CPC
Atamanenko, Alex	British Columbia Southern Interior	British Columbia	NDP
Aubin, Robert	Trois-Rivières	Québec	NDP
Ayala, Paulina	Honoré-Mercier	Québec	NDP
Baird, Hon. John, Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ottawa West—Nepean	Ontario	CPC
Bateman, Joyce	Winnipeg South Centre	Manitoba	CPC
Bélanger, Hon. Mauril	Ottawa—Vanier	Ontario	Lib.
Bellavance, André	Richmond—Arthabaska	Québec	BQ
Bennett, Hon. Carolyn	St. Paul's	Ontario	Lib.
Benoit, Leon	Vegreville—Wainwright	Alberta	CPC
Benskin, Tyrone	Jeanne-Le Ber	Québec	NDP
Bergen, Candice, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety	Portage—Lisgar	Manitoba	CPC
Bernier, Hon. Maxime, Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism)	Beauce	Québec	CPC
Bevington, Dennis	Western Arctic	Northwest Territories	NDP
Bezan, James	Selkirk—Interlake	Manitoba	CPC
Blanchette, Denis	Louis-Hébert	Québec	NDP
Blanchette-Lamothe, Lysane	Pierrefonds—Dollard	Québec	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Blaney, Hon. Steven, Minister of Veterans Affairs	Lévis—Bellechasse	Québec	CPC
Block, Kelly	Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar	Saskatchewan	CPC
Boivin, Françoise	Gatineau	Québec	NDP
Borg, Charmaine	Terrebonne—Blainville	Québec	NDP
Boughen, Ray	Palliser	Saskatchewan	CPC
Boulerice, Alexandre	Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie	Québec	NDP
Boutin-Sweet, Marjolaine	Hochelaga	Québec	NDP
Brahmi, Tarik	Saint-Jean	Québec	NDP
Braid, Peter	Kitchener—Waterloo	Ontario	CPC
Breitkreuz, Garry	Yorkton—Melville	Saskatchewan	CPC
Brison, Hon. Scott	Kings—Hants	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Brosseau, Ruth Ellen	Berthier—Maskinongé	Québec	NDP
Brown, Gordon	Leeds—Grenville	Ontario	CPC
Brown, Lois, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation	Newmarket—Aurora	Ontario	CPC
Brown, Patrick	Barrie	Ontario	CPC
Bruinooge, Rod	Winnipeg South	Manitoba	CPC
Butt, Brad	Mississauga—Streetsville	Ontario	CPC
Byrne, Hon. Gerry	Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Calandra, Paul, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage	Oak Ridges—Markham	Ontario	CPC
Calkins, Blaine	Wetaskiwin	Alberta	CPC
Cannan, Hon. Ron	Kelowna—Lake Country	British Columbia	CPC
Carmichael, John	Don Valley West	Ontario	CPC
Caron, Guy	Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques	Québec	NDP
Carrie, Colin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health	Oshawa	Ontario	CPC
Casey, Sean	Charlottetown	Prince Edward Island	Lib.
Cash, Andrew	Davenport	Ontario	NDP
Charlton, Chris	Hamilton Mountain	Ontario	NDP
Chicoine, Sylvain	Châteauguay—Saint-Constant	Québec	NDP
Chisholm, Robert	Dartmouth—Cole Harbour	Nova Scotia	NDP
Chisu, Corneliu	Pickering—Scarborough East	Ontario	CPC
Chong, Hon. Michael	Wellington—Halton Hills	Ontario	CPC
Choquette, François	Drummond	Québec	NDP
Chow, Olivia	Trinity—Spadina	Ontario	NDP
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre	Ontario	NDP
Clarke, Rob	Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River	Saskatchewan	CPC
Cleary, Ryan	St. John's South—Mount Pearl	Newfoundland and Labrador	NDP
Clement, Hon. Tony, President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Ontario	CPC
Coderre, Hon. Denis	Bourassa	Québec	Lib.
Comartin, Joe, The Deputy Speaker	Windsor—Tecumseh	Ontario	NDP
Côté, Raymond	Beauport—Limoilou	Québec	NDP
Cotler, Hon. Irwin	Mount Royal	Québec	Lib.
Crockatt, Joan	Calgary Centre	Alberta	CPC
Crowder, Jean	Nanaimo—Cowichan	British Columbia	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Cullen, Nathan	Skeena—Bulkley Valley	British Columbia	NDP
Cuzner, Rodger	Cape Breton—Canso	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Daniel, Joe	Don Valley East	Ontario	CPC
Davidson, Patricia	Sarnia—Lambton	Ontario	CPC
Davies, Don	Vancouver Kingsway	British Columbia	NDP
Davies, Libby	Vancouver East	British Columbia	NDP
Day, Anne-Marie	Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles	Québec	NDP
Dechert, Bob, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Mississauga—Erindale	Ontario	CPC
Del Mastro, Dean, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs	Peterborough	Ontario	CPC
Devolin, Barry, The Acting Speaker	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Ontario	CPC
Dewar, Paul	Ottawa Centre	Ontario	NDP
Dion, Hon. Stéphane, Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Québec	Lib.
Dionne Labelle, Pierre	Rivière-du-Nord	Québec	NDP
Donnelly, Fin	New Westminster—Coquitlam	British Columbia	NDP
Doré Lefebvre, Rosane	Alfred-Pellan	Québec	NDP
Dreeshen, Earl	Red Deer	Alberta	CPC
Dubé, Matthew	Chambly—Borduas	Québec	NDP
Duncan, Hon. John, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development	Vancouver Island North	British Columbia	CPC
Duncan, Kirsty	Etobicoke North	Ontario	Lib.
Duncan, Linda	Edmonton—Strathcona	Alberta	NDP
Dusseault, Pierre-Luc	Sherbrooke	Québec	NDP
Dykstra, Rick, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration	St. Catharines	Ontario	CPC
Easter, Hon. Wayne	Malpeque	Prince Edward Island	Lib.
Eyking, Hon. Mark	Sydney—Victoria	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Fantino, Hon. Julian, Minister of International Cooperation	Vaughan	Ontario	CPC
Fast, Hon. Ed, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Abbotsford	British Columbia	CPC
Findlay, Kerry-Lynne D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Delta—Richmond East	British Columbia	CPC
Finley, Hon. Diane, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development	Haldimand—Norfolk	Ontario	CPC
Flaherty, Hon. Jim, Minister of Finance	Whitby—Oshawa	Ontario	CPC
Fletcher, Hon. Steven, Minister of State (Transport)	Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia	Manitoba	CPC
Foote, Judy	Random—Burin—St. George's	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Fortin, Jean-François	Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia	Québec	BQ
Freeman, Mylène	Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel	Québec	NDP
Fry, Hon. Hedy	Vancouver Centre	British Columbia	Lib.
Galipeau, Royal	Ottawa—Orléans	Ontario	CPC
Gallant, Cheryl	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Ontario	CPC
Garneau, Marc	Westmount—Ville-Marie	Québec	Lib.
Garrison, Randall	Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca	British Columbia	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Genest, Réjean	Shefford	Québec	NDP
Genest-Jourdain, Jonathan	Manicouagan	Québec	NDP
Giguère, Alain	Marc-Aurèle-Fortin	Québec	NDP
Gill, Parm	Brampton—Springdale	Ontario	CPC
Glover, Shelly, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance	Saint Boniface	Manitoba	CPC
Godin, Yvon	Acadie—Bathurst	New Brunswick	NDP
Goguen, Robert, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe	New Brunswick	CPC
Goldring, Peter	Edmonton East	Alberta	Ind. Cons.
Goodale, Hon. Ralph	Wascana	Saskatchewan	Lib.
Goodyear, Hon. Gary, Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario)	Cambridge	Ontario	CPC
Gosal, Hon. Bal, Minister of State (Sport)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	Ontario	CPC
Gourde, Jacques, 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	Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière	Québec	CPC
Gravelle, Claude	Nickel Belt	Ontario	NDP
Grewal, Nina	Fleetwood—Port Kells	British Columbia	CPC
Groguhé, Sadia	Saint-Lambert	Québec	NDP
Harper, Right Hon. Stephen, Prime Minister	Calgary Southwest	Alberta	CPC
Harris, Dan	Scarborough Southwest	Ontario	NDP
Harris, Jack	St. John's East	Newfoundland and Labrador	NDP
Harris, Richard	Cariboo—Prince George	British Columbia	CPC
Hassainia, Sana	Verchères—Les Patriotes	Québec	NDP
Hawn, Hon. Laurie	Edmonton Centre	Alberta	CPC
Hayes, Bryan	Sault Ste. Marie	Ontario	CPC
Hiebert, Russ	South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale	British Columbia	CPC
Hillyer, Jim	Lethbridge	Alberta	CPC
Hoback, Randy	Prince Albert	Saskatchewan	CPC
Holder, Ed	London West	Ontario	CPC
Hsu, Ted	Kingston and the Islands	Ontario	Lib.
Hughes, Carol	Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing	Ontario	NDP
Hyer, Bruce	Thunder Bay—Superior North	Ontario	Ind.
Jacob, Pierre	Brome—Missisquoi	Québec	NDP
James, Roxanne	Scarborough Centre	Ontario	CPC
Jean, Brian	Fort McMurray—Athabasca	Alberta	CPC
Julian, Peter	Burnaby—New Westminster	British Columbia	NDP
Kamp, Randy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission	British Columbia	CPC
Karygiannis, Hon. Jim	Scarborough—Agincourt	Ontario	Lib.
Keddy, Gerald, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway	South Shore—St. Margaret's	Nova Scotia	CPC
Kellway, Matthew	Beaches—East York	Ontario	NDP
Kenney, Hon. Jason, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism	Calgary Southeast	Alberta	CPC
Kent, Hon. Peter, Minister of the Environment	Thornhill	Ontario	CPC
Kerr, Greg	West Nova	Nova Scotia	CPC
Komarnicki, Ed	Souris—Moose Mountain	Saskatchewan	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Kramp, Daryl	Prince Edward—Hastings	Ontario	CPC
Lake, Hon. Mike, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry	Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont	Alberta	CPC
Lamoureux, Kevin	Winnipeg North	Manitoba	Lib.
Lapointe, François	Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup	Québec	NDP
Larose, Jean-François	Repentigny	Québec	NDP
Latendresse, Alexandrine	Louis-Saint-Laurent	Québec	NDP
Lauzon, Guy	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Ontario	CPC
Laverdière, Hélène	Laurier—Sainte-Marie	Québec	NDP
Lebel, Hon. Denis, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec	Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean	Québec	CPC
LeBlanc, Hon. Dominic	Beauséjour	New Brunswick	Lib.
LeBlanc, Hélène	LaSalle—Émard	Québec	NDP
Leef, Ryan	Yukon	Yukon	CPC
Leitch, Kellie, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour	Simcoe—Grey	Ontario	CPC
Lemieux, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	Ontario	CPC
Leslie, Megan	Halifax	Nova Scotia	NDP
Leung, Chungsen, Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism	Willowdale	Ontario	CPC
Liu, Laurin	Rivière-des-Mille-Îles	Québec	NDP
Lizon, Wladyslaw	Mississauga East—Cooksville	Ontario	CPC
Lobb, Ben	Huron—Bruce	Ontario	CPC
Lukiwski, Tom, Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre	Saskatchewan	CPC
Lunney, James	Nanaimo—Alberni	British Columbia	CPC
MacAulay, Hon. Lawrence	Cardigan	Prince Edward Island	Lib.
MacKay, Hon. Peter, Minister of National Defence	Central Nova	Nova Scotia	CPC
MacKenzie, Dave	Oxford	Ontario	CPC
Mai, Hoang	Brossard—La Prairie	Québec	NDP
Marston, Wayne	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek	Ontario	NDP
Martin, Pat	Winnipeg Centre	Manitoba	NDP
Masse, Brian	Windsor West	Ontario	NDP
Mathysen, Irene	London—Fanshawe	Ontario	NDP
May, Elizabeth	Saanich—Gulf Islands	British Columbia	GP
Mayes, Colin	Okanagan—Shuswap	British Columbia	CPC
McCallum, Hon. John	Markham—Unionville	Ontario	Lib.
McColeman, Phil	Brant	Ontario	CPC
McGuinty, David	Ottawa South	Ontario	Lib.
McKay, Hon. John	Scarborough—Guildwood	Ontario	Lib.
McLeod, Cathy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue	Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo	British Columbia	CPC
Menegakis, Costas	Richmond Hill	Ontario	CPC
Menzies, Hon. Ted, Minister of State (Finance)	Macleod	Alberta	CPC
Merrifield, Hon. Rob	Yellowhead	Alberta	CPC
Michaud, Éloïse	Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier	Québec	NDP
Miller, Larry	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Ontario	CPC
Moore, Christine	Abitibi—Témiscamingue	Québec	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Moore, Hon. James, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages.....	Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam	British Columbia	CPC
Moore, Hon. Rob	Fundy Royal	New Brunswick.....	CPC
Morin, Dany	Chicoutimi—Le Fjord	Québec	NDP
Morin, Isabelle	Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine	Québec	NDP
Morin, Marc-André	Laurentides—Labelle	Québec	NDP
Morin, Marie-Claude.....	Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot	Québec	NDP
Mourani, Maria.....	Ahuntsic	Québec	BQ
Mulcair, Hon. Thomas, Leader of the Opposition	Outremont	Québec	NDP
Murray, Joyce	Vancouver Quadra	British Columbia	Lib.
Nantel, Pierre	Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher	Québec	NDP
Nash, Peggy	Parkdale—High Park	Ontario	NDP
Nicholls, Jamie	Vaudreuil-Soulanges	Québec	NDP
Nicholson, Hon. Rob, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada	Niagara Falls	Ontario	CPC
Norlock, Rick	Northumberland—Quinte West	Ontario	CPC
Nunez-Melo, José	Laval.....	Québec	NDP
Obhrai, Deepak, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.....	Calgary East.....	Alberta	CPC
O'Connor, Hon. Gordon, Minister of State and Chief Government Whip	Carleton—Mississippi Mills....	Ontario	CPC
Oliver, Hon. Joe, Minister of Natural Resources	Eglinton—Lawrence	Ontario	CPC
O'Neill Gordon, Tilly	Miramichi	New Brunswick.....	CPC
Opitz, Ted	Etobicoke Centre.....	Ontario	CPC
O'Toole, Erin	Durham	Ontario	CPC
Pacetti, Massimo	Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel ..	Québec	Lib.
Papillon, Annick	Québec.....	Québec	NDP
Paradis, Hon. Christian, Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture)	Mégantic—L'Érable.....	Québec	CPC
Patry, Claude	Jonquière—Alma	Québec	NDP
Payne, LaVar	Medicine Hat.....	Alberta	CPC
Péclet, Ève.....	La Pointe-de-l'Île.....	Québec	NDP
Penashue, Hon. Peter, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada	Labrador	Newfoundland and Labrador.....	CPC
Perreault, Manon	Montcalm.....	Québec	NDP
Pilon, François	Laval—Les Îles	Québec	NDP
Plamondon, Louis	Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour	Québec	BQ
Poilievre, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario	Nepean—Carleton	Ontario	CPC
Preston, Joe	Elgin—Middlesex—London ...	Ontario	CPC
Quach, Anne Minh-Thu	Beauharnois—Salaberry	Québec	NDP
Rae, Hon. Bob	Toronto Centre	Ontario	Lib.
Rafferty, John.....	Thunder Bay—Rainy River	Ontario	NDP
Raitt, Hon. Lisa, Minister of Labour	Halton	Ontario	CPC
Rajotte, James	Edmonton—Leduc	Alberta	CPC
Rankin, Murray	Victoria	British Columbia	NDP
Rathgeber, Brent	Edmonton—St. Albert.....	Alberta	CPC
Ravignat, Mathieu.....	Pontiac.....	Québec	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Raynault, Francine	Joliette	Québec	NDP
Regan, Hon. Geoff	Halifax West	Nova Scotia	Lib.
Reid, Scott	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	Ontario	CPC
Rempel, Michelle, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment	Calgary Centre-North	Alberta	CPC
Richards, Blake	Wild Rose	Alberta	CPC
Rickford, Greg, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Kenora	Ontario	CPC
Ritz, Hon. Gerry, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board	Battlefords—Lloydminster	Saskatchewan	CPC
Rousseau, Jean	Compton—Stanstead	Québec	NDP
Saganash, Romeo	Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik —Eeyou	Québec	NDP
Sandhu, Jasbir	Surrey North	British Columbia	NDP
Saxton, Andrew, Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification	North Vancouver	British Columbia	CPC
Scarpaleggia, Francis	Lac-Saint-Louis	Québec	Lib.
Scheer, Hon. Andrew, Speaker of the House of Commons	Regina—Qu'Appelle	Saskatchewan	CPC
Schellenberger, Gary	Perth—Wellington	Ontario	CPC
Scott, Craig	Toronto—Danforth	Ontario	NDP
Seeback, Kyle	Brampton West	Ontario	CPC
Sellah, Djaouida	Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert	Québec	NDP
Sgro, Hon. Judy	York West	Ontario	Lib.
Shea, Hon. Gail, Minister of National Revenue	Egmont	Prince Edward Island	CPC
Shiple, Bev	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Ontario	CPC
Shory, Devinder	Calgary Northeast	Alberta	CPC
Simms, Scott	Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor	Newfoundland and Labrador	Lib.
Sims, Jinny Jogindera	Newton—North Delta	British Columbia	NDP
Sitsabaiesan, Rathika	Scarborough—Rouge River	Ontario	NDP
Smith, Joy	Kildonan—St. Paul	Manitoba	CPC
Sopuck, Robert	Dauphin—Swan River— Marquette	Manitoba	CPC
Sorenson, Kevin	Crowfoot	Alberta	CPC
Stanton, Bruce, The Acting Speaker	Simcoe North	Ontario	CPC
St-Denis, Lise	Saint-Maurice—Champlain	Québec	Lib.
Stewart, Kennedy	Burnaby—Douglas	British Columbia	NDP
Stoffer, Peter	Sackville—Eastern Shore	Nova Scotia	NDP
Storseth, Brian	Westlock—St. Paul	Alberta	CPC
Strahl, Mark	Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon	British Columbia	CPC
Sullivan, Mike	York South—Weston	Ontario	NDP
Sweet, David	Ancaster—Dundas— Flamborough—Westdale	Ontario	CPC
Thibeault, Glenn	Sudbury	Ontario	NDP
Tilson, David	Dufferin—Caledon	Ontario	CPC
Toet, Lawrence	Elmwood—Transcona	Manitoba	CPC
Toews, Hon. Vic, Minister of Public Safety	Provencher	Manitoba	CPC
Toone, Philip	Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine	Québec	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Province of Constituency	Political Affiliation
Tremblay, Jonathan	Montmorency—Charlevoix— Haute-Côte-Nord	Québec	NDP
Trost, Brad	Saskatoon—Humboldt	Saskatchewan	CPC
Trottier, Bernard	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	Ontario	CPC
Trudeau, Justin	Papineau	Québec	Lib.
Truppe, Susan, Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women	London North Centre	Ontario	CPC
Turmel, Nycole	Hull—Aylmer	Québec	NDP
Tweed, Merv	Brandon—Souris	Manitoba	CPC
Uppal, Hon. Tim, Minister of State (Democratic Reform)	Edmonton—Sherwood Park	Alberta	CPC
Valcourt, Hon. Bernard, Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie)	Madawaska—Restigouche	New Brunswick	CPC
Valeriote, Frank	Guelph	Ontario	Lib.
Van Kesteren, Dave	Chatham-Kent—Essex	Ontario	CPC
Van Loan, Hon. Peter, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	York—Simcoe	Ontario	CPC
Vellacott, Maurice	Saskatoon—Wanuskewin	Saskatchewan	CPC
Wallace, Mike	Burlington	Ontario	CPC
Warawa, Mark	Langley	British Columbia	CPC
Warkentin, Chris	Peace River	Alberta	CPC
Watson, Jeff	Essex	Ontario	CPC
Weston, John	West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country	British Columbia	CPC
Weston, Rodney	Saint John	New Brunswick	CPC
Wilks, David	Kootenay—Columbia	British Columbia	CPC
Williamson, John	New Brunswick Southwest	New Brunswick	CPC
Wong, Hon. Alice, Minister of State (Seniors)	Richmond	British Columbia	CPC
Woodworth, Stephen	Kitchener Centre	Ontario	CPC
Yelich, Hon. Lynne, Minister of State (Western Economic Diversi- fication)	Blackstrap	Saskatchewan	CPC
Young, Terence	Oakville	Ontario	CPC
Young, Wai	Vancouver South	British Columbia	CPC
Zimmer, Bob	Prince George—Peace River	British Columbia	CPC

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BY PROVINCE

First Session—Forty-first Parliament

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALBERTA (28)		
Ablonczy, Hon. Diane, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs)	Calgary—Nose Hill	CPC
Ambrose, Hon. Rona, Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women	Edmonton—Spruce Grove	CPC
Anders, Rob	Calgary West	CPC
Benoit, Leon	Vegreville—Wainwright	CPC
Calkins, Blaine	Wetaskiwin	CPC
Crockatt, Joan	Calgary Centre	CPC
Dreeshen, Earl	Red Deer	CPC
Duncan, Linda	Edmonton—Strathcona	NDP
Goldring, Peter	Edmonton East	Ind. Cons.
Harper, Right Hon. Stephen, Prime Minister	Calgary Southwest	CPC
Hawn, Hon. Laurie	Edmonton Centre	CPC
Hillyer, Jim	Lethbridge	CPC
Jean, Brian	Fort McMurray—Athabasca	CPC
Kenney, Hon. Jason, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism	Calgary Southeast	CPC
Lake, Hon. Mike, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry	Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont	CPC
Menzies, Hon. Ted, Minister of State (Finance)	Macleod	CPC
Merrifield, Hon. Rob	Yellowhead	CPC
Obhrai, Deepak, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Calgary East	CPC
Payne, LaVar	Medicine Hat	CPC
Rajotte, James	Edmonton—Leduc	CPC
Rathgeber, Brent	Edmonton—St. Albert	CPC
Rempel, Michelle, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment	Calgary Centre-North	CPC
Richards, Blake	Wild Rose	CPC
Shory, Devinder	Calgary Northeast	CPC
Sorenson, Kevin	Crowfoot	CPC
Storseth, Brian	Westlock—St. Paul	CPC
Uppal, Hon. Tim, Minister of State (Democratic Reform)	Edmonton—Sherwood Park	CPC
Warkentin, Chris	Peace River	CPC
BRITISH COLUMBIA (36)		
Albas, Dan	Okanagan—Coquihalla	CPC
Atamanenko, Alex	British Columbia Southern Interior	NDP
Cannan, Hon. Ron	Kelowna—Lake Country	CPC
Crowder, Jean	Nanaimo—Cowichan	NDP
Cullen, Nathan	Skeena—Bulkley Valley	NDP
Davies, Don	Vancouver Kingsway	NDP
Davies, Libby	Vancouver East	NDP
Donnelly, Fin	New Westminster—Coquitlam	NDP
Duncan, Hon. John, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development	Vancouver Island North	CPC
Fast, Hon. Ed, Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Abbotsford	CPC
Findlay, Kerry-Lynne D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Delta—Richmond East	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Fry, Hon. Hedy	Vancouver Centre	Lib.
Garrison, Randall	Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca	NDP
Grewal, Nina	Fleetwood—Port Kells	CPC
Harris, Richard	Cariboo—Prince George	CPC
Hiebert, Russ	South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale	CPC
Julian, Peter	Burnaby—New Westminster	NDP
Kamp, Randy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway	Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission	CPC
Lunney, James	Nanaimo—Alberni	CPC
May, Elizabeth	Saanich—Gulf Islands	GP
Mayes, Colin	Okanagan—Shuswap	CPC
McLeod, Cathy, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue	Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo	CPC
Moore, Hon. James, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages	Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam	CPC
Murray, Joyce	Vancouver Quadra	Lib.
Rankin, Murray	Victoria	NDP
Sandhu, Jasbir	Surrey North	NDP
Saxton, Andrew, Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification	North Vancouver	CPC
Sims, Jinny Jogindera	Newton—North Delta	NDP
Stewart, Kennedy	Burnaby—Douglas	NDP
Strahl, Mark	Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon	CPC
Warawa, Mark	Langley	CPC
Weston, John	West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country	CPC
Wilks, David	Kootenay—Columbia	CPC
Wong, Hon. Alice, Minister of State (Seniors)	Richmond	CPC
Young, Wai	Vancouver South	CPC
Zimmer, Bob	Prince George—Peace River	CPC
MANITOBA (14)		
Ashton, Niki	Churchill	NDP
Bateman, Joyce	Winnipeg South Centre	CPC
Bergen, Candice, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety	Portage—Lisgar	CPC
Bezan, James	Selkirk—Interlake	CPC
Bruinooge, Rod	Winnipeg South	CPC
Fletcher, Hon. Steven, Minister of State (Transport)	Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia	CPC
Glover, Shelly, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance	Saint Boniface	CPC
Lamoureux, Kevin	Winnipeg North	Lib.
Martin, Pat	Winnipeg Centre	NDP
Smith, Joy	Kildonan—St. Paul	CPC
Sopuck, Robert	Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette	CPC
Toet, Lawrence	Elmwood—Transcona	CPC
Toews, Hon. Vic, Minister of Public Safety	Provencher	CPC
Tweed, Merv	Brandon—Souris	CPC
NEW BRUNSWICK (10)		
Allen, Mike	Tobique—Mactaquac	CPC
Ashfield, Hon. Keith, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway	Fredericton	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Godin, Yvon	Acadie—Bathurst	NDP
Goguen, Robert, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice	Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe	CPC
LeBlanc, Hon. Dominic	Beauséjour	Lib.
Moore, Hon. Rob	Fundy Royal	CPC
O'Neill Gordon, Tilly	Miramichi	CPC
Valcourt, Hon. Bernard, Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency) (La Francophonie)	Madawaska—Restigouche	CPC
Weston, Rodney	Saint John	CPC
Williamson, John	New Brunswick Southwest	CPC
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR (7)		
Andrews, Scott	Avalon	Lib.
Byrne, Hon. Gerry	Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte	Lib.
Cleary, Ryan	St. John's South—Mount Pearl	NDP
Foote, Judy	Random—Burin—St. George's	Lib.
Harris, Jack	St. John's East	NDP
Penashue, Hon. Peter, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada	Labrador	CPC
Simms, Scott	Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor	Lib.
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (1)		
Bevington, Dennis	Western Arctic	NDP
NOVA SCOTIA (11)		
Armstrong, Scott	Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley	CPC
Brison, Hon. Scott	Kings—Hants	Lib.
Chisholm, Robert	Dartmouth—Cole Harbour	NDP
Cuzner, Rodger	Cape Breton—Canso	Lib.
Eyking, Hon. Mark	Sydney—Victoria	Lib.
Keddy, Gerald, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway	South Shore—St. Margaret's	CPC
Kerr, Greg	West Nova	CPC
Leslie, Megan	Halifax	NDP
MacKay, Hon. Peter, Minister of National Defence	Central Nova	CPC
Regan, Hon. Geoff	Halifax West	Lib.
Stoffer, Peter	Sackville—Eastern Shore	NDP
NUNAVUT (1)		
Aglukkaq, Hon. Leona, Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council	Nunavut	CPC
ONTARIO (106)		
Adams, Eve, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs	Mississauga—Brampton South	CPC
Adler, Mark	York Centre	CPC
Albrecht, Harold	Kitchener—Conestoga	CPC
Alexander, Chris, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence	Ajax—Pickering	CPC
Allen, Malcolm	Welland	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Allison, Dean	Niagara West—Glanbrook	CPC
Ambler, Stella	Mississauga South	CPC
Angus, Charlie	Timmins—James Bay	NDP
Aspin, Jay	Nipissing—Timiskaming	CPC
Baird, Hon. John, Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ottawa West—Nepean	CPC
Bélanger, Hon. Mauril	Ottawa—Vanier	Lib.
Bennett, Hon. Carolyn	St. Paul's	Lib.
Braid, Peter	Kitchener—Waterloo	CPC
Brown, Gordon	Leeds—Grenville	CPC
Brown, Lois, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation	Newmarket—Aurora	CPC
Brown, Patrick	Barrie	CPC
Butt, Brad	Mississauga—Streetsville	CPC
Calandra, Paul, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage	Oak Ridges—Markham	CPC
Carmichael, John	Don Valley West	CPC
Carrie, Colin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health	Oshawa	CPC
Cash, Andrew	Davenport	NDP
Charlton, Chris	Hamilton Mountain	NDP
Chisu, Corneliu	Pickering—Scarborough East	CPC
Chong, Hon. Michael	Wellington—Halton Hills	CPC
Chow, Olivia	Trinity—Spadina	NDP
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre	NDP
Clement, Hon. Tony, President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Parry Sound—Muskoka	CPC
Comartin, Joe, The Deputy Speaker	Windsor—Tecumseh	NDP
Daniel, Joe	Don Valley East	CPC
Davidson, Patricia	Sarnia—Lambton	CPC
Dechert, Bob, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs	Mississauga—Erindale	CPC
Del Mastro, Dean, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs	Peterborough	CPC
Devolin, Barry, The Acting Speaker	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	CPC
Dewar, Paul	Ottawa Centre	NDP
Duncan, Kirsty	Etobicoke North	Lib.
Dykstra, Rick, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration	St. Catharines	CPC
Fantino, Hon. Julian, Minister of International Cooperation	Vaughan	CPC
Finley, Hon. Diane, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development	Haldimand—Norfolk	CPC
Flaherty, Hon. Jim, Minister of Finance	Whitby—Oshawa	CPC
Galipeau, Royal	Ottawa—Orléans	CPC
Gallant, Cheryl	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	CPC
Gill, Parm	Brampton—Springdale	CPC
Goodyear, Hon. Gary, Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario)	Cambridge	CPC
Gosal, Hon. Bal, Minister of State (Sport)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	CPC
Gravelle, Claude	Nickel Belt	NDP
Harris, Dan	Scarborough Southwest	NDP
Hayes, Bryan	Sault Ste. Marie	CPC
Holder, Ed	London West	CPC
Hsu, Ted	Kingston and the Islands	Lib.
Hughes, Carol	Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking	NDP
Hyer, Bruce	Thunder Bay—Superior North	Ind.

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
James, Roxanne	Scarborough Centre	CPC
Karygiannis, Hon. Jim	Scarborough—Agincourt	Lib.
Kellway, Matthew	Beaches—East York	NDP
Kent, Hon. Peter, Minister of the Environment	Thornhill	CPC
Kramp, Daryl	Prince Edward—Hastings	CPC
Lauzon, Guy	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	CPC
Leitch, Kellie, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour	Simcoe—Grey	CPC
Lemieux, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	CPC
Leung, Chungsen, Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism	Willowdale	CPC
Lizon, Wladyslaw	Mississauga East—Cooksville	CPC
Lobb, Ben	Huron—Bruce	CPC
MacKenzie, Dave	Oxford	CPC
Marston, Wayne	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek	NDP
Masse, Brian	Windsor West	NDP
Mathysen, Irene	London—Fanshawe	NDP
McCallum, Hon. John	Markham—Unionville	Lib.
McColeman, Phil	Brant	CPC
McGuinty, David	Ottawa South	Lib.
McKay, Hon. John	Scarborough—Guildwood	Lib.
Menegakis, Costas	Richmond Hill	CPC
Miller, Larry	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	CPC
Nash, Peggy	Parkdale—High Park	NDP
Nicholson, Hon. Rob, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada	Niagara Falls	CPC
Norlock, Rick	Northumberland—Quinte West	CPC
O'Connor, Hon. Gordon, Minister of State and Chief Government Whip	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	CPC
Oliver, Hon. Joe, Minister of Natural Resources	Eglinton—Lawrence	CPC
Opitz, Ted	Etobicoke Centre	CPC
O'Toole, Erin	Durham	CPC
Poillievre, Pierre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario	Nepean—Carleton	CPC
Preston, Joe	Elgin—Middlesex—London	CPC
Rae, Hon. Bob	Toronto Centre	Lib.
Rafferty, John	Thunder Bay—Rainy River	NDP
Raitt, Hon. Lisa, Minister of Labour	Halton	CPC
Reid, Scott	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	CPC
Rickford, Greg, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario	Kenora	CPC
Schellenberger, Gary	Perth—Wellington	CPC
Scott, Craig	Toronto—Danforth	NDP
Seeback, Kyle	Brampton West	CPC
Sgro, Hon. Judy	York West	Lib.
Shiple, Bev	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	CPC
Sitsabaiesan, Rathika	Scarborough—Rouge River	NDP
Stanton, Bruce, The Acting Speaker	Simcoe North	CPC
Sullivan, Mike	York South—Weston	NDP
Sweet, David	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale	CPC

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Thibeault, Glenn	Sudbury	NDP
Tilson, David	Dufferin—Caledon	CPC
Trottier, Bernard	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	CPC
Truppe, Susan, Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women	London North Centre	CPC
Valeriote, Frank	Guelph	Lib.
Van Kesteren, Dave	Chatham-Kent—Essex	CPC
Van Loan, Hon. Peter, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	York—Simcoe	CPC
Wallace, Mike	Burlington	CPC
Watson, Jeff	Essex	CPC
Woodworth, Stephen	Kitchener Centre	CPC
Young, Terence	Oakville	CPC
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND (4)		
Casey, Sean	Charlottetown	Lib.
Easter, Hon. Wayne	Malpeque	Lib.
MacAulay, Hon. Lawrence	Cardigan	Lib.
Shea, Hon. Gail, Minister of National Revenue	Egmont	CPC
QUÉBEC (75)		
Aubin, Robert	Trois-Rivières	NDP
Ayala, Paulina	Honoré-Mercier	NDP
Bellavance, André	Richmond—Arthabaska	BQ
Benskin, Tyrone	Jeanne-Le Ber	NDP
Bernier, Hon. Maxime, Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism)	Beauce	CPC
Blanchette, Denis	Louis-Hébert	NDP
Blanchette-Lamothe, Lysane	Pierrefonds—Dollard	NDP
Blaney, Hon. Steven, Minister of Veterans Affairs	Lévis—Bellechasse	CPC
Boivin, Françoise	Gatineau	NDP
Borg, Charmaine	Terrebonne—Blainville	NDP
Boulerice, Alexandre	Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie	NDP
Boutin-Sweet, Marjolaine	Hochelaga	NDP
Brahmi, Tarik	Saint-Jean	NDP
Brosseau, Ruth Ellen	Berthier—Maskinongé	NDP
Caron, Guy	Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques	NDP
Chicoine, Sylvain	Châteauguay—Saint-Constant	NDP
Choquette, François	Drummond	NDP
Coderre, Hon. Denis	Bourassa	Lib.
Côté, Raymond	Beauport—Limoilou	NDP
Cotler, Hon. Irwin	Mount Royal	Lib.
Day, Anne-Marie	Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles	NDP
Dion, Hon. Stéphane, Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Saint-Laurent—Cartierville	Lib.
Dionne Labelle, Pierre	Rivière-du-Nord	NDP
Doré Lefebvre, Rosane	Alfred-Pellan	NDP
Dubé, Matthew	Chambly—Borduas	NDP
Dusseault, Pierre-Luc	Sherbrooke	NDP
Fortin, Jean-François	Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia	BQ
Freeman, Mylène	Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Garneau, Marc	Westmount—Ville-Marie	Lib.
Genest, Réjean	Shefford	NDP
Genest-Jourdain, Jonathan	Manicouagan	NDP
Giguère, Alain	Marc-Aurèle-Fortin	NDP
Gourde, Jacques, 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	Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière	CPC
Groghé, Sadia	Saint-Lambert	NDP
Hassainia, Sana	Verchères—Les Patriotes	NDP
Jacob, Pierre	Brome—Missisquoi	NDP
Lapointe, François	Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup	NDP
Larose, Jean-François	Repentigny	NDP
Latendresse, Alexandrine	Louis-Saint-Laurent	NDP
Laverdière, Hélène	Laurier—Sainte-Marie	NDP
Label, Hon. Denis, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec	Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean	CPC
LeBlanc, Hélène	LaSalle—Émard	NDP
Liu, Laurin	Rivière-des-Mille-Îles	NDP
Mai, Hoang	Brossard—La Prairie	NDP
Michaud, Éline	Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier	NDP
Moore, Christine	Abitibi—Témiscamingue	NDP
Morin, Dany	Chicoutimi—Le Fjord	NDP
Morin, Isabelle	Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine	NDP
Morin, Marc-André	Laurentides—Labelle	NDP
Morin, Marie-Claude	Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot	NDP
Mourani, Maria	Ahuntsic	BQ
Mulcair, Hon. Thomas, Leader of the Opposition	Outremont	NDP
Nantel, Pierre	Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher	NDP
Nicholls, Jamie	Vaudreuil-Soulanges	NDP
Nunez-Melo, José	Laval	NDP
Pacetti, Massimo	Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel	Lib.
Papillon, Annick	Québec	NDP
Paradis, Hon. Christian, Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture)	Mégantic—L'Érable	CPC
Patry, Claude	Jonquière—Alma	NDP
Péclet, Ève	La Pointe-de-l'Île	NDP
Perreault, Manon	Montcalm	NDP
Pilon, François	Laval—Les Îles	NDP
Plamondon, Louis	Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour	BQ
Quach, Anne Minh-Thu	Beauharnois—Salaberry	NDP
Ravignat, Mathieu	Pontiac	NDP
Raynault, Francine	Joliette	NDP
Rousseau, Jean	Compton—Stanstead	NDP
Saganash, Romeo	Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou	NDP
Scarpaleggia, Francis	Lac-Saint-Louis	Lib.
Sellah, Djaouida	Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert	NDP
St-Denis, Lise	Saint-Maurice—Champlain	Lib.
Toone, Philip	Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine	NDP
Tremblay, Jonathan	Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord	NDP

Name of Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
Trudeau, Justin	Papineau	Lib.
Turmel, Nycole	Hull—Aylmer	NDP
SASKATCHEWAN (14)		
Anderson, David, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board	Cypress Hills—Grasslands	CPC
Block, Kelly	Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar	CPC
Boughen, Ray	Palliser	CPC
Breitkreuz, Garry	Yorkton—Melville	CPC
Clarke, Rob	Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River	CPC
Goodale, Hon. Ralph	Wascana	Lib.
Hoback, Randy	Prince Albert	CPC
Komarnicki, Ed	Souris—Moose Mountain	CPC
Lukiwski, Tom, Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre	CPC
Ritz, Hon. Gerry, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board	Battlefords—Lloydminster	CPC
Scheer, Hon. Andrew, Speaker of the House of Commons	Regina—Qu'Appelle	CPC
Trost, Brad	Saskatoon—Humboldt	CPC
Vellacott, Maurice	Saskatoon—Wanuskewin	CPC
Yelich, Hon. Lynne, Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification)	Blackstrap	CPC
YUKON (1)		
Leef, Ryan	Yukon	CPC

LIST OF STANDING AND SUB-COMMITTEES

(As of February 1, 2013 — 1st Session, 41st Parliament)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Chair:	Chris Warkentin	Vice-Chairs:	Carolyn Bennett Jean Crowder
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Stella Ambler Dennis Bevington Ray Boughen	Rob Clarke Jonathan Genest-Jourdain	Carol Hughes Greg Rickford	Kyle Seeback David Wilks	(12)
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Associate Members

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Mark Adler	Joan Crockett	Mike Lake	Blake Richards
Dan Albas	Nathan Cullen	Kevin Lamoureux	Romeo Saganash
Harold Albrecht	Joe Daniel	Guy Lauzon	Andrew Saxton
Chris Alexander	Patricia Davidson	Ryan Leef	Gary Schellenberger
Mike Allen	Bob Dechert	Kellie Leitch	Bev Shipley
Dean Allison	Dean Del Mastro	Pierre Lemieux	Devinder Shory
Rob Anders	Earl Dreshen	Chungsen Leung	Joy Smith
David Anderson	Rick Dykstra	Wladyslaw Lizon	Robert Sopuck
Charlie Angus	Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay	Ben Lobb	Kevin Sorenson
Scott Armstrong	Hedy Fry	Tom Lukiwski	Brian Storseth
Niki Ashton	Royal Galipeau	James Lunney	Mark Strahl
Jay Aspin	Cheryl Gallant	Dave MacKenzie	David Sweet
Joyce Bateman	Parm Gill	Colin Mayes	David Tilson
Leon Benoit	Shelly Glover	Phil McColeman	Lawrence Toet
Tyrone Benskin	Robert Goguen	Cathy McLeod	Brad Trost
Candice Bergen	Jacques Gourde	Costas Menegakis	Bernard Trotter
James Bezan	Nina Grewal	Rob Merrifield	Susan Truppe
Kelly Block	Richard Harris	Larry Miller	Merv Tweed
Peter Braid	Laurie Hawn	Rob Moore	Dave Van Kesteren
Garry Breitkreuz	Bryan Hayes	Rick Norlock	Maurice Vellacott
Gordon Brown	Russ Hiebert	Deepak Obhrai	Mike Wallace
Lois Brown	Jim Hillyer	Tilly O'Neill Gordon	Mark Warawa
Patrick Brown	Randy Hoback	Ted Opitz	Jeff Watson
Rod Bruinooge	Ed Holder	Erin O'Toole	John Weston
Brad Butt	Roxanne James	LaVar Payne	Rodney Weston
Paul Calandra	Brian Jean	Pierre Poilievre	John Williamson
Blaine Calkins	Peter Julian	Joe Preston	Stephen Woodworth
Ron Cannan	Randy Kamp	James Rajotte	Terence Young
John Carmichael	Gerald Keddy	Brent Rathgeber	Wai Young
Colin Carrie	Greg Kerr	Mathieu Ravignat	Bob Zimmer
Corneliu Chisu	Ed Komarnicki	Scott Reid	

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Chair:

Pierre-Luc Dusseault

Vice-Chairs:

 Scott Andrews
 Patricia Davidson

 Charlie Angus
 Charmaine Borg
 Alexandre Boulerice

 Brad Butt
 Blaine Calkins

 John Carmichael
 Dean Del Mastro

 Earl Dreshen
 Colin Mayes

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Dan Albas	Joe Daniel	Pierre Lemieux	Bev Shipley
Harold Albrecht	Bob Dechert	Chungsen Leung	Devinder Shory
Chris Alexander	Rick Dykstra	Wladyslaw Lizon	Joy Smith
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Candice Bergen	Laurie Hawn	Rick Norlock	Merv Tweed
James Bezan	Bryan Hayes	Deepak Obhrai	Dave Van Kesteren
Kelly Block	Russ Hiebert	Tilly O'Neill Gordon	Maurice Vellacott
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Peter Braid	Randy Hoback	Erin O'Toole	Mark Warawa
Garry Breitzkreuz	Ed Holder	LaVar Payne	Chris Warkentin
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Paul Calandra	Gerald Keddy	Scott Reid	John Williamson
Ron Cannan	Greg Kerr	Michelle Rempel	Stephen Woodworth
Colin Carrie	Ed Komarnicki	Blake Richards	Terence Young
Corneliu Chisu	Daryl Kramp	Greg Rickford	Wai Young
Michael Chong	Mike Lake	Andrew Saxton	Bob Zimmer
David Christopherson	Guy Lauzon		

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Chair: Merv Tweed

Vice-Chairs: Malcolm Allen
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Alex Atamanenko
Ruth Ellen Brosseau
Randy Hoback

Pierre Lemieux
LaVar Payne

Francine Raynault
Blake Richards

Brian Storseth
Bob Zimmer

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Stephen Woodworth
Terence Young
Wai Young

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Chair: Rob Moore

Vice-Chairs: Pierre Nantel
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Ray Boughen
Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet
Gordon Brown

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Andrew Cash

Matthew Dubé
Jim Hillyer

Blake Richards
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Bob Zimmer

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Chair:

David Tilson

Vice-Chairs:
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Mylène Freeman
Sadia GroguhéRoxanne James
Chungsen LeungCostas Menegakis
Ted OpitzRathika Sitsabaiesan
John Weston

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Terence Young
Wai Young
Bob Zimmer

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Chair:

Harold Albrecht

Vice-Chairs:

Kirsty Duncan

Megan Leslie

François Choquette
James Lunney
François Pilon

Anne Minh-Thu Quach
Michelle Rempel

Robert Sopuck
Brian Storseth

Lawrence Toet
Stephen Woodworth

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Larry Miller				

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Mr. Deepak Obhrai	to the Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Bob Dechert	to the Minister of Foreign Affairs
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Mr. Greg Rickford	to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario
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Mr. Pierre Poilievre	to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario
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Mr. Gerald Keddy	to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway
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Mrs. Cathy McLeod	to the Minister of National Revenue
Ms. Lois Brown	to the Minister of International Cooperation
Ms. Eve Adams	to the Minister of Veterans Affairs

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