



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 221 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, March 7, 2013

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 7, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

PUBLIC SECTOR INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour, pursuant to section 38 of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, to lay upon the table the special report of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner concerning an investigation into a disclosure of wrongdoing.

[*Translation*]

This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

* * *

[*English*]

OFFICE OF THE CORRECTIONAL INVESTIGATOR

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 193 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, I am pleased to table a report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator entitled “Spirit Matters: Aboriginal People and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act”, in both official languages.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government’s response to 10 petitions.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following reports of the Canadian Delegation of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation at a number of events: first, the U.S. Congressional meetings that were held in Washington, D.C.,

United States of America, February 28-29, 2012; the 65th Annual Meeting of the Council of State Governments West, held in Edmonton, Alberta, July 20-23, 2012; the 78th Annual Meeting of the Southern Governors Association, held in Rio Grande, Puerto Rico, August 10-12, 2012; and the National Conference of the Council of State Governments, held in Austin, Texas, November 30 to December 3, 2012.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, two reports from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

First I wish to present the 42nd report entitled, “Access to Information Requests and Parliamentary Privilege”. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

[*English*]

I also want to table the 43rd report in relation to the report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of Alberta, 2012.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in relation to a motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, October 18, 2011, on closed containment salmon aquaculture. Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of the Commons, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

I also wish to thank all members of the committee for their hard work and the spirit of collegiality from all parties. I also wish to extend my thanks to the dedicated staff of the committee.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on National Defence in relation to Bill C-15, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

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

[English]

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Criminal Code. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

Mr. Speaker, while I am on my feet, I move:

That the House do now proceed to the orders of the day.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1045)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 629)

YEAS

Members

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

Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauson	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Penashue	Poilievre
Preston	Raïtt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trottier
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	Williamson
Weston (Saint John)	Woodworth
Wilke	Young (Oakville)
Wong	Zimmer — 152
Yelich	
Young (Vancouver South)	

NAYS

Members

Andrews
Ashton
Bélangier
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brisson
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Coderre
Cotler
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Fry

Government Orders

Garrison
Giguère
Goodale
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Jacob
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Pilon
Quach
Rafferty
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote — 123

Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Julian
Lamoureux
Larose
Lavertière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Pécllet
Plamondon
Rae
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turmel

as they are asking their questions and giving answers, to limit them to one minute and no more.

The hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish I could say that it is with pleasure that I take to my feet today to address yet another shutting down of Parliament by the government, a government that seems unwilling and maybe incapable of actually working with the opposition within the constraints of Parliament. We have yet again a motion that shuts down debate for the 30th time, tying the record of any government in Canadian history for shutting down debate in a Parliament. What is it shutting down debate over this time? It is on a bill that has been 11 years in the making. That is 11 years of tax uncertainty for Canadians.

The committee has begun pre-hearings on this bill it will receive. It has heard that it has affected the GDP and our economy.

The government uses an arcane process by which it has passed more than 100 tax bills, with thousands of amendments to the tax code, and yet it does not make the changes. It waits a decade or more before ramming them all into one bill. New Democrats have suggested that there is a better way to do this. We have suggested that there is a better way to do Parliament. There is a better way to have conversations about the nature of our country and what the future looks like than shutting down debate because the Conservatives grow frustrated with having that conversation.

Parliament should do one thing: hold the government of the day to account. I know that the finance minister, the Prime Minister and the House leader do not like that idea very much, but that is the fact. The reason there is a Parliament is to hold the government to account.

We have a bill that was created by a broken process, which I think even the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance would agree with. It cannot be something created every 10 years, creating tax uncertainty for Canadians and businesses that we need to grow our economy. Members have already heard testimony that this lag, this wait, this debate has affected our economy and GDP. Deals do not get done. People do not know how to file their business taxes properly.

After 11 years, Canadians have grown frustrated by seven hours of debate. It is the 11 years that caused this uncertainty. It is this 11 years of waiting that caused the uncertainty that affects our economy. Is there not a better way to do this type of legislation? Is there not a better way to finally treat Parliament with the respect it deserves?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this bill has been before Parliament for five months now. It was introduced in November of last year. This means that the House of Commons has had over 100 days to examine this bill already, and we are only at the preliminary stage in what is a very long parliamentary process. We have had literally days of debate and have heard hours and hours of speeches. The speeches are all saying the same thing. If New Democrats are concerned about the economy, then I encourage them to vote and pass this bill. They are simply playing politics with this issue.

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

TECHNICAL TAX AMENDMENTS ACT, 2012

BILL C-48—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-48, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act, the Excise Tax Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, the First Nations Goods and Services Tax Act and related legislation, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the Bill; and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

• (1050)

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67(1), there will now be a 30-minute question period.

[English]

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period. I would direct members,

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is very clear is that we are seeing a different style of government. We are seeing a Conservative government that now has a majority and feels that it can get away with doing absolutely anything it wants inside the chamber, even if it means taking away the ability of opposition members to have appropriate time to debate a wide variety of issues. This is a majority government that has brought in time allocation more than any other government in the history of our nation.

We only need look back at some of the closure motions it has brought forward. They dealt with the Canadian Wheat Board, the pooled pension bill, the copyright bill, the gun registry, back-to-work legislation, our financial systems review and two huge budget bills. The way the government has walked on the rights and privileges of members by limiting debate is unprecedented. New Democrats are challenging the government House leader to do the job he is paid to do and start negotiating in good faith with opposition House leaders. That is what is essential.

My question is to the government House leader. Is he prepared to actually sit down with House leaders to ensure that a proper debate will occur on those bills that are affecting Canadians from coast to coast to coast?

• (1055)

Hon. Gail Shea: Mr. Speaker, while I am on my feet, please allow me to convey my sympathy to the family of the late Stompin' Tom Connors. Tom and I both call the small community of Skinners Pond, P.E.I. our home. He will be missed dearly by his family, his friends and all Canadians.

Back to the topic at hand, from 2009 to 2011, in advance of this bill, our government engaged in repeated open and public consultations on the proposed technical changes that would be included in this legislation. Those consultations took place in December 2009, July 2010, August 2010, November 2010, December 2010, January 2011, March 2011, July 2011, August 2011 and October 2011.

This is one of the bills that has been most consulted on in this House. It has been before Parliament for five months now, as I said. That is 100 days during which the opposition could have examined this bill. It is a bill that has all-party support. It has been a decade in the making.

I encourage the opposition to get down to business and pass this bill.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again I rise with great sadness that for the 30th time, the government has decided to enact closure to ram through one of its pieces of legislation, and not just any legislation, but very important technical tax changes, almost 1,000 pages, affecting more than 100 tax laws that are very important to all Canadians.

We have heard a lot of testimony from tax practitioners in this country about the importance of the timely resolution of these technical tax changes. Let me say that if this bill is so urgent on the part of the government, why did it take it 11 long years to bring this bill before Parliament and to get us to this point?

Second, if the government introduced the bill 100 days ago, what has it been doing? We have only just been able to get this on our agenda for debate.

While many of the changes themselves may not be controversial, the process, whereby the government has waited 11 years to enact technical tax changes that have already been announced, is the issue we need to debate.

We have no other opportunity to debate this. It creates confusion among Canadians and creates confusion among tax professionals. It creates a drag on our GDP because businesses do not know which set of rules they are playing by, the ones that have been announced or the ones that were formerly in place. We deserve a full and thorough debate of the process by which these tax changes get made. Will she answer that?

Hon. Gail Shea: Mr. Speaker, certainly the hon. member would agree that 11 years is long enough, so it is time that we get this bill passed.

We have listened to the professional accountants industry, which represents over 75,000 tax professionals, and I have a quote from them:

Some of the measures contained in today's bill were initially proposed as early as 1999.... With unlegislated tax measures, taxpayers and professional accountants must maintain their records and forms—sometimes for years—to be in a position to comply, even without knowing when and if these measures will be approved by Parliament and enacted. This uncertainty and unpredictability places an enormous compliance burden on taxpayers, businesses, professionals and their clients.

This is what the member, the NDP finance critic, had to say about this bill only this week in finance committee:

Obviously we support the goal of closing tax loopholes and making the system in Canada clearer and easier to understand for Canadians.... [I]t's important that these technical changes be adopted so that there's clarity and certainty in tax legislation.

Therefore, let us adopt them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have lost count of the number of times the government has muzzled the House. This is completely unacceptable. It is an affront to democracy.

As our finance critic said, we have been waiting for this bill for 11 years. Why are the Conservatives imposing a gag order and cutting debate short?

We heard nothing about this bill for months. We could see on the projected order of business that it was going to be introduced in the House. We wanted to debate it so that we could explain to Canadians just how complex the tax system is. I do not understand why they are cutting debate short again.

The House may be aware that in the 1950s the Speaker of the House of Commons was from my riding of Vaudreuil—Soulanges. At that time, there was a debate on pipelines. The government imposed time allocation on the debate, which wreaked havoc in the House.

Why is the government cutting debate short again?

Government Orders

• (1100)

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea: Mr. Speaker, we have had literally days and days of debate. The NDP is simply playing politics with this issue. We have heard many, many speeches, and they all say the same thing. The NDP has complained that the bill was too long in coming. It is here. Why are they holding it up?

The opposition members had the bill a week prior to the House. They were offered briefings by the Department of Finance. The committee has already started its work, so it is time for the opposition to stop playing partisan games and pass this very important bill.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it absolutely incredible what the member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges just said about not knowing about this until it hit the paper and about bringing it forward for debate. In fact, we have heard from witnesses in the finance committee who have said repeatedly that this has been introduced nine different times. A witness said that just two days ago. It has been consulted on hundreds of times.

I am quite perplexed to understand why the NDP continues to delay for the sake of delay. In fact, I have heard from every single witness in finance committee that we need to get this through as quickly as possible. In fact, they have said that it is well supported. It is uncontroversial.

The NDP and the Liberals received early binders and unlimited access to briefings from officials. Why on earth they have not taken the opportunity to do that is beyond me. The truth of the matter is that the NDP wants to force this government to act on behalf of taxpayers by using time allocation, and we will continue to do that, because the taxpayers deserve better than the delay tactics of the NDP just for the sake of delay.

Could the minister tell us if she has ever heard from a stakeholder, an individual or a Canadian who has asked for a delay in the bill being passed?

Hon. Gail Shea: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that all sides support the bill, and all sides recognize that it is a technical bill.

Yes, the NDP does insist on filibustering. It has been a 100-day delay for some bizarre reason. Groups such as the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants were in Ottawa pleading with the House, especially with the NDP, to stop this ridiculous delay.

We need to show some respect for taxpayers and get moving on Bill C-48.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is rather amusing to see the government shedding crocodile tears because we are allegedly delaying passage of a nearly 1,000-page bill.

I would like to remind the House that a few years ago, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism himself complained about a technical bill that was introduced in the House. It was about 500 pages long. He complained that it was complicated and cumbersome and that the process had been needlessly delayed.

The witnesses we are currently hearing from in the Standing Committee on Finance all agree that the current process is flawed because only half of the comfort letters will be passed into law. Bill C-48 will pass eventually, and that is a good thing. The problem is that the process is still seriously flawed.

What does the minister have to say to those witnesses?

• (1105)

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea: Mr. Speaker, there would be no need for letters of intent if the bill were passed. We have made a commitment, as a result of the Auditor General's report, to ensure that technical tax amendments are brought forward on a regular basis in the future.

We are taking steps to that end. It is time for the opposition to pass the bill and get it to the committee process.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I served on the finance committee for a time and the discussion we are having today is not about the bill; it is about the time allocation. This is about the thirtieth time that the government has chosen to end a debate process, a process that was put into place in the House to allow people to give the full assessment of a given bill, to report to Canadians, via the television cameras we see here, the pros and cons of any bill.

This is not about a filibuster by anyone. This is about the fact that there is a certain level of due diligence that has been repeatedly pushed aside in this place by time allocation. That is the issue here. There is a great deal of agreement on this particular bill. However, it is the fact that the time allocation is pushing aside the traditions of the House, and that is not a very healthy thing for our democracy.

Hon. Gail Shea: Mr. Speaker, we recognize that we need to move forward, which is something non-partisan groups have been demanding. Those are groups like the Real Property Association of Canada, the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Tax Executives Institute, the Canadian Tax Foundation and many more.

The bill has been a long time coming to the House. It has been consulted on with Canadians on more than 10 separate occasions. We have heard many speeches from the opposition, all saying the same thing, that there is a need for the bill and the need to pass the bill. Why are they unnecessarily holding it up?

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to what the minister had to say, and I agree with my NDP colleague who just spoke that the current debate is about another gag order, another guillotine motion imposed on the opposition parties, witnesses and members of the public who want to testify with regard to this important bill.

I have a very specific question to ask the minister, which is similar to the one I asked the Minister of Justice yesterday. When are we going to see the government introduce time allocation down to the day, hour, minute and second? We are practically there. To date, I have counted 33 gag orders imposed by the government.

Government Orders

Earlier, the minister was criticizing the fact that it took 11 years to come up with this massive bill, and with good reason. This bill contains positive measures.

However, the Conservative government has been in power for seven years now. How is it that the Conservatives did not move more quickly to introduce this bill so that it could be properly debated?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the bill has been before the House in different forms before this. However, it is before the House now and the opposition has said repeatedly that 11 years is too long.

We agree that 11 years is too long. Everyone in the House agrees that the bill has to be passed to support the Canadian economy. There is no need to hold the bill up. It has been through a lot of public consultation over the years. Everyone has said the same thing in their speeches, that we need to pass the bill, so let us get on with the business of passing the bill.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question before us right now, once again, is on muzzling debate in this House of Commons.

We know these technical tax code amendments have been 11 years coming. We know that the general practice within the department is to have comfort letters and move forward. Even though the government does not act, the bureaucrats move forward because the changes need to happen. We know that. However, the question before us today, right now, is that the Conservative government continues to move time allocation or, rather, stop debate. It muzzles parliamentarians who were elected to have debate on behalf of Canadians.

With this motion today, the Conservatives have shut down debate 35 times since the election; 19 times in the last 12 months alone. They have shut down debate on 19 different bills since their election. Of the 35 times they have shut down debate, time allocation was used 30 times, closure was used twice, and three times they used proceedings on a bill under Standing Order 56(1).

My question to the minister is not about what a witness may have said in committee about the need for these technical tax amendments. My question has to do with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance saying she is perplexed as to why we are trying to have this debate. It has to do with the Minister of National Revenue saying it is bizarre that the NDP wants to debate, and “we’re having a hundred day delay...”

We have had seven hours of debate on this issue and we would like to be able to do our jobs. We would like to ensure due process and do the necessary due diligence. Our fiduciary responsibility to our constituents is to make sure we are representing their views in this Parliament.

Why will the Conservatives not let us do our jobs? Why do they continue to muzzle parliamentarians?

• (1110)

Hon. Gail Shea: Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the opposition during the days of debate. We have heard hours of speeches. The speeches were all saying the same thing, which was the need for this

legislation. The NDP is simply playing politics with this issue. The finance critic for the NDP as much as said in committee that this bill had to be passed and that it was important.

It is important that the bill get to committee, which has already started its work. We want to get the bill to committee, and if there are concerns and issues more debate would be brought forward. We have said repeatedly that we would be open to reasonable amendments at the committee stage.

It is a long process to bring a bill to the House and have it become law. We want to get the process moving because we respect Canadian taxpayers.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think what we really need to talk about today is the difference between appropriate debate and the appropriate role of the opposition, versus obstruction.

Today we heard from a number of people saying that this bill would affect hundreds of thousands of taxpayers.

In committee today, Mr. Vineberg, Ms. Pousseault, Mr. Hickey, Mr. Kingissepp, were saying that there is nothing controversial about this bill, to please pass this bill as quickly as possible, that it is very important and that it has been widely consulted on.

I would ask the minister what the tax loopholes are that would be closed in this bill.

Hon. Gail Shea: Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the record, Bill C-48 proposes to strengthen Canada's tax system by closing a number of loopholes and improving fairness for all Canadian taxpayers. For instance, Bill C-48 contains some measures that would implement a more rigorous information reporting regime for certain transactions associated with schemes to avoid taxes.

This tougher reporting machine would help the Canada Revenue Agency get earlier disclosure and detailed information on transactions that present a higher risk of abuse to the income tax system. It would assist the agency in challenging them if they are in fact found to be abusive.

I do not know what reason the NDP would have in opposing the timely implementation of some of these measures.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty unbelievable that the minister opposite is refusing to answer questions about the gag order since that is what we are dealing with here. It is really sad that we cannot debate this further.

I would like to cite an hon. member who said the following on December 9, 2002:

Mr. Speaker, here we go again. This is a very important public policy question that is very complex and we have the arrogance of the government in invoking closure again.

Whose words are these? The current Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages said that on December 9, 2002. I think it is sad that the government has a double standard. The Conservatives impose gag orders when it suits them but complain about them when it does not.

Government Orders

Where does the minister stand? Will she finally explain why she is imposing a gag order? Why are they going back on their position?

I could ask more questions, but I am sure my colleagues also have questions that they would like to ask.

● (1115)

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea: Mr. Speaker, the bill has been in Parliament for five months now, and most reasonable people would agree that five months is a reasonable time to study any bill. I would suggest that the hon. member and the rest of the NDP listen to their finance critic, who said:

Obviously we support the goal of closing tax loopholes and making the tax system in Canada clearer and easier to understand for Canadians...it's important that these technical changes be adopted so that there is clarity and certainty in our tax legislation.

We need to get on with this legislation and send it to committee.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, they are showing their arrogance once again.

When we form the government in 2015, once we have spent several years debating a number of issues, according to Conservative logic, we will gag the opposition, which will certainly be a small opposition.

Or will we live up to our convictions? I think we will. We have always shown that we live up to our convictions when the time comes to debate things, listen to new ideas and gather these ideas together. That is what we will do. I find it shameful that they are once again using time allocation. It is shameful. It is scandalous. It is arrogant, but it is okay, because it shows who they are.

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was invited to make his concerns known to the Department of Finance during briefings. All opposition members were offered to do this, as well, by the Department of Finance. They had the bill a week in advance. The bill was tabled in the House of Commons in November. That is ample time to study a bill.

It is important that we get this process going, that we get the bill to committee, in the interests of Canadian taxpayers.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to speak today about the umpteenth gag order that this government is trying to impose on us and shove down the opposition's throat. This shows just how little the government listens to anyone: not to the experts, not to the municipalities, not to the provinces, not to the opposition. The government does not believe anyone.

Do my colleagues know where cynicism comes from? Public cynicism is created when governments like this come to power with a majority and do not listen to what the opposition has to say. I would have liked to have talked about what each of these bills might bring to my region and what changes might occur. It is through debate that we become better, we improve. And when people refuse to listen, things do not get better. And this government is not a good

one. People feel it and see it, regardless of this cynicism the government is trying to stick us with.

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea: Mr. Speaker, all Canadians know that this government has been very good to Canadian taxpayers. As a matter of fact, we have taken 120 different tax measures to lower taxes for Canadians.

The NDP might find these gains amusing, but Canadian taxpayers do not. They are waiting for these technical tax amendments, which the NDP says it agrees with, so let us get on with passing the bill and moving it to committee stage.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am having some difficulty understanding how the minister can say on the one hand that the bill has been before Parliament for five months and then say that it was distributed a week ago. I understand it was tabled, but the reality is that we need time to look at it carefully, to debate it and to change it at committee where it needs to be changed. It took 11 years to get around to this. I think a little more scrutiny is appropriate.

● (1120)

Hon. Gail Shea: Mr. Speaker, that is why the Standing Committee on Finance did offer the opposition members a full briefing on the bill, so that they could be up to speed and have any of their questions answered.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1200)

[English]

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

(Division No. 630)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy

Adams

Government Orders

Adler	Aglukkaq	Bellavance	Bennett
Albas	Albrecht	Benskin	Bevington
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Allison	Ambler	Boivin	Borg
Anderson	Armstrong	Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Ashfield	Aspin	Brahmi	Brison
Baird	Bateman	Brosseau	Byrne
Benoit	Bergen	Caron	Casey
Bernier	Bezan	Cash	Charlton
Block	Boughen	Chicoine	Chisholm
Braid	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Choquette	Chow
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)	Christopherson	Cleary
Butt	Calandra	Coderre	Comartin
Calkins	Cannan	Côté	Cotler
Carmichael	Carrie	Crowder	Cullen
Chisu	Chong	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Clarke	Clement	Day	Dewar
Crockatt	Daniel	Dion	Dionne Labelle
Davidson	Dechert	Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Del Mastro	Devolin	Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Dykstra	Fantino	Easter	Eyking
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Foote	Freeman
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty	Fry	Garrison
Fletcher	Galipeau	Genest-Jourdain	Godin
Gallant	Gill	Goodale	Gravelle
Glover	Goguen	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Gosal	Gourde	Hsu	Hughes
Grewal	Harper	Jacob	Julian
Hawn	Hayes	Kellway	Lamoureux
Hiebert	Hillyer	Lapointe	Larose
Hoback	Holder	Latendresse	Laverdière
James	Jean	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Leslie	Liu
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent	MacAulay	Mai
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Marston	Martin
Lake	Lauzon	Masse	Mathysen
Lebel	Leef	May	McCallum
Leitch	Lemieux	McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Leung	Lizon	Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Lobb	Lukiwski	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Lunney	MacKenzie	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Mayes	McColeman	Nantel	Nash
McLeod	Menegakis	Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Menzies	Merrifield	Pacetti	Papillon
Miller	Moore (Fundy Royal)	Patry	Péclet
Nicholson	Norlock	Pilon	Plamondon
Obhrai	O'Connor	Quach	Rafferty
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz	Rankin	Ravignat
O'Toole	Paradis	Raynault	Regan
Payne	Penashue	Rousseau	Saganash
Poilievre	Preston	Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Raitt	Rajotte	Scott	Sellah
Rathgeber	Reid	Sgro	Sitsabaiesan
Rempel	Richards	St-Denis	Stewart
Rickford	Saxton	Stoffler	Thibeault
Schellenberger	Seeback	Toone	Tremblay
Shea	Shipley	Trudeau	Turmel
Shory	Smith	Valériote— 123	
Sopuck	Sorenson		
Stanton	Storseth		
Strahl	Sweet		
Tilson	Toet		
Toews	Trost		
Trottier	Tweed		
Uppal	Valcourt		
Van Kesteren	Van Loan		
Vellacott	Wallace		
Warawa	Warkentin		
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to		
Sky Country)			
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks		
Williamson	Wong		
Woodworth	Yelich		
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)		
Zimmer— 151			

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Ayala	Bélanger

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

NUCLEAR TERRORISM ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (for the Minister of Justice) moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (for the Minister of Justice) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the third reading of debate on Bill S-9, the nuclear terrorism act. This important counterterrorism bill, if passed, will put Canada into a position to ratify and become a state party to the 2005 amendment to the convention on physical protection of nuclear materials, the CPPNM amendment, and the 2005 international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism, the ICSANT.

Let me begin by quoting former United Nations secretary Kofi Annan, who warned that if nuclear terrorism attacks were to occur, “it would not only cause widespread death and destruction, but would stagger the world economy and thrust tens of millions of people into dire poverty”.

In my remarks today, I will describe the four offences proposed in Bill S-9. I will also outline how these offences fit within the existing Criminal Code counterterrorism operations with the intent to cause death, serious bodily harm, or substantial damage to property or the environment.

The penalty proposed for a conviction under section 82.3 is a maximum term of life imprisonment. This offence captures the distinct criminalization requirements of both the CPPNM amendment and the ICSANT. It is important to note that in seeking to ratify international agreements, dualist countries like Canada can rely on existing domestic law to achieve compliance with the treaty requirements. In this regard, for the unlawful export or import of nuclear materials where no specific intent is called for by the CPPNM amendment, Canada will be relying on a number of offences which directly target this activity, notably under the Export and Import Permits Act, the Nuclear Safety and Controls Act and the Customs Act.

Second, the bill proposes, at section 82.4, an offence for using or altering nuclear or radioactive material, or a nuclear or radioactive device, with the intent to compel a person, government, or international organization to do or refrain from doing any act. The proposed offence also criminalizes the commission of an act against a nuclear facility or its operations, also with the intent to compel a person, government, or international organization to do or refrain from doing an act.

Common to all the criminal acts in this offence is the intent to compel or influence the behaviour of others. This intent requirement is a characteristic of terrorism. Given the seriousness of these nefarious acts, this offence would carry a maximum punishment of life imprisonment.

The third offence in Bill S-9 addresses the commission of an indictable offence for the purpose of obtaining nuclear or radioactive

material, or nuclear or radio active device, or to obtain access to a nuclear facility. If convicted under this section, offenders would be liable to a maximum of life imprisonment.

Both the CPPNM amendment and the ICSANT specifically reference criminal conduct such as theft and robbery committed for the purposes of obtaining nuclear or radioactive materials or devices. However, the treaties also specifically prohibit the “use of force or any other form of intimidation”, at article 9(f) of the CPPNM amendment and “use of force”, at article 2(2) of the ICSANT to obtain these materials.

By prohibiting the use of force, the treaties contemplate prohibiting conduct beyond the specified conducts. The notion of use of force is quite broad and could include any acts of violence or force and therefore any number of existing indictable offences could be contemplated as falling within that conduct, such as murder. It is for this reason that the present formulation of section 82.5 has been used. The scope of this offence is comparable to the requirement of the treaties, although formulated differently.

The final offence set out in Bill S-9 proposes a specific offence to threaten to commit any of the other offences in Bill S-9. The proposed punishment is a maximum term of 14 years of imprisonment. The 14-year maximum penalty in the new offence recognizes the heightened seriousness of a threat in a nuclear context, with a sentence proportionate to the potential chaos that such a threat could create.

● (1205)

Many existing offences in the Criminal Code use the concept of “threat” to describe prohibited conduct. I would also note that the Criminal Code contains a general uttering of threats offence at section 264.1. When examining the meanings of threats, the case law in Canada for the uttering threats offence has indicated the words are to be interpreted objectively within the context and circumstances. In other words, would they convey a threat which is a threat to a reasonable person? In addition, the *mens rea* has been interpreted to require that the accused intended his or her words to intimidate or to be taken seriously.

These four offences that I have just described, combined with the general provisions of the Criminal Code that address different forms of party liability, such as attempts and conspiracies as well as existing Canadian law outside of the Criminal Code, would put Canada in a position to ratify both of the treaties.

When we look at the proposed level of punishment for the offences in Bill S-9, I think members would agree that they are appropriate given the grave nature of the prohibited conduct. They are also consistent with other terrorism acts in the Criminal Code, for example, section 83.2, commission of an offence for a terrorist group, and subsection 83.21, instructing others to carry out terrorist activities. Both of these carry maximum terms of life imprisonment.

Government Orders

Some of the other areas of Bill S-9 that warrant mention are, first, that it would provide for concurrent prosecutorial jurisdiction over the offences between the provincial and federal attorneys general, an arrangement which is consistent with other terrorism offences in the Criminal Code. Second, the bill would provide for new offences to be added to both the wiretap and the DNA provisions of the Criminal Code. Third, by adding the CPPNM amendment and the ICSANT to the definition of terrorism activities under section 83.01(1)(a) of the Criminal Code, a number of existing powers and procedures would apply to the new offences, including reverse onus at bail and one-year wiretap authorizations, to name a few. These offences were designed in such a way so as to fit within the existing terrorism provisions of the Criminal Code.

In addition, these treaties require a sentence to assume extraterritorial prosecutorial jurisdiction over these offences. In this regard, Bill S-9 would give Canadian courts the jurisdiction to try these new offences in situations, for example, where the offence was committed outside Canada by a Canadian citizen or when the person who committed the act or omission outside Canada was, after the commission of the offence, present in Canada. Canada can already assume similar jurisdiction to prosecute other terrorism acts in the Criminal Code.

The final technical aspect of the bill that I will note is, as called for by both the CPPNM amendment and the ICSANT, these offences would specifically not apply to a lawful act that is committed during an armed conflict or to activities undertaken by military forces of a state in the exercise of their official duties to the extent that those activities were governed by other rules of international law.

The military exclusion language used in Bill S-9 is similar to that which is present as set out in subsection 431.2(3) and subsection 80.3(1) of the Criminal Code. Notably, the Supreme Court of Canada in the December 2012 Khawaja decision provided guidance on the application of the military exclusion clause used in the definition of terrorist activities in the Criminal Code. In rejecting the application of military exclusion to the defendant, the court found: first, the military exclusion clause functioned as a defence and therefore it was for the defence to raise an error of reality to the claim that it applied; and second, the conduct in question must otherwise be in accordance with applicable international law such as the Geneva Convention.

Over the course of Bill S-9 moving through the legislative process, much has been said about the impetus for Bill S-9 from both a domestic and international perspective. The context in which the bill has been brought forward has been debated and continues to be of vital importance.

The original CPPNM, which was negotiated in 1980, is presently the only legally binding international instrument in the area of physical protection of nuclear material. Canada signed it in September 1980 and ratified it in March 1986. Canada achieved ratification in 1986 through amendments to a range of statutes, including the Criminal Code.

• (1210)

Twenty-five years later the international community, through the International Atomic Energy Agency, recognized the need to revisit the original CPPNM. In this regard, in July 2005, state parties to the

CPPNM, including Canada, adopted the CPPNM amendment. One of the key additions to the original treaty is a requirement for state parties to protect nuclear facilities and materials in peaceful domestic use, storage and transport.

Also, in 2005 under the guidance of the United Nations General Assembly, the ICSANT was negotiated and adopted. The purpose of the ICSANT was to cover a broad range of nuclear terrorism acts and possible targets.

Canada is not alone in seeking to become a state party with these two important nuclear security treaties. At a second world leaders nuclear summit held last year in Seoul, Republic of Korea, 53 heads of state, including the Prime Minister of Canada, recognized the importance of multilateral instruments that addressed nuclear security such as the CPPNM amendment and the ICSANT.

The world leaders committed to work together through a universal assurance of a CPPNM amendment and the ICSANT. If Bill S-9 is passed, Canada will be in a position to report this accomplishment at the next world leaders nuclear summit in 2014. The CPPNM amendment at last count has 64 state parties while the ICSANT has 83 state parties.

Some of our closest allies have recently taken important domestic steps in this area. The United Kingdom became a state party to the ICSANT in 2009 and the CPPNM amendment in April 2010. In addition, Australia modified its laws to achieve ratification of the CPPNM amendment in 2008 and the ICSANT in 2012.

Let me conclude my remarks by heightening what Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University said in its 2011 report entitled "U.S.-Russia Joint Threat Assessment on Nuclear Terrorism". In a short yet powerful statement it warned that of all the varieties of terrorism, nuclear terrorism poses the gravest threat to the world.

Bill S-9 is balanced and timely and, most important, it is designed to target this new reality.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the idea of nuclear terrorism is a scary thought.

I have a question for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice about his conclusion.

What does he think is the most serious nuclear terrorist threat to Canada?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult for me to answer that question, since I do not know all the state secrets, as they cannot be divulged.

However, we are certainly always on the lookout for threats. We know that people go to other countries to be trained by terrorist groups. We must always be vigilant.

Honestly, I cannot give you a list of factors that I do not know myself. It is not because I do not want to.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, humanity has seen, unfortunately, the use of nuclear weapons and we have seen terrorism, especially after 9/11. However, we have never seen the two used in conjunction and it is terrifying prospect.

Would the parliamentary secretary not agree that given our international obligations in this respect, given our leadership on disarmament, on issues of international peace and security and given that Canada produces and exports nuclear materials, this is one case, one bill where achieving the unanimous support of the House would be a very valuable signal. On our side, we could not, and most Canadians could not, see any reason why that unanimity would not be achieved?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, being part of a ratification of a treaty that has worldwide acceptance against one of the major threats as recognized by most world leaders, nuclear terrorism, is a very important facet of being a world leader. Certainly we are world leaders, not only in the area of protection of our citizens and citizens abroad, but we are also world leaders in the development of nuclear technology.

If we have the capacity to develop nuclear equipment, nuclear technology, we have a further and stronger obligation to ensure our facilities and those areas where such projects are developed are appropriately protected, not only for domestic purposes but also for abroad.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the minister would be able to provide some comment in regard to the formal communications relationship that would exist with his provincial counterparts regarding the nuclear program, nuclear terrorism, the potential for nuclear terrorism, or anything of that nature. Does that exist, and if so, to what degree?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, I regret to advise that I am unable to answer exactly what go-betweens there are with the provinces and the federal government on this issue. However, with regard to the amendments to the Criminal Code and the prosecution, it is a boilerplate issue that basically there be joint jurisdiction in prosecuting such offences.

That is the limit of my answer to that relevant question.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was surprised a minute ago when the parliamentary secretary for defence did not make reference to the Pickering nuclear power plant, which is very close to his riding. It is within sight of my riding of Scarborough Southwest as well. That does bring up the provincial issue, again, because the nuclear power plants are provincially run.

Hearing about the negotiations that happened with the Province of Ontario, certainly not details which must remain secure, I wanted to ask in what way the government is evaluating the progress accomplished on the international scene with regard to the questions linked to nuclear terrorism.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the question is what we have accomplished with regard to international treaties, working with other countries and how we are measuring that.

Unfortunately, that is something that would be in the realm of CSIS. It would be information that I would not be privy to, and if I were would be unable to disclose.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think that Canadians are interested in this debate. One issue that I think concerns a lot of people, certainly in Toronto, is this. The goal of the bill is to take and enforce effective measures to prevent the proliferation of nuclear materials. That does raise a question around the proliferation of handguns and small arms that are awash in big cities in Canada. Largely, they are coming illegally across our borders with the United States. When we see that the Conservative government has failed cities with regard to ensuring their safety from illegal weapons coming across the borders, it does not provide us with the kind of solace we need. Notwithstanding the intent of this legislation, how can we feel secure and safe that the government can find illegal nuclear weapons that are traversing our country, if it cannot find the weapons that are finding their way into the hands of gangs on the streets of Toronto?

• (1220)

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, this bill goes well beyond the issue of importing or bringing nuclear weapons or materials into Canada. We are attempting to bring the states that have adopted the important treaties which give extra territorial and possibly prosecutorial rights in line with the rest of the countries so that this important legislation, and treaties, can be ratified. That is really the focus of it, not small arms being brought into Canada, which is also a very important and pressing issue that we have taken measures to conquer.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see some action on the nuclear file by the government. We are still waiting for changes to the Nuclear Liability Act, which would protect Canadians by raising the liability cap.

My question specifically to the member is this. There are fourth generation technologies of nuclear reactors that do not use enriched uranium. A month ago we had someone testify at committee saying that they have this very innovative technology. I asked representatives of TerraPower whether it had any contact with the Canadian government. His answer was that it had zero contact with the government. Therefore, when the member said that the Conservatives are providing leadership on the nuclear file, I fail to see the leadership that is being provided on this.

This is a move in the right direction, but it is a very slow-paced move. I wonder when the member will come forward with the other legislation on this file.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, Rome was not built in a day. It is a step in the right direction. We will let Rome elect its Pope and we will move forward with all those important measures that we will take in order to protect the Canadian public.

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for answering the second part of my question earlier.

Government Orders

However, with regard to the Pickering nuclear power plant, and certainly Ontario generates a lot of its power from nuclear, what role has the Ontario government played in the production of the bill? What role has it played, and how has it been consulted with regard to adoption of this treaty? Has the Province of Ontario been negotiated with regarding this?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, certainly the Province of Ontario has been negotiated with, and has been dealt with very closely, because it is within its jurisdiction. It has to provide security. When we asked questions about the security of nuclear facilities, such as Pickering, the answers we received were very constricted and limited. The reasons for that are very evident. Basically, it is a matter of security.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this House to speak to Bill S-9 at third reading stage. Members will recall that, at second reading, we recommended that the bill be passed so that the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights could study it in depth.

I am always skeptical about the Conservative government having a bill introduced in the Senate, which is made up of unelected people who are not accountable to Canadians. The government is bringing some very important bills in through the back door, including this one, Bill S-9, which takes a step required to ratify international treaties.

However, we are talking about something that pertains to public safety, which is an important issue to the NDP in this House, because we believe it is our duty to protect the public. That is one of the main reasons why we are here in Parliament.

That being said, it is also very important to approve the agreements and international treaties that we sign. People must understand that we often proceed a step at a time. The process often takes a long time, even too long. We agree to treaties at international meetings. Then, representatives return to their respective countries and have these treaties ratified, which is the reason for Bill S-9. The purpose of the agreement and the international commitments made was to create a legal framework to ensure that nuclear terrorism would be properly dealt with as a criminal offence. This required a number of amendments to the Criminal Code.

We know that the Senate passed Bill S-9 on March 27, 2012. It amends the Criminal Code in order to implement the criminal law requirements of the two international treaties to combat terrorism. The first is the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, which was amended in 2005. We were already a party to this convention, which we initially ratified in 1980. When I say that things move at lightning speed, I am not far from the truth. The other treaty is the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which was signed in 2005.

The bill contains 10 clauses that add four new offences to part II of the Criminal Code, making it illegal to possess, use or dispose of nuclear or radioactive material or devices or to commit an act against a nuclear facility or an act that disrupts its operation with intent to cause death, serious bodily harm or substantial damage to property or the environment.

The Senate passed an amendment to add making a device to the bill, making it illegal to use or alter nuclear or radioactive material or devices or to commit an act against a nuclear facility or an act that disrupts its operation with intent to compel a person, government or international organization to do or refrain from doing any act; to commit an indictable offence under an act of Parliament with intent to obtain nuclear material, radioactive material or a device; to obtain access to or control of a nuclear facility; or to threaten to commit one of these three offences.

Other amendments have also been introduced that stem from these four new offences and are no less important. The bill adds the definition—and this is important—of certain terms used in the description of the new offences, including “environment”, “nuclear facility”, “nuclear material”, “radioactive material” and “device”, and amends the definition of “terrorist activity”. A new section of the Criminal Code is also introduced to ensure that people who commit or attempt to commit one of these offences when they are abroad can be prosecuted in Canada.

Amendments are made to the provisions of the Criminal Code relating to electronic surveillance to ensure that those provisions apply to the new offences. The four new offences are also considered primary designated offences for the purposes of DNA warrants and collection orders.

● (1225)

Lastly, this bill also amends Canada's rule against double jeopardy, in other words being tried and convicted more than once for the same crime. Accordingly, if an individual has been tried and convicted for any of the four new offences outside Canada, the rule against double jeopardy will not apply when the foreign trial did not meet certain basic Canadian legal standards. In such circumstances, a Canadian court can try this person again for the same offence for which he or she was convicted by a foreign court.

There is a lot of information here. Some have described this bill as a technical bill. Indeed, it might seem quite technical, because it deals with concepts that are not familiar to us. Nuclear terrorism in Canada is not the kind of thing we talk about when chatting with friends. It is definitely not the kind of conversation we have every day.

The Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights took its role very seriously, considering the nature of the subject. We heard from some very interesting witnesses, including representatives from the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and people from the Department of Transport, since nuclear material is transported in Canada.

People might be shocked to learn what goes on right under their noses, which they are not told about for obvious reasons of national security. Also, we would not want to let potential wrongdoers know when nuclear material is being transported from point A to point B.

The committee also heard from representatives of the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness regarding policies related to managing national security and from the RCMP regarding criminal operations involving national security and related investigations. Representatives from the Department of Justice also appeared, including the Minister of Justice, who spoke about this bill.

Government Orders

We were able to ask questions before the bill was sent to committee. We have mentioned the time it took for the government to introduce Bill S-9 and the fact that the bill was introduced through the back door, through the Senate. We wanted to know why it took so long, especially since this is a huge national and international priority and, according to some, is one of Canada's biggest problems and most serious threats.

We also wanted to know why, when they were drafting the bill, they did not think about the concept of making a device, which came up in the Senate. Nevertheless, I am more or less satisfied. As a lawyer, I appreciate hearing from people at the Department of Justice. They said that the concept of making a device was already included in the bill. However, since we cannot be too careful, they agreed to add the wording, which they had considered included in the existing terminology. That settled that.

We could also leave out the concept of *autrefois convict*. In other words, if someone is being prosecuted in a foreign country, this law would allow Canada to retain the right to prosecute a Canadian who has committed one of the new offences. The charter includes provisions to enforce this.

The answers provided seem satisfactory, even though there may be some concerns when we see how tests for compatibility with the charter go at the Department of Justice.

In light of our international treaty obligations, we will support the bill, as it stands, at third reading. That is my recommendation. I think that my NDP colleagues will do the same. It is extremely important.

Nuclear terrorism is a difficult concept to grasp. People need to understand. I asked the parliamentary secretary what is the biggest threat in terms of nuclear terrorism. I do not want to scare people here, but we have to be realistic. There are some malicious people out there. There is no doubt about it. We cannot bury our heads in the sand.

Nuclear terrorism threats can come in different forms.

- (1230)

According to the explanations we heard in committee, there are four categories: the use of a stolen nuclear weapon; the use of an improvised nuclear device made of fissionable material; the use of a radiological dispersal device, often referred to as a dirty bomb; and the sabotage of a nuclear facility.

Canada is indeed a country that is rich in uranium, but we must not bury our heads in the sand thinking that we are immune. The article Graham Allison wrote in 2005 entitled "Is Nuclear Terrorism a Threat to Canada's National Security?" comes to mind. The title is quite striking, and in the article, the author makes some comparisons between the United States and Canada.

Having grown up in the Outaouais region, I admit that this article sent a shiver down my spine even though I am not an especially impressionable person. Yet, the fact remains that we need to be realistic about what is happening in the world. The question that Mr. Allison asked on page 717 of the summer 2005 issue of the *fissionable material* was "What about Canada?" He had this to say:

A nuclear bomb going off on Parliament Hill in Ottawa would cause everything from the supreme court to the Ottawa Congress Centre to disappear; everything for

several blocks past the National Archives and the Canadian War Museum would be left in rubble; and fires would consume the Canadian Museum of Nature. Tens of thousands of people would die immediately and the seriously injured would number in the hundreds of thousands. Fallout from the blast would be carried by winds across Canada, contaminating farmland and cities alike and creating thousands of additional casualties.

I mention this to put things into context. Clearly, we would never want something like this to happen. However, as I was saying, we must do our utmost to protect Canadians, particularly when fairly accessible areas are left in the hands of malicious people, which could result in this type of damage.

Given that I am from the other side of the river in Gatineau, reading something like this really put things into perspective for me. We tell ourselves that this would be tragic but that it has never happened and that we are the greatest country in the world and that people here are friendly, open and welcoming. Yet, this is a strange world we live in.

We need to strike a balance. We cannot resort to hyperbole or forget to respect individual rights and freedoms. We need to have balanced policies that protect public safety while respecting human rights. If we manage that, we cannot go wrong.

Ian MacLeod wrote a series of articles in the *Ottawa Citizen* while we were studying the issue in committee. He wrote:

Nuclear officials are preparing to secretly transport a toxic stew of liquid bomb-grade uranium by armed convoy from Chalk River to a South Carolina reprocessing site.

The "high priority" mission marks the first time authorities have attempted to truck highly-enriched uranium (HEU) in a liquid solution, prompting nuclear safety advocacy groups on both sides of the border to sound the alarm for greater government scrutiny.

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) has confirmed the plan to the Citizen. It follows Prime Minister[...]s commitment at last year's global nuclear security summit to return HEU inventories to the United States to lessen the risk of nuclear terrorism.

I asked the officials from Transport Canada and Public Safety Canada what they thought about that. My objective was not to find out what route the trucks will be taking. Obviously, we do not want to provide malicious people with a map and the details of when a given convoy will be leaving and tell them that no one should be in the vicinity. We are not that naive.

However, I want to be able to respond to questions I get from the people of Gatineau. When they read this news in the *Ottawa Citizen*, a local newspaper, some of my constituents telephoned or wrote to me, asking if they should be worried. As the member for Gatineau, I want to be able to tell them that they have no reason to be concerned, because our experts are doing everything they can to ensure that we have nothing to worry about and that every possible safety measure is taken.

Government Orders

● (1235)

I sincerely hope that is the case. However, I cannot guarantee it, nor do I think that anybody here in the House of Commons can. We are counting on protocols being followed and we hope that all security and technological measures will be implemented so that nothing serious happens. Canadians are lucky to have so many waterways, but we are well aware that nuclear waste would eventually make its way to us. I have always been worried that, sooner or later, nuclear materials could enter our water and cause problems.

I do not want to make a mountain out of a molehill, but I do want to emphasize the importance of Bill S-9 given the international treaty requiring states parties to take tough measures. We have to look at how we handle this type of material, facilities, storage locations and manufacturing facilities so that we can implement critical security measures. We need to amend the Criminal Code to ensure that the necessary measures will be taken should offences relating to nuclear terrorism occur, although we hope that will never happen.

I have always believed that prevention is key. I am not against harsh and specific indictments in such cases. Some of these new offences are liable to life in prison, which is the maximum penalty available in the Canadian criminal justice system and shows just how serious such cases are.

I would like to talk about one witness who really impressed me during the committee study of Bill S-9. His name is Matthew Bunn, and he is an associate professor of public policy at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University. He described the context of this bill:

Since the September 11 attacks in the United States, both countries have improved security for their own nuclear materials, helped others to do the same, helped to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency's efforts, and worked to strengthen other elements of the global response. But if the United States and Canada are to succeed in convincing other countries to take a responsible approach to reducing the risks of nuclear theft and terrorism at the Nuclear Security Summit in the Netherlands in 2014 and beyond, then our two countries have to take the lead in taking responsible action ourselves.

He also convinced me of the following:

Hence, it is important for both of our countries to ratify the main conventions in this area, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, as the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit called on countries to do. As [we all know], the leaders at the Seoul summit set a target of gaining enough ratifications to bring the amendment to the physical protection convention into force by the 2014 summit.

That is why Mr. Bunn urged us to ratify these two conventions and pass Bill S-9. He was embarrassed by the fact that Canada is further ahead than the U.S. in that regard. Canada has shown leadership in this matter, and I am pleased with that.

I will close by reiterating that, like it or not, the threat of terrorism is real. This does not mean that something will happen tomorrow and that we should create mass hysteria. However, we need reasonable and well-drafted measures. For once the government has a good bill, which it could have introduced directly in the House rather than in the Senate.

However, we must encourage the members of the House to work on protecting public safety and strengthening our role as an international leader.

● (1240)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on our side, we are very grateful for the NDP's previous support of this bill, support that was pointed out by the hon. member for Gatineau. She is right to focus on prevention.

Canada has always defended regimes that regulate the nuclear sector, including the Manhattan project a few decades ago, which had roots not far from here, in the Ottawa Valley.

Dozens of countries produce nuclear material, and some private interests have tried to sell it in central Asia and Africa, and possibly Pakistan, a country that has nuclear weapons. If a nuclear weapon were handed to the rank and file, who knows where it might end up; possibly Iran, since Iran is trying to get nuclear weapons and has harmful ties to terrorist groups around the world.

Does the member agree that these are concrete nuclear threats that countries like Canada might face?

● (1245)

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I do not disagree with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

I urge people to read the briefing notes on Bill S-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Nuclear Terrorism Act. These notes were written by Lyne Casavant, Cynthia Kirkby and Dominique Valiquet from the Legal Affairs division of the Parliamentary Information and Research Service and Holly Porteous from the International Affairs and Defence division of that same service. They do an extraordinary job because they explain things clearly, which the government often does not do.

Rather than attacking the opposition by saying that we are all fools who support criminals, perhaps the government should clearly explain its bills and what they are about.

This research, which was very well done, explains the threats that could come from Pakistan, Iran and other countries. It provides a good summary of the situation: who produces this material and who could be a threat. It is interesting to read and provides background information. These notes make Bill S-9, which seems very dry at first, easier to understand.

[English]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats are committed to international diplomacy. I think it is important that we co-operate with our partners and countries around the world to work on issues that are important to them and to us. The area of nuclear materials and terrorism is an important issue we should be co-operating on internationally at a multilateral level.

Government Orders

My question to my colleague, who made a wonderful speech, is about the environment. We have seen the Conservatives not only gut the environmental regulations in this country but fail to engage in meaningful environmental climate change issues at an international level. I would ask my friend if she has any knowledge as to what can be done to take a leadership role internationally on the issue of the environment.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question, but it is not an easy one to answer in the time that I have.

Bill S-9 defines the word “environment”. I understand the skepticism of members on this side of the House because the government does not have a very good track record when it comes to the environment.

Of course, such toxic and dangerous substances can have extremely harmful effects on the environment. Earlier, I quoted an article from the *Ottawa Citizen* regarding the issue of transportation from Chalk River. There is a very important environmental aspect to all of this.

Subclause 2(2) of the bill clearly states:

2.(2) Section 2 of the Act is amended by adding the following in alphabetical order:

“environment” means the components of the Earth and includes

(a) air, land and water,

(b) all layers of the atmosphere,

(c) all organic and inorganic matter and living organisms, and

(d) the interacting natural systems that include components referred to in paragraphs (a) to (c)...

This definition is very relevant. I am not sure that the government still sees things this way.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech given by my hon. colleague from Gatineau. Since she took part in the work in committee, I would like to ask her a question before we get to third reading.

I read in the committee evidence that when she was questioning the Minister of Justice, who appeared at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, she talked about the fact that sections 82.3, 82.4 and 82.6 have a broader scope than what was required to ratify those two international agreements.

I wonder if she could tell us whether she thinks the minister answered her question satisfactorily and whether his arguments were convincing.

• (1250)

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes; I was convinced.

However, it was not the minister who convinced me, but rather the people from the Department of Justice who were there in the interest of public safety, who clearly explained to me that, in these treaties, sometimes the minimum requirement was the common denominator. However, this does not stop some countries from taking measures that go a little further.

My concern remains ensuring the legal compatibility of these charges, that is, ensuring that the famous balance that I was talking

about is not upset because of this kind of situation. So, the answers were very satisfying in that regard.

[English]

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill S-9, the nuclear terrorism act, which would amend the Criminal Code to implement Canada's obligations pursuant to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which I will refer to as the “suppression convention”, and the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, which I will refer to as the “amendment”.

The suppression convention is a multilateral treaty, as has been described. It is intended to harmonize the criminalization of acts related to nuclear terrorism across all state parties. Regrettably, Canada has still not ratified this convention, though we originally signed it in 2005. I appreciate that we are finally getting to the point where we can now move to ratify it, but I regret the delay in this regard.

The Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, which Canada signed in 1980, established legally binding undertakings on state parties in the area of the physical protection of nuclear material and also established measures relating to the prevention, detection and punishment of related criminal offences.

In 2005, Canada, along with 87 other state parties to the original convention, convened to amend and strengthen its provisions. At this conference, the amendment was adopted by consensus, and it will soon begin to enter into force, though it is yet to be ratified by a sufficient number of signatories, including Canada. We need to move forward in that regard.

Both the suppression convention and the amendment are fundamental components of the international community's approach to the prevention and detection of acts related to nuclear terrorism. Consequently, Bill S-9 would constitute necessary implementing legislation for the suppression convention and the amendment, thereby strengthening this international regime. The bill has been thoroughly debated in the House, studied extensively at committee and thoroughly debated in the other chamber. It represents a positive step forward in this regard.

Moreover, the safeguarding of nuclear material and facilities exists within the domestic implementing legislation, and it must never be forgotten that it exists within the context of the overall threat of expanding nuclear proliferation, as represented by the proliferation activities with respect to Iran and North Korea, and the ultimate imperative, therefore, of achieving nuclear disarmament, for which Canada must be at the forefront.

Because members in this place are by now quite familiar with this bill, and reference was made to it by the parliamentary secretary, as well, in his remarks, I will briefly describe its contents and significance.

Indeed, the prevention of nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation will require an internationally coordinated response. Canada must continue to take a leadership role in this regard.

Government Orders

Following preliminary discussion of the contents of the bill, I will then address what has just been raised in this House as the particular issue posed by the proliferation threat of Iran, which also has been seen in the context of its overall, four-fold threat. It was the subject of an exchange between a previous speaker and the parliamentary secretary. I will address that issue, as well.

Let me very quickly move us to the contents of the bill.

First, Bill S-9 would make it an indictable offence to make a device or to possess, use, transfer, export, import, alter or dispose of nuclear material or device with the intent to cause death, serious bodily harm or substantial damage to property or the environment. It would also criminalize the commission of an act against a nuclear facility or an act that causes serious interference or disruption of a nuclear facility's operation.

Second, Bill S-9 would make it an indictable offence to do any of these acts with the intent to compel a person, government or international organization to do or refrain from doing something.

Third, Bill S-9 would make it a separate indictable offence to commit any indictable offence with the intent to obtain nuclear or radioactive material or to obtain access to a nuclear facility.

All three of the offences are punishable by a maximum of life in prison.

Fourth, Bill S-9 would make it an indictable offence to threaten to commit any of the aforementioned offences, which is punishable by a maximum of 14 years in prison.

Moreover, the bill would classify these new offences as terrorist activities, pursuant to section 83.01 of the Criminal Code, such that the commission of these offences would trigger other provisions of the Criminal Code relating, for example, to electronic surveillance and DNA collection.

• (1255)

It will also implement extraterritorial jurisdiction in relation to these new offences, such that Canadian courts will have jurisdiction over individuals prosecuted for the violation of these offences, even where the particular offence did not occur within Canadian territory. These are relevant steps, as they represent an internationally coordinated approach to the problem of nuclear terrorism.

Indeed, based on the debate that has occurred already, both in this House and in the other chamber, the bill appears to enjoy widespread support in both chambers.

The members in this place all recognize the importance of criminal law enforcement and the international harmonization of the criminalization of acts related to nuclear terrorism. It is precisely for this reason that the absence of any action on this matter for the last eight years, since the conventions were signed in 2005, is particularly regrettable.

In February, just one month ago, my colleague from St. Paul's had the opportunity to ask the Minister of Justice about the reasons for this delay when he testified at the justice and human rights committee. Indeed, the minister's explanation warrants referencing here. It is a lesson about the government's generally inverted approach to the setting of legislative priorities.

My colleague from St. Paul's asked the minister a very direct question to this effect: Since everybody seems to be in favour of this legislation, why did it take so long for the government to introduce the necessary domestic implementing legislation that is now finally being done eight years later?

Indeed, the minister answered that he was dissuaded from pursuing the bill because of what he described as the threat of filibuster in this House in matters relating to the criminal justice agenda. In particular, characterizing the debate on these bills as being a filibuster by the opposition, the minister stated at the justice committee:

...it was very difficult...to try to get any legislation through in the criminal justice area. ...dozens of bills...introduced into the House...opposed by one of the three parties, there was a desire many times by the opposition parties to talk about them incessantly, to go on and on....

The minister's explanation is itself objectionable insofar as it appears to imply that there is something wrong with the opposition parties seeking to address legislation before them, particularly important legislation in the matter of the criminal justice agenda, and particularly when that agenda of more crime and punishment emerges as a priority in the government's legislative agenda as a whole.

It is both wrong and, indeed in this instance, diversionary to equate thorough discussion and debate on the government's criminal law agenda to filibustering and use that as a reason that he did not introduce domestic implementing legislation regarding Bill S-9. I submit that, on both of these counts, the government has it upside down, as I said.

Number one, in the matter of the government's legislative agenda, members of this House have a responsibility to address this legislation, to vet this legislation. It is part of our responsibility of public oversight, as we sought to do whether it was to get costs of Bill C-10 or address an omnibus bill. In fact we could not even filibuster, because in most of these pieces of legislation, we had time allocation introduced in any case.

Leaving that aside, what relationship does the debate on the government's crime and punishment agenda have to do with a delay of eight years before we move to introduce domestic implementing legislation? I suggest that this cannot and should not have accounted for the delay in the introduction of this legislation.

Moving on to the issue of the nuclear threat and now moving to the question of the Iranian situation, which I said I would take up and is a part of the questions and answers, let me just say what we find with regard to what we are witnessing in Khamenei's Iran today—and I use that term because I want to distinguish it from the people and public of Iran, who are otherwise the object of massive domestic repression.

What we are finding in Khamenei's, Iran is really a fourfold threat, but a fourfold threat that is interrelated.

Government Orders

• (1300)

There is the nuclear threat; there is the genocidal incitement threat; there is the international terrorism threat, where the Iranian footprints are replete and evidence has come forward with respect to some 22 terrorist attacks in 2012 alone, spanning five continents with the Iranian Hezbollah connection in that regard; and finally, there is the massive domestic repression, which frankly will be leveraged if Iran should become a nuclear power. There is an interrelationship with all of these matters, because should Iran become a nuclear power, this will enhance the international terrorism threat. It will also leverage its domestic repression activity, let alone the problem of the incitement threat that underpins nuclear proliferation as a whole.

Let me move to the particular role Canada could play with regard to the Iranian fourfold threat. I am speaking about the P5-plus-1 negotiations that have just concluded in Almaty but will be re-engaged again. I want to commend the government's position in this regard, as stated most recently by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I want to put forth in particular a number of requirements that should underpin the negotiating position of the P5-plus-1 and, because of our chairperson role at the International Atomic Energy Agency as well as our linkage in that regard to the P5-plus-1 negotiations, how we can help frame the negotiations and combat what our own Minister of Foreign Affairs has referred to as the Iranian position of deception, denial and delay and using negotiations as a basis for delay and the period in between the negotiations not only as a pretext for delaying what has to be done, but where the acceleration of the nuclear weaponization program actually takes place in the context of the delay between negotiations, sometimes within the negotiation period itself.

Since I last spoke to Bill S-9 in the House, there has been, as the International Atomic Energy Agency reported, an acceleration of the nuclear capabilities in the Iran program in the installation of advanced centrifuges. All of this has been set out in the IAEA report, so I will not go further in that regard, but will only say that the intensification of the nuclear capability with respect to Iran is bringing us closer to Iran's becoming a nuclear power, with less capacity on our part to not only prevent it but even to detect it happening.

Let me close by making reference to what particular approach we should have to the P5-plus-1 negotiations.

First, Iran must, as a threshold requirement, verifiably suspend its uranium enrichment program, therefore allowing the international community to combat the three Ds of delay, denial and deception, which as I said, Iran has used to accelerate its nuclear weaponization program rather than, in fact, move toward disarmament.

Second, Iran must ship its supply of enriched uranium, and there is more enriched uranium at a higher level, out of the country, where it can be reprocessed and then made available to Iran under appropriate inspection and monitoring for use in civil nuclear programs. We have no objection to the Iranian civil nuclear program. Iran has the right like any other state with respect to civil nuclear program, medical isotopes use of uranium and the like. The objection we have here is to the weaponization program.

Third, Iran must therefore verifiably close and dismantle its nuclear enrichment plant at Fordow, embedded in a mountain near Qom, which Iranians initially denied even existed but where a zone of impenetrability will soon develop unless that facility is in fact dismantled. Iran has delayed any inspection of those facilities, let alone its dismantling as a whole.

• (1305)

Fourth, Iran must suspend its heavy water production facilities at Arak, because it is sometimes forgotten that an essential component for producing plutonium involved in nuclear programs could also be water, which is a nuclear component that North Korea uses for its own nuclear weapons. Simply put, the path to nuclear weaponization need not be travelled by uranium enrichment alone. The suspension of uranium enrichment, however necessary, will not alone ensure that Iran is verifiably abandoning its nuclear weaponization program.

Fifth, Iran must allow, as it is not, International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors immediate and unfettered access to any suspected nuclear site, as is required, as Iran is a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Iran is thereby bound by its obligations not only not to pursue nuclear weapons but also to open its nuclear sites and installations.

Sixth, Iranian authorities need to grant the IAEA access to the parts and military complex near Tehran, where it has been reported that Iran has conducted high explosives testing, and I am referring to the Parchin complex, possibly in conjunction with the development of a nuclear weapon.

Finally, Iran needs to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency—and again I mention Canada's particular role with respect to IAEA, our chairmanship now—to install devices on centrifuges to monitor Iran's uranium enrichment levels.

These are the kinds of threshold approaches that Canada can assist in framing and thereby assist in combating proliferation and help to underpin the P5-plus-1 negotiations, which are about to be re-engaged next month.

I also want to mention the question of the incitement threat, because the state-sanctioned incitement to genocide is inextricably bound up with the nuclear proliferation program. In fact, an all-party committee of the foreign affairs committee in the House determined already in 2010, and I am really citing from that committee's report, that Iran has already committed the crime of incitement to genocide prohibited under the genocide convention. That all-party committee thereby recommended that state parties to the genocide convention have an obligation—not a policy option, but an obligation—to undertake the mandated legal remedies under the genocide convention to bring Iran to account.

Regrettably, as I speak in the chamber, not one state party to the genocide convention—not our country, not the United States, not any of the European countries—has undertaken any of these mandated legal remedies, which I will briefly summarize in my final remarks. Again, I remind everyone that this comes out of an all-party report.

Government Orders

First, Canada could be among the countries that could seek to simply refer the matter of this state-sanctioned incitement to genocide, the standing prohibition of the genocide convention I mentioned, to the UN Security Council for deliberation and accountability. It is a modest initiative. Certainly we should be able to do that.

Second, Canada could initiate tomorrow an interstate complaint before the International Court of Justice against Iran, which is also a state party to the genocide convention, for its violations of its own undertakings.

Third, Canada could ask the UN Security Council to refer the matter of the state-sanctioned incitement to genocide to the International Criminal Court for prospective investigation and prosecution of Iranian leaders engaged in the violation of this treaty.

Finally, I want to mention the human rights situation. We need to sanction the Iranian leaders not only with respect to the nuclear weaponization program, but we need to sanction Iranian leaders engaged in the massive domestic repression and hold them to account, as well as holding to account those involved in the proliferation of international terrorism.

These four threats, the nuclear threat, the genocidal incitement threat, the human rights violations and the international terrorism threat, are all finding expression in Khamenei's Iran. We need a comprehensive approach to the fourfold threat. The government has identified that fourfold threat. In fact, it referenced the fourfold threat as the basis for closing the Iranian embassy here and ours in Iran. I would like to suggest that the government undertake these particular juridical remedies in the implementation of our international responsibilities.

● (1310)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we on this side would like to congratulate the hon. member for Mount Royal on his excellent speech, on his support for this issue, on his continuing commitment to comprehensive measures supported by the whole international community, with leadership from Canada, to counter the fourfold threat represented by Iran, and to making the world a safer place, in this and other respects.

The debate today is about nuclear terrorism, and while we all agree there has been delay, deception and denial with regard to Iran's ambitions to have nuclear weapons, those three terms also apply to terrorism in a much broader context. Certainly before May 1, 2011, there was a lot of delay, deception and denial about the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden, for which few, if any, official bodies in Pakistan have taken any responsibility, whatsoever, or shown any remorse.

Could the hon. member give us his personal view of how the international community has done on the macro level over the past 5 or 10 years in creating the legal frameworks and the political will to counter terrorism generally? Are we doing better? Are there still huge gaps? Do we actually find ourselves facing a greater and expanding threat, above and above Iran, globally on this front?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, that question deserves a response, both as to the nature of the threat and what could be done about it.

Number one, in my view the situation with regard to international terrorism has frankly gotten worse. I think part of the problem is that sometimes we have been so focused on the issue of al-Qaeda terrorism that we then repeat the mantra "al-Qaeda is not what it was", as if that was where all the terrorism resided.

We have seen, taking one case study, the phenomenon of Hezbollah. Here, too, the government has taken the lead in trying to get the European Union and the European community to list Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, as we did here in Canada, in 2002.

I mention Hezbollah, because very recently, testimony, in a trial in Cypress and in the apprehension of a prospective terrorist attack in Nigeria, indicated the footprints of Hezbollah, as we have seen them in terrorist attacks from Azerbaijan to India to Bulgaria, which even implicated a Canadian.

In a word, international terrorism is from Central Asia to Central America. We need to implement the existing framework for anti-terrorism law in that regard as well as undertake other responsibilities.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also want to compliment the member for Mount Royal on his excellent speech and intervention, and for his long career of work in international law and human rights.

I would like to ask him, and I will not get into the specifics of what he is proposing in other areas outside this treaty, whether he would care to comment on what appears to be the dilatory nature of states that are party to these two conventions in actually taking action.

We know the Americans, for example, have yet to ratify this, although they are signatories and support the objectives. Here we are in Canada, having signed one of these treaties in 1980, and we are only now getting around to ratifying it. We were signatories to this 2005 agreement, but it is seven years later and we are only now taking the steps to ratify this.

Would the member like to comment on the government talking about it being urgent but then waiting seven years to bring it forward?

● (1315)

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, I was the minister of justice at the time that we signed the international convention in 2005. It was my hope at that point that we would move to implement that undertaking with the ratification and the appropriate domestic implementing legislation. Regrettably, as the member has said, it has taken us all this time to get to that.

Government Orders

Part of the problem, if I may say, is the government's preoccupation with the justice agenda. I am not saying we do not need a domestic criminal justice agenda. I am saying that a justice agenda has to be more than a crime and punishment agenda on the domestic side, which I have spoken to elsewhere. It also has to have an international justice dimension. We have not seen an international justice dimension from the current government.

In an exchange that took place between the Minister of Justice and my colleague from St. Paul's, when she asked why it took eight years until we moved to ratify, his response was that we had been filibustering on the domestic justice agenda. Even if that were true, which I suggest it is not, what relationship does that have to our responsibility on the international justice agenda, whether that be with regard to the combatting of nuclear proliferation, combatting international terrorism, or whether it be with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights?

In other words, we need to have a conception of justice that is not only domestic, and when it is domestic, that is not just limited to the criminal law area but also has an international justice agenda.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the importance of the issue of nuclear terrorism and the potential threat. It is a concern that many people around the world share. The United Nations plays a very critical role in terms of that worldwide leadership.

My colleague made reference to when he was the minister of justice and these two agreements that were signed in good faith. If we reflect on the legislation we have today, my understanding is that the legislation in essence would incorporate the things that were decided back in 2005. It seems that in principle the legislation does have the support of all members of the House of Commons. Could the member provide comment on that and why in his most recent question he was referring to the delay?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the exchange that took place and the response by the minister to my colleague from St. Paul's. I do not want to go over it, but I want to make another point.

I believe that the consensus to adopt this domestic implementing legislation in Bill S-9 and the like was there back in 2005. I recommend to the government that rather than accusing us of filibustering on the domestic agenda, to reach out more and engage with the opposition and invite opposition critics to consult. If the minister had done that, he perhaps would have been able to determine, back in 2006, that the consensus was there to adopt the domestic implementing legislation for this convention. We need a little more engagement in this House from across the aisle on both the domestic justice agenda and the international justice agenda. I invite the government to engage with its opposition critics in this regard, so we can move forward where the consensus already did exist and not have to wait eight years.

When they do not take the leadership for eight years on something like this, then it undercuts the ability to take leadership on other issues internationally. We have to have an international perspective, where we move forward as effectively and as quickly as we can, and in a holistic approach, to recognize, again, that issues of nuclear proliferation, international terrorism, international rights violations and incitement are all inextricably bound, one with the

other. We need a comprehensive strategic approach with respect to addressing and redressing each and all of these violations.

• (1320)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill S-9, now before the House. It is called an act to amend the Criminal Code, but it is very directly related to the short title, which is nuclear terrorism act. It is an important piece of legislation on which my colleague, and dare I say friend, from Mount Royal, has said there is a consensus and probably has been a consensus for six or seven years in this country.

Therefore, it is quite a surprise that it has not been brought forward. As he pointed out, there are many instances where there can be a consensus on matters that could come before the House and be dealt with expeditiously, and some are, but there ought to be more of that. If we are going to be combative about certain things, I think that is the nature of politics. However, where there is a consensus, there can be a great deal more co-operation.

An ironic example of that was last year when the justice bill, Bill C-10, was before the House. It went to committee. The member for Mount Royal moved six or seven amendments at committee. They were defeated at committee. The government had to bring them into the House, but they were ruled out of order because they could have been done at committee. The Conservatives had to use the other place to deal with the passage of those amendments. It was quite embarrassing, I should think, that they showed their nature in terms of dealing with legislation and dealing with the opposition. However, that is one example of many.

Mr. Speaker, I was supposed to say at the beginning of my speech that I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Beaches—East York.

The substance of the bill is something that we support. The bill has a number of objectives. It amends the Criminal Code in adding four new offences. The bill was introduced in the Senate a year ago. It could have been brought here earlier than this, but, once again, that is a sign of not moving as quickly as one would have thought on something as important as this.

The bill adds four new offences to the Criminal Code, having to do with possession, use or disposing of nuclear radioactive material with the intention to cause death, serious bodily harm or substantial damage to property or the environment. That is an act against a nuclear facility or any of its operations. One has to do with using or altering a radioactive material or a nuclear or radioactive device with the intent to compel a person or government organization to do or refrain from doing any act being guilty of an indictable offence. That is a classic example of terrorism. Then, there's committing an indictable offence under a federal law for the purpose of obtaining nuclear radioactive material or a radioactive device or to control a facility, or to threaten to commit any of those other three offences.

Government Orders

These are significant crimes and would be given significant penalties in the Criminal Code as a result of the bill. It would be life imprisonment for the first three, as a maximum penalty, and 14 years as a maximum penalty for the threat to do any of these three things.

It is an important part of following through on two conventions that were agreed upon internationally: the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. Both of these conventions were an important part of a regime to attempt to control nuclear materials throughout the world.

As we were debating the bill this morning, I recalled growing up in an era where there was a real threat of nuclear war and nuclear annihilation. I grew up in the fifties and sixties, and in 1962 we all know there was a Cuban missile crisis.

● (1325)

I distinctly remember hearing air raid sirens being tested occasionally to remind us what they sounded like, and we had instructions. Some people were building fallout shelters in their back gardens in the event of a nuclear war. That was the reality. In schools, children were being told that if they heard the air raid sirens, they should get under their desks or under the stairs in their homes, and so forth. That was the way we thought about the world when we were children.

Happily, that is not something that children think about today, or have to think about, because the world is not in a state in which that is a likelihood or even a remote possibility at this point.

However, we do see proliferation. States such as Pakistan and India, with certain historic difficulties and disagreements that have not been resolved, are becoming nuclear powers. North Korea is attempting to engage in the development of nuclear weapons, as is Iran, as the member from Mount Royal has pointed out. Therefore, there are significant threats.

It is important to note that among the signatories to this convention are some important players, including the United States of America, China, India, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and Germany. Obviously we would like to see more. However, it is a framework that can be used to control international terrorism or attempts to use these materials for nefarious purposes.

More can and should be done. The area of prevention is extremely important. Canada and the countries who are signatories can play a role in assisting countries to ensure the protection of nuclear materials, because there are countries that do not necessarily have the technical ability to control those activities within their own borders.

Importantly, the 2005 amendments to the treaties made to deal with interstate transport and usage of these materials extended the scope to also cover domestic use, storage and transport and nuclear facilities used for peaceful purposes.

Historically, Canada ratified one of these conventions in 1980. Canada only signed the agreement, which does not make us a party until it has actually been ratified. This step is one of ratification of both these treaties.

What is also interesting as well is that this piece of legislation is called Bill S-9 for a reason. It was started in what we are required to call "the other place". I think we are allowed to say "senators" and we are allowed to talk about people by name over there, but what are we doing? Are we now the chamber of sober second thought? Have we reversed the constitutional roles? Do we have legislation coming out of the Senate? Is that where we start?

The Senate has looked at this legislation and has fixed it by adding one of the measures that was in the convention but not in the bill. I am sure it could have been fixed here easily before it was sent over there, but the government wants to legitimize the other place somehow, and even though senators are unelected, unaccountable and unapologetic, as we have found out in the last long while, the government seems to rely on the Senate as some sort of an institution where it can start legislation and have it come over here. Are we here to ratify what the Senate has done? Is that the expectation?

I think we support the bill, but it should have been brought here five or six years ago, when the government came into power.

● (1330)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was happy to hear in my colleague's speech that the NDP is supportive of the bill. However, I will have to disagree with him on one comment he made, that being that Canadians do not worry about nuclear terrorism in the way they used to.

I grew up at the same time he did. I want to read an email I received this morning from one of my constituents, named Chris, who stated:

The elite in North Korea are going nuts over the new sanctions at the UN. They involve yachts (yachts?), luxury cars, racing cars, and jewellery. They also can't use international banking. So, they are cancelling the 1953 ceasefire and have now threatened a nuclear first strike against the U.S.

Along with my constituent, I would argue that Canadians are concerned about this issue. My constituents are very aware of what is happening in the world.

I was wondering if the member could explain to the House whether the NDP feels that nuclear terrorism is a real threat. Also, although the New Democrats are supporting the bill, do they have any suggestions to strengthen the bill further?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I was sorry to hear my colleague across the way mischaracterize my statements about growing up with the threat of worldwide thermonuclear war between states armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons and with red phones sitting on the desks of the President of the United States and the president of Russia during the Cold War. That is what I was talking about.

Government Orders

I did not say that people were not concerned about nuclear terrorism, obviously. I specifically mentioned North Korea, Iran and others. On the threats that people make like that, threats and capabilities are two different things, and we are certainly concerned about that. It is why we are passing legislation like this. It is why we are urging countries like Canada, as well as the United Nations, to impose and increase sanctions to try to find a solution to the acts of states such as North Korea and Iran and to come to a better way of dealing with them. All efforts should be made to try to deal with that. I reject the member's characterization of what I said. Of course people are concerned about nuclear terrorism.

However, I wonder why we waited until now to try to ratify this convention and bring into our domestic law the important aspects that we have here. That is what I am wondering about.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as in trade, human rights and environmental norms, New Democrats support multilateralism and international co-operation. We support this kind of negotiation especially on such things as nuclear safety and safety from nuclear terrorism. Canada has agreed to be legally bound by these conventions, and it requires domestic implementation before we ratify the convention.

On the record of the government in terms of engaging in international multilateralism and international co-operation, we think of climate change accords and different things on the international stage. How can we have confidence that the current government would look after nuclear terrorism when it has abrogated its duty to stand up for Canada on the international stage so many times when it comes to human rights and environmental norms?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately we have a situation in which Canada has not measured up to the reputation we had in the past for co-operation with other nations, so much so that Canada, unthinkable, lost the opportunity to have a seat on the Security Council of the United Nations.

It was a tradition that Canada would be able to win that seat every 10 years. However, despite vigorous campaigning at the last minute, it was clearly a negative thing. We would certainly want to see more emphasis on that, and this failure is something that we will wear for quite a while.

• (1335)

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand up and speak a second time to Bill S-9. I would like to pick up where my colleague from St. John's East left off in talking about where the bill comes from. It emanates from the Senate, with the nomenclature "S".

For seven years, the same Prime Minister has been promising Senate reform. He claims to have an issue with the fact that the chamber is unelected and unaccountable, all the while dragging his feet and ragging the puck on this for seven years. In that time, he has led 58 of his friends to comfortable seats in the Senate at extraordinary expense to the taxpayers of our country.

That is the same old conduct that has been practised in this place by both Liberal and Conservative governments since Confederation. It is cynical politics, and it is breeding a deep concern about our political system in those who can still bear to cast a gaze upon this place and the spectacle that it has become.

It is a particularly sad day today, waking up to the realization that just last night the entrenched interests in this place and in the Senate—those interested in retaining the status quo, the Conservatives and the Liberals—did not just let an opportunity for change slip by, but actually stood on their feet to defeat that opportunity, a motion from my NDP colleague from Toronto—Danforth to usher in real change, to begin a discussion about expunging from our political system unelected, unaccountable power in the hope of bringing a deeper democracy to Canada, one befitting a modern, hopeful country. Instead, we have the party of so-called reform allowing an important bill like Bill S-9 to emanate from that unaccountable chamber.

Suffice it to say that I am disappointed that this important legislation honouring Canada's commitment to co-operate with the rest of the international community in protecting nuclear material and combating nuclear terrorism should have come from the Senate chamber instead of our own.

Bill S-9, also known as the nuclear terrorism act, when implemented, would amend the Criminal Code to comply with Canada's international obligations with respect to two treaties: the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

My NDP colleagues and I support the bill, in the spirit of forging ahead with Canada's fulfillment of these international obligations and commitments.

The Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, or CPPNM, dates back to 1980 and is deposited with the International Atomic Energy Agency. To quote the IAEA:

The Convention is the only international legally binding undertaking in the area of physical protection of nuclear material. It establishes measures related to the prevention, detection and punishment of offenses relating to nuclear material.

Canada is a signatory and had ratified the convention by the time it entered into force in 1987. The CPPNM was amended in 2005 to strengthen the provisions of the convention. The 2005 version seeks to extend protection measures to nuclear facilities in addition to protecting against the proliferation of nuclear materials. As well, it reinforces Canada's obligation under UN Security Council resolution 1540, passed in 2004, to enforce measures seeking to prevent the proliferation of such materials.

It is the strengthened requirements of this amendment that Bill S-9 seeks to fulfill in clearing the way for Canada's ratification of the strengthened agreement.

The second treaty addressed within the provisions of Bill S-9 is the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, or ICSANT. This agreement falls under the auspices of the United Nations and dates back to 2005 as well. This convention deals more specifically with the issue of nuclear terrorism; it calls on its signatories to establish criminal offences within their national laws for acts of nuclear terrorism and also introduces mandatory prosecution or extradition of offenders.

Government Orders

● (1340)

Bill S-9 would amend the Criminal Code to include four new offences that related to nuclear terrorism and thus fulfill Canada's obligation under the above mentioned conventions.

These new offences would make it illegal to: possess, use or dispose of nuclear or radioactive material or a nuclear or radioactive device, or commit an act against a nuclear facility or its operations with the intent to cause death, serious bodily harm or substantial damage to property or the environment; use or alter nuclear radioactive material or a nuclear or radioactive device, or commit an act against a nuclear facility or its operation with the intent to compel a person, government or international organization to do or refrain from doing anything, to commit an indictable offence under federal law for the purpose of obtaining nuclear radioactive material, a nuclear radioactive device, or access or control of a nuclear facility; and, finally, to threaten or commit to do any of the above.

In addition to those four offences outlined above, the bill would amend the Criminal Code to allow for the prosecution in Canada of individuals who committed or attempted to commit these offences outside of Canada.

The bill would also amend the double jeopardy rule so that the person could be tried within Canada for an offence that he or she had previously been convicted of by a foreign court in the event that the foreign trial did not meet certain basic Canadian legal standards. The bill would also make amendments to wiretap provisions and would make the new offences primarily designated offences for the purpose of DNA warrants and collection orders.

Both the convention on the physical protection of nuclear material and the second convention outline in plain language the urgency of action. The CPPNM states:

—offences relating to nuclear material and nuclear facilities are a matter of grave concern and that there is an urgent need to adopt appropriate and effective measures, or to strengthen existing measures, to ensure the prevention, detection and punishment of such offences.

The ICSANT speaks of:

—the urgent need to enhance international cooperation between States in devising and adopting effective and practical measures for the prevention of such acts of terrorism and for the prosecution and punishment of their perpetrators.

This sense of urgency was underscored in 2010 and again in 2012 during the nuclear security summits. The first summit proposed by President Obama in 2009 and held the following year in Washington was known as the global nuclear security summit and called together world leaders from 47 countries for talks regarding the advancement of nuclear security and the responsibility of nations to maintain and enhance this security.

In March 2012 the second summit was held in Seoul, where participants renewed the commitments made in 2010 and again underscored the urgency of the issue. To quote the Seoul communiqué:

We stress the fundamental responsibility of States, consistent with their respective national and international obligations, to maintain effective security of all nuclear material, which includes nuclear materials used in nuclear weapons, and nuclear facilities under their control, and to prevent non-state actors from acquiring such materials and from obtaining information or technology required to use them for malicious purposes.

Bill S-9 would bring us closer to the ratification of those two conventions and thus to the fulfilment of Canada's international obligations with regard to nuclear security. Given the importance of the legislation and the urgency of putting in place an international regime to counter nuclear terrorism, one wonders why the legislation has been seven years in the making. International agreements aiming to prevent nuclear terrorism are not something we should take lightly and our ratification has been delayed for far too long.

The bill has the support of both sides of the House and the lack of legislation thus far speaks more to the apathy on the government side rather than any threat of political interference or controversy.

Canada has long been a leader in the field of international co-operation, although that reputation has been tainted under the Conservative government. We should maintain that reputation. For that reason, we support Bill S-9.

● (1345)

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the nuclear power plant in Pickering is not far from the member's riding nor mine. We can see it from the lake front in my riding. It is an issue of concern that something could potentially happen down the road. I am happy we are finally moving forward with the bill.

As the member said, the legislation has been many years in the making. I wonder if he has a hypothesis or maybe he might know why it has taken so long for the government to bring this forward. Perhaps he could also elaborate on why it came from the other place, that place of unelected, unaccountable, unapologetic and under investigation senators rather than from the elected members in the House. Perhaps he could comment on that.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from my neighbouring riding and enjoy working cheek by jowl in the east end of Toronto with him.

On the latter question about why the Senate, I am confounded. The government claims to be concerned about the power of unelected and unaccountable officials and, yet, allows such an important bill to come forward from that chamber.

On the issue of Pickering, it has been a great advance in the legislation and the international conventions to include nuclear facilities. I spent a number of years working in the electricity industry in Ontario, representing nuclear workers. One thing one always needs to be careful of in matters of health, safety and public security is the normalization of risks.

While that is a tendency in workplaces and in the public, it is something that we in the House cannot allow to happen to us, especially with respect to issues of nuclear safety and security. I can only guess it is the issue of a normalization of risks that is the cause for the government taking so very long to bring forward this legislation. Public security, especially with respect to nuclear matters, should be a no-fail mission for any Government of Canada.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is simple. I believe that all Canadians are seeing more and more that the international picture is becoming darker and bleaker. Nuclear proliferation is a growing problem. All the associations that exist among the various governments around the world seem to be saying that there is an increasing amount of negligence in putting meaningful measures in place.

Why did the government, which seems to be so proud of being in touch with all these people around the world, take so long to put such a measure in place? Why is it coming from the Senate and not the government? Why is the government now open to something that has always been obvious and needed to be regulated?

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, I have suggested it is the issue of normalization of risks that is, perhaps, responsible for the delay by the government in bringing forward the legislation. It is extremely disconcerting and concerning that such a delay exists, when one looks around the world at the fragility of states, the number of states that are precariously potentially failed states, the number of organizations, non-state actors, that advocate terrorist activities to see their objectives through.

In that context, for the government to delay bringing forward this important legislation is a matter of serious concern. I think that is why members hear me express those concerns in my speech. As well, many of my NDP colleagues are expressing that concern very unequivocally in the debate on the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time.

As mentioned a number of times, Bill S-9 deals with nuclear terrorism.

I acknowledge the importance of this threat, but I would like to analyze the issue from another angle and emphasize diplomacy and international collaboration. This bill will change our domestic policy so that Canada can ratify two very important treaties.

I rarely rely on notes, but as I am not an expert, I will consult them for the names of these treaties. We are talking about the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

The objective of these two conventions is to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons and, as we are discussing, nuclear terrorism. The work is carried out within the United Nations and through multilateral relations.

I will focus on this aspect because when I communicate with the people of my riding, Chambly—Borduas, we often discuss Canada's international reputation, which is losing its lustre. Some decisions made by CIDA and the Department of Foreign Affairs are not in keeping with the expectations of the international community.

The very significant threat of nuclear terrorism is not the only reason why the NDP is pleased to support this bill. We are also encouraged by the fact that this bill appears to be a step towards ratifying multilateral conventions.

My colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie and my colleague from Ottawa Centre, our international relations and foreign affairs critics, often say that the NDP attaches great importance to multilateral relations. That has always been true. We could even say that about free trade, for example.

We are very pleased to see that Bill S-9 takes a step towards ratifying these multilateral conventions.

There is still one problem, and the member for St. John's East alluded to it earlier in his speech. Canada did not get a seat on the United Nations Security Council, which was a first. That clearly demonstrates just how much respect the international community has lost for Canada. It is a serious issue. A lot of work needs to be done to rebuild our reputation and continue moving in the right direction. Passing measures to ratify these types of conventions is one way we can do that.

A number of countries have not yet ratified these conventions, and a certain number must ratify before they can be implemented. That is why Canada's work is so important. Despite the fact that the respect the international community once had for Canada is plummeting, our counterparts from other countries who sit with us at the United Nations or other organizations still have a great deal of respect for Canada. If we ratify these conventions quickly, we can encourage other countries to do the same, in the hopes of reaching the required minimum.

In 2014, the Netherlands will host a summit to discuss this issue. It will be a wonderful opportunity to talk with other countries, explain the steps we have taken and use the respect other countries have for us in order to encourage them to follow our lead.

Hopefully we can move forward with these important measures.

● (1350)

I must explain that the notion of nuclear terrorism has changed quite a bit. Long before I was born, we had the cold war, as my colleague from St. John's East explained. Now, nuclear terrorism is changing a lot, and the international community has to adapt.

Take, for example, one of the conventions I mentioned that applies to this discussion. This convention was signed in 1980. It was then amended in 2005 because the reality of nuclear terrorism around the world has drastically changed in the past 25 years. So this is something we need to look at. If Canada can play a role in addressing this multilateral issue, we would be very happy to support any domestic measures necessary to move forward with Bill S-9.

As many of my colleagues have mentioned, it is important to note that Bill S-9 addresses a pressing issue. If the topic is so important, if the Minister of Justice thinks that this issue is so important and he is so proud of the outcome, as he said in the Senate committee, why was this bill not introduced in the House? Not to mention that it took a long time. This issue has been dragging on since 2005. The fact that the Senate finally decided to act on something so important is a huge problem.

Statements by Members

Last evening, we voted on our motion to abolish the Senate. The Liberals and the Conservatives unfortunately continued to support the institution, which is suffering from institutional arthritis. The fact remains that we must refocus on what we have to do here in this House. If we want to continue to make progress on international affairs, it should not be done in the Senate. It should be done here, in the House, with the elected members who are in the best position to do so.

Since I have this opportunity to discuss diplomatic relations issues, I would like to refer to my own relevant personal experience. I studied political science at McGill University not so long ago. Many people say that political science is not very applicable to actual politics. I do not quite agree with that and I would like to explain why. Even though we are talking specifically about nuclear materials, I believe in the importance of multilateral relations as a general philosophy.

This has to do with the tragedy of the commons, a very important concept in international relations. Allow me to explain. When several countries come together to try to solve a problem, such as climate change, and when all of them expect some other country to make the first move, that is the tragedy of the commons. Nobody does anything because everybody expects somebody else to do something.

Families may experience the same thing. Everybody wants the house to be clean. Everybody expects the little brother or the mother to do the cleaning, but in the end nobody does it. The same concept applies to international relations. Good, strong multilateral relations are critical to preventing these problems. That is true of the issue before us today, nuclear terrorism, and of all other issues.

That is why we are happy to support this bill. This gives us hope that the government will fall into line and continue in this direction. Let us hope that this is a sign of things to come. For the time being, we will support this bill, in the hope that this government will take further measures to restore and reassert Canada's once-excellent reputation on the international stage, a reputation that has suffered so much lately.

•(1355)

I will say in closing that, in 2015, the New Democratic government will work very hard to restore Canada's excellent international reputation. The member for Ottawa Centre and my esteemed colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie have a lot to offer in that respect.

•(1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for government orders has now expired.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, March 8, is International Women's Day, a day of celebration, equality and peace. We should take the

opportunity of this day to remind ourselves of the struggles women have and continue to go through as well as to stand up to celebrate the significant contributions women have made to our society and all around the world.

This year, the UN theme for International Women's Day is "A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women". Let us make the promise to be part of the change.

I would like to use this occasion to thank my wife, Gosia, for her unconditional love and support for me and our family, as well as all the females in the House and Senate and all women in our great country for their dedication and hard work. Let us take the opportunity to appreciate the women in our lives today, tomorrow and every day.

* * *

[Translation]

STEVE DÉRY

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to speak on behalf of my constituents to honour a hero who died while serving our region with courage and passion.

The sad news made its way across the country on Saturday. There was a report of a shooting in Kuujuaq that cost the life of Constable Steve Déry. Steve was a native of Orleans and came from a good family that values public service.

In fact, his brother Benoît is a City of Ottawa firefighter, and his mother works as a nurse in the region. Steve also followed in the footsteps of his father, Gilles, an RCMP member who was on a UN mission when he learned the tragic news.

Constable Déry was known for his good sense of humour and his love of sports.

[English]

Last night, most of the 550 residents of Kangirsuk, where he served for six months in 2011, came together to remember the officer who made a lasting impact on their community.

[Translation]

On behalf of the people in my riding, I would like to offer my sincerest condolences to Steve's parents, Gilles and Céline, to his brothers, Mathieu and Benoît, and to his entire family.

Thank you, Steve, for your service. You made our region a better place.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks International Women's Day. As the International Women's Day website says, we must all do our bit to ensure that the future for girls is bright, equal, safe and rewarding. That can only be assured in a world where equality for all is recognized and protected.

Statements by Members

In Canada, we must never forget that women were not even officially recognized as persons under the law until 1929. In overturning the law designating women as non-persons, the Privy Council called it a “relic of days more barbarous than ours” and stated that to those who would ask why the word “person” should include females, “the obvious answer is why should it not”.

These profound words echo down through the ages to our own time. No one gains by refusing to recognize the equality and the dignity and worth of any human being.

* * *

LABRADOR WINTER GAMES

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute the organizers of and participants in the Labrador Winter Games.

This week, Labradorians have gathered in Happy Valley-Goose Bay for the 11th Labrador Winter Games, which take place every three years. Founded in 1983, this year marks 30 years since the very first games, which bring people together from Nain to L'anse au Clair to Wabush and all communities in between.

Athletes demonstrate their skill, strength and spirit of fair play and sportsmanship in 14 different winter and outdoor sports, including the popular two-night Northern Games. The week also features culture and entertainment from throughout the Big Land in recognition of the diverse cultures in Labrador.

The games are Labrador's premier winter event and draw interest and spectators from every corner of the region and the province, as well as national and international attention. I ask all members to join me in sending best wishes and congratulations to everyone involved in this year's winter games, continuing one of Labrador's proudest traditions.

* * *

• (1405)

THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the last few months, the NDP has made many irresponsible proposals, and it is likely that these ideas will form the basis of its election platform. Let us take a look at these in their entirety.

First, the NDP would bring back the wasteful and useless long-gun registry. Next, it would continue its attacks on Christian aid groups. Third, the NDP wants to put a halt to all natural resource development and eliminate the thousands of jobs our resources create. Fourth, it wants to make it easier to break up our country, which is a direct result of its flirtation with the separatists. Last but not least, let us not forget the most important plank in the NDP platform, its \$21-billion carbon tax, a tax to fund its irresponsible spending promises.

I actually thank the NDP for making this platform crystal clear to the Canadian public. I have three words for the NDP: Bring it on.

[*Translation*]

MONSIGNOR THOMPSON

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last weekend, the Trois-Rivières community welcomed thousands of visitors from across Canada and around the world who wanted to pay a final tribute to Monsignor Thompson.

An outstanding musician, a distinguished educator, a first-class ambassador of the Pueri Cantores organization and, above all, a man of faith like no other, Father Thompson—as he was known to the 4,000 choir boys he worked with—had a profound impact on anyone who crossed his path.

His life's work focused on the ideals of beauty and service to others, and his death does not mark the end of that. Today, thousands of former choir boys are working in all sectors of our society with those same goals in mind. I am one of them, and I would like to thank my mentor, my guide, my friend, for his precious teachings.

Last Saturday, the story of his life here with us may have ended, but a new story of eternal life began.

Monsignor Thompson, you are more alive than ever, for many of us believe that the best way to pay tribute to you is by following in your footsteps in our own endeavours.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate International Women's Week, we must work together to engage men to end violence against women.

Sex traffickers earn an average of \$280,000 annually from every victim under their control. Thirty-nine percent of child pornography images involve children three to five years of age. The average age of entry into the sex trade in North America is 12 to 14 years old.

Unfortunately, human trafficking is occurring in towns and communities all across our nation. In the last three months here in Canada, human trafficking charges have been laid in Montreal, Sudbury, Calgary, Edmonton, North Bay, Winnipeg and right here in Ottawa, when a 27-year-old Ottawa man was charged with kidnapping and human trafficking after police say a woman was forced into the sex trade and controlled.

Our government has taken concrete actions to eliminate violence against women and girls. Canada's national action plan to combat human trafficking was launched to ensure the safety of women and girls across Canada. Our government will continue this good work.

* * *

RETIRING JOURNALIST

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a native of St. Catharines.

Statements by Members

After 30 years at CTV, Roger Smith will be retiring. Roger had a long and distinguished career in Canadian journalism. Throughout his career, Roger covered many significant events, both here in Canada and around the world.

As an international correspondent, he covered political and economic reform in China, the revolution that ousted Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines and Nelson Mandela's release from prison.

For the last 15 years, Roger has covered federal politics where he has reported on six federal campaigns. Roger Smith was dedicated to journalism, and his presence in the press gallery will be missed. In fact, I can think of a few others who I would like to see go instead.

On behalf of the people of St. Catharines and members in this House, I would like to wish Roger and his wife, Denise, all the best and hope he enjoys a peaceful, restful and hockey-filled retirement.

* * *

STOMPIN' TOM CONNORS

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for almost 50 years, Canadians from coast to coast to coast tapped their toes and sang along with Canadian country-folk legend, Stompin' Tom Connors.

Like all Canadians, I was saddened when I heard the news that this cultural icon passed away last night.

The man stood for everything Canadian and he was adamant that he stayed a Canadian. He made it very apparent that he never left the country to advance his career and stayed true to who he was.

Northern Ontario had a special spot in Stompin' Tom's heart. As legend has it, Connors began his musical career when he found himself a nickel short of a beer at the Maple Leaf Hotel in Timmins, Ontario.

Although I am biased, the best song by our country's best loved troubadour, of course, is *Sudbury Saturday Night*. Who could not love these lyrics?

The girls are out to Bingo and the boys are gettin' stinko,
And we think no more of Inco on a Sudbury Saturday night.

While we have lost Stompin' Tom, we will always have the now famous *Sudbury Saturday Night* in my hometown of Sudbury.

To his wife, Lena, his children and his grandchildren, we send our prayers and our deepest sympathies.

* * *

• (1410)

NORTH KOREA

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 12, the North Korean regime once again showed its reckless disregard for regional peace and security by conducting its third nuclear test.

In response to this provocative and serious threat, today the UN Security Council adopted serious sanctions against the rogue regime. These expanded sanctions send a clear and strong message to those in Pyongyang, and Canada was proud to be one of the co-sponsors.

Our government already has some of the strongest sanctions in the world on the regime in Pyongyang, and we have been clear that these recent actions would bear consequences.

The true travesty is that the North Korean people continue to starve and are denied basic human dignity, while the regime squanders limited resources. It is high time that North Korea reverse this dangerous course, abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, and focus its scarce resources on the living conditions of its people.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for decades now, the entire world has been recognizing International Women's Day on March 8.

[*English*]

Much has changed in Canada in the last 100 years. It is hard to believe that 100 years ago women not only could not vote but they were not even considered persons. Today, more and more women are breaking down the barriers.

[*Translation*]

Although we have come a long way, a lot of work remains to be done. Women are still paid less than men, and they are often under-represented in many fields.

[*English*]

Women are also still subject to violence and abuse because they are women. As Canadians, we must also recognize the particular violence many aboriginal women face and the need for a public national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women.

[*Translation*]

It is also important that we take a stand against all attacks on women's rights. In Canada, the Conservative government has been attacking women's rights non-stop since 2006.

[*English*]

We need to continue to move forward, not back, on women's equality here in Canada and around the world.

Happy International Women's Day.

[*Translation*]

Happy International Women's Day.

Statements by Members

[English]

ISRAELI APARTHEID WEEK

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to condemn Israeli Apartheid Week taking place on Canadian campuses. Israeli Apartheid Week is a deceitful and malicious attempt to delegitimize Israel under the cloak of academic freedom. This discriminatory event singles out the Jewish state and calls into question its basic right to exist when, in fact, Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East.

Israel, like Canada, is a pluralistic country that celebrates freedom of religion, equality of sexes, minority rights and other basic fundamental values. Canada is proud of its ever-strengthening economic and cultural ties to Israel and as Israel approaches 65 years of independence, Canada will uphold its right to exist as an independent Jewish state and continue its efforts to promote peace and security in the region.

I ask that my colleagues in the House join me in condemning Israeli Apartheid Week's anti-Semitic hatefest and offer support to those who stand with Israel.

* * *

STOMPIN' TOM CONNORS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night we lost a Canadian icon and friend. Stompin' Tom Connors held a special place in the hearts of all Prince Edward Islanders, but he will be remembered for bringing us together as Canadians.

We know his songs from coast to coast. His voice gave us an anthem for hockey, for the red mud and for stomping our feet. Stompin' Tom had a unique talent for writing about what it is to be Canadian. His pride allowed us to boast about our country and our work in our unpretentious way.

Some of his own last words demonstrate his love for our great and vast country. He said:

It was a long hard bumpy road, but this great country kept me inspired with its beauty, character, and spirit, driving me to keep marching on and devoted to sing about its people and places that make Canada the greatest country in the world.

His trademark song *Bud the Spud* contains the words:

Now from Charlottetown or from Summerside
They load him down for the big long ride

Stompin' Tom Connors, it has been a great ride. He will be missed.

* * *

●(1415)

STOMPIN' TOM CONNORS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Stompin' Tom Connors died in his home in Wellington County. He lived and died in the countryside, so close to the land he loved. Our condolences go to Tom's wife, Lena, his sons Tom Jr. and Taw, as well daughters Carol and Karma.

Stompin' Tom's music inspired generations of Canadians to see the beauty of our land and people, from maple trees and wheat fields to its characters and communities. Over the course of his decades-long career, which produced 61 albums, Stompin' Tom's songs like *Bud*

the Spud and *The Hockey Song* have become an integral part of Canada's national identity.

In his final words, he said:

I must now pass the torch, to all of you, to help keep the Maple Leaf flying high, and be the Patriot Canada needs now and in the future.

I humbly thank you all, one last time, for allowing me in your homes, I hope I continue to bring a little bit of cheer into your lives from the work I have done.

I think I speak on behalf of all of us when I say thank you, Stompin' Tom, for inspiring us through word and song to love our home and native land, Canada. Stompin' Tom, may you rest in peace.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister once said, "I will not name appointed people to the Senate". That is the promise he made to Canadians in 2004 and broke just a few years later. In fact, since he became Prime Minister, he has made 58 appointments. He has even surpassed Brian Mulroney's patronage record.

What have the Conservatives done to change from the status quo? They have done nothing. The only real action they have taken has been to pass the buck to the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, New Democrats tabled a motion to begin the process of Senate abolition, a move that would save Canadians \$92 million a year and end the free ride for failed candidates, fundraisers and party operatives. Sadly, last night, shoulder to shoulder with the Liberal Party, Conservatives voted against our motion. They chose the status quo.

While Conservatives defend their senators, New Democrats will defend taxpayers and never stop fighting to abolish the Senate.

* * *

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians will be springing their clocks forward by an hour this weekend to squeeze as much sunlight into the day as possible.

This small change signals that spring is nearly here and summer is just around the corner. However, as Canadians daydream of fun in the summer with family and friends, the NDP leader is scheming up a way to spring a new tax on Canadians that will squeeze their wallets. He has a plan for a \$20 billion job-killing carbon tax that would raise the price of everything and kill economic growth.

Oral Questions

Unlike the one-hour change Canadians are making this weekend, the NDP leader's job-killing carbon tax will not save anyone anything. It will not even matter if you live in Saskatchewan; you will not be exempt from the NDP leader's carbon tax. We know that the NDP leader wants to impose this new job-killing carbon tax on Canadians so that he can raise new revenues to pay for billions in new spending plans.

Daylight saving time is taking an hour of sleep from Canadians this weekend, but they are really losing sleep over the thought of the NDP leader's \$20 billion job-killing carbon tax.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yet another report from the United States is raising disturbing questions about the F-35. Serious problems have been identified with the aircraft's radar, helmet and cockpit design. Pilots report that the plane is actually incapable of flying through clouds. Who knew that this was one of the requirements. Worse yet, the former head of the U.S. navy is now suggesting that the F-35A, the model the Conservatives plan to buy, should be scrapped entirely.

Will the Prime Minister give a straightforward answer? Will he admit that he has made a mistake and agree to full, open and honest competition to replace the CF-18, yes or no?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has been very clear. In response to the Auditor General's report, we have laid out a process for the procurement of the next generation of Canadian fighter. That involves looking at all the options and also ensuring that we receive a full range of independent advice.

The most important thing for us is that when the CF-18s reach the end of their life expectancy, that there be aircraft there for our men and women in uniform.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister is not in the House, other ministers are responsible for answering questions from the party leaders on his behalf.

Since the day the members of the NDP did me the honour of choosing me to be the leader of the official opposition, I have asked a total of 115 questions when the Prime Minister was not in the House. In 112 of those 115 cases—98% of the time—a man has answered me on the government's behalf. That is 112 out of 115 times.

Why does the Prime Minister not trust his female cabinet ministers to answer on behalf of his government?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week we are celebrating International Women's Day. I am proud to say that more than 40% of deputy ministers—the people who run the public service—are women. We obviously also have more and more female ministers and members of Parliament, who do an excellent job for our government.

* * *

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Correctional Investigator of Canada is sounding the alarm. Over the past six years, the number of aboriginal inmates has increased from 14% to 23% of the prison population. Aboriginal Canadians are seven times more likely to be incarcerated than non-aboriginals. The rate of recidivism is also much higher among aboriginal inmates.

The investigator confirmed that there has not been any significant progress made in finding alternative reintegration approaches. This has been a complete failure.

Why is the Prime Minister not taking this first nations crisis more seriously?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that prisoners are people who have been found guilty of criminal offences by independent courts. Society must take action.

The reality is that, unfortunately, aboriginal people are more likely to be the victims of violent crime than other Canadians. That is why we are taking our responsibility to protect Canadian society seriously, and looking at other measures.

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is simply failing aboriginal men and women who are in disproportionate and growing numbers behind bars. It has become such a crisis that under the Conservatives that the Correctional Investigator has had to resort for only the second time in his history to table a special report directly to Parliament. This shows the incompetency of the Conservative government.

Will the minister agree that the overrepresentation of aboriginal peoples in our prisons is a crisis and will he take responsibility for the Correctional Investigator's recommendations?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, decisions with respect to guilt or innocence are made by the justice system and in the courts based on the evidence before the courts.

That being said, the government has certainly taken a balanced approach on this and invested in crime prevention programs over the last seven years, including the northern aboriginal crime prevention fund, the youth gang prevention strategy, the youth at risk development. We have created the National Crime Prevention Centre. These are all important measures that should have the support of everyone in the House.

Oral Questions

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about Correctional Service. What is needed is immediate action. According to the report, the situation has only become worse, not better, under the Conservatives. The numbers are staggering. One in four men in corrections is aboriginal. For women it is even worse: one in three is aboriginal.

Instead of finding solutions, we only see more cuts from the Conservatives to the Correctional Service Canada. What more will it take for the government to take action on this mounting and serious crisis?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague just mentioned this week the Canadian and Government of Canada support for aboriginal policing and the programs we have funded to assist aboriginal Canadians through the aboriginal justice strategy, the courtworker program specifically designed to meet the needs of aboriginal Canadians. We are getting the job done. We are taking a comprehensive approach and this should have the support of everyone.

* * *

• (1425)

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Middle-class Canadians have the right to obtain the skills in demand in their local job market in order to succeed.

On this side of the House, we are troubled by the news that the government is considering taking the responsibility for training programs away from the regions and communities, which know better than anyone what workers need.

Does the Prime Minister now believe that Ottawa knows better than the regions what Canadians need to get a job?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the shortage of labour, especially the shortage of workers with particular skills, is a growing problem across the country.

We are consulting not only with the provinces, but also with businesses and other economic stakeholders, in order to deal with this critical problem and ensure Canada's long-term prosperity.

[English]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are worried about their jobs and their MPs who stay silent. It is time the members opposite learned that they were elected by Canadians to represent their views in Ottawa, not the Prime Minister's views in their communities. We know they cannot run effective training in Kamloops or Rimouski from downtown Ottawa.

Will the Prime Minister assure the House that the government will not centralize skills training programs in Ottawa?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member for Papineau in showing up and making the views of his constituents known for a change in the House of Commons.

As I have said repeatedly, the shortage of labour in the country, particularly the shortage of particular skilled workers, is a growing problem in various parts of the country, one that is projected to grow in the future. Its solution is essential and we are working and collaborating with the partners across the country to address this issue.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while this Prime Minister is trying to score cheap political points, Canadians are worried and he is ignoring the fact that even in his own document from this year's report on plans and priorities for HRSDC it states:

Since provinces and territories are best placed to determine the mix of employment programming that is required to meet their local and regional labour market needs, Employment Benefits and Support Measures are delivered through transfer Labour Market Development Agreements between Canada and the provinces and territories.

Why does the government no longer believe that?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, this is a critical economic problem. I have held round tables across the country and this was identified everywhere in the country as a significant challenge to the Canadian economy. Certainly in my conversations with other levels of government, they are also seized with the problem and it is important that everybody, all levels of government and the business community, work to find solutions to this challenge.

* * *

[Translation]

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the correctional investigator is scathing: our prison system is in crisis and aboriginal women are the primary victims.

Aboriginal people represent less than 4% of the Canadian population, yet one in three women in federal prisons is aboriginal. They are released later and are disproportionately involved in the use of force and in segregation. We are all responsible for this failure.

Instead of slashing Correctional Service Canada's budget, will the minister finally acknowledge this crisis and take action?

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly have taken action inside and outside the correctional system within the country. As I pointed out, each decision is made on the evidence before the court.

Oral Questions

That said, we have been very involved in particular with victims who are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. We have taken steps to ensure that assistance is available to them and that we work with them. We work with individuals inside and outside the correctional system. We have an excellent record on this issue, one that I am very proud of and one that should that should be supported by everyone.

* * *

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for far too long, successive governments have ignored violence against women, especially when it comes to violence against aboriginal women. The alarming number of missing and murdered aboriginal women is a tragedy on a monumental scale. The time is long overdue to provide justice for the victims and their loved ones. Only a national public inquiry can provide justice.

Why do the Conservatives refuse to fully investigate these incidents and honour the memory of these women?

[English]

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has stood for aboriginal victims and victims across this country in an unprecedented manner.

However, if that member and that party want to protect women on reserve, they need to support Bill S-2, which would empower women and let them have the matrimonial rights they are entitled to. It would empower them when they were at risk for violence.

On this side of the House, we actually act to protect women. We do not just talk about it.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the week of International Women's Day, let us listen to the women and families calling for a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women, instead of changing the channel.

This year the theme of International Women's Day is "Engaging Men to End Violence against Women". It reminds us that violence against women is not just a women's issue but a problem that affects all Canadians, and we must work together to put an end to it.

In that spirit, would the minister commit here, today, to taking real action by establishing a national action plan to end violence against women in Canada?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member knows we have taken action across Canada, very targeted action. We have improved the funding for Status of Women projects targeting violence against women to its highest level ever in the history of Canada.

Recently we announced 21 projects all across the country, targeting the end of sexual assault on university campuses and

colleges specifically. Since 2007 we have approved over 550 projects across Canada. We have increased our funding. We are working with organizations across the country. We are doing everything we can to end violence against women.

[Translation]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that issues that affect women are not really a priority for the Conservatives. Year after year, Conservative budgets include more and more cuts to programs that support women. Last year the Conservatives made cuts to the Women's Health Contribution Program. The budget also made cuts to employment insurance and old age security, even though the majority of claimants in both of those programs are women.

Why are the Conservatives attacking programs that support Canadian women?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact that is incorrect. We have raised funding to women's programs through Status of Women to its highest level ever. In fact, we have almost doubled the funding. Since 2007, across the country that has resulted in support for 550 projects that work with grassroots women's organizations to support the empowerment of women and girls. In fact, 60% of those projects have been targeted to end violence against women.

* * *

● (1435)

[Translation]

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is nonsense.

[English]

We will not support Conservative budgets that make this gender imbalance worse, which is the Conservatives' record.

For a start, they could consult those affected by their policies. Instead, Conservatives are sabotaging the estimates process and silencing the people who help provide financial oversight, like the PBO. Now we hear that Canadians will be kept in the dark about the membership of the selection committee to replace Kevin Page.

It is one thing after another. The Conservatives are dodging oversight and avoiding accountability. What exactly are they trying to hide?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member should well know, this process is headed by the chief librarian under a process that she is leading. We respect that process. She is in charge of that process.

I would say for the hon. member that Kevin Page has had numerous disagreements with the chief librarian. We understand that, but he should be respectful of the process too. Why does the hon. member not respect the chief librarian?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after over a year of the government promising to follow up on the NDP's request that it examine the issue of French in businesses under federal jurisdiction, we learned this morning that a shadow committee of the Minister of Industry allegedly settled this issue in secret.

The problem is that, when we asked a question about this less than a week ago, the Minister of Canadian Heritage had no idea that this committee even existed.

No matter how you look at it, it is hard not to come to the conclusion that the minister did not tell the truth, so who did the analysis and what was the committee's mandate?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP is introducing a bill that was written on the back of a napkin, without considering the impact it would have.

We have a responsible approach. We said that we would conduct an analysis and that we would honour that commitment in a mature and thoughtful manner. When this process is complete, we will announce it formally.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have been asking about that committee for a year and a half now, and those who cannot read the Minister of Industry's mind have no idea what is going on.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Industry has been unable to tell us what the mandate of the committee would be and who would be asked to sit on it. This reeks of amateurism.

The Conservatives live in a land of empty promises and hot air. Yesterday, they chose to vote against our practical solution regarding the Senate.

Why do the Conservatives insist on defending the entitlements of party friends at taxpayers' expense?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is yet another typical example of the Orange Bloc spouting the same old rhetoric as the Bloc Québécois. It is irresponsible.

Bills written on the back of a napkin are unacceptable. Bills must be based on facts. We are saying that we are going to assess the bill in a mature and thoughtful manner, and we are going to keep that promise. When this analysis is complete, we will make a formal announcement and reveal our plan.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Arthur Porter was close to the Conservatives. He occupied a sensitive position, taken at their request, and all the while he was lining his pockets with millions of health care dollars under the nose of the Prime Minister.

To just say he resigned is not enough. The Conservatives have already implicitly acknowledged their mistake by tightening the verification process for future occupiers of Porter's position. Can they acknowledge, in the House, that the verification process for Porter was botched?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, security clearances have not been relaxed under our government. In fact, we have introduced more rigorous checks for these types of appointments. I would point out that the NDP and the Liberals were consulted on this appointment and made no objections to the appointment.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while Arthur Porter was on the Security Intelligence Review Committee, he gave money to the Conservatives, money he was stealing from a hospital construction fund.

Former Senator David Angus was Porter's way into the Conservative elite. In 2008, he said, "[Porter] was a man who could recognize the power and knew how to get close to it." Yes, he knew how to get close. They were warned, but they welcomed him with open arms. Now, they refuse to admit that his appointment was a monumental mistake. They were the ones who appointed him.

What is behind this Conservative loyalty? Why not make up for part of their blunder and exclude him from the Privy Council?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Arthur Porter submitted his resignation. We accepted it years ago. These allegations have no connection to his role as the chair of the Security Intelligence Review Committee.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Conservative government, the number of aboriginal people in jail has exploded by a shocking 43.5%. Instead of housing, education and mental health for first peoples in Canada, Conservatives choose jails.

Will the Conservatives commit today to fully implement the recommendations of the Sapers report and ensure in the next budget all the funding necessary to turn around this disgraceful situation?

● (1440)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, as I pointed out, any decisions with respect to individuals in the court system are made within the justice system, and the courts evaluate the evidence and make a decision.

That being said, our government has taken concrete actions in the area of the aboriginal justice strategy, the courtworkers program and the northern and aboriginal crime prevention fund. We are taking a very comprehensive approach, one that all Canadians can be proud of.

*Oral Questions***CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are fining seniors \$25 if they use a tax professional to file a paper return. This is after the Conservatives cut telephone filing and got rid of simple tax returns for low-income seniors. They are also closing down counter service, making it even harder for seniors to get help with their taxes.

Why are the Conservatives so focused on punishing seniors during tax time?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CRA does encourage Canadians to file online, and a growing number of Canadians are taking advantage of that option. We do recognize that everyone does not have access to a computer or cannot use a computer. That is why taxpayers and seniors can call CRA and have a tax form mailed to them. Last year, roughly 1.3 million packages went unused and went in the garbage. We do not think that is the best use of taxpayer resources.

I just want to quote the Canadian Snowbirds Association, which said it applauds the CRA “for continuing to look for the most efficient use of taxpayer”—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for York West.

* * *

PENSIONS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over 70% of Canadians do not have a pension plan to count on in their retirement years. Even the head of CIBC says that Canada's retirement savings system is falling short, and he is calling for a supplemental Canada pension plan, just like the Liberals have been pushing for.

Everyone knows the Minister of Finance is desperately seeking some good announcements for his upcoming bare bones budget. Will the finance minister commit to working with the provinces to implement a supplemental Canada pension plan for Canadians?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been working hard to improve Canadians' retirement security. For instance, we cut taxes for seniors and pensioners by over \$2 billion annually, including pension income splitting. We reformed the framework governing federally regulated pensions to better protect pensioners.

As we have said many times before in this place, CPP reforms continue to be examined by ourselves and provincial governments. We and many provinces want to ensure that any modest reforms reflect the current global economic reality.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence said some time ago, “The F-35 is the best plane for the best pilots in the Canadian air force.” According to him, it was one of the great moments in Canadian military history, except that yesterday, a Pentagon report made public listed a few of the many problems with the F-35: the

aircraft cannot tolerate temperatures lower than 15 degrees; pilots must avoid clouds; and visibility is poor, even in good weather.

When are the Conservatives finally going to proceed with an open and transparent call for tenders?

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my understanding yesterday was that the opposition wanted us to just ban one particular aircraft, and that is not what we are going to do. We have embarked on a full options analysis before the purchase, or any decision, to replace the CF-18. We, of course, are using the expert advice of a panel that is looking at every option available to replace the CF-18, and we will be guided by its advice.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives committed to buying the F-35 multiple times. They told us it is on the right track multiple times.

According to the Pentagon, the F-35 needs a heated hanger in Florida. It cannot fly at night, and the pilots stay out of the clouds. They got the headrest wrong. How can the Conservatives claim to have a legitimate procurement process when they are pitting real fighter jets against paper planes?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the opposition, we will be guided by an independent process that is in place. We will look at all of the options that are available to replace the CF-18. At this point, of course, no money has been spent on the purchase of any aircraft. We will not make a decision on the replacement of the CF-18 until the expert panel is finished all of the options analysis.

● (1445)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence yesterday admitted that his department made a \$776-million error in its estimates on contractor spending. The Department of National Defence calls that a coding error. The letter was sent to the defence committee just hours before the minister tried to get approval for his supplementary estimates.

Perhaps the minister would like to share with us, before the committee meets, whether there are any errors in the main estimates.

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member would know, the supplementary estimates were at committee that met yesterday. Prior to that committee meeting, it was brought to my attention by officials that they had mistakenly placed figures in the wrong column. They corrected that prior to the committee meeting taking place. They sent a letter to the chair. Officials answered for that yesterday at committee. I explained it quite simply.

The reality is that no matter what figures are there, we know the opposition is not going to support the Canadian Forces' efforts to rebuild their efficiencies, to rebuild their equipment, to rebuild their infrastructure across the country. That has been the record of the no-defence party.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a question of good governance.

It is not just coding errors that are challenging the government. The Department of Citizenship and Immigration has now said that it made a “drafting error” in its refugee legislation.

The government used time allocation twice on the bill in the House. When the minister rammed the bill through, he said, “I believe that this is an example of a process that works very well”.

Why does the government not show real leadership now and take responsibility for these mistakes?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in effect, the particular provision of the bill had been debated in the previous Parliament for about 65 hours and for another 20-plus hours in this Parliament. Not a single member of the opposition identified the technical drafting error, even after dozens of witnesses appeared at committee, over many days and hours. This bill received extensive coverage and analysis in Parliament. We are correcting the technical drafting error.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government continues to focus on the priorities of Canadians: jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

Today in Nova Scotia, the government made a major announcement dealing with the national shipbuilding procurement strategy. Can the Minister of National Defence please inform this House of the important steps that were announced today at the Irving shipyard?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my Nova Scotia colleague from Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley for his hard work in support of the military and the economy.

The national shipbuilding procurement strategy was created to end the boom and bust cycle that was plaguing workers in the Canadian shipbuilding industry. Today in Nova Scotia, our Conservative government announced the signing of the definition contract with

Irving Shipbuilding of Halifax for the Arctic/offshore patrol ship project. This will build on the important work that is being done in the design phase to see the Irving shipyard build the ships that the Royal Canadian Navy needs to protect our sovereignty and to carry out the type of coastal patrols that we need. We are proud of this contract—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Laurier-Sainte-Marie.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the immigration minister's fine words are nothing but a smokescreen.

Instead of increasing the number of refugees being settled, as it promised, the government admitted 25% fewer refugees than the previous year. The year 2012 now has the dubious distinction of having the second-lowest number of refugees in the past 30 years.

Why has the minister broken his promise to welcome more refugees to Canada?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have done no such thing.

We are increasing the number of refugees who settle in Canada and thus strengthening our humanitarian tradition of immigration and refugee protection.

Just yesterday I was in Iraq. We are accepting about 4,000 Iraqi refugees each year. That said, the civil war in Syria has led to the closing of our office in Damascus, and that has affected the processing of these Iraqi refugees. We are working on a solution to this problem over there.

● (1450)

[English]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as usual, there is no answer, and the ministry's own figures today belie the facts. The truth is that the minister has been saying one thing and doing another on refugee resettlement. They are nowhere near meeting even the minister's own targets. It is the world's most vulnerable who pay the price for this mismanagement.

One million refugees have fled Syria and half of them are children, yet the minister still refuses to meet with the Syrian community. Why is the minister abandoning refugees?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have met with dozens of members of the Canadian-Syrian community here. Just yesterday, I met with members of the Syrian community in Baghdad. I can tell the member that we have committed to the largest refugee resettlement program out of Syria in the world, starting four years ago, specifically for Iraqis who had fled sectarian violence, and have welcomed 20,000 over five years.

Oral Questions

This country welcomes one out of every ten resettled refugees worldwide, the highest per capita number in the world. We are increasing that number, but it is true that we have had technical problems because of the civil war, which we intend to resolve.

We take lessons from no one. We are leading the world with respect to refugee protection.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, HRSDC estimates that over one million households in Canada do not have enough money to cover housing costs, and for women the risks of housing insecurity and homelessness are higher than they are for men. Forty percent of single-parent families headed by women are living in a precarious housing situation.

When will the Conservatives start working with the New Democrats to find a solution to the lack of affordable housing in Canada?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we believe that every Canadian should have a safe affordable place that they can call home. That is why we have invested so much in providing those accommodations to people.

Annually, we support over 600,000 affordable housing projects, and during the economic action plan we made unprecedented investments in new construction and renovation of affordable housing. Sadly, the NDP opposed every one of those measures.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over one-third of the women who go to shelters go there repeatedly, and too many women must suffer violence and accept dangerous living conditions to avoid becoming homeless. Why are the Conservatives doing nothing to help more than one million Canadian women—and their families—who do not have access to affordable housing?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we believe that every Canadian woman and man should have a safe, affordable place they can call home. That is why we have made a large investment, primarily through the economic action plan, to support more than 600,000 affordable housing units.

Unfortunately, the NDP has opposed all our measures to help people in need.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the failed economic leadership of the Conservative government, many of my constituents are struggling to find employment. The five additional weeks of employment insurance targeted to areas of high unemployment helped them get on their feet to find a job. The program worked so well, the Conservatives renewed it three times.

However, the Conservatives cancelled the program last September with no warning, no compassion. Today, many are in a desperate situation. They cannot find jobs; they are cut off from their benefits and they have nowhere to turn.

Will the government renew this critical program?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, employment insurance is there as a financial support for people who have lost their jobs, through no fault of their own, while they are looking for another job. That funding is there.

The program to which the hon. member refers was a pilot project. It was temporary, and the extension of it was announced as temporary during the economic action plan.

We have expanded our supports to people who are looking for work so we can connect them with the jobs in their area and in their skill ranges. If there are no jobs, EI will continue to be there for them.

• (1455)

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the five additional weeks of employment insurance were so good for the regions with high unemployment rates that the Conservatives themselves renewed the program three times.

In just a few days, the people who would have had the additional five weeks are going to have their claims rejected and will have to rely on food banks and provincial social assistance.

Because of the Conservatives' poor decisions, areas like Kent County, New Brunswick, and the Gaspé are going to suffer.

Why are the Conservatives determined to impoverish regions that are already struggling?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, employment insurance is there to support people who have lost their jobs. The extra five-week pilot project was introduced as a temporary program in 2008-09. It was just there for the world economic crisis.

Employment insurance will continue to be there to help people find jobs in their own region in their particular field. If there are no jobs, employment insurance will still be there when they need it.

* * *

[English]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard from search and rescue, fire and police chiefs, the mayor, and the B.C. Premier that the closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station is reckless. Now we find the assistant commissioner western region was removed from her position for opposing the closure.

Oral Questions

This station costs only \$900,000 a year to operate and saves countless lives. When will the minister get his facts straight, listen to the needs of British Columbians and reopen the Kitsilano station?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a shame that the member opposite continues to attack the brave men and women of the Canadian Coast Guard and Coast Guard auxiliary.

The fact is that the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has the floor.

Hon. Keith Ashfield: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Coast Guard yesterday rescued two individuals within 17 minutes of receiving the call.

The strength of our response system is in the network of the responders. In this instance, on-water assets were tasked and under way, exceeding international search and rescue response time standards.

The Coast Guard is doing a fantastic job, and we should be congratulating them.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, agriculture is one of the key drivers of economic development in many regions, including the Eastern Townships. Less than a month from now, Quebec farmers will begin their work, yet many of them are still waiting to hear that their requests to hire foreign workers have been approved. The Conservatives' amateur ways are threatening the harvest. It is not surprising that farmers are once again feeling betrayed by this government that promised to give power to the regions.

Will the Conservatives ensure that our farms can count on all the foreign workers they need? Those workers are essential to the farm operations.

The government has abandoned the regions. We will put an end to this devastation. We will put an end to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the employment insurance system will be there for people who lose their jobs, whether they are full-time or seasonal workers. The system provides financial support while they look for other work. If there is no work available in their area of expertise in their region, employment insurance will continue to be there for them.

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no government in Canadian history has done more when it comes to promoting the values and traditions of the Arctic and northern communities than our Conservative government, whether it is our defence of Canada's humane seal hunt, setting responsible whale harvest allocations or our government's efforts to protect the Inuit sustainable management of the polar bear.

A trade ban on polar bears would not improve conservation, but it would cause undue hardship for the Inuit living in Canada's north.

Can the great Minister for the Arctic Council please update Canadians on our continued efforts in this regard?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Yukon for his hard work in promoting the Arctic.

Our government is proud to stand up and defend the Inuit way of life and Canada's north on the world stage.

That is why we have defended the humane seal hunt and called out hypocritical people like the UN special rapporteur, who says he is concerned about food security but opposes the ability of northerners and Inuit to make a living by harvesting and selling the seal products.

That is why we are defending the ability of Inuit hunters to responsibly hunt polar bears in Canada's Arctic.

* * *

● (1500)

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier we asked the Minister of National Revenue why the government is making it harder for low income seniors at tax time. She replied, quoting, "the snowbirds".

We are talking about low-income seniors. Most seniors in Cape Breton are low income. They do not have condos in Florida. Her department is fining low-income seniors who do not have a computer.

How can the minister be so out of touch? Why are the Conservatives attacking low-income seniors at tax time?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to this government, about 830,000 Canadian seniors no longer pay taxes.

Those who cannot use a computer and file online can call a 1-800 number and have a tax form mailed to them. It does not cost them anything to file a tax form.

Last year, there was a lot of waste. About 80 million sheets of paper ended up in the garbage. That is not the best use of our resources.

*Oral Questions***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have a plan to start buying and selling properties in London. They claim it is to save money, but now we learn that DFAIT cannot guarantee we would even save a nickel.

What we are seeing here is a plan by the government to actually sell off one of Canada's real estate jewels, and at the same time spend \$108 million to buy a new High Commission.

My simple question to the minister: Will he abandon his reckless plan to play around in the London real estate market?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): No, Mr. Speaker. What we are doing is consolidating the Canadian presence in London, one of the most beautiful cities in the world, where Canada has substantial diplomatic and trade interests.

Rather than having two High Commissions in London, we are going to have one. It will be at Trafalgar Square, in the building behind it, where we will be able to find some efficiencies and save some money for taxpayers, which is tremendously good news for the hard-working taxpayers of this country. At the same time, we are maintaining the historic Canada House, which all Canadians can be tremendously proud of.

* * *

LABOUR

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week we heard about the blatant misuse of union dues and public funds by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.

CUPW accused Canada of helping to commit war crimes in Israel. Later, CUPW was given a chance to apologize for discriminating against their own membership, but refused to do so. Instead, they repeated their anti-Israel rhetoric.

Could the Minister of State for Transport update this House on whether the CUPW position will change Canadian foreign policy as it relates to our relationship with Israel?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government does not support the use of public money for radical political propaganda.

It is shameful that the Canadian Union of Postal Workers refuses to apologize for this misuse of union dues and public funds to spread their anti-Israel rhetoric.

What is also shameful is that the Leader of the Opposition has yet to condemn CUPW for these appalling actions. Will the Leader of the Opposition continue to support—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Western Arctic.

* * *

SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' requirement that first-time applicants for social insurance numbers have to apply in person has made it nearly impossible for people in remote communities to get a card.

In Nunavut in communities like Grise Fiord, people must travel to a Iqaluit, costing thousands in air fare and a week's journey. Getting a SIN card is the first step in getting a job. This move flies in the face of Conservative rhetoric about job creation

Will the minister reinstate the mail-in process for these cards?

• (1505)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that everyone who needs a social insurance number will get one.

In fact, Service Canada will ensure that for those who are in exceptional circumstances, appropriate arrangements will be made.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government justifies its employment insurance reform, which harshly penalizes the economy in regions such as Saguenay—Lac-St-Jean, by claiming that it is trying to connect unemployed workers to available jobs. If that were true, it would not be tearing up its labour market agreement with Quebec, which helps unemployed workers find jobs.

Quebec's minister, Alexandre Cloutier, made it clear that Quebec will not give up this responsibility.

Will the government stop hiding behind the supposed secrecy of the budget and announce that this agreement will be fully maintained?

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has a good record when it comes to skills and skills training in all regions.

On the contrary, the Bloc has voted against a number of training measures we have introduced. The apprenticeship completion grant, the apprenticeship incentive grant, the apprenticeship job creation tax credit: the Bloc voted against them all.

We will continue with our plan to support workers.

[English]

The Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

I understand the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer will be asking the traditional Thursday question.

Government Orders

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons what bills his government plans to debate for the rest of the week and the week the House returns.

This morning, the government once again invoked closure to limit debate on a bill because it views legitimate discussion of its bills as an obstacle. It has invoked closure no less than two times in two days.

[English]

When my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley spoke weeks ago about a lack of agenda from the government, it did not mean that the government should return to its old ways of shutting down debate at every opportunity.

[Translation]

Perhaps the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons could tell us what bills he intends to place on the order paper for the rest of this week and the week the House returns.

Could he also tell us how many debates he intends to limit?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our focus as a government is on an agenda that puts at the forefront job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity, with a very clear focus on making our streets and communities safer. With regard to that clear agenda, we have several items to propose for the time ahead.

Today we will continue the third reading debate on Bill S-9, the nuclear terrorism act. That is a cornerstone in making our communities safer. After that, we will return to second reading debate on Bill S-12, the incorporation by reference in regulations act.

Tomorrow we will finish the second reading debate on Bill C-48, the technical tax amendments act, 2012, again resulting in a more stable and secure economy.

After we return from our constituency week on Monday, March 18, the House will consider Bill C-55, the response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *R. v. Tse* act, at report stage and third reading now that it has been reported back from committee. This is an important justice measure. I must remind the House that this legislation responds to a Supreme Court decision that takes effect over the Easter adjournment, so it is very important that we be able to pass it here and get it to the Senate for it to deal with before that time.

[Translation]

Once the House deals with Bill C-55, it could then consider Bills S-9 and S-12, if they are still held up in the House; Bill C-15, the Strengthening Military Justice in the Defence of Canada Act, at report stage and third reading, since that bill has now been reported back from committee; and Bill S-7, the Combating Terrorism Act, at third reading.

All these bills are necessary and important for Canadians' safety.

[English]

Wednesday, March 20, shall be the seventh and final allotted day. As a result, the House will then consider the usual supply motions and appropriation bills that evening. We will give priority to debating Bills C-15 and S-12 on Thursday and Friday, March 21 and 22.

I hope that makes clear the agenda that the opposition House leader has apparently been unable to perceive of the government, our clear agenda of delivering on job creation, economic growth, long-term prosperity and safe and secure communities for all Canadians.

* * *

● (1510)

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing the House that the Senate has passed the following bill to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-13, An Act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

NUCLEAR TERRORISM ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak to this bill on behalf of citizens from Surrey North.

Essentially Bill S-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the nuclear terrorism act, would amend the Criminal Code in order to implement the criminal requirements of two international counter-terrorism treaties: the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, as amended in 2005, and the 2005 International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. Regarding Canada's treaty obligations under the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, this bill would allow the government to sign to these treaties, fulfilling our domestic obligations.

We as New Democrats are committed to multilateral diplomacy and international co-operation, especially in areas that are common to our partners across this world. We have to work with our partners on issues that are important to their country and also to ours. Examples of these issues include terrorism, climate change, environment and nuclear materials, as well as other issues. It is our duty to consult our partners, whether NATO or the UN, to work on these issues.

Government Orders

Not only does the Conservative government have a very shadowy record on consulting citizens of Canada when making laws, but we have also seen over the years that instead of working with our partners across this world and working through NATO and working with other countries, it is just not working on some of these issues.

One of the areas where we could be working to enhance our leadership in the world has been the environment. Not only have the Conservatives gutted the environment legislation regulations in this country, but they have also failed to work with our partners across this country and across this world to tackle climate change. That is where co-operation is needed. That is where we need to work together to look at issues facing this world, but again the Conservatives have failed on that issue. They have not shown leadership through working with our partners across the world to tackle some of the issues that we need to tackle, such as terrorism and nuclear materials. These are the kinds of issues that we need to take leadership on. That leadership has been lacking over at least the last seven years that I know of, since the Conservatives have been in power.

This is an example of the leadership lacking from that side. We used to have a seat on the UN Security Council. Every time Canadians wanted to be on the Security Council, we were voted in by all of the other countries. What happened the last time the seat became available? It was the very first time in our history that we were not sitting on the UN Security Council. That is because the Conservatives failed in international diplomacy to bring the world together to show leadership on issues that are important throughout the world.

That leadership is lacking not only internationally but also on our domestic front.

I just heard the House leader talk about making our communities safe in regard to the international terrorism bill and the amendments that we have in front of us. Making our communities safe involves investing in our RCMP and investing in crime prevention programs. We all know what Conservatives want to do with the crime prevention programs.

• (1515)

In fact, I have talked to a number of organizations in my community that have supported crime prevention programs. They have received funding from crime prevention programs over many years, but that funding has been eroding over the years. It has been consistently cut by the government.

If we are serious about making our communities safe, as with this bill dealing with nuclear terrorism, we need to also invest in our communities. We need to invest in programs that make a difference at a ground level, such as programs that keep our young people from getting into gangs. Those are the kinds of programs that are needed and that are going to help keep our communities safe.

We heard earlier today that the Sapers report from the correctional office says that one-quarter of our prison population are aboriginal people. Those are the kinds of programs we need to invest in to make sure that our young people are getting the help that is needed to make our communities safe.

We need to invest in the RCMP. Forty staff that support the work of the RCMP were given notices in the last budget. Those workers provide critical services to the RCMP to help them do their jobs. Those are the kinds of programs that we need in order for us to support our communities and make them safe places.

There are many other ways we can make our communities safe. For us to work with our partners is a positive step. We encourage the government to work with our partners, whether the United States or other like-minded countries that want the world to be a safer place for not just Canadians but citizens around the world.

I have given a couple of examples of issues on which the Conservatives could show leadership around the world, including the environment. I have given the example of working with other nations on climate change. Conservatives have not shown leadership there.

There are many other issues that we can be working on locally here. When we talk about ratifying treaties, we could look at it as a contract with voters and with aboriginal people. We could be working toward fulfilling those contracts here in Canada.

When the government was formed in 2011, it had a contract with Canadian voters. I have seen up close, on a daily basis, that it has not lived up to those obligations, whether in treaties or in a contract with the voters for what it was going to do when it formed government. We have seen the types of draconian measures it has taken to gut our environment. We have seen how fast the Conservatives wanted to ram through the budget bills. Those were huge omnibus bills that we could not study in a few days, yet it happens time after time. We saw it today.

I learned a new term from the Conservatives today. This place has many rules and regulations, and one of the rules and regulations I learned very quickly from them was that they can shut down debate, gag the opposition, gag the House and ram these things through. We saw an example last night. We saw another example today.

We need to work with other countries, with our partners, to look at issues of a global nature and we need to resolve those issues. The Conservatives have not taken leadership on many of these international issues, and we are paying the price at the international level, where our status over the last number of years has gone down. That was shown by our losing a seat on the Security Council.

I encourage my colleagues to work at international co-operation, to co-operate with other countries, to take a leadership role and to work on those issues that are important to Canadians.

• (1520)

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked extensively about the lack of leadership of the government. I would like to submit to him testimony of one of the witnesses heard during the committee hearing just before third reading. It is from Professor Matthew Bunn, an associate professor of public policy at Harvard University. He said:

If the United States and Canada are to succeed in convincing other countries to take a responsible approach to reducing the risks of nuclear theft and terrorism, at the Netherlands Nuclear Security Summit in 2014 and beyond, then the United States and Canada have to take the lead in taking responsible action themselves.

Government Orders

I would like his comments about the view shared by this very well-known professor.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt. The Conservatives have not taken leadership on the issues that are important to Canadians. There was a time when our tourists went abroad and they were proud to wear a Canadian flag and a maple leaf badge. Over the last number of years, the Conservatives have not worked with the international community to take leadership roles. We used to take leadership roles on many issues, whether it was peacekeeping, whether it was providing help after an earthquake or whether it was CIDA needs. We have seen the budget cuts in those places.

We used to be a country everyone looked up to; they said Canadians are good people. Conservatives came in and they are secular. They want to promote international issues at a high level. Like on domestic issues, they have failed on a number of international issues, which is hurting the reputation of our country.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will tell the House what lowers Canada's international standing. It is speeches like the one we just heard from the member opposite. We are debating nuclear terrorism here, an issue that everyone in the House, including members of his party, agree is one of great gravity: terrorism, where nuclear weapons might be delivered. Canada has international obligations. Canada has shown leadership on this issue.

Instead, the hon. member chose to talk about climate change, the environment, the Security Council, anything but the issue that is before the House. This is frustrating for our side, because when we have the chance to discuss these issues on which our security globally truly depends, we do not get a serious response from the other side.

Does the hon. member agree that nuclear terrorism is a threat to the world? Does he agree that the measures contained in the bill are necessary and indeed should be dealt with expeditiously? Does he agree that without these measures, we are talking about countries like Pakistan, Iran and others that might literally bring us to the brink of disaster because of nuclear terrorism?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I made myself clear or not, but we are certainly supportive of working with our partners across this world to tackle issues like terrorism, issues like nuclear weapons. We are certainly supportive of the bill at this point.

What I mentioned, and I believe the member failed to see, is that our ability to show leadership on the world stage has diminished under the government. I was giving examples of our inability to lead in the areas of environment, climate change and many other issues where the government has had chance after chance to lead the world the way we used to. Under the current government, that ability has diminished.

The reason I mentioned the Security Council is that we used to get a seat at the Security Council every time we ran for that seat. It is under the Conservative government, because it failed to show leadership, that we did not get the seat at the Security Council.

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

It is my pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill S-9, Nuclear Terrorism Act.

Before I begin, I would like to sincerely thank my colleague, the hon. member for Gatineau, who is also the official opposition's justice critic. In my role as deputy critic, I have had the privilege of working with her. She is an extraordinary person and has done extraordinary work on this file, as well as on all the others she is responsible for. She is a true role model for hard work and I hope to emulate her.

Now, with regard to this bill, I agree that nuclear terrorism is a real threat to all countries, including Canada. It is important for us to consider it carefully and take the necessary measures. Thus, we are pleased to see the introduction of Bill S-9. I sat on the committee and I can say that, this time, we have been able to work with the government—I admit it—and with our Liberal colleagues.

Members of the official opposition have been able to work together to move the bill forward. When there are matters of importance to Canada, I think we can work together, and this is a fine example.

I would now like to speak more specifically about this bill. We must not forget that it leads to the eventual ratification of two international anti-terrorism treaties.

They are the 2008 Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the 2005 International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. The latter defines the categories of nuclear terrorism offences and the procedures for bringing offenders to justice. The purpose of this bill is to incorporate all these provisions into Canadian law, so that the treaties can later be ratified. One of the problems is that Bill S-9 comes from the Senate.

It was strange to hear the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence ask his question and tell us that it is a priority for them, and so on. When we see that this comes from the Senate, we realize that it is not necessarily the government's top priority. We must keep in mind the dates of the treaties I mentioned: they date from 2005 and 1980 and came into force in 2007. There has been quite a delay in government action on this matter.

I will speak now about the bill's details: it is an attempt to eliminate legal loopholes when launching proceedings against those who commit acts related to nuclear terrorism. There is also an extraterritorial aspect to this bill, to extend the reach of Canadian law.

In the past, legal proceedings could fail because of a lack of legislation; this will solve that problem. Bill S-9 also provides for extradition in cases of nuclear terrorism, even where there are no bilateral treaties between countries, so that legal tools can have a longer reach.

Government Orders

Moreover, new Criminal Code offences are being created. It would be illegal to: possess, use or dispose of nuclear or radioactive material, or commit an act against a nuclear facility or its operations, with the intent to cause death; use or alter nuclear or radioactive material or a nuclear or radioactive device, or commit an act against a nuclear facility or its operations, with the intent to compel a person, government or organization; and commit an indictable offence under federal law for the purpose of obtaining nuclear or radioactive material or devices.

Because we are establishing certain international conventions to which Canada is a signatory, all hon. members will agree that this bill will update the Criminal Code and other Canadian legislation. That is why we agree with and support this bill. We have always supported it. When we hear members on the other side say that the official opposition does not work with them and does not move things forward, they really ought to look at the way this has worked.

● (1530)

This is an excellent example of something that should move forward.

Bill S-9 makes other changes to the legislation. Anyone who commits any of the new offences outside Canada can be prosecuted in Canada. This new provision will help ensure that we address the problem. As we have mentioned, nuclear terrorism poses a real threat, and we need to take the necessary steps in that regard. That is why we supported this bill and studied it extensively in committee. We asked some serious questions and obtained some good answers, particularly from people who work on nuclear issues at the Department of Justice. The examination was very interesting and informative.

Nevertheless, we have another criticism of this government. Since it said that this bill is important, and I myself have pointed out just how important it is, we have to wonder why it took so long for the government to introduce this legislation. The treaty was signed in 2005 and came into force in 2007, yet the government is only starting to talk about it now. It blames the opposition, as usual, but it is important to remember that this government has a majority and it controls the agenda. Since everyone agrees on this bill, it could even have introduced it when it had a minority. This file could have moved forward, and we could have resolved these issues. Unfortunately, this government has acted in bad faith.

In fact, when the Minister of Justice appeared in committee, he openly admitted that this was not a priority. Here is what the minister said:

On this particular legislation, this was part of the enumerated bills that I wanted to get to, but yes, most of the focus of the last year or two has been concentrating on cracking down on drug dealers and going after people in the child pornography business and people who sexually assault children. I know most of the efforts of this committee, and certainly of the government, were to push that, but this was always important to us. Again, because most of the activity was already criminalized, I wanted to get it through.

It is a priority, but if you're asking me what I've done with my time, my time has been pushing all the legislation that we have had.

Keep in mind that Bill C-30 made us waste a lot of time. The government had to backtrack so much that the bill was poorly done and was inconsistent with the intent. The government is not moving in the right direction and is not putting its priorities in the right place.

We suffered because of that yesterday in the meeting of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. We had to whip through Bill C-55 without really being able to take the time to study it. We knew that we had a deadline because of the Supreme Court decision.

The government is not managing its time well. It improvises by introducing bills that, like Bill C-30, are purely ideological, have no legal basis and waste our time. Meanwhile, we have other bills waiting for us. We could tackle nuclear terrorism, but the government refused in order to move other bills forward, bills that ended up being called into question. The government realized its mistake and backtracked.

[*English*]

What does the NDP want? We are committed to multilateral diplomacy and international co-operation especially in areas of great concern, like nuclear terrorism.

We need to work together with other leading countries that are moving toward ratifying these conventions. Canada has agreed to be legally bound by these conventions, so it is important to fulfill our international obligations. Unfortunately, it took a long time for the government to act on this. Therefore, we must seriously address the issue of nuclear security and comply with our international obligations in order to better co-operate with other countries on countering nuclear terrorism.

[*Translation*]

Many issues have been put forward, and we would have liked to take action. Once again, the government took its time.

This is what Sabine Nolke, the director general of Non-Proliferation and Security Threat Reduction at Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, said:

Furthering nuclear security, enhancing the physical protection of facilities, installing radiation detection equipment, especially at border crossings, reducing the use of weapons-usable materials, is one of the key tools to prevent these materials from falling into the wrong hands.

● (1535)

Those are all things we should act on.

Fortunately, Canada did sign these treaties, but the government once again took too long to update Canadian legislation to include all these offences. It is difficult to understand why the government held back a file that all parties agreed on.

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Brossard—La Prairie, whose riding is next to mine. He did some excellent work in the Standing Committee on Finance. I am sure that he will do the same in the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Let us take advantage of the fact that he was there when the witnesses gave their presentations when the committee was studying Bill S-9, which we are discussing today.

There was concern about certain sections and that the scope went beyond the minimum recommended to ratify these two international conventions.

Since he attended the witnesses' presentations, I would like him to speak about section 82.6 in particular. It states:

Government Orders

82.6 Everyone who threatens to commit an offence under any of sections 82.3 to 82.5 is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than 14 years.

I would like him to talk about the risk of convicting someone who would not in reality be physically capable of committing a nuclear attack.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for his work. I am pleased to listen to a colleague, especially one who is practically a neighbour of my riding.

Some of these questions were asked during the committee's study. The fact that there were some witnesses who were going to apply these measures was reassuring to us. In some way, we are going further than the conventions or the treaties would. However, we got some satisfaction from seeing that we were heading in the right direction with respect to counterterrorism.

What was most unfortunate in the committee was the lack of response we had on how the bill will move forward, among other things.

We in the NDP were especially concerned that it took so long to introduce the bill in the House. When we looked at some of the government's actions in other situations with other bills, we saw that there were even more delays. Other treaties, from before 2005 and 2007, have not been ratified. We had a lot of problems with that.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for participating in this debate. We very much appreciate hearing the point of view of the member for Brossard—La Prairie when we manage to get one.

He wasted a lot of time criticizing us for waiting too long to introduce this bill in the House. We were not able to hear his thoughts about nuclear terrorism. So let us see.

What do he and his party think about the situation with Iran? Iran wants to develop a nuclear army and could represent the biggest threat we have seen thus far in the 21st century. Where does this bill fit in with international issues such as that?

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

I am not sure whether the hon. member heard my speech, but I was saying that nuclear terrorism represents a constant threat to most countries. Yes, it is important.

However, it would also be important to look at what we can do to counter this. I think my colleague is somewhat conditioned by his profession. I admire the fact that he was an ambassador and that he worked in the foreign service. I commend him for that.

However, when we look at how this applies to Bill S-9, I have to ask my colleague to focus on how we can get the tools. If he recognizes that nuclear terrorism is a threat, then he knows we must ensure that Canada has the tools it needs to counter it.

That is why I mentioned that it took too long. If we are saying that this is a threat and we must take action—and we are clearly saying that it is a threat—then Canada needs legislative tools so that it can

take action. That is why we are criticizing the government for taking so long to give Canadians and Canada the tools needed to counter nuclear terrorism.

• (1540)

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by responding to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

For the past hour and more, we have been hearing different views on Bill S-9. We have the impression that he wants to force us to target specific countries. I think that stigmatizing one country in relation to another goes well beyond the scope of this bill. Parliamentarians are not here to stigmatize a particular country.

I rise to speak on Bill S-9, which is at third reading. Its short title is the Nuclear Terrorism Act, which amends the Criminal Code to reflect the requirements of two international conventions that Canada signed in 2005.

Since then, we have been struggling miserably to ratify the two conventions. These are two international conventions: the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

In this regard, we must continue to bear in mind that Canadians in particular have enormous concerns about nuclear weapons, and that they attach great importance to international security. This is true for Canadians, as it is for everyone around the world.

I would also like to point out that international security in general is a major concern for the NDP members.

This bill amends part II of the Criminal Code to create four new offences.

We mentioned it earlier and we will mention it again: why did the government wait seven years? Everyone may well ask.

Bill S-9 is before us today, but these two international conventions were signed in 2005. Canada signed these conventions, but did not ratify them. Because Canada has not yet ratified these two international conventions, we have lost credibility on the international scene, as my colleagues pointed out.

The Conservatives have been in power since February 2006. Nevertheless, they did not consider it necessary to make this bill a priority, something that was confirmed by the Minister of Justice when he appeared before the committee. I read it in the transcripts.

In fact, even though the previous governments were not majority governments, they did not take reasonable care to make this bill a priority and give Canada an opportunity to be a leader in international security.

I do not want to speculate on why they procrastinated, but the consequence is that other countries think we are weak in terms of leadership.

Ratifying these treaties will encourage other countries to take steps to ratify them as well. We will be taking a step toward enhancing security throughout the world.

Government Orders

We should have made these conventions a priority and ratified them as quickly as possible, so that the rest of the world would see us as leaders, not as followers.

Furthermore, given that we are at third reading, it is relevant to take a look at the work of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Three meetings were held to consider this bill. The evidence that I read was all very interesting. However, I remember particularly the evidence provided by Matthew Bunn, associate professor or public policy at Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

● (1545)

The testimony he gave via videoconference during a committee meeting on February 13, 2013, was very interesting. I would like to share one of his most intriguing statements:

...if the United States and Canada are to succeed in convincing other countries to take a responsible approach to reducing the risks of nuclear theft and terrorism at the Nuclear Security Summit in the Netherlands in 2014 and beyond, then our two countries have to take the lead in taking responsible action ourselves.

It is very intriguing because Mr. Bunn acknowledged that he is somewhat embarrassed by the U.S.'s position on this treaty. As members of the Canadian Parliament, we, too, should be somewhat embarrassed by the fact that previous governments did not exercise due diligence, even if we had no hand in the matter.

I would like to quote another fascinating part of Matthew Bunn's testimony.

The core of al Qaeda is, as President Obama mentioned the other night, a shadow of its former self, but regional affiliates are metastasizing and some of the key nuclear operatives of al Qaeda remain free today. With at least two terrorist groups having pursued nuclear weapons seriously in the last 20 years, we cannot expect that they will be the last.

That statement is particularly worrying when we see what is happening with certain al-Qaeda cells, such as the al-Qaeda cells in Islamic Maghreb, in areas such as Mali or Algeria.

Take, for example, the hostage situation at the Ain Amenas gas plant in southern Algeria, near Mali and Libya that lasted from January 16 to 19 of this year. It was a blood bath; more than 30 people were killed. Situations like that are an incentive to remain vigilant about the risks posed by certain al-Qaeda cells.

That particular attack was planned by an al-Qaeda terrorist group in Islamic Maghreb. According to the Algerian minister of the interior, the abductors were from Libya.

This reminds me of the October 27, 2011, meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence. I was concerned about the proliferation of weapons trafficking at the border between Libya and Algeria. At the time, I asked an official from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade a question about weapons from the Libyan arsenal being distributed in northern Africa. I asked what the risks were of these weapons being used elsewhere, in a similarly unstable region. It turned out that, less than two years later, we saw exactly that. Members of al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb were carrying out attacks in that region, which is fairly unstable and very difficult to monitor because it is so vast.

Imagine if these terrorists had nuclear weapons. That would have introduced a whole new risk, a whole new danger to the region. That is why, in these conditions, extreme vigilance is necessary.

To conclude, I will say that for all the reasons I have mentioned and that my colleagues mentioned earlier, I will not hesitate to support Bill S-9 at third reading. Once again, I think that Canada was too slow in ratifying these conventions and that it is urgent that the provisions of Bill S-9 be integrated into our Criminal Code to enable Canada to ratify the two international conventions that are essential to better global security.

● (1550)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank our hon. colleague for his speech.

This bill is about measures to be taken here in Canada to fulfill our international obligations. We are talking about a treaty that is supposed to govern the behaviour of all countries, and we are talking about the kind of example we want to set for other countries.

Why does my hon. colleague consider any mention of Iran stigmatization? That nation definitely supports terrorism. According to the United Nations and the entire world, Iran wants to illegally acquire nuclear weapons. It is currently pursuing its nuclear ambitions, despite pressure and warnings from democratic countries around the world.

Mr. Tarik Brahmī: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

To answer his question, not wanting to name specific countries, like Iran or North Korea, in the context of our examination of this particular bill does not mean we support them.

Not naming certain countries in the context of our examination of this bill does mean we are offering them our moral support. I am simply saying that, in our study of this bill, the scope of the subject is broader than the stigmatization of any given country.

We should be focusing on the impact that ratifying these international treaties will have on our Criminal Code, instead of giving certain individuals the opportunity to use this bill as a platform to stigmatize any specific countries.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a very important matter. What troubles me and is evident from what I am hearing in the House is that it was quite some years ago that Canada agreed. In fact, Canada joined on in 2005 to amend the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. In Canada the problem is that in order to ratify these international treaties we must pass legislation. This was very important legislation whereupon we agreed to amend our Criminal Code to criminalize these activities for the domestic use, transport and so on of nuclear material for purposes of harm.

Government Orders

Could the member speak to the fact that it is appalling that it has taken this long to come to the national elected assembly of Canada and why it first went to the Senate? Is it not supposed to be the house of sober second thought? Surely a matter of this severe importance belongs in this House first.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that international and nuclear security is very important to the hon. member's constituents. I completely share her questions and have no answer why the government decided to first present this bill through the Senate and not the House of Commons. However, I agree with her that the Senate should be a second opinion on laws and bills and should not be the first element to review legislation.

•(1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on that last point. It would be wonderful if we saw the Prime Minister and his ministers see the benefits of bringing forward legislation through the House and introducing it for the first time in the House. That would be my first preference.

Having said that, in regard to Bill S-9, it went through the Senate first. Right away, I think of Senator Dallaire who has done a phenomenal job representing our country both in Canada and abroad. I think he has a great deal of background, a level of expertise that he brings to the table to at least get the bill going. That is something we have wanted to see for a number of years. At least the Senate has played some valuable role in ensuring that we have the bill before us today.

When the Prime Minister formed government in 2006, he was presented with a balanced budget, a trade surplus and all sorts of wonderful things of that nature, of which many Canadians would be very much aware. However, he was also provided with other things such as the Kelowna accord and a great child care program policy, and then there is Bill S-9. The bill actually stems from an agreement that would have been signed by the member for Mount Royal. While he was a minister, there was an agreement that was signed and there was expectation that shortly afterward the legislation would be introduced to ratify the agreement.

When the Government of Canada signs an agreement, there still is an obligation for federal legislation. In this situation I believe that Canada ultimately played a role in coming up with what we believe were some fairly important resolutions, with the great assistance of the former prime minister, Paul Martin, and the member for Mount Royal, who were able to work with other world leaders and others who truly cared about this issue with the United Nations. Even though the resolutions were signed, for all intents and purposes they cannot be ratified until the legislation is introduced and passed through the House.

It is unfortunate that it has taken the government this long to recognize the value of what was done back in 2005. We have indicated, whether at second reading or today at third reading, that we would like to see the legislation pass. We recognize that it would ratify agreements that were signed under the former government of Paul Martin.

Many, including me, would argue that Canada has a very important role to play when it comes to the potential of international nuclear terrorism. Canada should be playing a leadership role. We

have the expertise. I think there is the political will, for the most part, and many countries around the world recognize what it is that Canada has to offer. Not ratifying or passing a law in a more timely fashion does tarnish that leadership role I am referring to, and that is a loss of an opportunity.

•(1600)

When we think of the impact of the nuclear industry, there is the good and there is the bad. That impact is quite significant here in Canada. We have what I would term as civil purposes or civil use of nuclear power, and then we would have military use. I ultimately argue a third point, that the terrorist today is quite different from many years ago. For all intents and purposes, it was 9/11 that seemed to really awaken the world in a significant way to the degree in which there was a great deal more discussion on the potential harm to large numbers of people in any community throughout the world through terrorist acts.

More and more, we hear about the potential of nuclear terrorism. So it only stands to reason that the United Nations has picked up on that file. From what I understand, between 2001 and 2005, there have been four significant treaties, and I would like to go through those treaties, or at least make reference to them. The United Nations recognized the changing times and the threat of terrorism.

Prior to 9/11 when people thought of war and nuclear bombs, they would think of things like Hiroshima. It was a horrific time in history in terms of how much damage one bomb could cause and the horror stories that came from that. At the end of the day, many would argue that it assisted in ending a war, and hopefully we learned something from the horrors of the two bombs that were dropped. Many of us would recall the Cuban missile crisis and the impact that was talked about back then, when President Kennedy was involved in a critical two weeks.

Today, the talk is quite different. We get ultimately some nations in the world that would love to be able to acquire the technology to have some form of nuclear bomb or use the attributes of nuclear technology to ultimately cause a great deal of harm to a lot of innocent people through terrorist actions. I believe it is very real today. That is one of the reasons it was comforting, I believe, a number of years ago when we saw resolutions being discussed.

There was the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons that took place decades ago, as responsible governments around the world recognized the potential of nuclear bombs and possibly the window of nuclear terrorism, even back then when the idea was to reduce the amount of potential threat in the world. That is the essence, from what I understand, of why that agency was created in the first place.

Again we go back to 9/11. Following 9/11 the UN had a series of meetings, and there were four that I want to point out.

Government Orders

•(1605)

United Nations Security Council resolution 1373, which was passed back in 2001, required member states to adopt certain anti-terrorism legislation and policies, including those to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorists acts: freezing the financial resources available to terrorist organizations; suppressing the supply of weapons to terrorist organizations; and denying safe haven to those who finance, plan, support or commit terrorist acts. It also called on member states to become parties to and to fully implement the relevant international conventions and protocols related to terrorism as soon as possible.

In Canada, many of these acts were criminalized and reclassified as terrorist activity as a result of the Canadian Anti-terrorism Act, back in 2001.

United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 was adopted in 2004 and focused specifically on nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It asked member states to take steps to prohibit non-state actors from acquiring nuclear weapons and to put into place additional controls on nuclear materials. It also asked member states to adopt and enforce effective domestic controls to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons; to adopt legislation to prevent the acquisition, use or threat of nuclear weapons by state and non-state actors; to extend such criminal legislation to apply to citizens extraterritorial; and to include internal waters, territorial waters and airspace in the territory from which nuclear weapons would be prohibited.

In fact, we can see each of these steps in Bill S-9. As I said, this is a resolution that was passed in 2004 by the United Nations Security Council.

The International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which was adopted in 2005, was the first international convention related to terrorism open for signature after 9/11. It builds on both the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombing.

The International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism is comprehensive and contains detailed language on what particular aspects of nuclear terrorism should be criminalized. It is the inspiration for, many would argue, the bulk of what Bill S-9 is all about.

The other agreement, the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, came out of a diplomatic conference convened in July 2005, three months after ICSANT, the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, actually met. The Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material was signed in Vienna, Austria in March 1980. It is the only legally binding undertaking in the area of physical protection of nuclear material and establishes measures related to the prevention, detection and punishment of offences related to nuclear material.

Given the age of the CPPNM, the 2005 meeting was meant to update and strengthen its provisions. The CPPNM amendment would require states to protect their nuclear facilities as well as nuclear material used, stored and transported domestically, rather

than protecting only nuclear material transported internationally, as the CPPNM currently requires.

•(1610)

Earlier I posed a question to the minister with regard to the government working with the different provinces. We have provinces that provide power to their citizens through nuclear energy. There are real threats there. I asked the minister the question to get an indication of the degree to which the government has some sort of formal communication with the different provincial jurisdictions this might actually apply to. I was somewhat surprised to hear that the minister was not aware of any. I assumed that it would have been the case. There is a responsibility for us to think not only about outside the country but about within it, where nuclear energy is being utilized.

Bill S-9 also attempts to criminalize certain offences related to acts directed against nuclear facilities.

Nuclear energy and the potential for the scientific research done with this energy is quite significant. It not only provides many jobs, but it saves lives. Medical isotopes, for example, are used throughout the world. Many of the materials come from Canada. It would be a shame for us not to support and encourage that industry, because in many ways, it is a wonderful thing for Canada. Canada can, indeed, play the leading role.

It is important, whether it is isotopes or nuclear power plants, that we carry out the due diligence and work with the provinces and the industry to ensure that we are minimizing any potential threats. It would be wrong for us to believe that we have nothing to worry about. It only takes one person with a corrupt mind to cause a great deal of damage. That is why I think there are things we can do, as a national government, to work with and assist the provinces in coming up with backup and emergency plans. I also believe that Canada can and must play a stronger leadership role on the whole nuclear file, because we have a great deal to offer. We have the science and the technology.

Many might be surprised to know that Canada has been dealing with nuclear energy and materials since the early 1940s. It was in the early 1960s that we actually started to use nuclear power. We have a relatively safe environment compared to many other countries in the world. There is a great opportunity for Canada to demonstrate to the world that the elements of nuclear energy can be a positive thing if used for the right reasons.

•(1615)

Unfortunately, there will always be those who want to cause harm. What we have to do is minimize that. The member for Mount Royal and the efforts he has made, along with many others throughout the world who came up with these United Nations resolutions, went a long way toward making our world a safer place.

To that extent, it would be nice to see the legislation pass so that the deal can finally be ratified.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear what the member for Winnipeg North has to say about this statement by Senator Dallaire:

...there is no feeling...of what the delta of gaps are in the security with regard to terrorism or anti-terrorism. It seems to me that it is fine to go through and do our legislative duty; however, without that framework, it seems to me that, as a committee, we are a bit ill-equipped to get a warm, fuzzy feeling that we are going down the road that we feel maybe should be done expeditiously enough by the department or by the ministries with regard to anti-terrorism.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I have an immense amount of respect for Senator Dallaire.

One of the roles of the Senate is to study issues when senators have that level of expertise. I know it is an area of interest for him. I believe that when he makes statements like that, whether one is a member of Parliament or the average person living in Canada, one should listen and recognize the expertise he brings to the table.

We need to be aware. We should be taking that as a legitimate warning. There are many deficiencies. That is one of the reasons we need to be concerned about not making this issue a priority. Why did it take so long for us to see this bill come before us, when it could have been brought forward in 2006 or 2007? The government had very little interest in acting on it.

I believe that the New Democrats are also supporting this. Why would we not support it? We are the ones who signed the agreement that ultimately led to the requirement for the bill.

I believe that if we recognize this for the important issue it is, we could tap into the minds of Senator Dallaire and others across Canada and do a better job of dealing with this very important issue.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I particularly noted the member's comment towards the end, when he said that he would support this bill but that there is much more we can do.

I have the privilege of representing the same riding that former ambassador Douglas Roche represented. He, of course, has shown leadership for many decades on nuclear disarmament. My former colleague Bill Siksay, of course, continuously tried to create the department of peace.

I am wondering if the member thinks that instead of just finally moving to bring forward this legislation to implement an agreement we agreed to quite some time ago, the government could, in fact, take additional measures.

I have a second question for him. I know that the penalty is a maximum of life imprisonment. Interestingly, there is no mandatory minimum for something as serious as this. It is very puzzling to me what the government is thinking.

It is fine to table a serious piece of legislation like this. However, Alberta is crying for more judges and more support for federal prosecutors. Does the member think it would be useful for the government to come forward and also tell us what additional resources and strategies are going to be in place so that we can actually detect these serious crimes and take action?

• (1620)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is a good question. That is the reason I posed a bit of a different question to the minister when he spoke to it. However, I think it deals with a good part of what the member is referring to, that being to what degree the government of

Government Orders

Canada has worked with other jurisdictions to develop an overall Canada-wide strategy. We have different levels of governments in Canada that play a lead role in such things as the development of power or electricity. I am referring to the provinces. They have the nuclear power plants, and that requires provincial legislation.

Could the government have done more? I think it has only done the basics. It has had this resolution since 2005. It could have done a lot more. The bill is significant, in the sense that it at least allows us to ratify the agreement. That is the biggest plus. However, I do believe that it could have done more.

What I find surprising, and I made reference to this earlier, is that there does not appear to be any formal communications network that would allow Ottawa to work with the provinces that need support, or just dealing with the whole issue of emergency situations or crises that might arise, especially relating to nuclear terrorism, which could happen in Canada. There are all sorts of situations out there that are very real, and the government could have done a lot more.

At the end of the day, if it took the government six or seven years to bring forward a relatively simple bill, given the previous work that was done on it, I am not sure how much longer it would take it to have a more comprehensive approach at dealing with terrorism, nuclear terrorism or other types of chemicals out there. There are all sorts of disastrous situations.

The federal government could do more, and a part of that is not only outside of Canada. We could play a stronger leadership role outside of Canada, but we also need to be doing more within Canada to protect our own citizens.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate all day, with great interest. I want to follow up a bit on the events of last night and relate them to what is happening in the House today.

Yesterday, the NDP brought forward a very important motion in the House calling for the abolition of the Senate. We had a very interesting vote. Both the Conservatives and the Liberals voted to maintain the Senate, and only the New Democrats voted to abolish it.

Today we are faced in the House with a debate on a bill that is entitled Bill S-9, as opposed to C-9, indicating that the bill originated in the Senate. I would suggest that when it comes to nuclear safety and we are talking about keeping citizens of our country safe, that this might be something worthy of talking about first in the democratically elected body, which would be the House of Commons. Yet, clearly that did not happen here. Once again, the parliamentary process has been turned on its head. It used to be that we thought of the Senate as the chamber of sober second thought. I am pleased to see that clearly the Conservatives do not think it fills that role either because, in fact, they are now getting the Senate to introduce the bills, not to act as a check. We have been saying all along that the Senate should not, nor does it, fulfill the role of being a check on what happens in the House of Commons.

Government Orders

Since my hon. colleague from the Liberal Party actually voted in favour of supporting the Senate last night, I wonder whether he might explain why he thinks it is appropriate that a bill as important as one that is entitled an act to amend the Criminal Code with respect to nuclear terrorism should originate in the Senate as opposed to in the House of Commons.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I am going to let the government defend why it felt it was more appropriate to bring it in via the Senate.

However, with regard to her concerns with respect to the abolishment of the Senate, for a multitude of reasons the NDP is out of tune with what Canadians want to see debated.

At the end of the day, there are many regions in Canada, whether it is Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and others, that do see a great deal of value—

An hon. member: Yes, they love the Senate.

• (1625)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Well, P.E.I. is a province, too. The member might not like it, but it is a province.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, there are many Canadians who want to see more value to the Senate and want to see it reformed.

The New Democratic Party, which is going to prejudge Canadians by saying we are going to abolish the Senate, knows full well that it cannot. The NDP says it is going to abolish it, but it knows it cannot do that. It is not going to happen. It is going to have to have a constitutional round; every province in the region is going to have to agree to it.

The NDP knows it is not true, but it still says it.

Hopefully we will see some form of Senate reform. In the short term, let us ensure they are good solid Senate appointments, individuals like Senator Dallaire, who has contributed immensely to the development of this particular bill. It would have been nice to have had the bill brought in at second reading or introduced here in the House. That would have been the ideal situation.

Unfortunately, it did not happen that way. We can be grateful we have individuals like Senator Dallaire who at least picked up the ball for the government, as ultimately we do have a bill that is somewhat reflective of the UN resolutions that were signed back in 2005.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume debate, and pursuant to Standing Order 38, it is my duty to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, National Defence; the hon. member for Winnipeg North, Citizenship and Immigration; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Foreign Investment.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first of all like to say that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Hamilton Mountain.

I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill S-9, Nuclear Terrorism Act. It is an important issue, and one that will allow me to go a little bit beyond the specific subject matter of the bill. The NDP will be supporting this bill at report stage and at third reading. We want to promote the implementation of its provisions in Canadian law.

On the other hand, before I begin, I would like to express some reservations about the fact that the bill originated in the Senate. I will repeat what my colleague, the member for Hamilton Mountain, said when she raised this issue a little earlier and put questions to our colleague from Winnipeg North. I still believe that the Senate has no business introducing this kind of bill, even less so on an issue as important as amending the Criminal Code regarding possible sentences for nuclear terrorism. This should be done by the elected officials. In fact, bills must originate in the House of Commons, period.

International law has an important place in Canada. No one is disputing that. However, there are questions about the adoption and implementation of international conventions in Canadian law. Some countries may have different methods for incorporating standards and rules of international law in domestic law. There are basically two different methods.

Countries with a monist legal system, in general, automatically incorporate the rules of international law once they have been ratified. They become part of the country's legislation more or less directly, and some states will grant them superior force to any other domestic law. It is a simple and straightforward method.

However, Canada does not have a monist system; we have a dualist legal system. This means that international law is not immediately applicable in Canadian law. The Canadian Parliament must pass implementing legislation before the international provisions are applicable in domestic law. In a sense, this does justice to our political system—something that is not always very simple—for two reasons.

First, our federation is made up of provinces, which have their own areas of exclusive jurisdiction and separate legal systems. Second, it is logical that the legislative body should validate in legislation something that the executive has signed. If this were not the case, it would be as if Parliament were giving a blank check to the government of the day to sign anything and it would immediately come into effect in Canada. Not only would this be unacceptable, but when we look at some of the Conservative government's foreign-policy directions, I would be afraid of what might emerge.

We could well be told that parliamentarians hold up the implementation of certain provisions by making it mandatory that there be implementation legislation, but frankly, I am extremely pleased that we can give attentive consideration to all the provisions of international law that come in to Canada.

With regard to the subject of debate today, the amendments to the Criminal Code would affect the implementation of the criminal law requirements contained, first, in the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and, second, in the 2005 International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

Government Orders

In short, the bill creates four new offences under part II of the Criminal Code, with respect to the possession and use of nuclear or radioactive materials or devices, acts committed against a nuclear facility or its operation with the intent to cause death, serious bodily harm or substantial damage to property or the environment, or attempts to compel a government or international organization to do or refrain from doing anything. I will not be reading all the amendments contained in this bill.

I see two main reasons we can support this bill. First, Canada is a producer of fissionable materials such as uranium. Until recently, Canada was the world's largest exporter of uranium until Kazakhstan reclaimed that title in 2009. Most of our mines are located in northern Saskatchewan. As of October 2012, Statistics Canada says that 15.2% of the electricity produced in Canada comes from nuclear plants. Naturally, these fissionable materials are moved around in Canada. And Canada has nuclear power plants.

Therefore, we in Canada are vulnerable to acts of nuclear terrorism. We cannot hide from that fact. We have been lucky until now that we have not had to face threats, but we will not always be so lucky, not with the new, stubborn, warlike foreign policy the government has adopted.

Second, it is important for Canada to express the provisions of these conventions in Canadian legislation. Then, later, we will be able to ratify them. That is important because it takes a certain number of ratifications in order for international conventions to come into force globally. It seems very complicated at first, but the purpose is simple: if more countries adhere to the treaties, it will be easier to implement them, since all countries will have the same rules to follow.

When we look at the international situation of countries with nuclear capabilities, we quickly see that these conventions are not a luxury. Unstable countries like Pakistan have nuclear weapons; in Russia's vast territory, control and supervision of fissionable materials can be extremely difficult.

Canada has been a model for other nations. The message we are sending, in ratifying these conventions, is clear: we are taking a step forward and inviting other countries to join us. Leading by example is the way to produce tangible change.

• (1630)

Our obligations with regard to nuclear safety are also serious. They began in 1968 when Canada signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Since then, Canada has been a constructive partner in controlling the proliferation of nuclear weapons, working with the UN in Geneva, New York and Vienna.

The subject may seem abstract, but the scientific advances that began with mastering atomic fission in the 1940s have not come without great danger. Even today, North Korea is threatening the United States with a pre-emptive nuclear strike. It is clear: we have a long way to go.

The nuclear security summits in Washington in 2010 and Seoul, South Korea, in 2012 have helped control nuclear weapons. The more supervision and control of the fissionable materials circulating around the world, the less chance that these materials will be

misused. That is the stated goal of the next summit, which will be held in the Netherlands in 2014.

However, there is one element that cannot be ignored. In the grand scheme of things, Canada must be a party to these two conventions. There is no question about it. However, I have concerns about this government's foreign-policy directions that are becoming increasingly belligerent, inflexible and especially devoid of compassion. We used to be recognized worldwide for our moderate and rational stances on international issues. In addition to being seen as an unparalleled mediator, we were the very picture of an older brother, who listened closely, always sought compromise and campaigned tirelessly for peace.

Seven years after the Conservatives came to power, this is really no longer the case. There can be no better example of this than the loss three years ago of our seat on the United Nations Security Council. Furthermore, our development assistance policies are inconsistent, and shot through with a really tight-fisted idea of what helping your neighbour is all about. For this government, helping your neighbour really only means helping the big mining company make a bigger profit at the expense of the developing world.

Managing foreign affairs is a delicate exercise, but the Conservatives simply do not have the skill that it takes. Now they come onto the scene with their big boots and their preconceived ideas, giving lectures to all and sundry and preaching how we are better than everyone else. This is not how you make friends, especially when we regard our partners only from a financial point of view.

Why am I talking about this now? We can tell the Conservative government that we are supporting this tangible initiative on sentences for nuclear terrorism, but we should never lose sight of the global idea of our foreign-policy interests. By acting like coarse, combative villagers in our relations with the other countries of the world, we will end up pouring oil on the fire. There are better ways of doing things, and I believe the legacy of former Prime Minister Pearson must still serve as a guide.

We are not a major world power; we never have been. We are a middle power, with many natural resources, and an educated, resourceful and open-minded populace. I think Canadians are our greatest resource. In international relations, it is not just a question of trade and money. There is what Canada can bring to the table: ideas, responsiveness and compromises. There is still time for Canada to get back into multilateral forums with our international partners. In my view, it would be better for us to reach our goals with our allies, rather than against them.

Unbelievably, very few people agree on the literal definition of terrorism, because it involves unpredictable acts with many different causes. It is not just a question of religion or politics.

I am afraid that we are making the problem worse, with our one-dimensional foreign policy that is oriented solely toward money and that is totally insensitive to cultural, political and social demands. That hurts everyone and, much to the Conservatives' dismay, it also hurts the economy.

Government Orders

• (1635)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank our hon. colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for her speech.

Does she not agree that one of the greatest things Canada has to brag about is the fact that it has a nuclear sector that produces a huge amount of energy? This is particularly the case in Ontario, but in other regions as well. This industry has not caused the loss of a single human life in Canada since its inception.

How does she explain that the NDP has traditionally opposed this renewable, healthy and safe energy sector in Ontario, at the federal level and across the country, even though it is a great source of pride for Canadians?

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his question. I admire him a lot and admire his career path and background in diplomacy.

As someone from Quebec, where more than 95% of our electricity is produced by hydroelectricity, I have to say that this is not something I am very familiar with. However, it is still important to always ensure that nuclear energy is produced safely, and strict environmental protections must always be a priority.

Since hydroelectricity in Quebec is a very renewable and clean resource, I have nothing more to say about this subject, but I thank him for his question.

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I noted with interest that in her speech, my colleague mentioned the next Nuclear Security Summit, to be held in the Netherlands in 2014. This gives me the opportunity to bring up Canada's leadership on the world stage.

I would like the member to talk about what role she thinks Canada should play at the summit. What position should Canada take so that it can try to improve its reputation and regain a little of what it has lost in terms of international leadership?

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Jean for his question. He raises a very important point. In recent years, we have unfortunately seen the extent to which Canada's international reputation has been tarnished. For a very long time, it had a sterling reputation as a peacekeeper that helped countries resolve their differences. That is no longer the case. This issue should become a priority for Canada, and we should strive to regain our international stature. We must reclaim the much more peaceful and conciliatory vision that we held for so long in order to solve foreign conflicts and ensure that they do not degenerate.

In my opinion, this should be a priority for the government. Obviously, when we win power in 2015, this will continue to be an important issue for our party.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on February 28, the Minister of Justice appeared before the Senate committee studying the Anti-terrorism Act. He said:

...these offences do not deal with lawful medical procedures involving radiation, the lawful exchange of material or devices, or other existing lawful activity in the nuclear industry.

Can the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent tell us if the issue of the safety of nuclear waste from medical equipment has been dealt with in the terrorism file?

• (1640)

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for her question. A number of amendments were presented at the Senate stage, which makes us wonder why we only saw these additions at the Senate stage. We could also ask ourselves why this bill was introduced in the Senate. This type of important legislation should always be introduced in the elected House, that is the House of Commons.

I find it frustrating that, in 2013, bills are still introduced by people who are appointed, not elected, and who are not accountable to anyone.

[*English*]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today in support of Bill S-9, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the nuclear terrorism act. As I just said at the outset, I will be supporting the bill.

Before I get into the substance of the bill, I want to take a moment to talk about the corsage that I and indeed all women MPs in the House are wearing today. It was a gift from Equal Voice, an all-party not-for-profit organization that is dedicated to electing more women to all levels of political office in Canada.

On the day before International Women's Day, I am proud to accept and wear the carnation it has so generously given us to celebrate our election to Parliament. However, I also accept it as a call to action, and I would be remiss if I did not note that women's participation in elected politics is still woefully inadequate. Women are more than 50% of Canada's population but currently constitute only 25% of the members in the House, and that is simply not good enough.

In the NDP caucus, that number is significantly better. In fact, at 40% it is the best of any of the recognized parties in the House, but we did not get here by accident. Our party adopted action plans to break down barriers for women in politics, and our leaders have had the political will and commitment to make that happen. My point here is that there is a lot more that the Canadian government needs to do to remove the barriers, so women can realize economic, political and social equality in our country.

I would be less than honest if I did not express some disappointment that on this eve of International Women's Day, we are debating Bill S-9, which could have been debated long ago, instead of focusing on issues like violence against women, the lack of affordable housing, poverty or any of the other myriad issues that are still so pervasive in our country. We all need to be vigilant and tenacious in our fight for further sustainable change when it comes to women's equality.

Government Orders

The treaties we are talking about today could all have been ratified a long time ago. Nonetheless, here we are dealing with the legislation that the government has deemed more important to debate than women's equality today, and that is Bill S-9, an act to amend the Criminal Code, nuclear terrorism. As many of my colleagues have already pointed out, the bill fulfills Canada's treaty obligations under the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. This includes extending international measures beyond protecting against proliferation of nuclear materials to now include protection of nuclear facilities, and it reinforces Canada's obligation under UN Security Council resolution 1540 from 2004, to take and enforce effective measures to prevent the proliferation of nuclear materials as well as chemical and biological weapons.

In a case where the implementation of a treaty requires amendments to Canadian legislation, the treaty is ratified only when such amendments or new legislation have been passed. To date, Canada has not ratified either the ICSANT or the CPPNM amendment. That is because Canada does not yet have legislation in place to criminalize the offences outlined in the ICSANT or some of the offences outlined in the CPPNM amendment. The amendments Bill S-9 introduces into the code represent Canada's efforts to align its domestic legislation with what is required by both of those conventions.

If these amendments became law, Canada would be in a position to ratify both the ICSANT and the CPPNM amendment. I would hope we would indeed move expeditiously to do just that as soon as this law is passed. Having laid out what is at stake in the bill, let us now look at it in a little more detail.

The bill introduces four new indictable offences into part II of the Criminal Code. First, it makes it illegal to possess, use or dispose of nuclear or radioactive material, or a nuclear or radioactive device, or commit an act against a nuclear facility or its operations with the intent to cause death, serious bodily harm or substantial damage to property or the environment.

Second, it makes it illegal to use or alter nuclear or radioactive material, or a nuclear or radioactive device, or commit an act against a nuclear facility or its operation with the intent to compel a person, government or international organization to do or refrain from doing anything.

Third, it makes it illegal to commit an indictable offence under federal law for the purpose of obtaining nuclear or radioactive material, a nuclear or radioactive device, or access or control of a nuclear facility.

Fourth, it makes it illegal to threaten to commit any of the other three offences.

Frankly, I think most Canadians would have thought that such provisions already exist in the Criminal Code and will have been surprised to learn that they were not. To most of them it would seem like a no-brainer. Like them, my NDP colleagues and I believe we must address the issue of nuclear security and comply with international obligations to better co-operate with other countries on counterterrorism strategies.

● (1645)

We are committed to multi-lateral diplomacy and international co-operation, especially in areas of great common concern, such as nuclear terrorism. Canada, along with our international partners, must do what we can to protect Canadians from all forms of terrorism and protect global security.

I have read through some of the testimony from the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, the committee that studied this legislation, and I would like to draw the attention of the House to the spine-chilling testimony of Professor Matthew Bunn. He is the associate professor of public policy at Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University. Let me share what Professor Bunn said to us:

The danger of nuclear terrorism remains very real. Government studies in the United States and in other countries have concluded that if terrorists manage to get enough highly enriched uranium or plutonium, they might very well be able to make a crude nuclear bomb capable of incinerating the heart of a major city. In the case of highly enriched uranium, making such a bomb is basically a matter of slamming two pieces together at high speed. The amounts required are small, and smuggling them is frighteningly easy.

Should terrorists succeed in detonating a nuclear bomb in a major city, the political, economic, and social effects would reverberate throughout the world. Kofi Annan, when he was secretary-general of the United Nations, warned that the economic effects would drive millions of people into poverty and create a second death toll in the developing world. Fears that terrorists might have another bomb that they might set off somewhere else would be acute. The world would be transformed, and not for the better.

Hence, insecure nuclear material anywhere is really a threat to everyone, everywhere. This is not just an American judgment. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has warned that nuclear terrorism is one of the most serious threats of our time. Mohamed ElBaradei, while he was head of the IAEA, called it the greatest threat to the world.

As scary as that sounds, the fact is that between 1993 and 2011, the International Atomic Energy Agency identified close to 2,000 incidents related to the use, transportation and unauthorized possession of nuclear and radioactive material, which is why this legislation is so important. Canada must take action to support nuclear safety throughout the world, and the bill is a step in the right direction. We must respect our international obligations.

Government Orders

I am glad that the Conservatives have finally decided to implement the convention. I do wonder why it took them so long to introduce the bill and why they would choose to do it through the Senate. It is perhaps because the Conservatives are also no longer quite sure what the Senate's purpose is. I was taught that the Senate was a chamber of sober second thought. The Conservatives are again turning things upside down. They are now turning the House of Commons into a chamber of sober second thought. It really is Disney on the Rideau here. The Conservatives keep managing to create new illusions to keep Canadians off balance and unable to hold their government to account. I could go on at greater length about that theme, but I see that my time is just about up.

Let me conclude with one quick thought, even if I do not have the time to develop it more fully here. I would be remiss if I did not encourage the Conservatives to stop cherry-picking and get on with implementing all of the conventions that Canada has ratified. Nuclear terrorism and the protection of nuclear material are important, but surely to God so are conventions like the Convention on the Rights of the Child or the convention on indigenous rights. Let us bring the same single-mindedness to these conventions that the government brought to Bill S-9 and let us do it now.

•(1650)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, based on the member's comments, I would like to know if her party would support unanimous consent to pass the bill now and we would move on to the next item?

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, given that the member listened so intently to my speech, I find his request for unanimous consent a bit troubling. One of the things I said quite clearly in my speech was that I thought it was outrageous that this legislation came from the Senate without being duly debated in the House of Commons first. That, of course, is what we are here for. We are supposed to be examining government legislation. We are supposed to do our due diligence. We are here representing constituents in our ridings on something as important as nuclear terrorism. Why would we not want to discuss the bill in some detail? We are not holding it up. We are not being dilatory. There are some very serious concerns, including the fact that the bill is much broader than it needs to be to implement the two treaties we are debating here today.

When I get my opportunity, I will certainly be putting that question to the government. I appreciate that this is not my turn to ask questions, so I look forward to that opportunity in the very near future.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Hamilton Mountain very ably outlined the reasons why this needs to be debated in the House. It is irresponsible not to take a good hard look at a bill and see whether amendments are required.

In talking about unanimous consent to move this bill along, it is interesting that the Conservatives have been in power since 2006 and have had ample opportunity to bring this bill forward for debate. If we want to talk about delays, let us talk about what they have been up to.

When the member started her speech, she talked about the fact that this week we are celebrating International Women's Day and mentioned specifically that women certainly have a role to play in peace in the world. UN Resolution 1325, which we translate into "no women, no peace", talks very clearly about how women have to be involved in any kind of peace process. I am a very proud member of PNND.

I wonder if the member could speak specifically to what else she would have liked to have seen done in this particular instance when dealing with Bill S-9.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I entirely understood the question or the focus of the question. If it is asking about women's—

Ms. Jean Crowder: What?

Ms. Chris Charlton: I apologize. I have to say that the member for Burlington asked a clearer question.

If the question is about the importance of the voices of women being heard in all parts of public policy, I certainly agree. We bring a different perspective to matters of policy debate. That is why initiatives like Equal Voice, the fight for women's equality in social, economic and political matters, are so critical. I know that the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan has been a huge advocate of that for all of her adult life, and I want to applaud her for those efforts.

In that regard, her commitment is much different than that of the member for Burlington, but we can explore that a little further down the road.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate thing in this place is that it seems, on every side, that when we deal with an issue as important as this, we always denigrate the other side by saying such things as, "It may be a good piece of legislation, but they are bad".

To respond to the member across the aisle, this government, over the past three Parliaments, has brought in a lot of legislation. We cannot bring everything in at the same time. It takes time as we roll out legislation. We also have two Houses of Parliament in this country, both of which traditionally are able to send one item or another to the other level of Parliament. I do not think we should denigrate each other for doing that. If members on the other side come up with a good piece of legislation, we should thank them for that and carry on. Why is it so hard to say, "This is a good piece of legislation and we are going to support it", or, "We think it's a good piece of legislation and maybe if we did this, this and this, it would make it better", instead of talking down the other side.

Canadians' poor opinions of politicians is a result of our back and forth and not respecting each other. If we would do a bit of that, maybe when we go into our ridings, politicians collectively would be appreciated more. That is just an intervention.

Government Orders

•(1655)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I really welcome that intervention, because I, of course, started this group hug that the member is seeking by saying that I will be supporting this bill. Let me, in return, commend some of my bills to him where I would really appreciate his support as well, so that it really does become a mutual relationship.

In particular, one thing that is important to people in my community, and the building trades right across the country, in this time of economic turmoil, is a bill that would give tax credits to people in the building and construction trades for their travel and accommodations when they travel to work sites. That is a bill that has been championed by the building trades for over 30 years now, both with Liberal and Conservative governments, and they are chomping at the bit. It seems to me that when the government talks about the skills shortage we are facing in this country, this would be the perfect time. In the spirit of co-operation, I look forward to the member issuing a press release saying that he is onside with that positive initiative at this critical time in our economy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

My first comment concerns the numbering of the bill: S-9. This bill was in fact introduced in the Senate on behalf of the Minister of Finance. I find that regrettable. He could have introduced it in the House. I do not understand why, and I will come back to the reason I do not understand why that was not done.

It is very important to understand the background. I will not address the very specific points in the bill, because they have been covered almost completely, but I will talk about what follows. We are in a situation where we are complying with an international agreement: the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, which was drafted in 1980. There was a series of events and meetings in which, under the auspices of the United Nations, countries worked together to reduce the risk related to nuclear issues.

Everyone in fact recognizes that when nuclear material is used for other than peaceful purposes, it is disastrous. First of all, it is not armies that are attacked with nuclear weapons: it is civilians, the environment, and life on our planet. That is where the debate has to begin.

What surprises me greatly—and a number of people have pointed this out—is the time the government has taken to introduce legislation. It is not something that has been discussed only since yesterday. Everyone has spoken about the 2005 Convention, of course, but there was something else that followed. There was brief mention of United Nations Resolution 1540. Mention could also have been made of Resolution 1887 on non-proliferation, the Washington Summit in 2010 or the Seoul Conference in 2012.

On all those occasions, the international community undertook collectively to reduce the nuclear threat. So what was our fine government doing all that time? Nothing, and less than nothing, because this government is not interested in what happens beyond our borders, unless we are talking about trade.

When we talk about anything other than trade, it is slow going. You might say that this government does not understand that Canada is a country with neighbours, and we have to live at peace with each other. How is it that they have taken years to present legislation here to which, on the whole, everyone is agreeable? It was no great labour to prepare this 10-page bill. It was not for lack of time. Years have gone by. You cannot convince me that there was no time to do the job. You only have to look at the time it has taken at the various stages to realize that there is no logical reason why it has required so much time.

The only reason is that the Conservative government is not interested in international politics. It takes an interest only in petty adjustments, or for specific reasons.

•(1700)

It is high time the government gave more consideration to the international aspect. It is one of the government's responsibilities to see to our international relations. Yet it pays little attention to them.

Today, I am happy that it wishes to secure passage for legislation to ratify an international convention. On the other hand, I would also have liked it to address other international conventions to which Canada is a signatory. I am thinking of, for example, the Kyoto protocol, an obligation we failed to meet.

A word comes to mind: pathetic. It is pathetic that this government is incapable of taking its international relations in hand. It is pathetic that this government is incapable of taking responsibility for its international commitments.

I quite simply do not understand why the government does not understand that this is an important part of its mandate. In 2015, a New Democratic government will pay attention to its international commitments.

We are presented here with a bill that talks about repression, punishing criminals, and the fact that the nuclear issue is dangerous. No problem with that. However, it has to be looked at in a more global context. We can discuss criminalization, but have we also talked about prevention? In our international relations, how do we manage to reduce the risk of problems related to nuclear issues? What have we done in recent years? What has this government done in recent years to develop a dialogue in order to reduce the nuclear threat?

We have to face it: nuclear weapons have become almost affordable. It is frightening to think that this kind of possibility can be available to people who do not think of the consequences it would have for all forms of life on this planet. I do not want malicious people to be given an excuse to use these technologies.

Whenever people talk about non-proliferation or helping people in other countries to emerge from poverty, they will be helping to reduce the problem. That is less repressive.

Lastly, when people work on nuclear weapons, it is because they feel insecure. Insecurity is what makes people seek to barricade themselves. That is what makes them want to attack others. Recently, once again, a spokesperson for North Korea was threatening the United States in this fashion. It is fear that drives people to act.

Government Orders

What is being done to address those fears? What is being done to develop better relations with our neighbours? When you return home, you try to have good relations with them so that things go well, and in order to promote harmony among ourselves and in our communities. When you are responsible for managing a country, your neighbours are other countries. I wonder what this government is doing to make relations with other countries as harmonious as possible.

Rest assured that if we aim at that, if we combat proliferation and if we want to reduce poverty in the world, we will achieve as much as we will with this bill, if not more.

• (1705)

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech. He is always very thoughtful and looks much beyond to the bigger picture.

I had the privilege a few years ago of attending a meeting of an all-party organization committee that was looking at identifying triggers for intervention in matters of serious concern. Obviously, one might be preventing nuclear proliferation. It was a committee that included Senator Dallaire and the representative for Ottawa Centre.

To my surprise and delight, one of those five triggers was climate change. It was seen as a serious security threat to the planet. I am pleased that my hon. colleague has raised that issue. Many around the world have identified climate change as the most serious security threat to the planet. As I understand, world leaders and businessmen at Davos, at the meeting this year, identified the greatest security threat and the greatest economic threat as climate change.

I wonder if the member could speak to that and about the fact that the Senate crushed our bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

True, climate change will cause significant disturbances. In the history of mankind, whenever there have been major disturbances on our planet, there have been crises.

As I said in my speech, because nuclear weapons are unfortunately becoming almost affordable for certain groups now, if we do not address all the problems confronting our planet on a global basis, there is no doubt that at some point, someone will blow a gasket and do something irreparable.

I agree with my colleague. It is absolutely essential to tackle all problems not with a top-down approach, but comprehensively. We really have to develop a global vision of harmonious relations among ourselves.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his very humane speech.

Further to the idea of humanity, this bill on nuclear terrorism that comes from the Senate does not necessarily contain minimum

sentences. To have those, it would have had to come from the House of Commons, whose members are elected.

Thus, I would like to hear what the hon. member thinks about the fact that this super-important bill ought to have been introduced by the government. In five years, the government has presented no bills on this matter, and here we must take a position on a bill that we have not studied in our own committees.

• (1710)

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

The hon. member's question speaks to the entire issue of governmental irresponsibility. They have had ample time to act. I have the impression that they are now hurrying to pass this bill because there are international treaties to be respected and it would make them look good. Of course, we are looking at the criminal aspect of it and conforming to an international convention Canada has signed—which is the right thing to do—but I would have liked to go further and look at the problem in full.

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, are we debating the colour of margarine today? No, we are not.

Today we are debating an important public safety issue, a major issue. Once again, our colleagues opposite, who unfortunately form a majority government, are not getting up on their hind legs—to put it mildly—to contribute to the debate.

This is a Parliament. Gentlemen, you are parliamentarians. We are very well paid to take part in debates in this House. Like millions of Canadians, I am tired of watching you sit there and do nothing while we are discussing such important matters. Moreover, we are talking about their very own bill—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

I would like to remind the hon. members that it is inappropriate to refer to the absence or presence of other members. In addition, all hon. members should direct their comments through the Chair rather than directly to other members. For example, it is best not to say “you” or use other terms that refer directly to other members. It is preferable to use the third person.

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, history will describe this government's behaviour during the 41st Parliament as a blot on the history of Canada's parliamentary system. In 5 or 10 years, that is what we will remember of the shoddy work being done by the members opposite and their lack of attention.

We are talking about Bill S-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, which was introduced by the current government. We will be supporting this bill, but just because we are supporting it, that does not mean that we are not doing our jobs as parliamentarians or that we will not take the time to make comments and analyze it.

Government Orders

This bill amends the Criminal Code in order to implement criminal law requirements set out in two international treaties designed to fight terrorism: the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, which was amended in 2005, and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

Major events over the past decades—events that were turning points in the history of humanity—brought about the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and Bill S-9.

In 1942, physicist Enrico Fermi and his team succeeded in developing the first nuclear reactor. The team was not attempting to recover the energy during that experiment, but the nuclear stations that we have been using since the 1970s are based on the same principle.

For fear of seeing Nazi Germany producing an atomic weapon, this experiment was not immediately put to use in the civilian realm, but it did make it possible to begin producing plutonium, a byproduct of uranium or enriched uranium that has undergone a nuclear reaction. Plutonium was used to create the first atomic bombs.

It is disturbing to see that, since day one, there has been no clear line between the civilian industry and the military-industrial complex when it comes to nuclear technology. This shows just how dangerous this industry is. We learned that lesson the hard way. In 1988, the Chernobyl disaster released 400 times more radioactive material into the atmosphere than the Hiroshima bomb and may have killed up to 4,000 people, according to the World Health Organization. Other organizations estimate that 200,000 people contracted cancer and died as a result of this incident.

More recently, on March 11, 2011, there was the Fukushima disaster in Japan. The structure of the reactors was allegedly damaged immediately following the earthquake, before the tsunami even hit. This major nuclear accident was rated as a level 7 incident, the highest rating on the International Nuclear Event Scale, placing it on par with the Chernobyl disaster.

As we were figuring out just how dangerous the nuclear industry was, major events that have now been in the news for decades were emerging, for example, terrorism centred on serious and even mass destruction. An extreme right-wing political movement with paramilitary tendencies blew up a federal building, killing 168 people and injuring 680 others in the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, 1995.

The infamous September 11, 2001, attacks committed by religious fundamentalists killed 2,977 people. Very recently, in 2011, a lone, depraved right-wing extremist, Anders Behring Breivik, perpetrated an attack in Norway. He killed eight people in a bombing, and then used an automatic weapon to kill 69 young people who had committed no crime other than belonging to a political party.

This is what brings us to what I call the fear equation, which is completely justified, in the general population in the west, in Quebec and in Canada. Could a religious extremist group use a plane or any other kind of suicide attack on a nuclear plant? Yes, it is plausible, unfortunately. If someone like a future Anders Breivik had a small nuclear bomb in his possession, because unfortunately it is now

technically possible to make small nuclear bombs, would he be so disgraceful or be so lacking in humanity that he would detonate a similar device in the middle of a federal government building? Everyone can see that the answer is yes, unfortunately, something like that could happen.

• (1715)

I would like to digress briefly and talk about something that is extremely important to me. The way of the future could defuse this scenario.

In the 1970s, some technologies were set aside because there was probably a desire for enriched uranium to make nuclear bombs. For example, there is the molten salt nuclear reactor that the Chinese are currently focusing on. It is not developed in Canada. China will surpass us in this area. In this type of reactor, nuclear fuel is in the form of salt with a low melting point. The reactor does not need to be stopped to extract the fusion products. Using the thorium cycle produces only 0.1% of the half-life radioactive waste that a reactor like the ones we are using produces. I repeat, it is 0.1% without enriched uranium.

This is a tangent, but it is very important for the future. If we do not make safe technological choices now, our children—my grandson who may one day be in this House—in 30, 40 or 50 years, will still be debating the potential threats. So let us make choices today that, technologically speaking, will not put our children in terribly dangerous situations in 30 or 40 years.

We will therefore be supporting this bill, which covers four important points. It creates new criminal offences punishable by life imprisonment for the possession of or trafficking in nuclear material, or for committing or forcing others to commit an attack against a nuclear facility. It creates a new offence punishable by life imprisonment for anyone who commits a criminal offence under this legislation. Furthermore, it creates a new offence punishable by up to 14 years' imprisonment for threatening to commit any of the three new offences.

These clauses reflect the kind of fear—what I called the fear equation earlier—people have regarding these kinds of terrorist acts and such a dangerous technology, which exists in our society. We will therefore be supporting this bill.

However, the cost has not yet been determined. These new criminal offences and the added pressures on Canada's extradition regime could increase public safety costs. Furthermore, measures to improve the physical protection of nuclear material and nuclear facilities will definitely mean additional costs. This bill came from the Senate. The financial cost has not yet been assessed or reported.

It is very important that the Senate work on that aspect during the second phase of work on this bill. I hope that senators will be at work for more than just 50 or 60 days this year and that we will not end up with a botched bill at the end of all this. If that is the case, we will not be able to support the bill, not because it does not address a basic need, but rather because it would have been botched by senators who show up to work for only 50 days of the year.

Government Orders

• (1720)

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the speech by the hon. member, as the member of Parliament for Burlington I was not sent here just to make repetitive speeches in the House and say the same thing over and over again. I was sent here to vote and move legislation forward.

If the previous speaker and the hon. member's party are serious about moving this forward, and everyone in the House is supportive, why are we not voting on it? Is it not hypocritical that we could be voting on it and moving on to other legislation? Instead, the opposition put up speaker after speaker. Is that not hypocritical?

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, what can I say?

The contempt for the very essence of the parliamentary system is so great on the other side of the House that the Conservatives are now redefining what a parliament should be. If they were honest in their approach to the parliamentary system, they would adopt a motion in the House to change the name of the House of Commons to something like "Let's botch this quick and pass everything without debating too much!" I do not know how we could sum it up in one word.

If there were any consistency in their way of thinking, they would even refuse to be called parliamentarians and they would move a completely ridiculous motion, one that would be dismissive of 175 years of traditions that have allowed people to speak out about bills. They would at least be somewhat consistent, but they definitely would not have my support for their scornful attitude towards the Canadian parliamentary system and parliamentary government in general.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a different type of question for the member.

When we talk about nuclear terrorism, there is always the question of what is happening around the world, which is very real. Ultimately, though, many Canadians are also concerned about nuclear plants and other industries located physically here in Canada.

I am interested in knowing to what degree the member believes we need to see the government put more effort into working with the provinces to establish a communication network to ensure that safety is first and foremost here in Canada, that our facilities are being protected in the best way they can be, that there are very real emergency scenarios and that the government could minimize any threat of nuclear terrorism right here in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, the questions posed by my colleague from Winnipeg North are often very general. I will try to do my best based on a general understanding of the situation.

I wonder if members remember the isotope crisis. A certain commission president suggested that a nuclear facility be closed. The government intervened, inappropriately in my opinion, and went against her recommendations.

More specifically, I believe that my colleague is right to be concerned by this government's lack of judgment when it comes to nuclear safety. We should ensure that the recommendations and operating mechanisms are strictly observed in future so that we do not end up with a situation that is as disturbing as the one where a member of the nuclear safety commission is overruled by someone who is by no means an expert, but just an elected member.

• (1725)

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to this important bill. Obviously my colleagues have shared some of the key points surrounding the bill and the important steps it takes when it comes to something as vital as violent nuclear acts that harm people to the point of actually taking people's lives. We truly support the expansive approach and the changes that were made to strengthen Canada's legislation when it comes to these kinds of acts.

Since I have limited time, I would like to focus on the fact that the government took so long. I heard members previously ask why we are debating this. The irony is that we are now in 2013, the government was first elected in 2006, and it took seven long years for the government to bring this kind of bill forward to this stage in spite of being in a majority position for the last two years.

Our point is it should not have taken this long if it was so important. However, at the moment that it does come to the House, our role as members of Parliament is to debate the issues ahead of us, make sure that due diligence is done when it comes to the legislation in front of us and raise the voices of Canadians, whether they agree or disagree with the legislation being put forward.

Unfortunately, the government has not paid much respect to that approach. We have seen the government apply closure, I believe 28 times, in the House on various pieces of legislation. It has essentially silenced MPs from bringing forward key concerns—and more importantly, the voices of Canadians—when legislation is in front of us.

That is not acceptable. It goes against our basic reason for being here as members of Parliament. It raises the question of why Canadians would be interested in the work of Parliament if we are not here to speak out on their behalf and if they cannot tune in to Parliament to hear the positions of their communities and organizations being put forward on these bills.

Debate is clearly important, and we would like to highlight some of the important pieces of the bill. Bill S-9 reinforces Canada's obligation under UN Security Council resolution 1540 to take and enforce effective measures to prevent the proliferation of nuclear materials, as well as chemical and biological weapons. If the implementation of a treaty requires amendments to Canadian legislation, the treaty is ratified only when such amendments or new legislation has been passed.

Unfortunately, Canada has not ratified either the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material nor the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. This is because Canada does not yet have legislation in place to criminalize the offences outlined in both of these documents.

Today is an important step. The debate here is an important step in giving a bill like this its due diligence. I know hard work was done by our members and the NDP at the committee level. We certainly encourage the government to take seriously our need to be leaders at the international level, whether it is dealing with nuclear weapons or whatever it may be, and to truly show leadership.

• (1730)

Canada is well-known for the leadership it has taken in the past on the international stage. We hope that the Conservative government will change course, support healthy debate, and take the steps, without waiting for years to go by, to make sure that Canada is once again showing leadership on the issues that matter for us and for people around the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

When Bill S-9 returns to this House, the hon. member for Churchill will have 15 minutes remaining for debate.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The House resumed from February 27 consideration of Bill C-279, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code (gender identity and gender expression), as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back today to speak on this issue.

It is interesting to watch the movement on the other side on the bill as those members have brought it back to the House and then desperately tried to amend it in order to make it acceptable to parliamentarians. Now they have moved it up, probably to get the bill into debate and into play before Canadians realize that it is actually here and that Canadians are allowed to ask the questions they have about it.

I want to state, as I did last time, that I am cognizant of the need to protect all Canadians from discrimination and hate crimes. I am proud of the fact that Canada is recognized internationally as a country that is deeply committed to the principle of human rights, but I would argue that the bill does not achieve that end.

As I mentioned last time, I would argue that Bill C-279 is unnecessary. We talked about the jurisprudence around the bill, the fact that the issues are already covered by jurisprudence, and that there is no agreement even at the UN on this issue.

We also spent some time talking about the fact that the main problem with the bill is that it is undefined. It almost seems that there is an attempt to confuse people in the way the bill has been presented.

Private Members' Business

There were no definitions offered for either gender identity or gender expression. The member has come back now and dropped "gender expression" and tried to redefine "gender identity" in a way that ties it to people's feelings. As I explained last time, that is not adequate, and it seems to have been done deliberately. The author of the bill has already declared the intention that

Once gender identity is in the Human Rights Code, the courts and human rights commissions will interpret what that means.

I think there is a new argument, a new confusion, around the bill. I have heard some people now saying that it is about sexual orientation. However, as we know, the code and the act already cover sexual orientation. They have been included there for some time.

One concern is that the bill is unsettling to people. The author has really refused to talk about or deal with the potential implications and consequences of such wide-ranging and undefined legislation. My constituents, I have to say, do not see this as benign legislation because of the things we just talked about, in particular the fact that there is such a lack of definitional framework to the bill. What I am getting from my riding is that the constituents oppose it, but they do have some questions that I will pose on their behalf.

The first question to the member opposite is this: does he actually believe that there is no one who will try to abuse the situation that would be created by his deliberately vague legislative agenda?

That is what the member seemed to be saying when he spoke, but he has refused to address this criticism in his speech. It remains out there in the public's mind, and I have heard that from my constituents.

Second, especially with regard to minors and adults, my constituents have questions about the power relationship that would exist in what in the past were basically private facilities that would now become very public facilities. They are asking what their obligations and rights would be. The failure to address these issues is really why the bill has become known as the "bathroom bill". I do not think we can just brush off people's concerns.

The legislation is poorly written, it does not deal with the issue the member addresses and it would give the opportunity for some to take advantage of the situation, as not everyone's motives are selfless. I think we need to be sure. We should not be naive. These questions need to be answered.

We know that the bill is not necessary, as jurisprudence already covers these issues. We know that the bill is not well defined, and that is the major problem with it. It is not well defined even with the amendments. We know that the consequences of the bill are not well understood. Therefore, it is time to defeat this poorly researched, poorly written and poorly presented bill.

• (1735)

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured this evening to speak to Bill C-279, a bill that seeks to extend the scope of human rights legislation to include transgendered Canadians. I applaud the members who have led the charge in this regard, including the member for Vancouver Centre, the member for Burnaby—Douglas, as well as the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca in whose name this bill resides.

Private Members' Business

I will summarize briefly the thrust of the bill. Bill C-279 seeks to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to add gender identity as prohibited grounds of discrimination. This is important because today, when transgendered individuals seek to allege they have been discriminated against, they have to fit their claim within the definition of either discrimination on the basis of sex or discrimination on the basis of disability. That is the state of the law at present. Bill C-279 also seeks to amend the Criminal Code with respect to hate speech to include gender identity and gender expression in the definition of what constitutes a recognizable group within the meaning of the code.

I support this bill and I do so without reservation. I acknowledge my colleague, the hon. member for Mount Royal, the former Attorney General and justice minister of Canada and an esteemed law professor. His interventions are always instructive. I certainly would not be able to improve upon them, and there are a couple that bear repeating.

The member for Mount Royal stated:

By adopting the amendments that have been proposed in Bill C-279, Parliament can send a strong message of support to transgendered Canadians, affirming their identity and acknowledging their struggles. Indeed, this legislation, again as my colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca pointed out, ensures that they will enjoy the legal protections accorded to other targeted groups.

The hon. member for Mount Royal went on to dispel the notion we just heard from the member opposite, that existing legislation already covers those who identify as transgendered, when he said:

Some members of the House have argued that Bill C-279 is unnecessary because transgendered people are already protected under the existing categories of sex and disability. With respect, this position is misinformed.

First, gender identity and gender expression do not refer to biological sex or sexual orientation. Rather, the terms refer to an inner feeling of being male, female, both or neither. Second, gender identity and gender expression are not a disability. Rather, they are a sense of self and a source of identity. To confound gender identity and gender expression with sex and disability is to ignore the unique experiences of discrimination and disadvantage that are faced by transgendered Canadians.

The member continued:

The Canadian Human Rights Act is more than just an act of Parliament. It is an act of recognition, a statement of our collective values, and a document that sets out a vision of a Canada where all individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination.

So in the context of this debate, which has at times been a vigorous debate and at times a debate with moments unworthy of this House, there are some who, contrary to evidence and facts, choose another path to make their case. They choose fear and innuendo, all the while claiming a moral high ground. They claim for themselves exclusivity to that which is right and decent, using language that is hurtful and demeaning. How can anyone claim to be of good heart or claim the virtue of “love thy neighbour” yet reduce this bill to gutter language when they call it “the bathroom bill”? It is an entirely offensive and erroneous implication to suggest that transgendered people would be lurking late at night in bathrooms should this bill pass.

These purveyors of fear and intolerance are often the same people who claim same-sex marriage would lead to the downfall of marriage or that same-sex marriage would lead to rampant polygamy. It was pure nonsense then and it is pure nonsense today.

● (1740)

In contrast to these voices of intolerance, we have the work of organizations like the Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health. It has done excellent work using facts and evidence as the basis of this debate. This is what it said with respect to Bill C-279 and the so-called bathroom question:

It is also important to recognize that the provisions...will not create new or special rights for transgender individuals, and in particular, it will not change the law with respect to washroom use. Rather, its enactment will explicitly confirm the law's protection of the safety and human dignity of everyone in Canada regardless of gender identity or gender expression. It will also ensure that gender variant people's right to participate in, and contribute to, Canadian society and economic life are not hampered by ignorance, prejudice, hatred and violence.

Not too long ago, I had the opportunity to listen to interventions by Conservative MPs, whose passion and thoughtfulness at the justice committee was encouraging. I first acknowledged the member for Delta—Richmond East, now the Associate Minister of National Defence. She should be applauded for her courage in defending the rights of transgender Canadians at the justice committee. One can only imagine her embarrassment, however, when a fellow Conservative MP, a non-member of the justice committee, was sent by the Prime Minister's office for the sole purpose of hijacking the meeting in order to filibuster and prevent this important bill from proceeding through the committee. In the face of this intervention and filibuster, the Conservative member for Delta—Richmond East held firm to her convictions in supporting Bill C-279.

The second individual I would like to acknowledge is the Conservative member for Saint Boniface. She is a rare ray of light in this debate, using reason to construct an argument that is worthy of the House. Unlike the vast majority of her Conservative colleagues, she supports protecting transgender Canadians. Allow me to highlight one quote by the member for Saint Boniface:

To give hope and opportunity to transgendered people through a bill like this, to give them hope in knowing they will have clarity every single time they report, every single time they want to go before a commission or a tribunal, that gender identity means they can be a transgender individual and not have to rely on sex, which to most people means plumbing, or disability, which is not what many of them feel, I think is imperative. I think it's imperative that this move forward. I think it's imperative that we, as Canadians and parliamentarians, embrace the notion that we are inviting other Canadians to feel the sense of belonging that this bill will give them.

The march to full equality is never easy. There will always be voices opposed to progress and to full equality. Those voices of intolerance are now on the fringe of society, where they belong. One need only reflect on a time when women were not allowed to vote and treated like second-class citizens, if even citizens at all, or we think of the great injustice inflicted on black people who struggled and, arguably, still struggle for the justice and equal treatment they deserve by virtue of their inherent dignity, or we think of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters and how they were treated, so marginalized and shunned. Many of those who oppose same-sex marriage are the same people who now oppose this bill.

Private Members' Business

Let me close by suggesting this. If the Conservatives use their majority to defeat this bill, they may very well take comfort in the victory of intolerance over justice, but the fight for equality and dignity will continue. Those who are vulnerable to hate speech, marginalization and discrimination in the workplace because they are transgendered will one day, despite the Conservative government, get the protection they deserve as full and equal citizens of this great country.

● (1745)

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Charlottetown for his speech. That was really incredible.

I am a trans rights activist. I have been working on the issue of transgender rights for many years in my community of Halifax, and I am an ally to the trans community. Years ago, when I was a law student, and then later when I was working at Dalhousie Legal Aid, I worked with NSRAP, the Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project, and we developed a trans rights awareness program.

I had the opportunity to work with transgendered Nova Scotians to develop a presentation on trans rights. We actually presented to the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission on the realities of being trans people, their experiences, day after day, within their communities, our communities, within their/our legal institutions and within their/our government institutions, because we do not realize, when we are cisgender, which is when our gender identity matches our biological sex, how often we get to take for granted our gender rights.

I had a transgender client who once asked me to write a letter on official legal aid letterhead that gave a legal opinion about her right to use the bathroom, based on case law. She would keep it in her purse and use it if she ran into problems. Imagine walking around with a legal document, a legal opinion, in one's purse or wallet to settle disputes about the right to use a bathroom. Imagine the indignity of arguing this with mall security, with a bouncer, with classmates or co-workers, just to heed the call of nature. It could be at any time. It could be this afternoon. It could be tomorrow. It could be every day. It could be never. One just does not know when it is going to happen.

Imagine being pulled over by the police for speeding and answering questions about why the sex listed on one's identification does not match one's gender identity. Perhaps one's birth name is called out at the doctor's office, because one has to have sex reassignment surgery to change identification. Imagine what that would feel like. These small indignities happen every day to members of our community.

The bill does a small thing by adding trans rights to the Canadian Human Rights Act and by adding trans motivated hate to the hate crimes list. It is a small thing, but it is a magnificent thing.

I am pretty close to the trans advocate community at home, and we have had long discussions about the idea that adding trans rights to human rights legislation may not actually grant protections that members of the trans community do not already have. As we heard, there is ample case law to show that human rights commissions will fit trans rights into different categories that already exist. For example, when Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project made our

presentation to the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, it was strong and steadfast in its commitment to protecting trans rights and said that it would find a way to make it fit under another ground, but what ground? How do we protect the dignity of trans Canadians when we are asking them to fit their problem into the margins? How do we protect the dignity of trans people by making them look for their rights under another category, such as sex, when it is not about sex, or gender, when it is not about gender, or disability, when it is absolutely not a disability?

It is meaningful to look at rights and see ourselves there. It is important to know that we are protected, that we can hold up a human rights act and say, "I am protected. I am here in this document".

Further to this argument, we heard evidence from the Canadian Human Rights Commission that fitting trans people into the margins now is not a guarantee that they will be fit into the margins in the future. Enshrining rights in legislation protects those rights, and trans Canadians need this protection.

The Canadian Police Association agrees. Today, president Tom Stamatakis spoke out in favour of this bill with a simple and beautiful statement that equality under the law is an important principle for Canada's front-line police personnel to uphold. It is that simple.

My home province of Nova Scotia has had this debate in our legislature. I want to share a letter from Kate Shewan about how things have changed since this legislation was passed in our province.

● (1750)

I think we can learn from the Nova Scotia example, and I think we can learn from the members of our trans community who have had this experience.

She writes:

I'm a board member of Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project, an organization that advocates for the rights of the LGBT community. I'm also a trans-identified person. I'm writing to you in support of Bill C-279.

As a member of the trans community in Nova Scotia, where provincially we've benefited from the changes to the human rights act, I've seen first hand how this change can benefit individuals within the trans community, a community which has suffered significant discrimination.

The immediate change that I saw following the Nova Scotia legislation was a change in attitudes and a new confidence. Members of the trans community who had almost taken it for granted that they would be discriminated against in the employment market and other areas of society felt empowered and more confident, knowing with certainty that their rights were protected, and seeing that the challenges our community faces had been formally acknowledged. In a group that suffers significant unemployment, underemployment and disengagement from society in general, I believe this empowerment and confidence will help to give trans Canadians a better opportunity to reach their full potential, improve their employment and economic situations and become more engaged in the community.

It is important that these protections are also in place at the federal level, so that all trans Canadians can benefit from these changes...

Today is International Women's Day, and I heard a lot of statements in the House about how far women have come in our fight for equality. I heard a number of references today to the Persons Case, a court case that ruled that we, women, were persons under the law.

Private Members' Business

The result of that case probably did not do much for women that week. It probably did not change their day-to-day experience. It did not mean that the next day all of a sudden women got to sit at the tables of decision making. It did not mean that the next day they started working outside the home and were paid wages equal to men's, and it did not mean that domestic violence ended.

However, not long after that, some women got the right to vote. A woman could look at that document and know that in the eyes of the law, she counted.

In the lead-up to today, I got a lot of calls and emails from my community telling me why they thought I should support this bill. Of course everybody knew that I would, but they sent me such interesting things that I wanted to share a couple of them.

I had one community member who contacted me to say:

I'm trans, but have a good job, house, car, money in the bank...by all measure successful in most people's eyes. (Not to boast) just trying to show that we are like most other people, just are part of a gender spectrum that is finally being recognized.

I also want to share a letter I received from the sexual orientation and gender identity division of the Canadian Bar Association. I was a member of that group when I was a law student. This is from the chair of the equality committee and the co-chairs of the sexual orientation and gender identity community. Here is just a shout-out to Amy Sakalauskas and Level Chan who are actually from Nova Scotia. I was happy that they have taken up this issue. They wrote:

Transgender Canadians are a minority who suffer profound discrimination, such as job losses, alienation from their communities, ridicule, harassment and inadequate health care services. They also disproportionately fall victim to hate crimes, including homicide.

They go on. It is these kinds of examples that make us realize we have to do something about this.

The bathroom panic argument just does not wash. We have laws against peeping Toms. It is an illegal act. That argument does not wash here.

An argument that does wash here is that recently I was at a community event and a young person came up to me. I do not really remember it. I do not remember if this person was a young man or a young woman, blond or brunette, but this person came up to me, took my hand and opened it, put something in my hand and closed it up. Then they left.

I opened my hand and there was a tiny little note. It said:

Thanks for giving...[an eff] about trans people.

I think that is why we are here.

• (1755)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I speak today to Bill C-279. I would like to thank the member for Halifax for some of her comments here today.

I have had the privilege of representing constituents in Calgary Centre North for nearly two years now. In this time, I have had the opportunity to review many pieces of legislation and debate both their merits and their flaws. As I have done so, I have been struck that oftentimes, we have to evaluate two components of legislation: the why of the bill and the how of the issue. Many times we disagree,

sometimes vociferously, about the why. We have differing political ideology, thoughts on how public policy should be best utilized and thoughts on how this country should be governed. It is in this context that I first speak to the why of this bill.

After reading testimony from witnesses during this iteration of the bill and in the last Parliament, and after consulting with those who work with members of the trans community and members of the community itself, I am frankly shocked by the discrimination this group of people faces.

The member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca and witnesses to this bill at committee, and indeed members here today, have given this House so many examples that I cannot reiterate them. Suffice it to say that I would offer that the summary of evidence could read as follows: the trans community in Canada has, on frequent occasions, experienced elevated levels of sexual violence committed against members; frequent workplace discrimination and job loss based on gender; lack of clarity on health care provisions and sometimes access to health care; lack of clarity on processes related to obtaining identification documents; bullying in places of employment and educational institutions; discrimination in accessing housing accommodation; and numerous other incidents of discrimination.

Most importantly, they live with the consequences of these acts of non-compassion, of false assumptions that, simply by virtue of their state, they are sexually promiscuous, or more ludicrously, that they are criminal. In this, the trans community experiences very high levels of both depression and suicide. This is not acceptable to me, and this is the why of this bill. It is my hope that no one in the House, either on this side or the other side, could read the testimony, could talk to people in the community, and argue that this is acceptable or tolerable in our country.

The question set upon us as legislators is the how. How do we prevent these situations from occurring?

I have spent a lot of time on the how. I found that this bill seeks to address the how by addressing the following assumption, using the language of the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca during the bill review at the Standing Committee on Justice, that “transgendered Canadians do not enjoy the same protection of their rights as other Canadians”.

This is a very serious charge that is worthy of study, as the ideas and values that are the heart of how our country operates, the freedoms it affords to all groups to worship without persecution, to seek prosperity in one's field of work, to choose whom we love, and to speak with conviction on issues that impact our communities, are all based on the assumption that Canadians have equality of rights in freedom of expression and can do so without the threat of discrimination or violence to their person. However, to assess whether this bill provides an adequate how, I first evaluated the validity of this assumption.

The member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca had an exchange with the member for Edmonton—St. Albert at justice committee about this assumption. The member for Edmonton—St. Albert said:

Private Members' Business

Except now that the Canada tribunal has emphatically stated that there is no longer any doubt, I would suggest to you that your first hurdle has been cleared by precedent... There is now case law that supports the proposition that individuals who have a genuine gender identity disorder are entitled to human rights protection.

There have been numerous examples given in the House and at committee of case law that shows that this provision exists. I understand the member for Halifax when she says that she wants to see herself in that human rights bill. The case law does exist to show that it is there.

● (1800)

Mr. Ian Fine, the acting secretary of the human rights commission, stated the following, “the commission, the tribunal, and the courts view gender identity and gender expression as protected by the Canadian Human Rights Act”. Having said that, he also stated that “adding the grounds of gender identity and gender expression to the [Canadian Human Rights Act] would make the protection” of the transgender community explicit. The rationale that he stated for this necessity was as follows: “This would promote acceptance and send a message that everyone in Canada has the right to be treated with equality, dignity, and respect”. I do not disagree with the latter part of that statement. It gave me quite a bit of pause for thought, and that has been at the heart of my deliberations on the bill.

It could be argued that this is contradictory in some regard. Mr. Fine previously made a statement that the tribunal, the commission and the courts do view gender identity and expression as protected by the Canadian Human Rights Act, and that somehow even though this protection exists, it does not send enough of a message to Canadians on this issue. While this contradiction may be well intentioned, I feel there are many examples where serious issues arise when legislators equate symbolism with social action or when we inadvertently dilute the role of social activists by being reactive to an issue with legislative symbolism.

The member for Halifax has my playbook because she stole my speech on International Women's Rights Day. I would like to speak on the social action process for the struggle for female gender equality.

Even after laws were passed to enshrine women's gender equality within our laws, the member is right; we did not see those changes happen overnight. In fact, lawsuits still had to be fought and won, offenders had to be charged, battles had to be waged to change workplace codes of conduct, and awareness training programs had to be crafted. I would like to highlight that in the British parliament, even after women had been elected, as little time ago as 1993, a woman in this place did not make it to a vote because she could not find a bathroom.

I have also stood in the House to highlight that sexism does happen with frequency in this country in spite of these laws. I am not trying to imply that the struggle for trans rights is directly concurrent with the struggle for women's rights, but in my deliberations on the bill, I found there is a burden of evidence which suggests that case law does exist to provide the trans community with protection under the law against discrimination and violence. Here is my concern. In this fact, the how of this legislation may not achieve the ultimate solution to the why, in that it may place too much of an emphasis on symbolism over direct social action.

As always, the member for Halifax makes a very compelling argument.

A question that I have struggled with in evaluating the validity of the bill is what guidance we, as legislators, are truly giving judicial organizations in how to carry out the intentions of Parliament in this regard. The way the term “gender identity” is defined in the preamble of the bill, even with the amendments, played a large part in my decision to vote to study the bill further. I am still not entirely clear on how parliamentarians, the human rights tribunal, criminal courts, sentencing judges and the broader community at large will be required to interpret this term.

I am also not clear on the following key issues. What constitutes the scope of discrimination against someone based on his or her gender identity in the eyes of my colleagues, as legislators, of members of the trans community and the courts? What kind of speech based on someone's gender identity could be considered hate propaganda? What does it mean in defined terms to have a bias based on a person's deeply held internal and individual experience of gender?

Admittedly, the evaluation of this legislation has been very difficult for me because I believe that the why it presents is concerning. Any time we as parliamentarians are faced with clear situations where fear of differences or lack of awareness allow hatred to mushroom, we have to take note and ask ourselves what role we play in breaking down these barriers. This legislation has opened my eyes to the plight of a group of people in this country who experience extreme discrimination. Both sides of this debate should agree that equality and protection against harm are two fundamental values that all Canadians of any gender, any age, any background are entitled to.

However, as legislators we are also tasked with deciding if the proposed legislation is sound. Given the lack of clarity that I found in the bill, I do have concern about its viability and if the how will achieve what the community and Canadians hope for in addressing the why.

● (1805)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege and pleasure for me to speak this evening about the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca's bill, particularly since I had the pleasure of examining and fine-tuning it with my Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights colleagues.

It was a very intense experience. We had to establish the parameters for the debate on the bill, which seeks to amend the Criminal Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

First, it is important to point out that gender identity and gender expression are basically a state of being, or in other words, something that cannot be fully explained outside the personal experience of the individual in that state.

Private Members' Business

I am well aware that some of my colleagues are somewhat reluctant to deal with differences related to gender identity and gender expression. They may even feel uncomfortable or unable to do so as a result of their own personal experiences.

I would like to use my own experience growing up as a heterosexual in a very common family situation as an example. Like any individual in our society, at some point I had to deal with my gender identity and gender expression. We have no choice about this state of being. We cannot really change it and we have to live with it, yet we still have to make decisions dictated by societal conditions and our ability to deal with those conditions.

From this perspective, for certain groups in our society, it may be difficult, if not practically impossible, to deal with one's gender identity and expression and the decisions associated with that without a certain amount of suffering and a feeling of helplessness.

I would like to come back to my personal experience. I am 46 years old, and I had my late father as a role model. If he were still alive, he would be 80 years old. He was a man from a certain era who quietly shouldered his responsibilities, keeping many questions and doubts, as well as his share of heartache, to himself. That was the example I had, and I had to decide whether or not to follow it. I also had to determine how far I was prepared to go and how much of his legacy I was prepared to accept.

That sometimes put me in uncomfortable situations as a heterosexual. It can be difficult to be at ease with being a man. We are told that real men do not cry, that they shoulder their responsibilities, that they should take their place in society, get a job, have children and have a nice little family. Having to conform can be a heavy burden, especially as society evolves. We experienced that in Quebec, with the upheaval of the Quiet Revolution.

● (1810)

Sometimes, our grandparents' reference points, which seemed to be set in stone, are jarred or even swept away by compelling movements that force people to question themselves and face a reality that is completely different from everything they have every known.

We all experience frustrations in life. Some people, however, not only experience frustrations, but also face suffering because of conditions in society and repression by intolerant groups that have no place in a society that prides itself on freedom and on giving every individual an equal opportunity and an equal place in society.

We should not hide the fact that the testimony we heard in the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights was shocking. I would like to repeat part of what the member for Calgary Centre-North said. At times, we were outraged and at times we were simply pained by their stories. I cannot describe how it felt to hear people testify about the humiliation they endured in everyday situations that I, as a heterosexual man, could never have imagined.

At times, an overwhelming sense of outrage came over me, and I had a hard time accepting the systematic obstruction, the underhanded attempts to obstruct the committee's normal work in order to gain the upper hand in this debate.

All of my colleagues in the House will agree that human dignity is non-negotiable. It is very simple. I would even add that the sanctity of human life is something we value so highly—at least we should—that we cannot put a price on defending it. We must never tolerate pettiness or compromise.

I have spoken about my faith before, and I want to share some of the Catholic Church's social doctrine. It very clearly states that every human being has the unalienable right to exist and to have dignity within society. That represents a tremendous challenge, because it means that we must allow the right to be different, the right to a certain degree of dissidence, the right to go against the established norm and the right to go against the stream.

This also means that people like me, who have the privilege to have a favourable—even comfortable—place in society, must make concessions. I am very pleased to be able to reach out to a group in our society whose rights are too easily violated and to offer them some progress. It may not be perfect, but it is still progress.

● (1815)

With respect to the work in committee, it is no secret that transgender and transsexual individuals too often face problems with the courts. I do not want the courts to determine their rights. That is my role and my duty as legislator, and that is what I want to do, here in this House, with Bill C-279.

[English]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege today to rise and speak in support of Bill C-279. The bill would add gender identity and gender expression to the Canadian Human Rights Act, section 2, as prohibited grounds for discrimination. It would also amend the Criminal Code to include gender identity and gender expression as distinguishing characteristics protected under section 318, and as aggravating circumstances to be taken into consideration under section 718.2, hate crimes, at the time of sentencing.

However, before I go into more detail on the bill, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the stellar speeches I have heard tonight. My colleague from Charlottetown captured what the legislation is about, but also identified how many of the fears are baseless and that a lot of flames are being fanned to scare people and make them not feel right.

My colleague from Halifax, from a legal point of view, but more from the emotional point of view, very importantly pointed out to us that we are not talking about giving people rights here; we are talking about acknowledging in legislation, laws that we are saying they already have. I have not heard anyone in the House say that transgendered people do not have these protections. Therefore, let us make them explicit by putting them in the Criminal Code and the Human Rights Act.

Private Members' Business

My colleague also went on to talk about, and we could see it in her presentation, the human toll it takes when we have discrimination and we have a minority group of people in our society who do not feel reflected in law. They have to find a corner that they can hide in or that they can fit in. That is not how we are as Canadians.

I also liked the struggle of my colleague across the way, the member for Calgary Centre North. What was so moving about her presentation was that she identified beautifully the very reason that we need this legislation. She felt, when she heard and read the testimonies, the pain and anguish that some Canadians are going through because of gender identity issues.

After listening to these three members, I cannot imagine anyone in the House being opposed to the legislation. We disagree in the House on all kinds of things, on the budget, on some pieces of legislation, but surely when it comes to fundamental rights and protections for every Canadian, no matter what race or gender, that is one thing we can all agree is fundamentally Canadian and the right thing to do.

My colleague articulated beautifully the struggle that women have had. When we look at history, it was not that long ago that women were not recognized as persons. I challenge anyone in the room to think that we could be sitting in the House as women representing our ridings if that legislation had not been enacted and we had not been recognized as persons. That did not automatically get rid of all the discrimination and all the barriers and glass ceilings that exist. However, what it did do was to open up a pathway, and it took away the greatest barrier, which was to not be recognized at all.

• (1820)

This bill, in turn, would do exactly that. It says to the members of our transgendered community that they are part of this society and they are explicit in our human rights code. They do not have to hide, nor do they have to go looking to see which corner of the human rights code they fit in, nor do they have to see if there is a judge who is going to be favouring looking for a spot or fear a day when the judiciary could turn around and say it is not explicit and cannot be found in here, so they are not covered. It is to avoid that very situation that we have to have legislation like this.

In our human rights code, we identify race, gender and many other things. This bill would add another specificity to the word "gender". It would identify it to include Canadian society.

I do not know if members are aware, but I was a classroom teacher for a very long time. In that role, one of the things I discovered very early on in my teaching is that for children to be successful in life, they have to see themselves reflected, but they also have to feel themselves protected. When we have transgender young people in our community who do not feel protected explicitly in our law, we leave them vulnerable.

I do not have to explain and draw graphic pictures in words of the kind of discrimination many face. I am not saying this legislation would take it away, but when this legislation is passed, it would send a message to employers and to the very few Canadians who may have a tendency not to be so inclusive and not to be so accepting. There are very few of those in Canada, I find, but when it comes to imposing hurt on a person, one person can do a lot of damage. It is

for that reason that we must have this law and this kind of explicit protection in our legislation.

As we sit in here, words are important, and words in legislation become even more important. I heard a colleague today speak from a legal perspective that I had not thought of, describing all the different areas the different judges have had to explore to see where discrimination on gender identity and gender expression could be covered under the human rights code. They actually have to struggle to find those areas, and if they have to struggle to find them, our human rights code needs to be made more explicit.

Once again I acknowledge the wonderful speeches made by my colleagues from Halifax and Calgary Centre—North and the emotion and empathy I heard from my colleague from Charlottetown. I am sure her colleagues on that side of the aisle heard the pain that she experienced as she chose her words very carefully and will see that it is time for this House of Commons to take action.

It would be fitting if we could all vote for this measure unanimously, especially when we are on the eve of International Women's Day. We would celebrate the fact that we have enshrined those rights into our legislation and into human rights.

I appeal to my colleagues across the aisle to vote for this unanimously. I know they are going to, because they are very caring Canadians.

• (1825)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate...? No.

Accordingly, the question is on the Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred. This recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 2, 4, 7 and 8.

The next question is on Motion No. 3.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Adjournment Proceedings

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred. This recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 5, 6 and 9.

Normally, at this time the House would proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at the report stage of the bill. However, pursuant to standing Order 98, the divisions stand deferred until Wednesday, March 20, immediately before the time provided for private member's business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I come back to the question I asked on November 26, 2012, concerning the transparency of the National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman. He did not seem to have access to the documents he needed to fulfill his mandate effectively and conduct his investigations.

The Minister of National Defence's response was:

...we continue to work very productively with the ombudsman's office and we will do so within his mandate and within the law. It is that simple. That is what would be expected.

And yet, it is not only the ombudsman's office that has difficulty accessing the information needed to do the work. For example, the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer seems to be having the same problems. He also has difficulty getting access to figures to determine where cuts were made in the departments and how they were targeted. If there are cuts, he really must have the documents that go along with them.

Despite repeated requests, the Conservatives refuse to be transparent. Yet, the very foundation of any democratic system rests on the ability of parliamentarians to monitor government spending. Instead, and this seems to be common practice at the Department of National Defence, the government is spending millions of taxpayer dollars to pay private auditing firms, even though there are parliamentary officers who could do the job. For instance, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the Auditor General or the ombuds-

man are all here for the same reason: to conduct such audits and produce studies depending on the situation.

We have nothing against independent audits; on the contrary. However, when officers of Parliament provide independent analyses, the government should support their efforts instead of questioning their math skills or not providing the necessary documents.

The government is paying private firms to do work that has already been done, and the only reason is so they can keep the reports in the hands of the departments and manipulate the information more easily in the House. At the end of the day, it is a huge waste of time, money and resources.

The treatment of reservists is an important issue for all parliamentarians, or at least I hope it is, and the question I asked was about health care for reservists. The ombudsman's report followed up on the recommendations made in the 2008 report. I would like to state that most of these recommendations are apparently being implemented, and that is a good thing.

However, there has been no action on recommendation 10: "...that the Accidental Dismemberment Insurance Plan be changed...to ensure that all Canadian Forces members receive the same compensation for the same injury". I am not sure that there have been any improvements or updates.

This recommendation refers to reservists serving in Afghanistan alongside regular forces. However, there is serious inequity in their treatment if they are injured or mutilated. The Forces' Accidental Dismemberment Insurance Plan provides a lump sum payment that is different for a reservist than for a regular forces member. The insurance is not the same. If a class A reservist and a regular forces member each lost a hand, the reservist would receive compensation of \$50,000 and the regular forces member would receive \$125,000, or 2.5 times as much.

I would like my colleague to tell me about changes that have been made.

• (1830)

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will begin responding directly to my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue on the issue of the accidental dismemberment insurance plan.

The delay in implementing the changes to cover reservists for this plan was absolutely unacceptable, and we have moved swiftly at the Department of National Defence to make sure that this issue was resolved. We informed Canadians and the Canadian armed forces reservists that the necessary changes were made within weeks of the ombudsman's report being delivered last fall. We are committed to progress toward the fair and equitable treatment of all reservists who play an essential role in the defence of this country.

[*Translation*]

I would like to highlight the role our reservists have played in Afghanistan and in Canadian Armed Forces overseas missions over the years. The hon. member knows all about that.

This is part of a multi-dimensional plan to improve the lives of reservists across the board.

I would like to thank the member for raising this question, as it gives us the opportunity to clarify certain points.

At National Defence, we are very aware of the excellent work our ombudsman has done. We welcome his report, which the member spoke of. Our reservists are indispensable. They account for approximately 15% of our personnel who are serving in Afghanistan, even now.

We followed up on the recommendations presented by the ombudsman in 2008. Progress was made on 11 of those 12 recommendations.

National Defence made changes to the Accidental Dismemberment Insurance Plan, as I already mentioned. In addition, the department also took measures to update and save reservists' medical files using the Canadian Forces health information system and by applying the same standards as exist in the regular force. We are respecting their needs as well as our obligation to maintain the confidentiality of this information.

In 2009, the Surgeon General published an interim guidance for the provision of health care to reservists. It will serve as a guide until the department has made the changes to the Queen's Regulations and Orders that apply to the Canadian Forces.

We have also taken measures to accelerate the medical release process for all reservists.

The department is ensuring that reservists who are injured or become ill while they are participating in training will have access to compensation and appropriate medical care.

We are in the process of resolving the other more complex pending issue of fair treatment for reservists. Reservists are subject to a certain number of health assessments, for example, before deployments and promotions.

However, the ombudsman's recommendations stated that there must be periodic health assessments, which has proven to be a difficult recommendation to implement, because of the costs involved and the schedules of reservists.

We did a trial run of periodic health assessments in one location last year, and we have expanded that to five reserve brigade groups across the country.

Our goal is to develop an implementation plan once the trial is complete at the end of this year, so that will be 12 responses—in the near future—to 12 recommendations.

• (1835)

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the government agrees with all the ombudsman's recommendations.

I hope that the changes that still need to be made to meet those recommendations will be found in the next budget, and I sincerely hope that they will be retroactive to the start of the mission in Afghanistan.

Adjournment Proceedings

Clearly, there is no reason why such an unfair situation occurred, and it is vital that measures be taken quickly. The next budget would be an excellent opportunity to do just that.

The Canadian Armed Forces reserve is very important to the Government of Canada. It was essential during the mission to Afghanistan. I used to be a reservist myself. It would be unthinkable for them to be treated like a different class of soldier.

Furthermore, I would like to remind my colleague that much of the infrastructure for reservists is crumbling and that there have been cuts to positions in the regions. I hope that the government will take action in this regard for the well-being of our reserve forces.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all the members in the House, I would like to thank the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue for her service as a reservist, for her professional experience in the Canadian armed forces, and for the concern she shows for the lives of reservists and their health care. We must all ensure that they continue to receive a higher level of care.

We are absolutely convinced that we must follow all of the ombudsman's recommendations. We are determined to do so. We have made a great deal of progress in this regard already.

Our commitment to reservists includes a new range of mental health policies. We have often talked about this in committee. We will continue to do so and to ensure that the health of reservists in all areas is well taken care of. If reservists are in another class, it is probably a higher one. We had militias and reservists well before we had regular forces in Canada.

[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration being here. He knows I feel passionate about the provincial nominee program, and we had a chance to talk about it a little bit earlier today. I did not quite realize it was coming up again this afternoon.

Having said that, I do want to take the opportunity to share with the minister a very strong passion for this particular program.

The Province of Manitoba was very quick to act. It was actually a former premier, Gary Filmon, who entered into an agreement quite quickly after Mr. Chrétien introduced the program, which really allowed Manitoba to get involved in a very serious fashion with the nominee program.

During the nineties, immigration numbers in Manitoba were around 3,500, and through the provincial nominee program, our immigration numbers exploded to the degree in which we were receiving 13,000 or 14,000. Without the provincial nominee program, that just would never have taken place. To that end, when I am speaking in my home community in Manitoba, I often talk about just how wonderful that particular program is.

Adjournment Proceedings

That is where my passion comes, because I have seen the benefits of the provincial nominee program for my province, and as immigration critic, I do see great value for other provinces. I can appreciate the need to look at how different provinces ultimately utilize the program. I have recognized for many years that different provinces have different ways of processing nominees.

It does have an impact abroad. The Philippines was Manitoba's number one source of immigrants. Today it is our number one source of immigrants for Canada as a whole. It is not just the Philippines. One could look at India and other countries.

We are looking at different provinces and individual nominee programs, because there is so much variation. I do believe there will be a lot more pull from different provinces. Some provinces want to have a larger number. Ontario, for example, based on its population, is entitled to a much larger number of nominee certificates, and I acknowledge that up front.

Other provinces really want to further develop the program so that they could enrich their populations with the type of skilled workers they want to see brought into their province.

I am hoping we will see the benefits of the program overall. There is a need for Ottawa to have some sort of review of the program with the idea of how we can ensure there is more harmony among different provinces and more consistency within the development of the program, and a need to just plan it for the next number of years, believing we will have the nominee program for many years to come.

I would be very much interested in the parliamentary secretary's response to my statement.

● (1840)

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member, my counterpart and colleague on the citizenship and immigration committee, for speaking about a program that he acknowledges, and we both agree, has been a major source of pride for a number of provinces, in terms of the growth they have witnessed over the past number of years.

We have had this discussion at committee. When we took government in 2006, there were around 4,000 individuals and family members who had the opportunity to pursue permanent residency through the provincial nominee program. The provincial nominee program had just started and was in its infancy. It gave provinces and territories across our great country the opportunity to participate, in a very regional way, in achieving and bringing federal skilled workers into their province. It gave them the opportunity to identify areas of the province that were in need of additional assistance, and for companies and small business that were looking for individuals they could not find in Canada to fill those positions.

Since 2006, when we saw this program as a bit of an afterthought of the previous government, we have actually expanded that program, to the point where this year, in 2013, we hope we are going to achieve a target of around 42,000 individuals and family members who are going to come to this country, achieve permanent residency and participate in this program.

The member is right about the point that there are provinces like his, Manitoba, which has done a considerably better job than a number of other provinces in terms of utilizing this federal program. They have grown in leaps and bounds because they have been focused on growth and on filling those positions. The province has been successful at achieving what used to be a larger percentage of individuals and family members moving to Ontario. Manitoba now has the ability, as have a number of other provinces in the country, partially because of the provincial nominee program, to grow their numbers in terms of the size of the province. From a percentage of 64% of all immigration taking place in the province of Ontario in 2005, it is now a little over 52%, in 2012.

Part and parcel of why we have such a great variance in the degree of growth in the country is because provinces like Manitoba have achieved that. I certainly see other provinces that have not had the same kind of success and focus. The member mentioned Ontario. Ontario has not put forward a prescribed plan that would see them enabled with a provincial nominee program in a much stronger way.

I am quite happy, on a regular basis, to talk about the provincial nominee program. It makes up a little over a third of the federal skilled workers program in this country. It is to bring to small and large businesses in this country, individuals who want to come to Canada to start a new life in the profession they have because we do not have people in Canada to fill those positions.

It is a program that works. It is a program that we are continuing to expand. It is a program that we are focused on in 2013.

● (1845)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on one of the words that the parliamentary secretary made reference to, and that was the word "expand".

Let us look at the two extremes: the province of Manitoba versus the province of Ontario. The province of Ontario wants to further develop its program. I have had the opportunity to talk to people from Ontario, who have indicated very clearly that they want to see the program expanded. Then there is the province of Manitoba, which at the very least would love to be able to maintain its numbers.

The question for the parliamentary secretary is this. When he thinks about two or three years from now, does he believe the number of provincial nominee certificates will continue to increase, in terms of Ottawa allowing for a larger number of nominee applicants throughout the country? Or, does he see the provinces having to work out a set number and that the number would not likely change, or, if it does, it would be of a modest nature?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I think the growth and expansion of the program over the last seven years speaks for itself. Steps have been taken to expand the program, and to lessen our federal skilled worker program to make room for the provincial nominee program. How that is going to move itself forward is a constant evolution.

Whether we speak to expanding from 42,000 or 43,000 to a higher number in 2014 or we seek to achieve a reallocation of numbers across the country is an ongoing conversation that the minister has had with his provincial counterparts. It is an ongoing discussion that individual citizenship and immigration ministries have had across our country.

The fact is, I do not think we can talk about whether there is going to be continued growth or whether we need to diversify the program; it is about making sure that we do it right on a yearly basis.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening in adjournment proceedings to pursue a question I asked of the Prime Minister on November 21, 2012. It related to what we are pursuing in the Canada-China investment treaty, which was, as we know, signed in Vladivostok in September 2012. It was placed before this place for 21 sitting days, in which, unfortunately—I stress unfortunately, because it is rather a weak term for what I regard as a large democracy deficit, and a tragedy—we did not get to debate the Canada-China investment treaty.

It is now sitting before the Privy Council of this country. Most Canadians would take that term to mean the cabinet. At the time it decides to pass an order in council, the Canada-China investment treaty will be legally binding on Canada. Given its difficult provisions, it is very difficult to exit the Canada-China investment treaty compared to NAFTA, for instance, which has a six-month exit clause that can be exercised by any one of the parties: Canada, the U. S. or Mexico.

The Canada-China investment treaty is in effect for a first 15-year period. If a future government wants to exit the treaty, it needs to give a one-year written notice. Any existing investments from the People's Republic of China within Canada would be further protected for another 15 years after we try to exit the treaty, so it is essentially locking us in for 31 years.

I raised the issue with the Prime Minister on November 21, because he was just back from a trade mission to India. Some of the news reporting at the time had been a little misleading. It suggested that we had a treaty with India on investments and that the Indian parliament was not yet ready to vote on that treaty. The Prime Minister's response was right. I had taken the newspaper coverage at face value. We do not yet have an investment treaty with India.

Since the time that has elapsed that I could pursue this question in adjournment proceedings, a lot has happened in India on this subject. I am looking forward to the government representative's response to this. India is taking a very dim view of investment treaties, such as the one that now sits before Privy Council between Canada and the People's Republic of China. This class of agreements, investor state provisions, do not open up new markets necessarily. Certainly the one with China does not. What they do is give foreign investors superior rights to seek arbitration damages against the country in which they are investing.

In the case of India, the Indian government has decided, as recently as late-January 2013, after a raft of suits from foreign corporations—they are looking at upwards of \$5 billion in current arbitration charges against India—to put a freeze on all investment agreements. Certainly any hopes Canada has for getting a new investor state agreement with India are on hold, because India is putting on hold all investor state agreements, and it wants to reopen and renegotiate the ones it has already agreed to.

This puts India in the same category as Australia. It did a full cost-benefit analysis on investor state provisions and decided that they are

Adjournment Proceedings

not of benefit to Australia. South Africa is now also re-examining investor state agreements.

It is time for Canada to do a cost-benefit analysis, as India is doing and as Australia has done, and not only refuse to ratify the Canada-China investment treaty but never enter into one of these things ever again.

• (1850)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her interest in this subject, and I wish her good luck in maybe reaching a better understanding of it.

I know that she is new to this House and may not be aware that prior to our forming government in 2006, treaties such as the FIPA with China were never brought to this place. There was no opportunity to debate them. There was no discussion about them. I think it was around 2007 that we brought in the rule that treaties would be tabled in the House of Commons for 21 sitting days. Of course, the hon. member did not take advantage of those 21 days. Unfortunately, her party is not large enough to take advantage of those 21 days to force debate. The official opposition did not take advantage of that opportunity to force debate on this issue, and the Liberal Party of Canada did not take the opportunity to force debate on this issue.

What we have, quite frankly, is a whole lot of innuendo, rumour and some misinformation, although I will be fair to the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. She has not come anywhere near the rumour and innuendo the NDP have put onto this issue.

The principle of a FIPA, or the Canada-China Foreign Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement, is to make sure that Canadian investments in China are protected and that there is reciprocity so that Chinese investments in Canada are protected. The member was quite right when she said that it is over a 15-year period and that at the end of that period, either side, either China or Canada, can opt out of it.

Obviously, those investments already made need some longevity and protection, so another 15 years for those investments that have already been made is not untoward or unreasonable. I suspect, with the hon. member's background as a lawyer, that she probably wrote a number of agreements similar to that herself in the past.

This is about giving Canadian companies investing in China the same rights and privileges a Chinese company would have. This is about protecting Canadian foreign direct investment in China. We cannot do that without allowing those same rights and privileges to the Chinese. It is called reciprocity. It is called fairness. It is called reasonable, rules-based trading.

I appreciate that the hon. member did not go along with the fear mongering of the NDP. This treaty in no way impedes Canada's ability to regulate and legislate on such areas as the environment, culture, safety, health and conservation, which is another thing that needs to be brought up.

Adjournment Proceedings

What this does is establish a clear set of rules for trading and investment between Canada and China. It promotes trade, helps the Canadian economy, and provides jobs and opportunities for Canadian workers. It is a good agreement.

• (1855)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, let me amend my earlier statement to make it very clear that I also believe that the Canada-China investment treaty will create a chill for future Canadian governments if we ratify it on those very areas of the environment, health, safety and labour.

I will move to the member's point that I may be new to this House. I did not just drop off a turnip truck. I have been working on investment treaties for a very long time.

Go back to chapter 11 of NAFTA, which was the first in the world. Of course, it was subjected to a vote in this House, because NAFTA was a much larger treaty and had to have lots of other ancillary laws changed. Interestingly enough, if Canada were to give the six-month notice to exit NAFTA, there would be no grandfathering of other investments. In that sense, the Canada-China investment treaty is very unusual in having a 15-year first period and a further 15-year lock-in.

This treaty is one that should never be ratified. Canada should follow India's and Australia's lead and study this whole area to see if, on a cost-benefit analysis, these treaties are worth the paper they are written on and protect Canada's interests.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, I know I only have a minute to sum up, so I am going to try to stick to a couple of important issues and simply correct the record.

Again, in no way, shape or form does this treaty impede Canada's ability to regulate and legislate in areas such as the environment, culture, safety, health and conservation. The hon. member is incorrect. She is fearmongering and following in the footsteps of the NDP. It is unfortunate to hear that type of rhetoric in the House, quite frankly.

This is no different from 24 other foreign investment promotion and protection agreements that we have already signed with other countries around the world. It is similar to the agreements that apparently dangerous countries, according to the hon. member, such as New Zealand, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Japan have already signed with China. There is nothing untoward here. This again is broken down to rules-based trading. Everybody knows the rules. That is fair trading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:59 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, March 7, 2013

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Public Sector Integrity Commissioner

The Speaker 14699

Office of the Correctional Investigator

Ms. Bergen 14699

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Lukiwski 14699

Interparliamentary Delegations

Mr. Brown (Leeds—Grenville) 14699

Committees of the House

Procedure and House Affairs

Ms. Latendresse 14699

Fisheries and Oceans

Mr. Weston (Saint John) 14699

National Defence

Mr. Bezan 14699

Justice and Human Rights

Mr. Wallace 14700

Motion 14700

Motion agreed to 14701

Ms. Boivin 14708

Mr. Alexander 14709

Mr. Lamoureux 14709

Mr. Harris (Scarborough Southwest) 14709

Mr. Cash 14709

Mr. Nicholls 14709

Ms. Boivin 14710

Mr. Alexander 14712

Mr. Sandhu 14712

Mr. Brahmi 14713

Mr. Cotler 14713

Mr. Alexander 14716

Mr. Harris (St. John's East) 14716

Mr. Lamoureux 14717

Mr. Harris (St. John's East) 14717

Mr. Carrie 14718

Mr. Nicholls 14719

Mr. Kellway 14719

Mr. Harris (Scarborough Southwest) 14720

Mr. Larose 14721

Mr. Dubé 14721

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Technical Tax Amendments Act, 2012

Bill C-48—Time Allocation Motion

Mr. Van Loan 14701

Motion 14701

Mr. Cullen 14701

Mrs. Shea 14701

Mr. Lamoureux 14702

Ms. Nash 14702

Mr. Nicholls 14702

Mrs. Glover 14703

Mr. Côté 14703

Mr. Marston 14703

Mr. Bellavance 14703

Ms. Sitsabaiesan 14704

Mrs. McLeod 14704

Ms. Doré Lefebvre 14704

Mr. Larose 14705

Ms. Papillon 14705

Ms. Mathyssen 14705

Motion agreed to 14706

Nuclear Terrorism Act

Bill S-9. Report stage 14706

Mr. Van Loan (for the Minister of Justice) 14706

Motion for concurrence 14706

(Motion agreed to) 14707

Mr. Van Loan (for the Minister of Justice) 14707

Bill S-9: Third reading 14707

Mr. Goguen 14707

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

International Women's Day

Mr. Lizon 14722

Steve Déry

Mr. Saganash 14722

International Women's Day

Mr. Woodworth 14722

Labrador Winter Games

Ms. Foote 14723

The New Democratic Party of Canada

Mr. Sopuck 14723

Monsignor Thompson

Mr. Aubin 14723

International Women's Week

Mrs. Smith 14723

Retiring Journalist

Mr. Dykstra 14723

Stompin' Tom Connors

Mr. Thibeault 14724

North Korea

Mr. Van Kesteren 14724

International Women's Day

Ms. Ashton 14724

Israeli Apartheid Week

Mr. Adler 14725

Stompin' Tom Connors	
Mr. Casey	14725
Stompin' Tom Connors	
Mr. Chong	14725
Democratic Reform	
Ms. Sitsabaiesan	14725
Daylight Saving Time	
Ms. Adams	14725

ORAL QUESTIONS

National Defence	
Mr. Mulcair	14726
Mr. Harper	14726
Status of Women	
Mr. Mulcair	14726
Mr. Harper	14726
Correctional Service Canada	
Mr. Mulcair	14726
Mr. Harper	14726
Ms. Crowder	14726
Mr. Nicholson	14726
Ms. Crowder	14727
Mr. Nicholson	14727
Intergovernmental Relations	
Mr. Trudeau	14727
Mr. Harper	14727
Mr. Trudeau	14727
Mr. Harper	14727
Mr. Trudeau	14727
Mr. Harper	14727
Correctional Service Canada	
Ms. Doré Lefebvre	14727
Mr. Nicholson	14727
Aboriginal Affairs	
Ms. Ashton	14728
Ms. Bergen	14728
Status of Women	
Ms. Ashton	14728
Ms. Ambrose	14728
Ms. Nash	14728
Ms. Ambrose	14728
Parliamentary Budget Officer	
Mme Nash	14728
Mr. Clement	14728
Official Languages	
Ms. Latendresse	14729
Mr. Paradis	14729
Ms. Latendresse	14729
Mr. Paradis	14729
Government Appointments	
Ms. Boivin	14729
Mr. Toews	14729
Ms. Boivin	14729

Mr. Toews	14729
Aboriginal Affairs	
Ms. Bennett	14729
Mr. Nicholson	14729
Canada Revenue Agency	
Mr. Brison	14730
Mrs. Shea	14730
Pensions	
Ms. Sgro	14730
Mrs. Glover	14730
National Defence	
Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	14730
Ms. Ambrose	14730
Mr. Kellway	14730
Ms. Ambrose	14730
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	14730
Mr. MacKay	14731
Citizenship and Immigration	
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	14731
Mr. Kenney	14731
National Defence	
Mr. Armstrong	14731
Mr. MacKay	14731
Citizenship and Immigration	
Ms. Laverdière	14731
Mr. Kenney	14731
Ms. Sims	14731
Mr. Kenney	14731
Housing	
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	14732
Ms. Finley	14732
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	14732
Ms. Finley	14732
Employment Insurance	
Ms. Foote	14732
Ms. Finley	14732
Mr. LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	14732
Ms. Finley	14732
Search and Rescue	
Mr. Donnelly	14732
Mr. Ashfield	14733
Agriculture and Agri-Food	
Mr. Rousseau	14733
Ms. Finley	14733
Aboriginal Affairs	
Mr. Leef	14733
Mrs. Aglukkaq	14733
Canada Revenue Agency	
Mr. Eyking	14733
Mrs. Shea	14733
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Dewar	14734

Mr. Baird	14734
Labour	
Mr. Hiebert	14734
Mr. Fletcher	14734
Service Canada	
Mr. Bevington	14734
Ms. Finley	14734
Intergovernmental Relations	
Mr. Patry	14734
Mrs. Glover	14734
Business of the House	
Ms. Turmel	14735
Mr. Van Loan	14735
Message from the Senate	

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Nuclear Terrorism Act	
Bill S-9. Third reading	14735
Mr. Sandhu	14735
Mr. Brahmi	14736
Mr. Alexander	14737
Mr. Mai	14737
Mr. Brahmi	14738
Mr. Alexander	14739
Mr. Brahmi	14739
Mr. Alexander	14740
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	14740
Mr. Lamoureux	14741
Mrs. Day	14742
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	14743
Ms. Charlton	14743
Ms. Latendresse	14744
Mr. Alexander	14746
Mr. Brahmi	14746
Mrs. Day	14746

Ms. Charlton	14746
Mr. Wallace	14748
Ms. Crowder	14748
Mr. Norlock	14748
Mr. Blanchette	14749
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	14750
Ms. Quach	14750
Mr. Lapointe	14750
Mr. Wallace	14752
Mr. Lamoureux	14752
Ms. Ashton	14752

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Canadian Human Rights Act	
Bill C-279. Report stage	14753
Mr. Anderson	14753
Mr. Casey	14753
Ms. Leslie	14755
Ms. Rempel	14756
Mr. Côté	14757
Ms. Sims	14758
Division on Motions Nos. 1, 2, 4, 7 and 8 deferred	14759
Division on Motions 3, 5, 6 and 9 deferred	14760
Division on motion deferred	14760

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

National Defence	
Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	14760
Mr. Alexander	14760
Citizenship and Immigration	
Mr. Lamoureux	14761
Mr. Dykstra	14762
Foreign Investment	
Ms. May	14763
Mr. Keddy	14763

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>