



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, April 24, 2013**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 24, 2013

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1405)

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** It being Wednesday, we will have the singing of our national anthem, today led by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### WORLD MENINGITIS DAY

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, meningitis is a serious infection caused by inflammation to the lining around the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis kills and maims children, young people and adults. The Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada was established in 1998 to raise awareness and advocate vaccination to prevent death and disability from meningitis and other infections of the central nervous system. Through education, it provides support to patients and their families.

Today is World Meningitis Day. Approximately 10% of individuals who contract the disease will die. One in five patients will suffer permanent disabilities. Meningitis spreads easily through close human contact. World Meningitis Day allows us to raise awareness to support the many Canadians who are affected. Let us all work toward sparing the heartache of losing one more loved one to this devastating disease.

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### VIETNAMESE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to bring to Parliament's attention three occasions of great importance to the Vietnamese Canadian community.

The ancestor ceremonies are held by Vietnamese the world over. This is a moving custom in which families honour and respect their departed ancestors. It reflects the faith of the Vietnamese people in

the eternal soul and memories of loved ones who endure in their hearts.

April 30 marks the day that South Vietnam fell to the Communists. It is a time to remember the courage and heroism of those who fought for democracy, human rights, and freedom, and to dedicate ourselves to restoring those values to Vietnam.

May 12 will be a day of celebration. In Vancouver Kingsway, we will inaugurate the creation of Little Saigon. This is a wonderful initiative that honours the social, economic, and cultural contributions of the Vietnamese community to Vancouver and Canada. By creating Little Saigon, the people of the Vietnamese community will show Canada and the world that their dedication to their country, their principles, and their heritage is strong and unwavering.

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### LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Leader of the Opposition has been to western Canada condemning westerners of inflicting Dutch disease upon the nation. We know as well the leader has been to Washington trying to scuttle an international deal that would bring jobs, economic growth, and long-term prosperity to Canadians.

Recently, the leader has been to northern Ontario fearmongering about FedNor. As a result of the budget, he indicated FedNor would be a ministry, wrong; then an agency, wrong; then cut by 10%, wrong; then cut by a whopping 26% with layoffs, wrong again. We have maintained the program.

The Leader of the Opposition has been wrong on FedNor in northern Ontario. He worked in Washington against jobs and growth for all Canadians, and he accused our western Canadians of giving our country Dutch disease.

I believe that the only disease is the disease the NDP leader has perpetrated. That is his own foot-in-his-mouth disease. We would ask that the NDP leader get his facts straight.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**ARMENIA**

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is a poignant time, a time to remember, to commemorate and to bear witness. I rise today on the anniversary of the Armenian genocide, which reminds us of the dangers of indifference and inaction in the face of incitement and mass atrocity.

This fact of history has been recognized by the House, documented by scholars and confirmed by the anguished testimony of survivors.

[English]

I have just come from meeting with the Armenian community here assembled. The present Turkish government and the people are not to blame for Ottoman injustice. We trust that the process of Turkish-Armenian reconciliation will lead to both recognition of truth and healing between peoples.

[Translation]

As we say on occasions such as this, never again.

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[English]

**ARMENIA**

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, George Santayana said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

That is why I rise today and ask Canadians to join with me in remembering the first genocide of the 20th century when 1.5 million Armenians died at the hands of the Ottoman Empire. We remember, and in remembrance we recommit ourselves to the promise that never again will we stand idle in the face of such inhumanity.

Today hundreds of thousands of Armenians will gather in Yerevan to commemorate the lives lost between 1915 and 1923. As chair of the Canada–Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group, I have been honoured to travel to Armenia and witness the prosperous democracy that has emerged. I have also had the privilege to meet Canadians of Armenian descent, who contribute so much to my home community of Waterloo Region and to this great country.

On this, the 98th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, I ask all Canadians to remember.

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is showing its paternalistic attitude yet again. This time, it is Bill S-2. The government has made some wild statements, claiming to have heard from aboriginal people. It is not formal consultation. The government has not listened to first nations, to recommendations made by aboriginal organizations or the ministerial representative. In fact, Bill is in breach of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Conservative government has also suddenly remembered the issue of violence against aboriginal women, yet Bill S-2 has nothing

to do with ending violence against aboriginal women. It provides no effective and timely access to remedy, including legal services and the courts. More importantly, it does not involve an action plan; no national inquiry, no investment in shelters, housing and education, and now members of the government are blaming first nations leaders. Pretty convenient.

Instead of playing politics, the Conservative government should do its job: consult with first nations and take real action on ending violence faced by aboriginal women. It turns out the government does not know best.

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● (1410)

**GEORGE BEVERLY SHEA**

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to an international gospel icon, George Beverly Shea, who passed away last week at the age of 104. He was a close confidant to evangelical leader Billy Graham, who said of his friend, “He was absolute fun to be with. Bev was one of the most gracious and unassuming men I have known.”

He was born in Winchester, Ontario, the son of a Methodist minister. His father taught him the violin and his mother taught him the piano and organ. He started singing in the choir of his father's church. He recorded more than 70 sacred music albums, won a Grammy in 1965 and the organization honoured him with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2011.

George Beverly Shea toured the world singing in front of literally hundreds of millions of people in his journey. What a life, what a story, and what a legacy he has left. After 104 years of wonderful life, may he rest in peace as heaven has a new booming baritone in its choir today.

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**GRASSLANDS REGIONAL FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great enthusiasm that I stand in the House to speak of the coming together of a group of organizations in Brooks and other communities in the wake of the XL Foods recalls last year. The City of Brooks with the County of Newell commissioned a report on how a number of organizations worked in coordinated fashion to deliver relief to those workers who were affected. The detailed report was completed by the Grasslands Regional Family and Community Support Services.

Community groups and people came together to deliver things like basic necessities such as food and clothing to the affected workers. Others offered employment support, either by helping employees find other opportunities or by offering resumé services. I would like to personally thank all those who got involved, either by volunteering their time or by making donations to special funds to support workers. They are to be congratulated for supporting their neighbours.

I wish the employees of JBS Food in Brooks and their families all the best.

### ARMENIA

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, nearly a century ago, the world remained silent while 1.5 million Armenians were murdered. On April 24, 2004, the Canadian Parliament passed a motion clearly stating this truth and condemning it as a crime against humanity.

Democratic governments from around the world must ensure that this grim and tragic historical event is never forgotten. We must always remember the brutal words of Adolf Hitler during the planning of the Holocaust when he said, “Who today remembers the extermination of Armenians?”

We mark this day. We remember the fate of the Armenians—men, women, and children—who died in the 1915 tragedy. We must recommit ourselves to protecting human rights and dignity for all people wherever they live.

Today, the House joins with 50,000 Canadians of Armenian heritage to remember and work to create a future of peace and reconciliation.

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### KOREAN WAR VETERANS

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an event that happened 62 years ago to the day.

Approximately 700 soldiers from 2 PPCLI were dug into a hill north of Seoul. The name of the hill is Kapyong. For two long days and nights, these brave 700 held where all others had previously failed. Wave after wave of attackers broke against the defences of the Canadians. In one battle, D company called artillery on its own position as the attack was so fierce. This is but one story of many acts of heroism and courage that some 26,000 Canadians took part in, during the Korean War, with 516 paying the ultimate sacrifice.

In recognition of Canada's involvement, 2013 has been marked as the Year of the Korean War Veteran by the Minister of Veterans Affairs. This week, the minister was joined by 36 Canadian Korean War veterans as they travelled to Korea to participate in commemorative events marking the 60th anniversary of the Korean War armistice.

One of the veterans, Mr. William Harrison, said that the commemoration in this way “helps us to know that our story will never be forgotten”. He could not be more right. I call on all members of the House and all Canadians to join me in thanking our Korean War veterans.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

[Translation]

### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, every day we see new repercussions of the Conservatives' improvised EI reform.

This time, it is women who are paying the price. Last week, the Fédération des femmes du Québec, the Conseil d'intervention pour

### Statements by Members

l'accès des femmes au travail, Au bas de l'échelle, the Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec and Action travail joined together to denounce this reform.

In 2010, a mere 55% of unemployed women were entitled to benefits. Today, the minister is making the situation even worse by specifically targeting people who hold unstable jobs, a group in which women are overrepresented.

The minister did not see all the impacts of the reform coming. The reform must be put on hold and impact studies must be conducted.

We say no to butchering employment insurance. On April 27 at noon, I will be at Place du Canada in Montreal to denounce it.

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[English]

### LANGLEY HAS TALENT

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be able to tell this House about an incredible event happening in beautiful Langley, British Columbia. It is called “Langley Has Talent”.

Last Saturday night, 24 semi-finalists performed and demonstrated their incredible talents. This is the third annual Langley Has Talent competition, which is organized by the Rotary Clubs of Langley and sponsored by 12 local businesses and organizations, all to raise money for a new Langley arts centre.

This is a must-see event. Last week the judges selected the 12 performers for the May 4 finals. A 13th contestant will be chosen by us, the public, through online voting. Go to [langleyhastalent.ca](http://langleyhastalent.ca) and vote for a favourite performer to select the 13th finalist.

Please join me in congratulating the contestants, the volunteers and the organizers who have come together to celebrate Langley Has Talent.

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### UNICEF REPORT CARD ON CHILDREN

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sad to report that UNICEF's report card released on April 10 places Canada 17th out of 29 for overall well-being, but drops Canada to 24th when it comes to children.

On material well-being, 14% of Canadian children live below the poverty line, ranking us 21st. Most disturbing is Canada's 27th rank on health and safety, due mostly to the overall immunization rate, at 28th; and infant mortality rate, at 22nd.

[Translation]

Our childhood obesity rates have increased, putting Canada in 27th place.

*Oral Questions*

We are in 21st place on childhood bullying and 29th place on cannabis use.

Canadian children excel on tests in the areas of reading, mathematics and scientific knowledge, but we rank 24th on participation in secondary education.

These results are completely unacceptable. The government can and absolutely must do better for our children.

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[English]

**LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY**

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the new leader of the Liberal Party is clearly in way over his head.

Last week in the wake of horrific crimes that took place in the Boston Marathon, he wondered about the root causes and whether or not individuals seeking to kill and destroy innocent people were somehow excluded.

Now senior adviser and former Liberal member of Parliament, Omar Alghabra has said the Liberal leader wants to have more engagement with Iran.

Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism. Iran's revolutionary guard was recently listed by our government as a terrorist organization, and in fact the individuals arrested earlier this week were taking direction from al Qaeda operatives operating in the border regions of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Talking about engaging Iran shows that the Liberal leader simply lacks the judgment to be Prime Minister.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PRIVACY**

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my constituents are outraged. Yesterday the NDP revealed the magnitude of the Conservative debacle when it comes to privacy.

Indeed, the office of my hon. colleague from Timmins—James Bay has learned that the personal information of over 725,000 Canadians has been leaked in 3,134 separate incidents.

It gets worse. The holes in the Conservative sieve are so enormous that these data breaches are no longer even considered worth mentioning. Less than one in six leaks was reported to the Privacy Commissioner.

This all happened on the Conservatives' watch, and they never lifted a finger to put an end to this colossal boondoggle.

In fact, the only kind of information the Conservatives will do anything to protect are ministerial documents on their fiscal management and their cuts—documents that are supposed to be made public. However, in order to avoid disclosing them, they are willing to move mountains and even fight the Parliamentary Budget Officer in court.

Here is the Conservative track record: personal information gets scattered all over the place, while ministerial information is kept secret at all costs.

Canadians deserve so much better than that. They deserve an NDP government in 2015.

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● (1420)

[English]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians can count on our Conservative government to keep their taxes low. Since 2006, we have cut taxes over 150 times, saving Canadian families over \$3,200 a year.

While our Conservative government is cutting taxes, the NDP leader is out pushing his \$20 billion carbon tax that will increase the cost of gas, groceries, electricity and everything else. The NDP leader's carbon tax would be an assault on the pockets of Canadian families.

While the NDP leader thinks Canadians have an endless ability to pay, we know otherwise. On this side of the House, we are going to spend each and every day fighting the NDP leader's carbon tax. We are going to spend each and every day fighting for those families who sent us here to keep their taxes low.

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[English]

**JUSTICE**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I had the honour of meeting with the parents of Rehtaeh Parsons. I understand that the Prime Minister has met with them as well.

Canadians have heard about the tragic circumstances of how Rehtaeh recently took her own life. Her name is added to that of Amanda Todd and too many others.

Our Criminal Code dates from another era. There are realities in today's society that it simply does not address. We are committed to working with the government to make changes to the Criminal Code to deal with cases like Rehtaeh's before the House rises for the summer.

What action will the Prime Minister take, and what timeline will he commit to?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I think the House knows well, I also met with the parents yesterday. I obviously want to express my great admiration for both their strength and their public-mindedness in the face of what is just a horrible and unspeakable tragedy that has befallen their family.

*Oral Questions*

I would agree with the assertion by the leader of the New Democratic Party. One of the difficulties is that investigative tools for our police officers have not kept pace with the Internet age. That must change. The government has indicated it will be bringing forward various measures in this regard.

We absolutely must speak out against the notion that some people have that anything goes on the Internet. Something that is a crime is a crime, if it happens on the Internet as well.

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**PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister for his answer, but we do not want this issue to be lost amongst the various issues that he referred to. We need action on this now.

[Translation]

For over a year, the Conservatives have refused to tell Canadians the truth about their devastating austerity measures. According to the law, the new Parliamentary Budget Officer must have access to all the financial information she needs to inform parliamentarians and Canadians. The courts clearly said that they will intervene if the Conservatives do not comply.

My question is simple. Will the Prime Minister finally show some transparency by requiring his ministers to provide all the required information?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see the court decision against the partisan action of the former Parliamentary Budget Officer and the leader of the NDP. This government created the position. We provide information on a regular basis and we will continue to do so.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PRIVACY**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I invite the Prime Minister to read paragraphs 5 and 28 of the decision. He will learn that the Parliamentary Budget Officer won the right to require his ministers to produce the evidence.

The new Parliamentary Budget Officer who is there temporarily, on an interim basis, has already signalled that she will use that decision because it does empower her to give the information to the opposition on behalf of all Canadians.

● (1425)

[Translation]

What hypocrisy. They hide information when it is to their advantage, but they refuse to protect Canadians' privacy.

Why are they doing nothing to protect privacy?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP is talking about specific incidents, some of which occurred a decade ago. Every time privacy is breached, this government reacts. It establishes action plans for the different departments in order to protect privacy and takes immediate action when there are breaches.

**Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, more than a million Canadians have been affected by data and privacy breaches, and that is the government's response? Canadians deserve better. The information about these data breaches was made public because the NDP pushed for it. There have been more than 3,000 privacy breaches, yet only 13% of those cases were reported to the privacy commissioner.

Why did the Conservatives not feel it was necessary to report these breaches to the commissioner?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the majority of these breaches happened years ago, and they resulted in measures to ensure that the privacy of Canadians is protected.

[English]

We have acted on a number of fronts, for instance, the veterans privacy action plan to protect the information of Canada's veterans. We have made it mandatory to report any transgressions in the department. We take these issues seriously, a lot more seriously than the previous government.

**Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's answer is cold comfort to the farmers, students, veterans and unemployed whose privacy was compromised. These are privacy problems on a massive scale and now we also learn that the tracking system for dealing with these problems has also failed.

A million Canadians had their privacy compromised on 3,000 separate occasions, yet the Conservatives failed to put a system in place to track this serious problem. Why is no one tracking these breaches of personal data?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have already indicated, and as the Prime Minister has indicated, many of these breaches occurred many years ago, in some cases a decade ago.

We take these breaches very seriously. That is why we have created whole systems, including to protect the privacy of our veterans, for example, but we have made it mandatory across all government departments that they must report and must act to ensure that privacy breaches do not occur in the future.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. Last summer, the student employment rate was at its worst level in 40 years. There are 200,000 fewer jobs now than before the recession. It is absolutely deplorable to see that this government is funding fewer jobs for our young people, but has no problem spending millions of dollars more on partisan advertising.

*Oral Questions*

Why partisan advertising instead of helping our young people find summer jobs? What measures will the Conservatives take? Will they abandon our youth once again?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is no better country than Canada to be young and looking for a job.

Clearly, we can do more. That is why we have proposed many measures in our budget, such as keeping the pathways to education Canada program, establishing more internships for new graduates and providing more post-secondary education opportunities for aboriginal peoples.

It is time for the Liberal Party to vote in favour of measures for our young people, not against them.

[English]

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** That is simply not good enough, Mr. Speaker. I am trying to find out why the government abandoned young, unemployed Canadians.

Could he explain why the number of young people getting help through the youth employment strategy has plunged from 113,000 in 2005 to 50,000 today and why the youth unemployment rate is double the national average?

Instead of talking points, could the Prime Minister please justify why the Conservatives are killing job opportunities for Canada's youth and punishing middle-class families, all while inflating their own partisan advertising budget?

• (1430)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the challenges that exist, there is no better country to be living in and for young people to be seeking work in than Canada.

That said, we have more work to do. That is why we have made a number of proposals in this budget and in the past.

What is peculiar about the Liberal members' talking points is why they continue to vote against these things. For instance, they voted against the apprenticeships grants that have gone to some 400,000 Canadians over the past few years.

The Liberals voted against the youth employment strategy and on a number of occasions against the apprenticeship incentive grant, against the textbook tax credit, against pathways to education tuition tax credit. It is time they joined with us and stood up for the young—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in light of the appalling human rights record of the Sri Lankan government, including the impeachment of the chief justice, including the jailing and indeed murdering of several journalists, including human rights abuses which go right across the jurisdiction, would the Prime Minister consider this proposition? Why would Canada not invite the Commonwealth countries to come to Canada, for Canada to host the conference and for Canada to become the chairman of the Commonwealth for two years?

It is preposterous that the Rajapaksa government should be chairing the Commonwealth for the next two years.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I and almost all members of the House are in one mind on this issue. We are deeply troubled by the direction in Sri Lanka and the fact that Sri Lanka is, at this point, the host of the next Commonwealth heads of government meeting.

Suggestions have been made of any number of countries that would be willing to host that. In the meantime, we will continue to monitor events there and do what we can to try to increase pressure on the government of Sri Lanka to make changes. However, given the current circumstances, as I have said before, it would be very difficult for this government to fully participate.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we learned today that Ontario wants to work with Manitoba in order to save the Experimental Lakes Area.

This intervention is required because the Conservatives have abandoned this rich scientific resource. To ensure the long-term future of the experimental lakes, the Conservatives must stop their attacks on science and help the provinces that want to save these precious scientific tools.

What financial assistance will the Conservatives give the provinces?

[English]

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as has been made clear for several months now, the federal government has been leading negotiations with third parties in order to secure a new operator for the Experimental Lakes Area. The federal government has involved the province of Ontario as it owns the land on which the property sits.

Our government is continuing important freshwater research in other facilities across Canada, such as the Freshwater Institute in Winnipeg and the Bayfield Institute in Burlington. We are also making important investments to clean up freshwater lakes like Lake Winnipeg and Lake Simcoe.

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, someone did not update his talking points.

What Canadians expect from the government is a little leadership on the science file. However, when we have the Minister of Natural Resources down in Washington telling a retired NASA scientist that he should be ashamed of himself, well, I do not have a lot of hope.



*Oral Questions*

Given that the Minister of Natural Resources has said that the Conservatives are washing their hands of the ELA, we are left with questions like these. Who pays the operating costs in the future? Who will take responsibility for these liabilities? Will the government take any responsibility for this fiasco?

**Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her questions from her speaking notes. The federal government has been involved for some time with the province of Ontario as we have tried to move this file forward. As indicated, the negotiations with IISD are ongoing and subject to a confidentiality agreement. We are hopeful that an agreement can be reached, and details will be shared at a suitable time.

\* \* \*

•(1435)

[Translation]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Ms. Éloise Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let us talk more about issues that showcase Conservative incompetence.

Yesterday, the Minister of National Defence blamed the army for cutting the danger pay of soldiers in Afghanistan. However, he is the minister. He is responsible, and he must have signed off on this directive. He could have opposed this directive as soon as it was suggested, but he did not do so.

If the minister does not know what is happening in his department and is not responsible for what happens, then what good is he?

[English]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me inform the member again of what occurred. We have an arm's-length committee, the departmental hardship and risk committee, that reviews annually. This work is done to examine the situation in every mission and every case. As a result of decisions taken, which we disagree with, we have asked it to re-examine them.

While I am on my feet, I would ask the member to demonstrate her support and perhaps explain to the House why she continually votes against things like pay increases, education funds for families of deceased members of the Canadian Forces and funding for our Commonwealth war graves.

We will take no lessons from members of the NDP who continually work and vote against the interests of the armed forces.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we all know that when the Minister of National Defence starts making things up and accuses the opposition of not supporting the troops, it is because he simply has no answer to the question. Instead of trying to avoid embarrassment for himself because he mishandled the issue of danger pay, the minister should be thinking about the Canadian Forces soldiers stationed at Mazar-e-Sharif and their families.

Again, why will he not reverse the decision to reduce the danger pay for soldiers in Mazar-e-Sharif?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think I have addressed this a number of times with respect to payments at Mazâr-e-Sharif. We have in fact directed that

measures be taken to ensure that personnel deployed there are not penalized for an administrative error. It was in fact an intervention on my part and the part of the government that prevented that from happening.

Again, I would ask the member to get on his feet and perhaps explain why his colleague, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, mocked and belittled the efforts of the Vimy Ridge heroes. That is disgraceful. I have heard nothing but silence from the member.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will wager a little bet that if we check we would find the Minister of National Defence spent a lot of time in opposition voting against Liberal defence spending. Does that mean that he does not support the troops?

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The minister will have a chance to answer the question. I do not think he needs help at this stage.

The hon. member for St. John's East has to finish putting the question.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Mr. Speaker, the fact is he is now the Minister of National Defence. He is supposed to be in charge of his department. He is the one who signs off on these recommendations. He is the one who makes the decisions. Therefore, why can he not tell us why he believes that Mazar-e-Sharif is so much safer than Kabul?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, to enlighten the member, I did not sign off on it.

I want to again come back to the member. Here is what we have. We have the defence critic for the NDP defending the abysmal record of the Liberal Party, a decade of darkness. He has his facts wrong on the history of the Liberal defence spending, just like his colleague from Quebec has the facts wrong on what happened at Vimy Ridge.

The NDP is a joke on defence.

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**EMPLOYMENT**

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is always the same from that minister: insults, insults.

Criticism has flowed in about problems with the temporary foreign worker program, problems caused by Conservative mismanagement. Now the Governor of the Bank of Canada has testified that an overreliance on temporary foreign workers is a problem and drives down the wages of Canadians.

Mr. Carney gets it and Canadians get it. When will the minister stop the spin and just fix the problem?

*Oral Questions*

•(1440)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has been clear that we are fixing the temporary foreign worker program, despite the ongoing demands from members of the NDP to provide more temporary foreign workers for their own ridings.

Which do those members want? Do they want what they preach or do they want what they practice?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there have been problems with the temporary foreign worker program for years.

Yet, it took Canadians speaking out about being ruthlessly replaced before the minister finally began to take the situation seriously.

Mark Carney has some good advice for the government: the program should be used to fill temporary gaps in the labour market.

The misuse of this program drives wages down.

Mr. Carney understands the urgency of finding a solution to this problem. Why does the minister not get it?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there are problems with this program. That is why we are improving it, despite what the NDP says.

On one hand, members of the NDP are asking for less participation in the program; yet, on the other, they are asking ministers to help them find temporary foreign workers to work in their own ridings.

Do they want what they preach or what they practice?

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in 2009, the minister promised that the program would be monitored, but she did not keep that promise.

Yesterday, Mr. Carney said that this program should be used to fill needs for high-skilled jobs temporarily. However, over the past 10 years, the use of this program has tripled. That is no coincidence. Training a Canadian worker now costs employers more than paying a temporary foreign worker.

Can the minister explain why she would rather support the temporary foreign worker program than help train Canadian workers?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government believes that Canadians should always get first crack at the jobs available in Canada. That is why we are improving the temporary foreign worker program.

If members of the NDP do not like this program, then why are they asking us every day to help them find temporary foreign workers to work in their own ridings?

[English]

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats did not ask for Canadian jobs to be taken away,

but that is exactly what happened because of Conservative mismanagement.

Back in 2006, the Conservative immigration minister said that he was proud to water down the temporary foreign workers program, essentially only requiring companies to pay lip service to recruiting Canadians first. What was the pressing labour shortage for Conservatives at the time? “When it starts to affect our ability to go to Tim Hortons and get a double-double, it ceases to be a laughing matter”. Canadians are not laughing.

Again, when will the Conservatives fix this program?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we firmly believe Canadians should always get first crack at every job. That is why we are changing the temporary foreign worker program to ensure that happens.

Meanwhile, while they decry the program, NDP members are regularly approaching this government for special assistance to help them get temporary foreign workers into their ridings to work there.

What are we supposed to believe, what they preach or what they practice?

[Translation]

**Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the latest statistics on student summer jobs show a significant drop in available jobs since 2006. This decline calls into question the funding for post-secondary education for thousands of young people who will have to give up on job opportunities in the new knowledge-based economy.

Does the government intend to increase budgets for summer jobs?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is our government that increased funding for this program with our economic action plan, and we made those funds permanent to help young people.

We introduced several other programs to help young people prepare for the jobs of today and tomorrow. Unfortunately, the opposition voted against almost all those programs.

•(1445)

[English]

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the answers from the Minister of Human Resources leave a lot to be desired. She has said that the programs are working when they really are not. The minister's incompetence comes through whether it is employment insurance or the youth employment strategy.

Here are the facts. We have the highest youth unemployment that the country has ever seen at 14% and 63,000 less youth are being helped under the youth employment strategy than under the previous government.

*Oral Questions*

When will the minister stop reading from lists and implement a strategy that works?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to helping young people prepare themselves for the jobs of today and tomorrow and providing them with experience and opportunities for education, I have to ask why the Liberal Party keeps voting against initiatives like pathways to education, expansion of the career focus program, including 3,000 new internships to help young people get the experience they need and the apprenticeship incentive and completion grants that have gone out to 400,000 Canadians so far.

These are programs that really do help our young people get good jobs.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no matter how many nickel and dime programs the minister might want to talk about, the fact is they are not working. Sixty-three thousand fewer young Canadians are being served now than when the Conservatives took over. She is sleepwalking when she should wake up and start helping young Canadians.

How can the minister brag about cutting 63,000 summer student jobs when 400,000 young Canadians cannot find work? When is she going to wake up and help these young people?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is a global economic challenge still in existence. Canada is fortunate to have one of the lowest unemployment rates for young people in the world right now, but it is not good enough. That is why we have introduced an expansion of 3,000 internships through the career focus program. That is why we have made it possible for almost 400,000 young people to receive apprenticeship grants to help them get the education they need and the skills for the jobs that are in demand.

Sadly, the Liberals voted against all those initiatives to help literally thousands of young people get into the job market.

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's strategy is not working. Young Canadians are still feeling the effects of the 2008 economic crisis.

Let us not forget that 280,000 young Canadians lost their jobs during the crisis and that an entire generation is still having trouble finding work in the labour market. Also, more and more young Canadians are losing jobs to temporary foreign workers. According to TD Bank, it will take at least a decade for these young Canadians to recover from the cumulative effects of this economic setback.

Why are the Conservatives stubbornly refusing to look for a solution to the problem?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have implemented several programs to help young people acquire the skills they need to fill jobs that are available and in demand in Canada.

Every time we have put forward programs for grants, scholarships or help paying for post-secondary courses to help young people prepare for the job market, the NDP has voted against our proposals.

*[English]*

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Conservative budgets and all of their initiatives consistently fail Canadian youth. Of course we voted against it. Even if the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism is laughing, young people have been left out of the economic recovery. More than two years after the recession, youth unemployment is stuck at a troubling 14%. That is double the national average.

According to TD Bank:

Being unemployed at a young age can have a long-lasting impact on an individual's career prospects.

When will the Conservatives stop their self-congratulations and start offering real solutions for Canada's youth?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the best way to help Canada's young people is to ensure that they have the skills that are in demand by employers for jobs that are open. That is why we created the Canada student grant program, which has benefited hundreds of thousands of young people. That is why we introduced and supported the pathways to education program, which helps youth, disadvantaged youth, get through school and into university and college to get the skills they need. That is why we provide the Canada summer jobs program: to help over 30,000 students get the experience they need as well as the funding to continue with their education.

Why will the NDP not support our young people, just for once?

● (1450)

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism will not be laughing when he considers that out of the 280,000 young people who lost their jobs during the recession, only 40,000 actually got new jobs.

The Conservatives do nothing to help with student loans, but they complain about household debt. They refuse to properly fund apprenticeship programs but complain about the lack of skilled workers. Canada's youth are saddled with record debt and fewer job prospects because Conservatives designed it that way.

When will the government finally act to fix this growing job crisis?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if it were up to the NDP, there are almost 400,000 apprentices who would not have received incentive and completion grants to help them get the skills they need to become ticketed journeypersons and there are almost 300,000 students who would not have received non-repayable Canada student grants.

*Oral Questions*

We have introduced very many projects and programs to help young people get the skills, the education and the experience they need for their jobs. It is unfortunate that the NDP has voted against every single one of those. Without our initiatives, there would be hundreds of thousands more young Canadians out of work.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is easier for the government to replace Canadian workers with foreign workers than it is to help young people. That seems to be what is going on.

According to TD Bank:

Being unemployed at a young age can have a long-lasting impact on an individual's career prospects.

When will the Conservatives stop their self-congratulations and start offering real solutions for Canada's youth?

Young people who do not currently have jobs will continue to feel the devastating effects of the Conservatives' failure to act for decades to come.

Does the minister realize that by twiddling her thumbs on this issue, she is putting the economic future of an entire generation at risk?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I just mentioned several of our initiatives to help young people acquire the skills they need to get available jobs.

We believe that available jobs should always be offered to Canadians first, but Canadians need the necessary skills.

If the member's colleagues do not like the temporary foreign worker program, why are they always asking us to help them get temporary workers in their ridings?

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the oil sands support hundreds of thousands of jobs in communities throughout Canada, from engineers to construction workers to manufacturers to service employees. All Canadians benefit from resource development.

Our government has been clear that we support the Keystone XL pipeline.

Would the parliamentary secretary please update us on the latest developments on this important project?

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Calgary Centre for that question.

The Minister of Natural Resources is in Washington today to advocate for Canadian jobs in our resource sector. The difference between our trade missions and the NDP's position is clear. While our government is working to support job creation and economic

growth across Canada, the NDP leader and his critics go to Washington to argue against Canadian jobs.

We support Canadian workers. The NDP follows its narrow, ideologically-driven, anti-trade, anti-development, anti-resource, anti-job agenda.

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**CANADA POST**

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canada Post is musing about serious reductions, including cutting door-to-door delivery. Instead of eliminating essential postal services, Canada Post needs to expand its e-services, take advantage of its unique coast-to-coast-to-coast network and bring in more revenue.

Why are the Conservatives not looking to new ideas to generate more revenue for Canada Post so that we can continue to get the postal services we deserve?

• (1455)

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as a crown corporation, Canada Post is an organization at arm's length from government. We understand that email and other technologies are creating serious long-term financial problems for Canada Post. To be frank, Canada Post's labour and cost structure is unsustainable for the future.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, all the Conservatives want to talk about is cuts and downsizing, but the NDP wants to talk about new ways of doing business.

A number of countries, such as Germany, Switzerland and New Zealand, have developed effective financial services that ensure that their postal services are profitable. If the Conservatives rely solely on the Conference Board report, they will find nothing but arguments justifying their drive for privatization.

My question is simple. Will the Conservatives maintain this public service for Canadian individuals and businesses across the country?

[*English*]

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as a crown corporation, Canada Post is at arm's length from government.

It is really rich to hear the NDP discuss this, as it is part of the problem. In fact, it is the NDP's big union bosses who helped delay our legislation to restore service to Canadians in 2011. The NDP and its puppet-master, big-boss, union dudes have accelerated Canada Post's decline.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it was a lockout in 2011. All the Conservatives had to do was make a phone call and the labour dispute would have ended.

On Monday, Qatar announced a proposal to move the International Civil Aviation Organization from Montreal to Doha. ICAO is a powerful international organization that is vital to the city of Montreal.

After the fiasco with the UN Security Council seat and the ludicrous decision to pull out of the UN convention to combat desertification, will Montreal pay the price for the Conservatives' indifference?

How are the Conservatives planning on keeping ICAO in Montreal, in Quebec, in Canada?

*[English]*

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is working very hard to keep the ICAO in Montreal. The minister is personally ready, willing and keen to work with the Government of Quebec and the City of Montreal to keep ICAO in such a world-class city as Montreal.

We have reached an agreement with ICAO that is good for all involved. That is why it was supported by the ICAO council. We believe the presence of its headquarters in Montreal represents an economic benefit of more than \$100 million each year.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is a never-ending list of bad Conservative decisions that could cost us dearly. It includes Canada's decision to pull out of the Kyoto protocol and the Prime Minister's decision to deliberately skip a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly.

In its sales pitch, Qatar offered to construct a new building, cited the difficulty delegates have obtaining Canadian visas and mentioned that diplomats are very unhappy with the services provided. We have a problem.

I will ask again. What is the Conservative government's strategy for keeping ICAO in Montreal and attracting new international institutions?

*[English]*

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell the hon. member again that the presence of the headquarters in Montreal is very important for Canada, and we are working very hard to keep ICAO in Montreal.

The minister is personally ready and willing and keen to work with the Government of Quebec and the City of Montreal to keep ICAO in such a world-class city. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has spoken to the Prime Minister of Qatar twice in the last two days on this issue. We will continue working very hard to keep ICAO in Montreal.

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Prime Minister. I would like to touch on ICAO again. Qatar is clearly mounting a shameless offensive. They are obviously willing to do whatever they can to get ICAO out of Montreal.

Has the Prime Minister struck an interdepartmental committee to address this situation? Who is really in charge of this file? Has he worked with his ministers—immigration, revenue, finance, foreign affairs—to fix this? There is too much at stake for Montreal.

● (1500)

*[English]*

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will only agree on one thing that he said. ICAO staying in Montreal is very important for Canada.

That is the reason the minister is personally ready and willing to work with the Government of Quebec and the City of Montreal to keep ICAO in such a world-class city. We will do everything we can. In fact, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has spoken to the Prime Minister of Qatar twice in the last two days about this issue.

Let me say again, once more, that we will work very hard to keep ICAO in Montreal.

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**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if people are disposing of any business, they will get more for it if they sell it in good shape as a going concern, rather than dumping the assets in a fire sale.

Well-respected western organizations are trying to avoid a hasty fire sale of the federal tree farm at Indian Head, Saskatchewan. They want it to service prairie agriculture for a long time into the future.

They ask only that the government ensure the tree farm's full operation through 2013, protecting its integrity and value so it can be properly transferred as a viable business in 2014.

Will the minister agree?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the member for Wascana is several months behind on this file.

We have done exactly that. I have had meetings, face to face, with APAS members. I have had other interventions from other groups that are interested in picking up the facility. We have offered it on two or three different levels to two or three different competitors. There is quite a demand for it.

We have also said we will continue to run it through 2013, and that is exactly what we intend to do.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians might be wondering what the Minister of National Defence's record was on spending before he was the minister.

We went and checked. Lo and behold, it turns out he repeatedly voted against the military.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** No, no, it is true. In 2004, he voted against \$792 million for military operations in capital. He voted against \$17 million for the St. Anne's veterans hospital and against \$600,000 for war veterans.

Can the minister not see through his own tortured logic so that he can finally admit that MPs can be opposed to his government's agenda and still support Canada's military?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat passing strange to hear members of the NDP defending the Liberal decade of darkness.

What I voted against and what many Conservatives voted against when we were in opposition was the unmitigated disaster that was the Liberal Party and the dismantling of the Canadian Forces.

What we have seen as a government is unprecedented investment in the Canadian Forces, improved morale, new equipment, and investments in bases and programs. This member and his party have been against all of those.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, his answer to the decade of darkness was to cut danger pay to our troops in Afghanistan—fascinating.

He also voted against \$6.3 million for a Canadian Forces health information system, against \$2 million to upgrade the Goose Bay airfield, against \$22 million for disability pensions and against \$49 million for public security and anti-terrorism measures—fascinating.

I could do this all day, but I will allow the minister one more opportunity. He must now understand that we can hold the government to account, vote against its bad budgets and support our brave men and women.

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me get this straight. This member is now suggesting that because, while in opposition, this NDP government continues to oppose the unprecedented and—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I have asked several times for the members to wait until the minister is finished answering the question. Then they can applaud.

The hon. Minister of National Defence.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** While in opposition, while they are continuing to oppose these unprecedented investments in the Canadian Forces, somehow this justifies their ongoing resistance to investments in programs, in equipment, in personnel. Somehow that twisted logic justifies their opposition to all of the wonderful things we have done for the Canadian Forces.

• (1505)

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincerest condolences to the family of Rehtaeh Parsons for the tragic loss of their daughter. There is no greater loss any parents can experience than that of their child.

This week, we welcomed Rehtaeh's family to hear about their daughter's life and what the federal government can do to prevent such tragedies from happening in the future. Can the Minister of National Defence and Regional Minister for Nova Scotia please update this House on the work being undertaken by this government to strengthen Canada's criminal laws?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend from Nova Scotia for that timely and important question. I can speak for members here in the House when I say, again, that our hearts and prayers are with the family and friends of Rehtaeh Parsons as they cope with this tragic loss of their beloved daughter, Rehtaeh.

Our Minister of Justice is currently meeting with provincial ministers of justice. He has asked that an expedited review of the Criminal Code occur in order to identify gaps related to the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. As the Prime Minister has said, and his members present have repeated, this case goes well beyond bullying. What is being alleged is criminal, and our government will continue to push forward with our practical and comprehensive justice reviews.

We have all known a Rehtaeh. Some have been a Rehtaeh. The pain has to stop.

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**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have gathered across the country expressing their concerns about Roundup Ready alfalfa. A pervasive crop spread by pollination, GMO alfalfa rightly has organic and non-organic farmers alike concerned that cross-contamination will compromise organic integrity and affect international markets not open to GMOs.

Will the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food undertake a study on the impact of GM alfalfa, and will he place a moratorium on its release until its results are known publicly?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is too bad the member for Guelph was not here in 2005 when his counterparts actually did this without those types of studies being done. It was the Liberal government in 2005 that first authorized trials for Roundup Ready alfalfa.

We, as a government, continue to rely on the sound science that will allow this type of product to be introduced, or not. It will be based on a scientific decision, not on a partisan political decision. Farmers ultimately will decide whether they will grow this crop. Certainly we take the concerns to heart, but at the end of the day, it will be science rulings that will carry the day.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### PARKS CANADA

**Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after 43 Parks Canada employees were laid off, some five million artifacts are still being stored improperly. For nearly a year now, we have been asking the Conservatives about this utter mismanagement of artifacts in the Parks Canada heritage collection. They still have done nothing to rectify the situation, yet the minister did tell the House that he had begun a dialogue with Quebec's minister of culture at the time.

What happened to that dialogue? When will the artifacts be stored properly in Quebec City?

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague—again today, the same as last year—that the Quebec collection will remain in Quebec. The collection of historical artifacts, which Parks Canada will continue to preserve, manage and present, will remain available to institutions, communities, organizations and researchers.

[English]

Our government fully recognizes the cultural and historic importance of these objects.

\* \* \*

#### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since the government of Prime Minister Diefenbaker, no other government has done as much as we have to promote and protect Canada's sovereignty in the north. We have and continue to make key investments in our troops to ensure that they have the equipment and training they need to operate successfully in Canada's north.

Operation Nunaliut has just concluded in the high north. Can the Minister of National Defence please provide the House with an update on whether this operation can be considered a success?

• (1510)

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Operation Nunaliut is concluding today. It is one of our major sovereignty exercises conducted by the Canadian Armed Forces to ensure our readiness and our protection and projection of Canadian values and interests in the north.

This year's successful exercise took place in the northwest portion of the Arctic Archipelago. It included long-range patrols by air, land and sea ice. The operation demonstrated that the Canadian Armed Forces are more than ready and able to take on the many challenges of operating in the high Arctic.

I would like to congratulate all members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families for taking part in this exercise, and

#### Oral Questions

especially our Canadian Rangers, whose unique knowledge and ability makes them so effective in protecting the Arctic.

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#### TRANSPORT CANADA

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, water levels in Lake Huron are dropping and could take tourism jobs with them. Federal port facilities in Tobermory and South Baymouth need maintenance, and the harbour for the Manitoulin terminal needs to be dredged so the *Chi-Cheemaun* ferry can carry 36,000 passengers and their cars this May and June. The cost for repairs is less than \$300,000. The cost to tourism without a ferry is unimaginable.

When will the government perform this affordable maintenance and protect Great Lakes tourism jobs?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Transport Canada recognizes the role this ferry plays in serving the local communities and in providing a transportation link between Manitoulin Island and Tobermory.

Transport Canada is aware that the Great Lakes water levels are at a significantly low level across the entire Great Lakes system. The department is currently in discussion with the province and will continue to work on this issue.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### 1982 REPATRIATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, everyone in Quebec agrees: we must get to the bottom of the events that led to the 1982 repatriation of the Constitution and the serious allegations of political interference by Supreme Court justices.

Since Ottawa has not responded to the unanimous motion of the National Assembly of Quebec, this morning, the Government of Quebec had to submit three access to information requests in order to have all the relevant documents made public.

Rather than hiding behind the Supreme Court's internal review and making the Government of Quebec submit access to information requests, will the Prime Minister order the release of all relevant documents?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have said it before: we have no interest in revisiting old constitutional squabbles.

The Supreme Court of Canada will determine what happened during the time of Trudeau's Liberal government.

*Routine Proceedings*

The hon. member should know that lawyers and public servants are responsible for making decisions regarding access to information for federal documents, in accordance with the law. Public servants will do their work.

\* \* \*

[English]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to point out that my voting record while in opposition was against motions that did not provide enough money for the—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order, please. No doubt, tomorrow the hon. minister may have that opportunity to point it out. There are also statements by ministers in the routine proceedings, if he would like to avail himself of that rubric, but I do not think that is a point of order.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS**

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation to the first part of the 2013 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held in Strasbourg, France from January 21-25, 2013.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the 58th Annual Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly held in Prague, Czech Republic from November 9-12, 2012.

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● (1515)

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to Bill C-444, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (personating peace officer or public officer).

[Translation]

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

[English]

## NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present today, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources in relation to the main estimates for fiscal year ending March 31, 2014. The committee has studied the main estimates and reports the same.

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions this afternoon, signed by over 400 Canadians, calling for a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa. They want to ensure a proper review of the impact on farmers in Canada. They showed me the courtesy of visiting me at my constituency office in Camrose to personally deliver this petition. I appreciate very much meeting with them and the discussion we had that day.

## PRAIRIE SHELTERBELT PROGRAM

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of presenting a petition today signed by hundreds of folks across Manitoba and primarily Saskatchewan. It talks about the shelterbelt program and how unique it is to Saskatchewan, especially, and that it needs to be protected. They call upon the minister to reverse the decision to do away with the shelterbelt and to keep it in place to help all of those farmers and all of those great Saskatchewan residents by making sure that this program continues.

## GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

**Mr. Frank Valeriotte (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by hundreds of Canadians from Guelph, south-western Ontario and the rest of Canada who wish to register their concerns regarding the impacts of genetically modified organisms on Canadian agriculture and on the health of all Canadians. They request evidence-based decision-making and a moratorium on the licensing and release of new GMOs and request an independent review of existing GMOs currently in the Canadian marketplace.

## JUSTICE

**Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have three sets of petitions from Canadians across the country, including the provinces of Ontario, Alberta and Quebec. Each of the petitions calls on the Government of Canada to try Omar Khadr for treason, under the laws of Canada, for his actions against coalition forces in Afghanistan.

[Translation]

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoulu, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a large number of people from the Quebec City region, in support of Bill C-452, which is designed to combat human trafficking and sexual exploitation.



*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

## CANADA POST

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition from a large number of residents in my riding of Westmount—Ville-Marie who ask that the post office known as the Montreal Victoria post office be allowed to remain open. It is extremely important to the community from an economic and a social perspective.

[Translation]

I am therefore asking the government to reconsider its decision to close that post office.

[English]

## FALUN GONG

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and present two different petitions from the people of Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon.

The first calls on the House to condemn atrocities against Falun Gong practitioners.

## SEX SELECTION

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the House to condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

## SHARK FINNING

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two separate petitions.

The first is from thousands of Canadians calling that measures be taken to stop the global practice of shark finning and to ensure the responsible conservation and management of sharks.

They call upon the government to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fins into Canada.

●(1520)

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I also rise to present a petition that calls the recent decision by the federal government to close the Kitsilano Coast Guard station a grave mistake that will undoubtedly cost lives and put people in peril along the shores near Vancouver harbour.

They call on the government to rescind this decision and reinstate full funding for the Kitsilano Coast Guard station.

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of 32 constituents in my riding calling on the government to support Bill C-452, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (exploitation and trafficking in persons).

## CHIEF FIREARMS OFFICERS

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this petition is mainly from people in the Mississauga-Burlington area. They are calling on the government to replace the CFOs, the chief firearms officers for the provinces and territories,

with a civilian agency, because the chief firearms officers are inconsistently applying the laws across the lands.

[Translation]

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents in my riding, I have the honour to present a petition that opposes the changes to employment insurance, including the changes with regard to suitable employment and reasonable and customary efforts to obtain suitable employment.

## PARKS CANADA

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to present a petition, signed mostly by people in Ontario, denouncing the cuts made to Parks Canada. Those cuts amount to nearly \$30 million, and a number of people have lost their jobs.

The petitioners are asking the government to restore the funding necessary to provide service to the public and to cancel the downsizing.

[English]

## EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great pleasure. This will probably be the last time that I present a petition in the House from amongst the tens of thousands of Canadians who have signed petitions to save the Experimental Lakes Area.

This issue was resolved earlier today by the Premier of Ontario, who stepped up in conjunction with the International Institute for Sustainable Development to act when the federal government has failed to act to keep this world-class area open.

I pay tribute today to the coalition to save the ELA , and particularly Diane Orihel, who did so very much.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of the Vancouver area, calling for a permanent ban on crude oil supertankers on the coast of British Columbia.

## ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions signed by residents of my riding of Durham or neighbouring ridings.

The first petition, signed by 34 residents, asks the Government of Canada to strengthen animal transport regulations.

## SEX SELECTION

**Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition, signed by 128 Canadians from our area, condemns sex-selective abortion.

*Routine Proceedings*

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since 1999, the water level in Lake Huron has dropped by four to five feet, with no sign of rebounding even 13 years later. This has caused immeasurable damage, not only to aquatic wetlands and spawning areas, but it is causing serious economic and safety concerns to the communities in the area, many of which depend in large measure upon tourism, cottaging and boating during the navigation season.

The petitioners are asking the government to significantly increase its efforts to halt and reverse the ongoing loss of water from the Great Lakes Basin in general, and the Lake Huron-Michigan-Georgian Bay-North Channel Basin in particular.

## GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. The first is with regard to the introduction of genetically modified alfalfa, and it is from the residents of Dorion, Thunder Bay and Kaministiquia in my riding.

They are very concerned about the introduction of GM alfalfa, for a number of reasons, including inevitable contamination, harm to organic farming and loss of farmers' rights. They are asking for a moratorium.

## EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is also about the ELA. I do not think it will be the last time I will be presenting petitions on the ELA, until this is a final deal—signed, sealed and delivered—and Ontario has taken over the ELA.

Once again, petitioners are asking the government, even today, to reverse its ill-advised decision on the Experimental Lakes Area.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition signed by hundreds of citizens from Spring Bay, Providence Bay, Evansville, Sheshegwaning First Nation, Little Current, M'Chigeeng, Tehkumamah, Manitowaning, Wikwemikong first nations, Gore Bay, Sheguiandah, Mindemoya, Massey, Espanola, Sudbury, Wanapitei and as far away as Toronto.

Water levels in Lake Huron have dropped four to five feet with no rebound in sight. It has caused immeasurable damage to the aquatic wetlands, the spawning areas, and it is causing serious economic and safety concerns to many communities. The impact, especially with respect to tourism, cottaging and boating is crucial.

I want to also indicate that the petitioners are requesting that the government act to halt and reverse the ongoing loss of water from the Great Lake Basin in general, and the Lake Huron-Michigan-Georgian Bay-North Channel Basin in particular.

This is a serious issue and we hope the government will act soon.

● (1525)

## SEX SELECTION

**Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions on behalf of churches in my riding, the Canadian Reform Church of Brampton and Saint Anne's Church.

Both petitions, and the people who signed them, call upon the House of Commons to condemn discrimination against girls through sex-selective abortion and to do all it can to prevent sex-selective abortions from being carried out in Canada.

[Translation]

## INTERNATIONAL AID

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions.

The first one is from some great people at Development and Peace in Gatineau. These are committed people who are concerned about the CIDA situation and Canada's role in the world. They are urging us once again to commit to increasing development assistance to 0.7% of GDP, as agreed in 2005.

## CANADA POST

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** The other petition is extremely urgent. It was signed by a lot of people, and it is in addition to the other petitions already tabled with respect to the potential closure of the post office located at 139 Racine Street in Gatineau. I already have hundreds of signatures from people who are opposed to the closure of this post office—the only post office in the riding of Gatineau.

[English]

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present three petitions, including one that asks the government to immediately prohibit a new oil pipeline from proceeding through Burnaby—Douglas, commonly known as the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline.

My constituents believe that this will bring massive environmental and economic risks, but no substantial benefits to British Columbians.

This is an issue that is dominating the current provincial campaign. There are a number of people who oppose it, along with the petitioners, including the Mayor of Burnaby and me. I will work as hard as I can to make sure this pipeline gets stopped.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo the petitions presented by my colleagues from Hamilton Mountain and Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing.

There is solidarity from the Toronto region with respect to the lowering of levels in the Great Lakes. Ontarian petitioners, including from Toronto, request that various ministers, Natural Resources, Environment, Fisheries and Oceans and Transport, work together to try to reverse the ongoing loss of water in the Great Lakes Basin, most especially in Lake Huron but throughout the Great Lakes.

*Business of Supply***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

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

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

**MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

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

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[*English*]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—AMENDMENTS TO THE STANDING ORDERS

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.)** moved:

That Standing Order 31 be amended by adding the following:

“(1) The Speaker shall recognize Members in alphabetical order by Party. For the purposes of this Standing Order, all Members who do not belong to a recognized party shall be grouped together.

(2) When a Member is unable to present his or her statement on the date required by Standing Order 31(1), he or she may indicate in writing to the Speaker at least one hour prior to the beginning of Statement by Members, the name of the Member with whom he or she will exchange position.”.

He said: Mr. Speaker, as we know, Standing Order 31 provides that 15 minutes prior to each question period is dedicated to private members' statements, during which an MP who is not a member of the cabinet may deliver a 60-second statement.

● (1530)

[*Translation*]

The motion I have the honour of moving today is very simple. It has to do with the order in which members speak during the 15 minutes dedicated to members' statements before question period every day.

The motion proposes that this order no longer be based on a list submitted by party whips to you, Mr. Speaker.

Instead, the motion invites you to recognize members in alphabetical order.

Of course, you would retain your authority to select the member of your choice based on the criteria of fairness, which remains your responsibility.

[*English*]

Indeed, only the Speaker has the right or the authority to recognize or not recognize an MP during private members' statements.

[*Translation*]

However, the House has indicated its preference for alphabetical order, rather than having lists submitted by party whips.

In that sense, the motion I am bringing forward here today follows on the heels of the Speaker's ruling presented to the House yesterday.

More specifically, here is what the motion says:

That Standing Order 31 be amended by adding the following:

(1) The Speaker shall recognize members in alphabetical order by party. For the purposes of this Standing Order, all members who do not belong to a recognized party shall be grouped together.

(2) When a member is unable to present his or her statement on the date required by Standing Order 31(1), he or she may indicate in writing to the Speaker at least one hour prior to the beginning of statements by members, the name of the member with whom he or she will exchange position.

As we can see, the motion is proposing only one small change: following alphabetical order rather than the whips' lists.

The distribution of the number of statements allocated to each party and to independent MPs would stay the same.

Thus, the Liberal caucus is currently entitled to two statements a day, and it would still have these two daily statements after the motion is adopted.

[*English*]

In other words, the Speaker would be invited to recognize MPs in the order of their last names each day. The alphabetization would be by party, so each party's respective spot would remain.

[*Translation*]

This motion offers all of the flexibility that is required. If a member is absent or wishes to change positions with another member, it can be arranged. The motion offers enough latitude for a pressing statement to be made by a given member if circumstances warrant.

The objective of the motion is to give more latitude to members and less to party leadership.

I believe that there is a feeling here in the House that there needs to be a better balance between an MP's right to freedom of speech and the need to toe the party line.

This motion is a step in that direction.

I would like to use the recent example of our colleague from Langley to illustrate the scope of this motion.

[*English*]

On March 26, 2013, when our colleague from Langley rose on a question of privilege complaining that the use of lists generated by party whips during private members' statements had prevented him from delivering a statement, he received a large amount of sympathy, from both sides of the House.

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During his question of privilege, the MP for Langley explained that he had been scheduled to deliver an S. O. 31 during one of the Conservative-dedicated spots, but was informed 15 minutes prior to private members' statements that his topic had not been approved by the Conservative whip and that consequently he would not be allowed to speak.

Since then, at least 10 other members of the governing party have spoken in support of the question of privilege from the MP for Langley. The NDP House leader, our colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley, has also provided a statement in support.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker's ruling yesterday made it clear that the member for Langley could have risen, attracted the Speaker's attention and eventually been recognized by the Speaker to make a statement. However, he would have been flouting the decision of his whip and his party.

There is no reason for this type of clash between members and their party. We can prevent it by getting rid of the whip's list for members' statements.

• (1535)

[*English*]

Of course, under this proposal MPs belonging to a party may still feel pressure from their whips in terms of the content of their S. O. 31. However, their ability to speak would not be at risk and this in itself would be an improvement.

[*Translation*]

Members would have control over their own speaking time. They would not have to defy their whip or party to get the chance to speak. Members would not have to openly disregard the whip's list because that list would no longer exist. That would be a useful improvement, but it is still a small one and far from revolutionary. After all, these lists are a relatively recent phenomenon.

[*English*]

The practice of having party whips supply the speaker with lists of MPs to recognize during private members' statements began in 1994. At the start of the 35th Parliament, all recognized parties agreed that party whips would help to coordinate private members' statements by providing lists to the speaker. It is clear that while the original intent of the decision to have party whips prepare speaking lists was to facilitate a sense of order, it was not to allow parties to use the system to silence their members.

Furthermore, there is no indication that whips' lists improve the quality of the statements. To the contrary, while MPs are inclined to use S. O. 31 spots to highlight the achievements of their constituents and recognize important events, parties are more likely to use them for partisan attacks, which may unfortunately lower decorum in the House. While this motion would not ban such partisan attacks, it would very likely reduce them.

[*Translation*]

That said, this motion is not at odds with the principle of party discipline. It actually supports the proper use of party discipline,

which has a useful role in our institutions, but should not be overly rigid.

Members will continue to express their convictions, and these are in line with the policy directions of the party to which they belong. When making their statements, members will continue to keep in mind the strategic interests of their party, strategies whose success will have a great impact on their chances of being re-elected.

I want to be very clear that the sponsor of this motion supports party discipline. He supports his whip.

[*English*]

Some argue that allowing members of Parliament to represent their constituents in the House without being whipped in any way by their party leader—U.S. congress style—would radically enhance the people's trust in our democracy. If that were so, why is the trust of Americans in the congress at a record low? According to a Gallup poll of December 12, 2001, a record 64% of Americans rate honesty and ethics of members of congress low.

Party discipline is there for a reason. Studies show that when casting their ballot, voters generally vote more for a political party than for an individual. True, hard-working, conscientious, and well-known MPs might, thanks to their efforts and personal qualities, get the extra popular support that helps them survive their party's political setback. Trust me, I know first-hand what that is about.

However, the main determinant of an election is the faith voters have in a given political party and its leader. Canadians expect that each of us as their legislators will be well informed of the realities of the riding that we represent and uphold its interests. However, at the same time, Canadians do not consider their own riding taken in isolation. They want their MP to be a good legislator who makes sound laws and good decisions for all Canadians.

Canadians expect that each of us will care about Canada's 307 other ridings in addition to the one that elected us. They want us to look out for the national interest, to fight for Canada's values, well-being, and reputation. They want us to help them build a country they can be proud of. They know that in this task we are not, and will not be, lone wolves. We will be supported by our party and colleagues. The people of Saint-Laurent—Cartierville know that I am a Liberal and that as always I will be a team player within the Liberal caucus.

This motion would allow us to be more free to express our convictions our own way during this one-minute statement that is given to us, our Conservative, NDP, or Liberal convictions, our convictions as elected representatives of a riding, and our convictions as Canadians who will always put our country before our party.

In adopting this motion the House would not say that MPs elected as part of a team, on a national platform, and with a recognized leader, should not act as a team once elected. Rather, we would say that party discipline should not be unnecessarily rigid in Canada.

By moving to a strictly alphabetized system for determining who delivers S. O. 31s, we would be taking that power from political parties and returning it to the individual members of Parliament, where it belongs.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Adopting this motion would be a step in the right direction towards restoring a healthy Canadian parliamentary democracy. Many reforms are still needed in order for party discipline to have its proper role in our democratic institutions, without being excessive.

We will get the ball rolling by supporting this motion. I am appealing to members of all parties.

This motion is not addressed to any party in particular. It is absolutely non-partisan. Its goal is the smooth operation of Parliament as an institution, something all members care about.

Therefore, I invite all my colleagues to support this motion. I invite all my colleagues to stand up for a right that belongs to us, in turn and in alphabetical order: the right to have our 60 seconds.

[*English*]

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as someone who the alphabet favours quite well, having a last name that has the first letter of the alphabet, it would be very endearing to me to go alphabetically; I would probably get to go first. However, there may be some issues of a more technical sense as to how this could be done.

The member was correct when he said that the Liberals are entitled to two spots. If the case came up where a person was going to be away and tried to switch with someone in his or her party but could not get someone, what would happen to that person's spot? Would it be lost? The Speaker, through his ruling yesterday, said that he would recognize someone who stood up. If someone in the Liberal Party was going to be absent and could not exchange with somebody else in his or her party, the spot would be vacant. If the Speaker recognized someone else who rose in the House, would the spot be lost to the Liberal Party or to another party based on spots being allocated with nine to the government side, five to us in opposition, two to the Liberal Party, and independent members getting opportunities based on how the Speaker recognizes them?

It is very much a technical piece, not an objection to it, in the sense of how we would work that through. Would a party just lose the spot if an internal change could not be made?

I look to my colleague to help me with that because it is something I am trying to figure out. If someone gives up the spot what happens? Alphabetically that individual would go back to the bottom and wait to circle back through again.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Speaker, it is an unlikely problem because I am sure the member's caucus would have in mind that there are too many members willing to speak. We have never had a situation where nobody wanted to speak and we would give the spot to another party. It would never happen. Today the whips find someone, or say which member will speak.

This motion would make it by alphabetical order. If I am unable to speak because I am away or for whatever reason and my colleague

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from Mount Royal had a pressing declaration to make about something awful happening in the world, which he does so well, I would be pleased to exchange with him. It would be my honour to do so.

• (1545)

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I feel the air has kind of come out of this debate a bit. I wonder why, if this was such a pressing issue for the third party, it did not address this question of member privileges dealing with S. O. 31s when the question was before the Speaker in a question of privilege.

This is an issue that was already before the House. It was an important one. Yet, again, at the end of the day, I regret we did not hear from the third party when that opportunity was there. I just want to highlight that.

Perhaps the member can respond.

Really, this is an issue that has been settled, I think, by the Speaker. He has affirmed his responsibility to this House and the rights of all members.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, the member for Beauséjour, our leader in the House, expressed his views that indeed there was a problem.

What we are doing today is proposing a solution that supports the Speaker's ruling of yesterday. The Speaker said the Speaker has the power to decide and nobody may remove this power from the Speaker.

However, the Speaker said it is for the House to express its views as to the kind of structure the House would want to provide. I am suggesting that this structure should be an alphabetical order list and not a party whip list.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been here for many years, and over time, I have noticed a decline when it comes to member statements. They have, unfortunately, become increasingly partisan.

I agree with my colleague. Statements have become more partisan and, in some cases, pettier, because they are often dictated by the parties themselves. I would like my colleague to comment further on how it would benefit the House to discourage partisan member statements. Things have been degenerating for the past 15 years or more. I think this is a shame, and Canadians are not impressed.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Speaker, I agree. I believe that if members are allowed to speak without fear of losing their speaking time, and if they take turns in alphabetical order, there will be less pressure to make partisan statements.

Naturally, MPs will still be members of a party and they will be proud of that. They will express their party's beliefs, but they will also have the opportunity to spend 60 seconds talking about things they care deeply about. I think that will go a long way toward reducing the excessive partisanship that results from whips telling people what to say.

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**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville will certainly understand that this is of particular importance to the Bloc Québécois, especially in light of our present situation. We are concerned with keeping the proportion that was established after the election, at the beginning of the session, so that we can keep our speaking time.

I note that this motion is directed at one party more than others, that is, the Conservative Party, which seems to find it difficult to manage its members' statements. That is not the case for our party, and from what I have heard from other parties, I do not believe that is the case for them either.

We have five statements every 20 sitting days since we added a fifth member. We would not all want to speak on a Monday or Friday or even later than others.

What I take away from the motion, and I would like the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville to confirm this, is simply that within our own party we will speak in alphabetical order and we will have the flexibility, when it is our turn, to trade with members in our party or even other members if possible. We do not have a problem with that. We do not see this as a bad thing.

I would like to hear what the member has to say about that.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure my colleague that that is exactly the idea behind the motion he is being invited to support. The five Bloc Québécois members will be able to trade their speaking time if one of them is not there. I would willingly take his time, if he would like to give it to me.

• (1550)

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamotte (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the intent of the motion before us today is laudable as it seeks to raise the level of what we sometimes hear in the House of Commons.

I have two quick questions for my colleague. First, the motion says that “the Speaker shall recognize Members in alphabetical order by Party”.

I would imagine that this means alphabetical order by last name, but it could also be alphabetical order by riding. I was just wondering whether the wording of the motion lacks clarity.

Second, could the member also tell us what system the Liberals are currently using to determine who has the right to speak? Have Liberal members been happy with the system to date? Have problems come up on occasion when Liberal members make partisan or somewhat inappropriate statements?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague and neighbour is right. We are indeed proposing to use alphabetical order by last name. It could also be alphabetical order by riding, but we thought this would show even more clearly that we want to focus on individuals, the members as individuals, by using their last names.

As to her second point, which party is most to blame? The member will understand that I do not want to get into that today. First, I am personally involved in the sense that I prefer my own party's behaviour. Second, I am also urging the members of all parties to support this resolutely non-partisan motion. The motion

seeks to improve the institution of Parliament by enhancing the members' roles, without weakening party discipline where it is needed.

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in opposition to the motion drafted by the leader of the Liberal Party and moved today by the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville. It seems to be an attempt by the Liberal leader to try to change the channel from what was undoubtedly a disappointing first week for him. Perhaps he has been hearing the grumblings in the media by anonymous Liberal insiders concerned about his performance in a week where he made excuses for terrorists only hours after the deadly attacks in Boston.

It also came to light that he demanded special treatment for foreign cooks for his father's favourite restaurant in his riding, even when he claims to want temporary foreign workers fixed. Of course, he had written the government asking to impose a tax to make Canadians pay for more for iPods, while publicly saying he was against such a tax. We find ourselves dealing with the Liberal leader's motion, desperately trying to change the subject from his own failed leadership.

This motion proposes to amend the Standing Orders to diminish the rights of members of Parliament that were preserved in the Speaker's ruling that was delivered yesterday. We respect that ruling. Clearly, the Liberals do not respect that ruling. If the House were to adopt today's motion, the Speaker would no longer have the authority to recognize members who wished to make a one-minute statement pursuant to Standing Order 31. This recognition would be governed, instead, by alphabetical order.

Before getting any further into the specifics of the motion, allow me to review some history relating to the role of the Speaker in the House and, more broadly, in other Westminster systems around the world.

Beauchesne's sixth edition, at page 47, describes the Speaker's role as follows:

—the Speaker presides over the debates of the House of Commons and enforces the observance of all rules for preserving order in its proceedings.

The motion being debated today proposes to modify the Speaker's authority to preside over the debates and enforce the rules and preserve order. This would be a new development in the wrong direction.

One of the issues raised in the Speaker's ruling yesterday was that in the interest of orderly debate, the Speaker is guided by lists provided by party whips. Let me quote from the ruling, which stated:

In a June 19, 1991, ruling found at page 2072 of the *Debates*, Speaker Fraser was even more categorical about the authority of the Chair. In response to a member who asked if the Chair was bound to follow a set list in recognizing members, he said:

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I appreciate the hon. member's intervention and my answer is yes, there is a list. I am not bound by it. I can ignore that list and intervene to allow private members, wherever they are, not only to ask questions but also to ask supplementals. That is a right which remains with the Chair and I do not think it has ever been seriously challenged. I would remind all hon. members that it is a right which the Chair has had almost since: 'The memory of man runneth not to the contrary'.

There are also numerous procedural citations that speak to how, as the practice of this place has developed, the ultimate authority has remained with the Speaker. Allow me to provide some of those quotes for the record, which were also cited in the ruling yesterday. It was noted as follows:

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

The authority the Speaker has in this regard is likewise described in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, at page 318, which states:

No member may speak in the House until called upon or recognized by the Speaker; any member so recognized may speak during debate, questions and comments periods, Question Period, and other proceedings of the House. Various conventions and informal arrangements exist to encourage the participation of all parties in debate; nevertheless, the decision as to who may speak is ultimately the Speaker's.

[*English*]

This practice with respect to statements by members is recognized in O'Brien and Bosc at page 423.

[*Translation*]

In according members the opportunity to participate in this period, the Chair is guided by lists provided by the Whips of the various parties and attempts to recognize those members supporting the government and those members in opposition on an equitable basis.

[*English*]

At pages 594 to 595 of O'Brien and Bosc, known by my staff as the green book, it states:

There is no official order for the recognition of speakers laid down in the Standing Orders; the Chair relies on the practice and precedents of the House in this regard. The Standing Orders simply authorize the Speaker to recognize for debate any Member who seeks the floor by rising in his or her place...Although the Whips of the various parties each provide the Chair with a list of Members wishing to speak, the Chair is not bound by these.

Further down on page 595, it says:

While the Speaker has complete discretion in recognizing Members, the Chair may follow such informal arrangements as may be made...

Beauchesne's, sixth edition, at page 137, adds, "the Speaker is the final authority on the order of speaking".

Clearly, your authority is important, Mr. Speaker, and should not be diminished by adopting today's Liberal motion.

I think I heard quite clearly in answer to a question that the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville purported that this motion would not impinge upon that authority of the Speaker. That is clearly not the case. The motion is quite clear on its face. It states:

That Standing Order 31 be amended by adding the following:

(1) The Speaker shall recognize Members in alphabetical order by Party.

It is a clear direction to the Speaker. It does take away the Speaker's authority and discretion to recognize members.

I appreciate that the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville did not actually draft the original motion we are debating today. It was done by the Liberal leader. However, it is a clear indication that it

would tramp on that authority. I find it interesting that he is in the House as the proponent of the motion and does not himself understand what the implications and consequences are of what it asks on its own face. That alone shows us this is not something we should take seriously as a proposition coming from the party.

There are other reasons of course. The Liberals are claiming they have some newly discovered interest in Parliament as an institution and that is why they are bringing this motion forward. Curiously, there is nothing stopping the Liberal leader from applying the proposed change to the practices in his party, but the Liberals have not done so to this point. If they said that they had adopted this approach for the members of the Liberal Party, that they thought it worked well and that was why they were asking other parties to adopt it, it might have some credibility. However, the fact is that they are proposing today that all of us should be bound to do something they have never done themselves. We need only look at what has happened in the past several days to see they are still not applying this rule.

If the leader of the Liberal Party believes in advancing the principles contained in his motion, it begs the question as to why it only applies to the time slot that is dominated by government members, that being members' statements.

If the Liberal leader were genuine in his desire to empower members of Parliament, the motion would not just cover members' statements under Standing Order 31. It would also cover question period questions. That would be much more consequential in empowering ordinary members of Parliament.

That is not something the Liberals are putting forward. They have no intention of proposing such a change because that would not be helpful to their own partisan interests. However, it also speaks to the lack of bona fides here, to the fact that this is a really a cynical ploy rather than something they genuinely believe.

If they were genuine, they would propose that application to question period. Perhaps the member does not want to because the leader does not want to cede his supplementary leader's round question to the member for Guelph or perhaps he does not want to have to ask follow-up questions to the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville.

Going beyond conjecture, let us look at the record of the Liberal Party since it elected a new leader last week. As I said, it could have been using this approach but it has not. In the eight sitting days since the member for Papineau has been leader, not once has a Liberal statement been organized based on the alphabet. Perhaps the Liberals are taking their cue from the NDP and adopting a "do as I say, not as I do" approach or perhaps the Liberal leader is just in over his head. Whatever the reason, it is clear the Liberals are being disingenuous and hypocritical in proposing this motion.

There are lots of reforms we can consider. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is currently studying proposals and I am sure is still open to other suggestions. However, I do not think this motion would pass muster as a serious reform there. I suppose that is fair game in the political world, but it should not be deployed as a political tactic at the expense of the role of the Speaker.

*Business of Supply*

I might add that at the beginning of this Parliament, I approached my opposition counterparts to suggest some reforms to question period, for example, lengthening the time allowed for questions and answers. I thought this would be the kind of reform, which people had talked about, that would improve the overall quality of question period, allowing more substantive questions and more substantive answers.

● (1600)

I was in fact heartened to hear the same suggestion on the CBC last night from no less than senior Liberal operative David Herle. Ultimately, however, the opposition parties were not interested in this suggestion, so it has not been put in place.

Things like that are a more appropriate way to look at reforming the rules, rather than putting forward a motion drafted with the aim of simply getting some short-term political advantage. This motion is not an attempt to seriously reform the rules of the House. How can diminishing the role of the Speaker be considered a progressive reform?

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe we should be diminishing your role as the final authority. This motion would eliminate any discretion that you may want to exercise in the performance of your duties in this House. It is no secret that one of those tools at your disposal is a very important one to enforce decorum. That very important tool—the ability of the Speaker to turn a blind eye to a member and fail to recognize him or her for a period of time when the member's conduct has been inappropriate or the member has crossed the line—is one of the most practical sanctions used by Speakers in the past to maintain order and decorum in this House.

The effect of this member's statement, a proposition from the Liberals, would be to take that power, a power that is important to enforce decorum in this House, away from the Speaker. At a time when people are claiming that the ability of the Speaker to enforce decorum is of great importance, I do not see how such a reform would be anything but a backward move.

Therefore, I do not see the proposed motion providing a meaningful and practical benefit to our work in this House. It would simply advance the Liberal leader's agenda in his effort to change the subject from his very bad first week and a half. It is an agenda that obviously has no interest in preserving or increasing the integrity of your office as Speaker.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I did not hear any comment on the substance of the motion. The hon. minister did not tell us if he thinks it would be an improvement not to have whips' lists and to allow MPs to have the guarantee that they will have their 60 seconds, one after the other, in alphabetical order.

He addressed three items, and I will comment very quickly.

The first one is that we should not affect the power of the Speaker. Obviously we should not and we will not.

He said that the whips' lists do not bind the Speaker. Alphabetical order, by this motion, would not bind the Speaker. We cannot bind the Speaker. We cannot remove the power of the Speaker. We may

indicate to the Speaker how the members of the House would like the Speaker to proceed. If my colleague thinks it is not clear enough, he would just have to propose amendments, and we would consider them with openness. We should not be partisan; the cheap partisan jabs in this case are very imprecise and ineffective.

Second, he asked why we should not do it for question period as well. The motion is about statements by members; we will deal with question period another time. It is a step-by-step issue that we need to focus on, and just because we are not able to do everything at the same time does not mean that we should do nothing.

Third, the member asked why the Liberals are not doing it alone. It is because we want to have the same strategy as our friends. If they have a strategy to attack us, we need to be prepared to react. If we have our strategy to offer more leeway to MPs from all parties, we are ready to do it.

● (1605)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I believe the last remarks of the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville expose fully how shallow the Liberal commitment is to these kinds of changes. The Liberal members stand for themselves as a better argument than any I could make for why this is not a genuine proposal from them.

However, I will point out that I am very surprised that the member appears not to have read his very own motion.

It says:

(1) The Speaker shall recognize Members in alphabetical order by Party.

If adopted, that would be the rule of this House, not a convention reflected in a book that says the Speaker is guided by whips' lists. That is a convention. That is not the statute, the law of the House.

The member is proposing to change the very law of the House, yet he stands here in the House and does not seem to understand what it is that he is trying to do. It frightens me that the person proposing this change to the Standing Orders does not even realize, by his own admission right in front of us right here today, the consequences of doing so: that this change would remove the Speaker's discretion entirely. It is a clear direction when it states:

(1) The Speaker shall recognize Members in alphabetical order by Party.

That would take away the Speaker's discretion. It would be a dramatic change from the convention right now of the whips' lists.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his intervention on this particular piece. However, I would remind him that we are at this point because the member for Langley put a case of privilege before the Speaker.

The member for Langley is a member on the government side, and my hon. colleague is the House leader of the government. This is about the assertion of the member for Langley, and of others, that he was being muzzled by the executive of his party, his whip. That is why we are here: to debate how we would open this up.

There is a sense that we could do it by alphabetical order, and I hear what my hon. colleague is saying about using the word "shall" in the Standing Order. I understand that language because I used to bargain collective agreements. I get the nuance of language.



*Business of Supply*

However, I would ask my colleague across the way how we can undo this issue of not allowing people to get up to speak when the sole responsibility comes down to the whip, even though the Speaker said yesterday that if one stands up, one might be recognized depending on how one presents oneself. I think the hon. Speaker said that a person might be seen if he or she has captured his eye by standing up.

The issue occurs when the whip says to not get up because the member's S. O. 31 was taken away, as was the contention of the member for Langley. He was refused his spot. How do we then get this system to work so that all members have an opportunity to speak when they feel they should be speaking on behalf of their constituents on things that are of importance to them?

I wonder if my colleague could help us understand how we get to that piece, as the Speaker clearly said that we should somehow get there. I think he wants us to find a way to do that.

Whips in each party can do what they need to do to control their own members. That is for their caucus to decide. However, how do we undo all of what seems to have constrained us, other than by what my colleague just described in saying that the convention would no longer be a convention and would be an absolute? I think that is what he said.

• (1610)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I would start first by simply saying that today we did not get into the debate proposed by the Liberal Party because of what was resolved yesterday with the Speaker's ruling. That discussion was had, members made their submission, the Speaker ruled, and the question was settled.

If the member is asking how we go forward, I think we follow the direction of the Speaker's ruling. It seems to me that it is quite clear and quite simple. It includes the conventions and the practices around it as well as the authority the Speaker has in that context, which means that who is chosen to be recognized is fully at the discretion of the Speaker. He can take whatever input, submissions and guidance that whips and others who are seeking to speak provide to him.

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are debating an important question today and we are speaking on the record.

I would like to ask the government House leader a very simple question: does he believe that there should be more power given to individual members of this House, as compared to the power that the party whips have? Does he believe that it would be better if more power were transferred from the party whips to the individual elected members?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I am a great believer in political parties. I think political parties provide Canadians with a shorthand of where people stand so that individual Canadians are not forced to examine individual voting records. That is why I think our political system is superior in some ways to that of the United States or some municipal councils. In the United States, everybody says that Congress is terrible but that their own congressman is okay. That is because they do not have the opportunity to examine what their voting records are and so on.

I think political parties provide an important way of informing Canadians and delivering clear messages, clear alternatives and clear choices. I think clear choices are good from a policy perspective, and they are good for Canadians.

I find it very amusing that the Liberal Party is purporting through this motion to give more power to individual members, but will not do so in the one place where it would actually count: in question period. That would actually have some impact on their strategic approach, and we understand why: the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville said himself that he wants to be able to maintain that maximum advantage for the partisan reason of invoking damage upon the government.

It is the same thing that David Herle said last night on television about how question period works when that is the agenda. That is why the Liberals are not really interested in empowering members of Parliament. They are really interested in the same old Liberal game: power at all costs.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we must look at what is behind this motion. One reason for the motion is to guarantee equal amounts of speaking time within caucuses and freedom of speech, in light of what the member for Langley raised in his question of privilege to the Speaker. Yes, certain government members are being muzzled.

I would like to ask the Leader of the Government if he thinks that a member in the House should have the opportunity to speak to the issues affecting his or her constituents without being censored by the Prime Minister's Office.

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I find that question kind of odd, coming from a political party that has had members stand in question period and demand of the Prime Minister that he prevent his members from speaking on certain issues, the very issues that the member for Langley is concerned about.

While the NDP members have stood and said members should not be allowed to speak and the Prime Minister must stop them from having opinions on such issues because they find that so offensive, here they are arguing for an entirely different case. I am sorry, but I cannot take these arguments from the NDP seriously.

• (1615)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Before we return to debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Employment Insurance; the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, The Environment.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

Mr. Speaker, I am anxious to involve myself in this debate on how we make statements, how we acquiesce to demands inside our own caucus and how we help our caucus colleagues find a way to make statements.

*Business of Supply*

I can use the example of what happened just a few weeks ago when a good friend of mine, a great friend of the folks in Welland, the late Peter Kormos, passed away on a Saturday. I sent a note to my whip's office saying that I would love to do a statement on Monday to commemorate Peter's life, because he had just passed away. My colleagues were very accepting of that fact. Indeed, I ended up on the list, even though it was not my regular rotation. We have an easy schedule that allows us to do statements when we have House duty so that we are actually here, not somewhere else or engaged in a meeting, which would cause the Speaker difficulties if no one else stood. In this caucus, we give ourselves equal opportunities for statements. I can tell members that no one, since I arrived here in 2008, has ever told members of our caucus what we could or could not say in a statement. We are free to talk about constituencies or to commemorate the life of a good friend, as I did for Peter Kormos.

It is that freedom of members of Parliament that is being debated here. How do we allow all 308 of us, all members of this House, whatever number it happens to be in the future, to speak on behalf of the folks who sent us here. Ultimately, the whips did not elect us. The folks in our constituencies, whether it be the great riding of Welland, where I come from, or the wonderful community of Langley, are the folks who sent us here. Those are the folks we represent.

As the hon. House leader said, we are inside a party structure. We run on a particular platform. However, that does not diminish our role as individual MPs in a Westminster model in which the onus is on individual members to stand to speak for their constituents.

One of the things my constituents have asked me is what my role is. I tell them that part of my role is to be their voice, because they cannot all get one day in this House of Commons. It is impossible to have all the people who live in Welland come and speak to the things that are important to them.

There are standing order rules on how we should behave and use language. We all understand that. However, it really is about articulating the views of the folks who send us here and standing up for them, regardless of who they happen to be. I do not, as a member, have to agree with other members' statements, and they do not have to agree with mine. However, what we have to do, in my view, and I say this as an individual member of Parliament, as the member for Welland, not as a member of this particular caucus or party, is treat the other members with respect, even if I totally disagree with the statements they make. They were duly elected to this House. What they say matters to the constituencies they represent. Therefore, they have the absolute right to say it.

Of course, they fall within the confines of the standing orders, as I said earlier, and the Chair will call to order someone who goes beyond the bounds of the standing orders. I admit that I have seen the hon. Speaker end a statement because he felt it went beyond the bounds of the standing orders by which we guide ourselves.

● (1620)

If we are going to find a way to allow all of us that opportunity, then we clearly need to look at alternatives.

My friends in the Liberal Party have offered a possible solution. They have come forward with something that would be alphabetical. I have to thank the hon. member from Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, who said that it would be alphabetical by last name and not by riding, because I would have gone from the top of the list all the way down to W, for the riding of Welland. I appreciate his clarification.

However, it still would come around the alphabet. It would still get to me, even if I was at the bottom. If I had a last name that began with W or T, I would still be recognized.

I am sure that the intent was that the Speaker's rights would not be abrogated in terms of how the Speaker recognizes who should speak. This was meant as a convention. For each party, including the independents, who would be grouped together, the alphabet rather than the whip's list would be the convention. I do not wish to put words in my colleague's mouth, but I am sure that this is my colleague's intent.

I am sure that no one in the House would have the audacity to suggest that the Speaker is wrong. In my view, the Speaker was very eloquent the other day in his ruling. He referenced the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, on page 89, which refers to the freedom of speech of members. It states:

[...] a fundamental right without which they would be hampered in the performance of their duties. It permits them to speak in the House without inhibition, to refer to any matter or express any opinion as they see fit, to say what they feel needs to be said in the furtherance of the national interest and the aspirations of their constituents.

He then went on to say, and this is where the Speaker sees he intersects with us:

The Speaker's role in safeguarding this very privilege is set out in O'Brien and Bosc at page 308. "The duty of the Speaker is to ensure that the right of Members to free speech is protected and exercised to the fullest possible extent..."

I believe that the Speaker was absolutely right. He correctly pointed out that he is elected by us. We decided who would sit in the Chair as Speaker. He applies the rules we actually give him.

It is all of us as members who decide the rules we give to the Speaker. We empower the Speaker, through a democratic process, to adjudicate the rules we have given him, because that is how we want this place to function. We ask the Speaker to accept the rules and to enforce them for us.

The Speaker gets a list to help him. It is a guide. He uses it quite often. All of us also recognize it is a guide. If an S. O. 31 comes to me, I stand up. Usually no one else tries to challenge me to take that spot away, and the Speaker recognizes me because I stood, as he did a moment ago.

● (1625)

Based on all of that, the help we provide the Speaker is important to how the House functions. It really is a piece of what we do in helping the Speaker adjudicate in the House, not with an iron hand but with a guiding hand so that we all feel that we have had an equal opportunity to speak, within the confines of the standing orders.

Mr. Speaker, I can see that you are getting ready to rise to let me know that the time is up. That is one of the rules we have all come to understand. We appreciate the fact that the Speaker always makes us understand that our time is up.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to my colleague that he is right in his interpretation of the alphabetical order. It would be the family name. It would not deprive the Speaker of his power to decide. The House would have to indicate to the Speaker the way we would like to proceed. It would put the power back into the hands of the MPs. The 60 seconds would belong to them. They would not have to compete with the whip's list, because there would not be any whip's list.

It is the only thing that would change. Otherwise, the parties would keep the same spots. Nothing else would change. I think it would be a great improvement.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the clarification from my colleague on how we would replace the convention.

As I said during my remarks, my feeling was that a new convention was replacing an old convention in the sense that it is not an absolute “Thou shalt do this or forever more you will not be allowed”. In my view, we would never challenge the Chair, nor should we attempt to. I do not mean that in a procedural sense. To give a rule to a Speaker would bind the Speaker in a certain way so that the Speaker could no longer make decisions when sitting in the Chair. I think that would be wrong-headed. I do not think that is a direction members in this House are actually looking for, because we duly elected the Speaker. He was someone we placed our trust in when we elected him by secret ballot. We look to the Chair to help us adjudicate in those moments when we might need that. From time to time, I have seen Speakers having to do that to make sure that we function in a way that allows us to not only speak but be heard.

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in a way, this is really too much. We have the “let freedom reign” caucus here.

I want to point out, though, that the official opposition caucus has a voting record, on private member's bills, of sticking together 100%. There is no breaking off to exercise any independent thought or any breaking away from the pack to exercise any independence. I find this laughable that they say freedom reigns on that side.

I have to point out, though, that the sponsor of this motion does not understand his own motion. The problem with this motion is that it will put an official list above the power of the Speaker. We had this debate in the House over the last number of weeks. The two major opposition parties were frankly not part of that debate. The Speaker wisely ruled last night.

My question is for my hon. friend from Welland. With his caveat that he did not want to do that, I am curious to know how he is going to vote. I know that the sheet that tells the caucus how to vote is not in front of him, so maybe he is not sure. I am curious to know if you are going to support this motion tonight or if you are going to reject it. I suppose if I had that answer, I would know how your entire caucus would vote.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I would just remind hon. members to direct their questions and comments through the Chair.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen:** Mr. Speaker, I find the comments that my colleague and friend has made to be really unique, at a time when we are talking about his ability to be free to speak. He talked about that

himself. However, he decided to be hyper-partisan at a time when we are talking being free to speak and to speak our minds.

I would only say this to my colleague: He should go back and check the voting record of this caucus. He will find on a very difficult government bill that there were indeed members of this caucus who voted with the government. Therefore, it is not unanimous that we always vote against the government or private members' bills from the other side.

In fact, we have voted with private members' bills on the other side on numerous occasions, so I can tell him unequivocally that no one whips the member for Welland on a private member's bill, regardless of what sheet he may or may not have seen. However, that is neither here nor there. I have many sheets here, but none of them are about voting.

The reality is that on private member's business, we are actually free to vote every way we want and there has never been a whip system inside our party. In fact, we get whipped so badly when it is their side and we all agree with them. I am not sure if they want us to be whipped when we agree with the other side on a private member's bill when we all voted for it. I am not exactly sure whether they want us to be whipped that way or not.

I guess we will never end the debate, since I am not inside the government's caucus to hear what they tell their members. They are certainly not inside my caucus to hear how we have our discussions, either. That is just the way it is. I guess we have to take it on trust as to whether the member has indeed ever been whipped on a PMB.

● (1630)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, before I start my speech, I want to address the comments made by my Conservative colleague, who I think is misleading people.

This is not about knowing how or whether people vote. The public knows that there are different procedures and rules in the House that apply to each part of the day, and much more besides. Indeed, different rules determine when a debate on a given topic will be held and also who votes, how votes are held and who can allow whom to vote. There are also different types of votes.

Today's motion is not about all of these procedures or the freedom of members of the House at any time when the House is sitting. I think that is important to note, because my colleague's comments were misleading. The motion before us has to do with a very specific period and part of our procedure.

I would like to get back to the motion itself. It refers to the period allocated for statements by members, which happens once a day every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. During this time, MPs rise to make a statement of one minute or less. The MPs who are making statements should have the freedom to choose the subjects they will be talking about. These subjects can be varied.

*Business of Supply*

Normally, the whip or a designated party member chooses the list of members who can speak on a given day, as opposed to the next day, and gives the list to the Speaker, so that he knows which members will speak on the designated day.

That is a little background for today's motion, which would determine who decides on the list of members who can speak and the day on which they can speak during member's statements. It is very specific.

I will explain how the NDP operates, since that is what I am familiar with. I must say that my NDP colleagues generally do not complain about how things are done. I am very comfortable with how the NDP whip decides on who will make a statement.

Indeed, a period of time is established and a statement is allocated to each member for a certain period of time. Then, once all members have had their turn, we start over again; the next time period is established and each member is allowed a statement. Accordingly, the distribution is relatively equitable. Each member is allowed at least one statement for a certain period of time, and so on. Unfortunately, this is not the case in all parties, but I will come back to that.

I myself have had the pleasure of making a few statements in the House since being elected to represent Pierrefonds—Dollard. For instance, I took advantage of the opportunity to promote the West Island women's forum and thank those who have contributed to its success.

I also commended the work of the organization PAS de la rue, and I took the opportunity to discuss what the bill on a national housing strategy introduced by my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot could do for homeless seniors living in poverty.

• (1635)

[*English*]

For example:

I also congratulate the important South Asian community in Pierrefonds—Dollard and underline the tremendous work it is doing to keep its cultural life and to build bridges in the largest community of the West Island.

[*Translation*]

These are just a few examples. If I had the opportunity to make more statements, I would use it to talk about more things that go on in my riding, such as the community-based approach of the Poste de quartier 3, the possible elimination of the subsidy for fighting organized crime in Montreal and the negative repercussions that such a decision on the part of the Conservatives could have. That is just one example.

I would like to give some specific examples of topics that can be discussed in a statement: I can talk about individuals, projects, events that take place in my riding and bills that affect the people of Pierrefonds—Dollard in one way or another.

The NDP has risen in the House in the past and asked the Speaker to analyze the content of some statements that have been made by certain parties, statements that have been used to attack members of the House and spread misinformation about other political parties.

In reality, members' statements should be used to talk about things that are happening in our ridings. I do this proudly, but not all members do. Let us be pragmatic. Members can decide to talk about almost anything as long as they are respectful. What can influence them or motivate them to talk about such subjects rather than about their ridings?

I would like to share some statistics. An analysis conducted by the *Ottawa Citizen* showed that, since May 2011, 159 Conservative members' statements referred to the carbon tax, 42 were about the leader of the NDP, and 142 were about the New Democratic Party. Did these statements promote what was happening in Conservative members' ridings? One has to wonder.

Members decide what they will talk about. Are they going to waste that precious minute talking about the great leader of the NDP? That is their choice. However, the motion before us suggests that the list be determined alphabetically and that it be provided by the Speaker, rather than by the party whip. This way of doing things would take some power away from the parties, the power to decide who gets to speak and what they can speak about.

This would give members a little more freedom and power. If they want to talk about a certain subject, they know that the time is theirs and that no one other than the Speaker of the House gave them that time to speak. If a member of the party gave them the time to speak, it could affect the content of the members' statements in some cases. For example, the party member could give an MP the time but require him to talk about a specific subject; otherwise, he will not be given that time. It does not necessarily work like that.

As I said before, in the NDP, we are very good at arranging things, and members are free to talk about the subject of their choice. They know that, within a certain period of time, they will have one minute to talk about their riding or about any other subject of their choice.

However, what is worrisome and what probably led to the debate on this motion today is that members of the Conservative Party have complained. About 10 members have complained about being muzzled in one way or another when it comes to the content of their members' statements. That is unfortunate. The purpose of this motion is not necessarily to make accusations against the Conservative Party. It simply seeks to examine part of the procedure related to the period for statements by members in order to ensure that the content of those statements is more impartial and that one party member is not influencing the content of statements made by other members.

The comments and questions coming from the Conservative benches are unfortunate. The Prime Minister and the Conservative Party have muzzled this House on a number of occasions. There have been complaints about how work is done in committee, and a dozen or so members have complained about their inability to speak freely within the party. Again today, there does not seem to be much openness. They say that it is not them, it is the other parties; that the other parties are not doing as many good things as their party is; and that that is how things were done 10 years ago. Why the diversion tactics? Why not talk about the issue at hand, namely how this could affect procedures and freedom of expression for MPs, instead of trying to divert attention by pointing fingers and accusing people of various things at various times?

*Business of Supply*

To conclude, I would like to say that the NDP defends freedom of speech for members in the House. For the NDP, the question is not whether or not members' statements should be doled out in alphabetical order. Our current system works, and it respects our MPs' freedom of expression. However, if this motion can give other members the opportunity to speak freely during members' statements, why not? We are prepared to move forward.

• (1640)

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my NDP colleague for her very clear and interesting speech. I appreciate her words of support for this motion, which strives to strengthen the individual freedoms of the members of the House.

I would just like to know if the member will support our motion, which speaks to an important aspect of the role of members. Will she vote in favour of this motion?

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Mr. Speaker, I will give a very simple answer to a very simple question: yes, I am prepared to support this motion.

As I said earlier, this is not necessarily an issue for the NDP because our members are comfortable with how our party functions. However, we are prepared to support this motion because it is true that much of the power is held by the party executive. If this hinders members' free speech—as indicated by a dozen or so members of the Conservative Party—why not support the motion?

My answer is simple: yes, I am prepared to support a motion such as this one.

[English]

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her intervention on this very interesting debate today, and I thank the Liberal Party for bringing this forward. In the seven years I have been here, this is the first time I have had an opportunity to stand up on a procedural issue.

How do we make the rules in this House of Commons? Certainly they should be decisions of the House, but quite clearly they must follow the basic precepts of our country, and rules such as the Canadian Bill of Rights, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Constitution. That should be reflected in our practices here. Sometimes they are and sometimes they are not.

Are we content to continue to follow rules that were set up a long time ago without thinking our way through these rules to see that they are appropriate?

I think of the way that the Speaker arbitrarily goes from party to party when asking for questions after debate. Even so, parties are not the same size. By doing that, the Speaker is denying equality of opportunity for those in larger parties, for those in smaller parties. Is that fair?

I will ask the hon. member, is it not good to have debates about how we behave in this House? Is this not part of what could bring about a better House of Commons, one that could represent the people of this country in a more democratic and sensible fashion?

• (1645)

[Translation]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I was a teacher before I became a member of Parliament. Sometimes it feels as though I am back in a classroom when I rise to speak in the House. I will share a funny example. Once, while I was giving a speech, I had to stop because one member was yelling at another member, “You are a child. You are nothing but a child and everyone knows it.” He was yelling that from one side of the House to the other. I must point out that there were not many people here and this little outburst was unsettling.

Should we question how we act in the House of Commons? The answer is yes. The motion before us does that to a certain extent, and I hope it will inspire us to do it much more.

We can elevate the level of debate and improve how members act, to avoid yelling, disrespect or even insults in the House. Canadians are entitled to expect better. All parties can do better. I hope that we will see a change. I may be naive, but I have hope.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to this opposition day motion, in the hope that members will approach the motion as a form of bringing us closer, in allowing individuals the opportunity to do something we should never take for granted. I have a deep and passionate respect for the House of Commons. Indeed, it is a privilege to be here. I feel honoured, and at the end of the day there are certain things that I believe we have as rights. In representing our constituents, we want to have the opportunity to express ourselves.

Regarding S. O. 31s, I have had a couple of occasions to speak. One was recently, where I talked about the celebration of Khalsa, which is a very important and significant birth in our Indo-Canadian communities all across Canada. I had an opportunity to talk about the Holodomor and the importance of not forgetting the Holodomor. S. O. 31s are used for a multitude of different reasons, so we should try to do what we can.

I would first like to reflect on what actually happened today. We have a card, on which the Speaker is provided with a list. That list is made up by the party whips submitting names of individuals who will be speaking in particular spots. Quite often we will see the Speaker or the clerks at the table crossing off names. We know, through tradition, that the whips submit the names and, one-by-one, each will speak for one minute. The subjects vary, from community ideas or projects or some special occasion—it could be the passing of someone—to something that is a little more political in its nature. The Speaker goes through that list.

*Business of Supply*

The change that is being suggested in this motion would allow every member the opportunity to get on that list. There would be no obligation to abide by party discipline. A member's name would appear on that list in alphabetical order. If there are 35 members in the Liberal caucus, that would mean maybe every 15 or 16 days his or her name would come up on that list. The same principle would apply for all three caucuses. There has also been special consideration given for those who sit as independents, and they would be blocked together. That would indeed be a fair way of proceeding.

For the last number of weeks in the chamber, I have listened to members from all sides, not just from the Conservative benches. The opposition House leader, the House leader from the Liberal Party, a number of members from the Conservative caucus and others, have stood in their place and talked about the importance of a member's right to speak.

On a number of occasions, Mr. Speaker, you will recall, and *Hansard* will show, that the leader of the Liberal Party was being asked to get engaged, to voice his opinion on this issue. At the time he was not even leader of the party. The question was where we stood on the issue.

This is appropriate. This is the Liberal Party's second opposition day motion. It tries to set a framework that will accommodate what I believe is not unique to one caucus. Every time I see someone from either side of the House stand to address this issue, I see individuals trying to make a case for their right to speak.

● (1650)

I think that most, hopefully all, members of Parliament are sympathetic to the arguments being made and are wanting to see something take place that would alleviate the concerns being expressed by a number of members of the House. That is what should happen here.

Through rules, we have seen changes in the past. When I was a member of the Manitoba legislature a number of years ago, in the early 1990s, we used to call them non-political statements. At the end of the question period, members would stand up and be recognized; however, they could not be political. There might be half a dozen individuals who would stand up, and they could speak for more than one minute.

That has since changed. It was interesting that we looked at how Ottawa dealt with members' statements, S. O. 31s, to do that. The Manitoba legislature was looking at how it could change its rules. We found with the non-political statements that some MLAs were getting a little too partisan. Then there would be points of order being raised, interrupting these non-political statements and so forth.

In the end, changes were made, and the Province of Manitoba looked at what Ottawa was doing. It adopted the concept of having members' statements. It could be anything that the members wanted, but with a restricted amount of time. It proved to work quite well. There was never really a problem.

I sat as an independent back then, and the Speaker had control. There was a sense of independence, in that members of each caucus were afforded the opportunity to contribute if they wanted to. From my understanding, there was no list that was kept by the whip.

When I look at the S. O. 31s today, I believe if we were to adopt what is being suggested by the opposition, it would change the dynamic considerably. If you take it out of the hands of the party whip and put it in the hands of the individual member of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, you would empower the member of Parliament to have more freedom of speech in addressing any issue the member would like to address.

Today, that is not necessarily the case. There are limitations in place. I suspect there might be some variations in all political parties that are represented, and even with the independents.

If this motion were to pass, let there be no doubt that two things would happen. One is that every member inside this House would not have to fear, whether today or a year from now, being denied the opportunity to stand in his or her place and give an S. O. 31. That is a guarantee, and it is something I thought would receive wide support from the House. I hope we see that, and I genuinely hope that members will reflect on that point. Today it might look grey; today we might hear things coming from all three of our parties. However, if this motion were to pass, our rules would change. As individual members of Parliament, no matter what caucus, we would be afforded the opportunity to stand up and deliver our S. O. 31. That is number one.

● (1655)

The second significant change as a result of this motion being passed is that we would enable members of Parliament to express what they feel is important to them. That could be a specific celebration in the constituency. As I mentioned, it could be the passing of someone very important to the larger community, it could be a celebration such as what I made reference to in terms of the Khalsa or, if the MP wants to make it very political, then, by all means, he or she can do that, too. There are no limitations because the difference here is that it is the MP who is allotted the spot. As such, it means the party would have to go to the MP to ask for something to be recognized. It could be anti-racism day, it could be all sorts of national or world-recognized days, celebrations, or significant events. The party would have to go to the individual member of Parliament. The PMO or a leader's office could not say, "This is what has to happen in the S. O. 31s delivered today in the House." I suggest that this would be a huge step forward in terms of individual members' rights.

I know some people would ask why we are talking about this one particular rule change. I sat on rule change committees before and it is very difficult to get consensus on changing a wide variety of rules. I have seen rules change first-hand. I have been involved in discussions that led to those changes, and they can be exceptionally challenging because there is so much give-and-take expected. If the government wants something specific, what does it get out of it? The opposition wants something specific, what does it get out of it? It is a very partisan look. The reason I say that is at the end of the day, if we were to allow a rules committee to reform or make the necessary changes to give more power to individual members of Parliament, that might not happen for a long time. I know from experience just how difficult it is to get rules changed inside a legislative building and that would include the House of Commons.

*Business of Supply*

I am suggesting that we have a wonderful opportunity and I truly believe that if the Speaker wants to stand for the individual rights of members of Parliament—and I do not want this to be Liberal versus Conservative versus NDP or Bloc party or anything of that nature. It is all about the individual rights of members of Parliament. How many times have members knocked on doors or spoken with constituents and our constituents wanted us to represent them? They want to have a strong voice. There are very few windows of opportunity that will come before the House when members are going to be afforded what we are being afforded today.

I can appreciate that some members are inclined to vote against the motion, and that is fine, but it would be wonderful if members of Parliament were allowed to have a free vote on the issue, quite frankly.

Mr. Speaker, if you believe in the rights of members of Parliament to stand in their places—and we are only talking about one minute. It is one-minute speech maybe every 14 days that the House actually sits. It is not asking for that much. I believe that it sends a very strong and powerful message. When individual members of Parliament stand and vote on the motion, we can all take some credit, if in fact it passes. I would not want us to pass on this opportunity believing that the rule might change six months or a year from now. If members believe that they should be allowed to express their thoughts for that one minute, I would argue this is one of the best opportunities we are going to get in the House of Commons to do that.

• (1700)

In the sense of co-operation, I appreciate what it is that the government House leader has indicated. We use the word "shall". If we read the motion, the Speaker "shall" recognize members.

I look to my colleague. We are sympathetic. If the government says that it should be a different word, we are open to that. If we look at our rules, we will see ample examples of "the government shall" or "the Speaker shall". Ultimately, if a member of Parliament has maybe not played fairly, or has been a little obstructive, the MP would likely be named and not allowed to come into the chamber. He would not be able to stand in his place to be recognized.

Whether it is the word "shall" or there is another word, and I look to the government if there is another word that it would rather see, I believe that I speak on behalf of the mover of the motion when I say that we would be very open to that change. We invite them to bring that thought over to my colleague.

I indicated that I have dealt with the issue of changing the rules in the past, and it is very difficult to change rules. I believe at my core that we need to move forward in providing opportunities for members of Parliament to be able to represent their constituents as MPs with individual rights.

I have periodically had the opportunity to stand up and speak in the House, and I enjoy every opportunity I get to speak. I am very grateful. I understand the roles that political parties play in the House and I do not want to belittle the important roles that they play. However, I will plead to each and every member, not as a member of a caucus, and suggest to them that they are not going to get an opportunity like this in the short term. I believe, with the 20-plus

years of experience that I have had as a parliamentarian who has sat on rules committees and has actually seen rules get changed, that it is very difficult. I suspect that there are others who have also been on rules committees who could vouch for this.

This is a one-off. Here is one rule. It will make a difference. I believe our constituents would be very pleased with the rule that is being suggested here, and it would enable us to stand in our place and speak for that one or two minutes every two weeks.

It is a motion that is worthy of support from all members of all caucuses. I look forward, ultimately, to its vote.

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that perhaps if the mover of the motion were actually serious about it, he might have thought about trying to participate in the debate. However, it is apparently not that important, because the mover chose to not even speak to the motion.

What I would like to know from the member for Winnipeg North is, was he not in the chamber yesterday at 3 o'clock? Did he not hear the sage and thoughtful ruling of the Speaker? Does he not understand that the Speaker reaffirmed the ancient prerogatives of members to seek to be recognized by the Speaker, and of the Speaker's discretion to recognize them?

Why does he want, through this motion, to limit that right and take away the Speaker's discretion so that members who have an urgent matter would no longer be able to get up if they do not find themselves grouped into some alphabetical order?

Why is he trying to in fact limit the capacity of members to rise, to be recognized, and to speak to what matters to them in this place?

• (1705)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I will attempt to address both issues.

We were very hopeful that this matter would have been debated on Monday. I will not go into the details, but had that been the case, the leader of the Liberal Party would in fact have been there when it was originally scheduled. There were a number of commitments; a lot of individuals in Labrador and individual events were being planned, so there was a commitment from the leader of the Liberal Party to be there with Canadians. It is much like when the Prime Minister is obligated to be in places if the agenda changes.

On the latter point, with regard to the Speaker, yes, I was here. I would put my attendance record inside the House matched with that of the Minister of Immigration any day of the week.

We were quite pleased with the Speaker's ruling. Quite often, like question period and S. O. 31s, opposition parties and the government do provide a lead for the Speaker to follow from. It does not necessarily mean that the Speaker has to do it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** There are a lot of interesting questions and comments. I would ask members to keep their interventions to no more than one minute.

The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this issue is about the distinction between legislative power and executive power.

To the NDP, this is not even an issue. We are happy with our system. This issue came up today because the Liberal Party wants to rush to the aid of people it sees as frustrated Conservatives. It is up to those individuals to decide whether they are frustrated or not.

To date, party discipline has been in line with the legislative power. MPs have been able to speak freely on private members' bills. Some NDP bills were passed thanks to the support of Conservative members, and some Conservative bills have received the unanimous support of the House. That power exists.

How does this new resolution make a significant distinction between legislative power and executive power?

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I want to keep it at the base level here. We are trying to ensure that individuals of all political stripes have the opportunity to express themselves in an S. O. 31. We can guarantee that right today. This is an opportunity for those individuals who believe that we should have the right to stand in our place for one or two minutes every 14 days not to pass on. It would empower members to do so much more than just stand in their place.

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if we read the Speaker's ruling from yesterday we could have the following conversation with our constituents. I would tell my constituents that if I wanted to give an S. O. 31 under the current system I would either play ball with my party or if I did not get a chance to speak then it would be up to me to do the work to make a case to the Speaker that I was being prevented from speaking. If we adopt the motion that we are debating now, I could simply tell my constituents that I will get a chance to speak and represent them if I simply wait my turn. That would make a lot more sense to our constituents.

• (1710)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, not only would the member be able to do that, but the member would also have far greater freedom to choose the content of what he or she wants to say. That is equally important. Not only would the member be guaranteed the right to speak on an S. O. 31, but he or she would also be guaranteed the content. Members would have so much more freedom of speech.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am struck by the irony of that member standing in the House to talk about free speech and the ability of members to express themselves freely in the House. My colleague has indicated that the member for Winnipeg North may well have used up about 400 years of statements since the 2011 general election, and that is his right as a member. He is recognized by the Speaker and he uses that right frequently.

I have to be honest, given the ruling that we heard yesterday I think that members' freedom and their ability to be recognized by the Speaker has been codified by that ruling. I would like to hear, for example, questions or statements by the member for Ottawa South or perhaps the member for Scarborough—Agincourt. I have not heard

them speak in the House for some time. Maybe the Liberal Party would like to unshackle those members.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I guess it is a different way of looking at it.

Traditionally, some members will speak a bit more than others and some members choose not to speak as much. I will not impugn their motives. I appreciate whatever opportunity I personally get because I find it is a privilege to be here. It is a question of whether one believes that a member of Parliament should have the right to give an S. O. 31 and be able to say what he or she believes is important, whether it is a constituency event, a national event, whatever it might be. That is really what we are going to vote on. Do we believe that a member should have that right?

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to ask my colleague a question.

At the end of the day yesterday, the Speaker delivered his ruling. Does my colleague still think that today's motion is relevant and important, given the Speaker's ruling? The ruling pointed out that all members are free to rise, just as they are during debates. Members rise and speak. The same principle applies during question period and member statements. I could go into some detail, but this question does not give me much time.

Does my colleague still believe that this motion is of critical importance in light of the Speaker's ruling?

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, even with the Speaker's ruling, which we have provided comment on in general, I appreciate the support that a number of New Democratic members of Parliament have expressed toward our motion. We understand that in good part, they will be supporting it come voting time.

I believe it is absolutely critical. If this motion passes, every member of the House of Commons will be guaranteed the opportunity to give an S. O. 31. The current rules will not give that guarantee. If members believe they will have the same guarantee that this motion would provide, there is very good chance they might be wrong and they might want to revisit it. The motion would also give members so much more freedom in what they would be able to say.

I understand the process. This is something that is a step forward. If members believe in parliamentary process and in enhancing members' rights, they do not want to be voting against this motion.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

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

• (1715)

[English]

*And the bells having rung:*

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 45 I ask that the vote be deferred until tomorrow, Thursday, April 25 at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Accordingly the recorded division stands deferred until tomorrow at the end of government orders.

The hon. chief government whip has asked to see the clock at 5:30 p.m. Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

### COMBATING TERRORISM ACT

The House resumed from April 23 consideration of the motion that Bill S-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Security of Information Act, be read the third time and passed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill S-7.

Call in the members.

• (1755)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 666)

#### YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Andrews	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Bélangier
Bennett	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Block

Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dion
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Foote	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodale
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenny (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureux
Lauson	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	Leef
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murray
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Pacetti
Paradis	Payne
Poillievre	Preston
Rae	Raït
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Regan	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Seeback
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Smith	
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	St-Denis
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Valeriotte	Van 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 — 183	

*Private Members' Business*

## NAYS

## Members

Allen (Welland)	Ashton
Atamanenko	Ayala
Bellavance	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Caron	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Fortin
Freeman	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lapointe	Larose
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Mulcair
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Papillon	Patry
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravnagat	Raynault
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scott
Sellah	Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan	Stewart
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Turmel— 93	

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[English]***CRIMINAL CODE**

The House resumed from April 17 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in Bill C-394 at report stage under private members' business.

• (1805)

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

*(Division No. 667)*

## YEAS

## Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Ashton
Aspin	Atamanenko
Ayala	Bateman
Benoit	Benskin
Bergen	Bernier
Bevington	Bezan
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Block	Boivin
Borg	Boughen
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Caron	Carrie
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Chisu	Chong
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Clarke
Cleary	Clement
Comartin	Côté
Crockatt	Crowder
Cullen	Daniel
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Dubé
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Dykstra
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finlay (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Freeman
Galipeau	Gallant
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Gill	Glover
Godin	Goguen
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Groguhé	Harper
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hassainia
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hoback
Holder	Hughes
Jacob	James
Jean	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lapointe
Larose	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leslie
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Michaud	Miller

*Private Members' Business*

Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
 Moore (Fundy Royal)  
 Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)  
 Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)  
 Nantel  
 Nicholls  
 Norlock  
 Obhrai  
 O'Neill Gordon  
 O'Toole  
 Paradis  
 Perreault  
 Poilievre  
 Quach  
 Raitt  
 Rankin  
 Ravignat  
 Reid  
 Richards  
 Ritz  
 Saganash  
 Saxton  
 Scott  
 Sellah  
 Shipley  
 Sims (Newton—North Delta)  
 Smith  
 Sorenson  
 Stewart  
 Strahl  
 Sweet  
 Tilson  
 Toews  
 Tremblay  
 Trottier  
 Turmel  
 Uppal  
 Van Loan  
 Wallace  
 Warkentin  
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)  
 Weston (Saint John)  
 Wilks  
 Wong  
 Yelich  
 Young (Vancouver South)

Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)  
 Muleair  
 Nash  
 Nicholson  
 Nunez-Melo  
 O'Connor  
 Opitz  
 Papillon  
 Payne  
 Pilon  
 Preston  
 Rafferty  
 Rajotte  
 Rathgeber  
 Raynault  
 Rempel  
 Rickford  
 Rousseau  
 Sandhu  
 Schellenberger  
 Seeback  
 Shea  
 Shory  
 Sitsabaiesan  
 Sopuck  
 Stanton  
 Storseth  
 Sullivan  
 Thibeault  
 Toet  
 Toone  
 Trost  
 Truppe  
 Tweed  
 Valcourt  
 Vellacott  
 Warawa  
 Watson  
 Williamson  
 Woodworth  
 Young (Oakville)  
 Zimmer — 242

**NAYS**

Members

Andrews  
 Bellavance  
 Brison  
 Cuzner  
 Easter  
 Foote  
 Garneau  
 Hsu  
 Lamoureux  
 MacAulay  
 McCallum  
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
 Pacetti  
 Plamondon  
 Regan  
 Sgro  
 St-Denis

Bélanger  
 Bennett  
 Byrne  
 Dion  
 Eyking  
 Fortin  
 Goodale  
 Karygiannis  
 LeBlanc (Beauséjour)  
 May  
 McGuinty  
 Murray  
 Patry  
 Rae  
 Scarpaleggia  
 Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-  
 sor)  
 Valeriotte — 34

**PAIRED**

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

The House resumed from April 22 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 382 under private members' business.

● (1810)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 668*)

**YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy  
 Adler  
 Albas  
 Alexander  
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
 Ambrose  
 Anderson  
 Armstrong  
 Ashton  
 Atamanenko  
 Bateman  
 Bellavance  
 Benoit  
 Bergen  
 Bevington  
 Blanchette  
 Block  
 Borg  
 Boulerice  
 Brahmi  
 Breitreuz  
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
 Brown (Barrie)  
 Butt  
 Calandra  
 Cannan  
 Caron  
 Cash  
 Chicoine  
 Chisu  
 Choquette  
 Christopherson  
 Cleary  
 Comartin  
 Crockatt  
 Cullen  
 Daniel  
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
 Del Mastro  
 Dewar  
 Dionne Labelle  
 Dreeshen  
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
 Dusseault  
 Easter  
 Fast  
 Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
 Fletcher  
 Fortin  
 Galipeau  
 Garneau  
 Genest  
 Giguère  
 Glover  
 Goguen  
 Goodyear  
 Gourde  
 Groguhé  
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)  
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
 Hawn  
 Hiebert  
 Holder  
 Hughes  
 James  
 Julian

Adams  
 Aglukkaq  
 Albrecht  
 Allen (Welland)  
 Ambler  
 Anders  
 Andrews  
 Ashfield  
 Aspin  
 Ayala  
 Bélanger  
 Bennett  
 Besskin  
 Bernier  
 Bezan  
 Blanchette-Lamothe  
 Boivin  
 Boughen  
 Boutin-Sweet  
 Braid  
 Brison  
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
 Bruinooge  
 Byrne  
 Calkins  
 Carmichael  
 Carrie  
 Charlton  
 Chisholm  
 Chong  
 Chow  
 Clarke  
 Clement  
 Côté  
 Crowder  
 Cuzner  
 Davidson  
 Day  
 Devolin  
 Dion  
 Donnelly  
 Dubé  
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)  
 Dykstra  
 Eyking  
 Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)  
 Flaherty  
 Foote  
 Freeman  
 Gallant  
 Garrison  
 Genest-Jourdain  
 Gill  
 Godin  
 Goodale  
 Gosal  
 Grewal  
 Harper  
 Harris (St. John's East)  
 Hassainia  
 Hayes  
 Hoback  
 Hsu  
 Jacob  
 Jean  
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)

*Private Members' Business*

Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leslie
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Michaud
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nicholson
Norlock	Nunez-Melo
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Pacetti
Papillon	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Poilievre
Preston	Quach
Rae	Rafferty
Raitt	Rajotte
Rankin	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Scott	Seeback
Sellah	Sgro
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
St-Denis	Stewart
Storseth	Strahl
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Toone	Tremblay
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Turmel
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Valeriotte
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 — 276

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

● (1815)

**ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS****Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC)** moved:

That the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be instructed to: (a) consider the election of committee chairs by means of a preferential ballot system by all the Members of the House of Commons, at the beginning of each session and prior to the establishment of the membership of the standing committees; (b) study the practices of other Westminster-style Parliaments in relation to the election of Committee Chairs; (c) propose any necessary modifications to the Standing Orders and practices of the House; and (d) report its findings to the House no later than six months following the adoption of this order.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the support I have received from all sides of this House—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I ask people to take their conversations out into the lobby. I cannot hear the member, who is about 20 feet from me.

**Mr. Brad Trost:** Mr. Speaker, my motion today is a very simple motion in many ways, but it is also a motion that is very profound. Fundamentally it is about democracy, about changing where we go and how we do. I should make it clear at the beginning of my remarks that my position is not a criticism of any particular committee chair. It is not a criticism of the current system. However, every so often we can look to those things and decide what is good, what is better and what is best. As a wise man once said, our good should be better until our better is best. Let us never rest until our good is better and our better is best.

Politics is a place where reality is not always reality. Often perception is reality. It is important for us in this place, as we deal with all of our institutions, including committees, which is one of our most important institutions, to make sure that both the practice, the perception and the reality all come together to bring an image of democratic accountability in all that we do.

Currently the House procedure for election of committee chairs is an election directly at committee. That has not always been so. In fact, a little over a decade ago it was common and normative for all committee chairs to be appointed. Starting with a debate in the 37th Parliament, and I have probably not located all attempts for reform, motions were moved by opposition members. My understanding is that government members were also interested in doing that. Reports were done at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

One of the best sources for finding information as to what the parliaments of the day were thinking, and their desire to make committees more democratic and responsible, is from one of the supply days. That was moved in 2002, by Mr. Reynolds, then a member of the Canadian Alliance. Interestingly, it was one of those situations where there was a considerable degree of cross-party co-operation. In fact, the NDP, which at that time was one of the minor parties, traded with the Canadian Alliance to move up its supply day and give it support.

*Private Members' Business*

Some of the remarks from then on the value of an independent chair are very apropos today. As the then member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, the now Minister of National Defence said:

An independently elected chair...would demystify and give greater credibility to the process. What we are talking about is not the election of opposition members to fill those important positions of chair, but government members.

Then the NDP member for Pallister, Mr. Dick Proctor, said:

Frankly we make it far too easy for the media to cover politics in a very partisan fashion. There is the high angle shot which highlights, maybe even exaggerates, the neutral zone between the government side and the opposition side.

This was the sentiment expressed by members from all sides of the House during that day. Growing out of that debate and the discussions around it, we evolved to a place where we now elect committee chairs through our direct votes at committee.

It is interesting that one of the most important things brought about was that we need to have a secret ballot, otherwise, what is the point? However, we only need a secret ballot when there is more than one candidate applying for the post. Again, it is not a criticism of anyone in particular, or a situation, but because of the small size of our committees, five to seven members, it is such a small electoral pool that effectively members feel compelled to only vote for one candidate. In many cases these candidates have been excellent and outstanding personnel, who have served the job well.

Again, to my point, let us strive for what can be better. Let us look to other examples and begin to study what we find is best. I was doing some research on what I was going to move for my private member's motion, and I came across the way the British Parliament has evolved on this issue. The British Parliament has moved from a system where its committee chairs were, first of all, appointed. Eventually, I believe in 1979, it began to have a backbencher's committee to select, through the whips, the prime ministers and leaders, appointments to its chairs, vice-chairs, et cetera, of committees.

● (1820)

Then, in 2009, if memory serves me correctly, the British parliament produced a report calling for changes to the parliamentary system to again enhance and grow the perception and reality of democracy. It came up with a rather interesting and, I think, novel solution that it is now reviewing in a very positive fashion. It is saying that perhaps it should throw open, at the beginning Parliament, to all eligible members, since cabinet members, the Speaker and other members would not be eligible, the opportunity to present themselves to the wider, broader judgment of the House. It did that in a very new fashion, and there are some things that are slightly different in its system, so we cannot bring every idea. It put forward this idea so there would be greater accountability and more interest, power and authority for the committee chairs, a greater sense of independence and belonging.

Those are some of the underlying reasons I am proposing this study be discussed by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and then come back to the House with some ideas for the House to decide.

My first rationale for the change is that it enhances the reality and perception of democratic accountability. Again, we have some

outstanding chairs and the underlying idea of electing chairs by committees is a wonderful idea, but let us be practical. When there are 12 members on a committee, 5 to 7 depending on a minority or majority situation for the government, there will not be the same vigorous participation, broader discussion and suggestion of ideas to try to attract support for committee chairmanships.

Therefore, people then get a perception, which may not be the reality, and different members can argue about whatever, I am not taking sides on this, that there is not an actual election, only a fake election and an appointment. In a situation such as that, a committee chair and therefore the entirety of the committee, loses a degree of democracy, which may not necessarily be reality. Perhaps the same person might win by the unanimous consent of the House, but it is the perception of democracy. In a democratic system, a lot of what we do is based upon perception. We get our authority from our constituents because they entrust things to us. We get our authority because we stand in our places and speak on their behalf. It is not through raw force, it is through the consent of those who we govern that we hold our offices in this place.

A second rationale for why I am suggesting that we study these changes is that it requires members to engage on what the characteristics are of a good committee chair. I have had opportunities to serve on many committees and be a member of caucuses, and so forth, and there have been some delightful, wonderful, good senior members, who, frankly, cannot chair a meeting. They are wonderful constituency people, they are honest as the day is long and are collegial, but sometimes they may not have it. To be frank, sometimes we may not always want to directly confront them about this on a very small issue.

This would provide an ability to start to discuss and bring forward what the characteristics are and who are the individuals. We may not always concentrate so much on dividing up the membership, but to think in a broader sense of who would bring the most credibility and respect to a committee and who would actually then engage in processes and behaviours to bring people together in ways that are profitable for all members.

That brings me to point three, which would enhance the reality and perception of impartiality. I will address later the fact that I am not suggesting we change the ratios of government and opposition members for committee chairmanships. That is something the British parliament has that is different. That could be for another debate. It is interesting and may even be profitable, but I am not go there today.

We have a situation now, particularly since all of the elections for committee chairs are unanimous, where the perception is that the committee chairs are not always impartial, though not everyone may have that perception. There are many committee chairs who I am sure are viewed impartially by all members of the House, but on occasion that has been a problem, in my observation.

With regard to the speakership, members from all parties elect and vote for Speakers. The previous Speaker, Mr. Milliken, a Liberal, did a fine job in the Speaker's chair. To get elected in a minority Parliament, he had to have support from more than one party.

*Private Members' Business*

●(1825)

This is the thing. When we personally vote for colleagues or politicians, we give them a certain degree of credence. We want those people to succeed. We look at them through a different lens. Therefore, both the perception of impartiality and the reality of impartiality are supported.

It also strengthens a committee's ties to the broader House. A committee should be in charge of its own destiny. I am not disputing that. I am not in any way, shape or form trying to take that away. However, a committee has a relationship and a responsibility. It derives its powers, in a broader sense, from the House and also reports back to the House. The broader House trusts each of us on committee to become a specialist to do things, and this back and forth of democratic interaction, and a sense of a stake in each committee, would be a good thing.

This is my most important point. It opens up the discussion for more democratic change. My change is a minor change. Even if this change did not go forward, I would consider it a success if other very good ideas to change committee structure, membership, debate in the House—structure the debate the way we do our caucuses—and the way we elect officials in our caucuses came forward from this. I am hoping to use this as a springboard to encourage other members to engage in a review of the Standing Orders and to think about what we can do to make this a better place.

Our Westminster system was not handed down like the Ten Commandments. It has evolved over the years. Perhaps because it was written by mortals, unlike the Ten Commandments, there is not a degree of perfection in it. However, the broader community is now talking to us through social media, the Internet, various telecommunications and other things we do. They are demanding a broader, more direct sense of accountability. Therefore, we need to be open and discuss how we can make more changes. In fact, I am encouraging members to make amendments, suggestions, etcetera. At this stage, it may be a little complicated, but we need to have that discussion on a wider range of issues.

Again, my experience has been that in most of these committees, only one candidate stands for office. This would actually make it a vigorous election, with the usual suggestions, or what I would call campaign promises, for improvements, better behaviour, better action and better quality of chairmanships. Again, I think we have had excellent chairs. There is no criticism implied.

I will respond to a few quick questions that have come to me.

One of the major concerns for both sides of the House is that the eligibility of the chairs would be affected. Who could be there? Some members of the opposition were concerned that with a majority government, the government could then elect all 24 chairs. That is not what I am proposing. I am proposing that we keep the 24 we currently have.

The concern has also been expressed by members on the government side that in a minority Parliament, all 24 chairs would then be from the opposition. That is expanded and dealt with in other Standing Orders and is not what I am dealing with today.

The other point often brought to me is why we do not go further. I know many members here are veteran members. They understand that with private member's business, if we go too far, it gets too complicated. That goes back to my point that I am using this as a springboard to try to inspire other people to bring forward other broad ideas.

People have talked about vice-chairs and other membership-related issues. I am open to all of those ideas. However, I would encourage other members to bring forward those ideas for another broad debate and try to build consensus.

I thank all members of the House, because at this point, I have received support on this issue from, I believe, every single party, including from the corner populated by the independents. I thank all members for their positive input and ask for their constructive and positive criticism.

●(1830)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have seen some interesting bills today.

I have a question for the hon. member. First of all, what does he consider to be a good chair? How would he define a good chair? What are the criteria for becoming a good chair?

We saw this when we voted for the Speaker of the House. When a party has a majority, that party's candidate will win, of course. The only time there is any kind of democracy is when there are two, three or four candidates from the same party. Then there could be several votes.

How does the member think democracy fits in when we are voting for a committee chair within this structure?

[*English*]

**Mr. Brad Trost:** Mr. Speaker, the member's excellent question goes to the point of what I am trying to do. Currently, we effectively have only one candidate for every post. This would encourage several candidates to run for a post.

In Great Britain, four candidates ran for the same post on one of the committees. Four members of the governing Conservative caucus appealed to all 650 members. The Conservatives do not have a majority government in Great Britain so whoever won definitely received votes from the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, or the minor parties. In that situation, with the preferential ballot, I suspect the winning candidate did not get selected on the first, second, or maybe even the third ballot.

In answer to the first part of the member's question about what makes a good committee chair, in my personal opinion and observation it is someone with good temperament and character, someone who is honest, fair and has integrity, someone with an open personality. The individual must be receptive and balanced, and be able to work back and forth, someone with a good sense of humour. Other things could be added to that, but I look for someone with a good temperament and good character when I look for a good committee chair.

*Private Members' Business*

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague for his initiative. I will have the pleasure of giving my own views about his motion in a couple of minutes.

Could my colleague expand a bit more on international examples of other parliaments that would be relevant to this matter?

**Mr. Brad Trost:** Mr. Speaker, if memory serves me right, the research note that I pulled out from the Library of Parliament indicated that Australia and New Zealand have a similar system to ours with respect to election in and around committees. It is the British model that I am asking us to look at in a broader, direct sense. That is where this motion is going.

Before the British parliament is fully set up and people are sitting on committees, members start to campaign. After the speaker is elected they then vote with a large preferential ballot. I have never seen this ballot. I do not know if it is huge with 34 different committees on it. It is numbered one, two, three, and four. In the case of the committee that I noted, and looking through some of its transcripts, four candidates ran for the position. With a preferential ballot, they would have chosen candidate one, candidate two, candidate three by default. That is the British system. In the British system, eight of its committees in the first run through were not contested. Eight members were elected by unanimous consent of the House. They had the experience and the views that members were looking for. That is the British model and that is what I am looking for.

My understanding is that the Australian and New Zealand system are very similar to what we have.

• (1835)

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the sentiment that my colleague has expressed, that this could lead to a broader discussion on democratic reform in Parliament.

I just want to ask him one question. In the first session of a new Parliament does the hon. member see any particular challenges because of so many new people in most new Parliaments in the system that he is proposing?

**Mr. Brad Trost:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague raised a fairly valid point because of what has happened frequently in Canadian history with a large number of new MPs coming in. It would therefore be unlikely, but not impossible, for rookie members to get elected as committee chairs. It would be fairly difficult to get to know personalities and so forth before Parliament gets going. That is the situation the way it is now. When one is brand new to a committee, what does that individual know about the person who is running for committee chair? Newer members of Parliament historically, whether de facto or officially, tend to get mentored and turn to veteran members of Parliament for advice and knowledge about colleagues. I suspect that would happen. Every new member has a different personality and would react in a different way.

[Translation]

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as the member for Toronto—Danforth and parliamentary and democratic reform critic for the NDP, I am pleased to speak to Motion No. 431, moved by my colleague from Saskatoon—Humboldt.

It is a simple motion, but it is also a very surprising and worthwhile motion.

The motion asks that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs conduct a study to consider the election of committee chairs by means of a preferential ballot system by all the members of the House.

Here is how it currently works. Since November 2002, pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), chairs of standing committees are chosen by committee members, as the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt pointed out.

When more than one candidate is nominated for the office of chair, the election is conducted by secret ballot within the committee. However, in practice, as the member just said, the convention is that the party whips determine which members of their caucus will be put forward for the positions each respective party is allowed pursuant to the Standing Orders of the House: either committee member or committee chair.

As things stand, committee chairs have to satisfy committee members that they are being impartial and exercising good judgment.

This system has been around for nearly 10 years and seems to work fairly well; few have criticized it. I am not saying that everything works perfectly all the time. For example, during the past two years, some chairs have been unable to manage committee business in such a way as to give opposition members a fair opportunity to prepare for meetings involving witnesses or to present amendments with sufficient notice.

The member for Saskatoon—Humboldt presented this motion to temper the dominating influence of the Prime Minister's Office and other political parties on aspects of parliamentary life and MPs themselves.

The NDP welcomes research and studies that could help improve the democratic character of our system.

As the critic for democratic reform, I am wide open to the idea of studying the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt's motion, especially given that the United Kingdom recently adopted a similar system.

The NDP is actually in favour of improving several parliamentary practices to achieve a better balance between legislative and executive power and to relax the strict control of the Prime Minister's Office over parliamentary life.

That is why we are in favour of studying the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt's motion.

Our reasons are simple. Even though there is no urgent need for reform, and even though some parliamentary reforms are more of a priority than this one, there is nothing stopping us from taking a serious look at this issue.

The NDP has always advocated for more open, more transparent democracy. Canadians know that.

*Private Members' Business*

No doubt the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs will do some very interesting research that could potentially be of great value to Parliament. As a member of the committee, I look forward to participating in that process.

However, before anything else, there are some key aspects that we would like to talk about during the committee's study to ensure that they are given due consideration. I am talking about the principle of gender equality and maintaining the practice of reserving some committee chair positions for the opposition.

● (1840)

The hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt felt that this was important, and I thank him for raising the issue.

We must also think about the voting method used. For example, would votes be secret and confidential or not? We must also see whether the preferential ballot being proposed by the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt is the best election procedure for the situation of our Parliament, the composition of our Parliament and our House of Commons, the way we operate and our traditions. We certainly need to hear from witnesses who have the social science expertise on this.

The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs will examine this motion. This study will be added to the long list of proposed amendments that the committee has to examine.

Is the government just as interested in parliamentary reform as the official opposition? It is not quite clear. However, yesterday's events and the wise ruling of the Speaker of the House give me hope that things might change. Perhaps we will see more interest in this from the Conservative backbenchers and maybe even from the rest of the party. We will see.

In this regard, there are a number of other parliamentary reforms that come to mind. I would like to mention a few.

The first is to limit the systematic use and abuse of in camera proceedings in committee, which decrease transparency and impartiality.

The second is to more strictly enforce the objectives of the statements made under Standing Order 31. These days, the time for members' statements is being misused by many members—most but not all of whom are Conservatives. They use this time to launch attacks and spew drivel from the Prime Minister's Office.

The third is to limit the government's use and abuse of time allocation motions in order to stop the Conservatives from systematically limiting debate in the House of Commons. In this regard, it is important to note the November 2011 motion moved by the NDP member for Windsor—Tecumseh, which would give the Speaker of the House of Commons the authority to determine whether the grounds for the time allocation are reasonable.

The fourth is to modernize the process for tabling petitions in order to allow for online petitions. This was suggested in part by the NDP in the motion moved by the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas in February.

The fifth involves the reform of the procedure for making amendments in committee. Under the Prime Minister's watch, almost

none of the opposition's amendments have been accepted. It is important that the work of the committee be recognized and put to better use.

● (1845)

[*English*]

To conclude, I have only listed a very few of many dozens of reforms that come to mind. There are many—as I have said, into the dozens—of changes that could enhance our parliamentary democracy to ensure Parliament functions honourably, effectively and in a dignified way.

In the short term, we must, through a combination of procedural reform and incentives, change the prevailing parliamentary culture and resuscitate and then deepen our disappearing parliamentary traditions, collegiality, cross-party co-operation in the public interest, and civility. Prime ministerial power must be ratcheted back in favour of a return to a more robust form of responsible cabinet government, respect for Parliament as the executive branch's conscience and its commander, and multiple levels of greater accountability through greater transparency.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our colleague, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt, moved the following motion:

That the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be instructed to: (a) consider the election of committee chairs by means of a preferential ballot system by all the members of the House of Commons, at the beginning of each session and prior to the establishment of the membership of the standing committees;...

This procedure would replace the current procedure, in force for the past 10 years, whereby committee chairs are selected by secret ballot within each committee. Of course, the goal of this reform would be to give all members greater powers relative to the pressure they may receive from their party leadership, and especially from the Prime Minister's Office, since we are operating under a majority government.

Indeed, it would be harder to control these secret ballots if there were hundreds of people voting, rather than just a dozen or so. It would be easier to conceal one's vote and therefore possible to vote more freely, without any pressure from party leadership or the Prime Minister.

I completely understand where this proposal is coming from. It is part of the democratic surge that has recently come from the government backbenches in response to the Prime Minister's authoritarianism and the PMO's heavy-handedness. This is a very compelling notion, and I wish to congratulate our colleague on this. However, as the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth said, there are other, more important reforms that need to be made in order to restore and rehabilitate our parliamentary democracy.

I would also like to emphasize the need to limit the right of the government majority to force committees to meet in camera. This right has been abused, which undermines the transparency of parliamentary activities.



*Private Members' Business*

• (1850)

[English]

I will also mention time allocation, which has been abused. It is not good for our parliamentary democracy. As well, the right of the government to avoid the House and prorogue when the government wants to should be limited, and there have been huge abuses of that recently. Also, there are the mammoth bills that prevent members of Parliament from debating and voting on specific issues, as we should do in a healthy parliamentary democracy. These areas are much more important to reform than what is being proposed. However, that being said, I want to congratulate my colleague on his motion and I think it would be helpful to consider it carefully.

[Translation]

The Liberal opposition will support this motion, but our support is motivated by the fact that the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt had the wisdom to recommend that his idea be studied closely before the House considers implementing it. Actually, as attractive as it may be, the idea of having committee chairs elected by the House raises some questions that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs will have to examine thoroughly prior to submitting its report to the House in six months.

[English]

Therefore, I am glad that this motion is only asking for the matter to be referred to committee for study since it does raise some questions in my mind, and I will list some of these questions.

[Translation]

First, is this a secret ballot or a recorded vote? Fortunately, our colleague made it clear in his speech that it was a secret ballot. If it were a recorded vote, the reform would be meaningless. However, the motion does not specify the type of vote. I am asking the question just to make sure. I am assuming that the hon. member really does have a secret ballot in mind, as he said in his speech. A recorded vote could very well end up being whipped.

In addition, a secret ballot is an easier way to hold a preferential vote, which is what the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt is advocating. At first glance, I think he is right to advocate a preferential ballot, but that is something that the committee will need to look at.

Second, are there any precedents? Our colleague has just mentioned the precedent of Great Britain, which is relatively recent. In addition, my understanding is that it has not been put in place yet, because the chairs were elected unanimously in that case. I am not aware of any other parliaments, with the exception of the British Parliament, that use this practice.

The motion asks us to study the practices of other Westminster-style parliaments. That is a good idea, but why stop there? Why limit ourselves? Why do we think that Great Britain, Australia or New Zealand are the only countries that can teach us something?

The parliaments of France, Spain and Germany have committees. I do not understand this reluctance. This is the tendency not just of my colleague, but of our entire system. As a minister, I would ask for international comparisons, and all I would hear about was New Zealand. I really like that country, but I do not understand why we

are so reluctant to venture outside our small circle to learn from the rest of the world.

I hope that we will consider more than just Westminster-style parliaments. I understand the fact that we have a long-standing relationship with those countries, but we can learn from other countries as well.

Third, does the committee not run the risk of losing some of its authority over its chair? That was studied.

[English]

Indeed, currently, should the committee lose confidence in its chair, it has the ability to pass a motion and remove the chair. The committee then elects a new chair from among its members.

If, however, the chair is elected by the full House of Commons, would the committee have any right to vote non-confidence in its chair? Would the committee have to send a motion to the House indicating it had lost that confidence and request that the House elect a new chair? This may be a solution, but it is something at which we will need to look.

[Translation]

Fourth, we have to consider the arrangement with the upper house.

[English]

Indeed, joint committees often have co-chairs, one from the House and one from the Senate. It would certainly be a problem if MPs elected the Senate co-chair, but would the Senate co-chair selection be limited to a vote by senators on the committee, or by the whole Senate?

Would a co-chair of a joint committee elected by one of the two chambers have more authority than one elected only by committee members?

[Translation]

Fifth, we must protect the prerogatives of the opposition. I am pleased that our colleague mentioned that in his speech.

• (1855)

[English]

Indeed, some committees are required to have opposition MPs sit as their chair. This is especially important for committees that hold government to account for its spending, such as the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the government operations committee.

The Standing Committee on the Status of Women and the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics are also chaired by opposition members.

Currently Standing Order 106(1) requires committee members to elect an opposition MP as chair of their committee.

However, the House is not bound by the decisions of previous Houses, and we will have to move very carefully to ensure this tradition is maintained.

*Private Members' Business*

[Translation]

Sixth, there is the opposite concern of protecting the government. It will need this protection when it is a minority in the House, and there is the risk that all chairs elected will be from the opposition. That is a concern my party has about the coming years.

Finally, there is the thoroughly Canadian concern for striking a balance when appointing committee chairs: we have to strike a balance between males and females, francophones and anglophones and also the regions. Not all chairs should be from Ontario, for example.

Would a preferential ballot of all members protect these balances?

In closing, these are questions that could help guide further study of this matter. Should committee chairs be elected by all members?

The Liberal opposition is willing to provide assistance in order for the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to report back in six months.

[English]

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to participate in today's debate on Motion No. 431 on the process for selecting the chairs of committees of this House.

The first part of the motion would require the procedure and House affairs committee to consider the election of chairs by means of a preferential ballot system by all members of the House. The second part of the motion would require the committee to study the practices of committee chair elections in other Westminster-style parliaments and table its findings within six months of the motion being adopted, including any necessary modifications to the Standing Orders.

Before I begin, members of this House will know that our current system for electing committee chairs involves the election of committee chairs by members of each committee. Under this system, Standing Order 106 provides that at the start of every session, and when necessary during a session, each standing or special committee shall elect a chair and two vice-chairs. When more than one candidate is nominated, an election is conducted by secret ballot. This system is consistent with the view that committees are the masters of their own affairs.

These rules for electing committee chairs have been in operation for over 10 years. I believe it is fair to say that the current system functions relatively well. Prior to this motion coming forward, I had not heard of any major issues with the current system.

That said, I would like to remind members of the circumstances under which the current rules were adopted by the House. In October 2002, an opposition day motion was brought forward by the then official opposition, the Canadian Alliance Party. The motion proposed to change the Standing Orders to require the election of committee chairs by secret ballot. The rationale for the motion was that committee members should have the freedom to vote by secret ballot for the member of their choice to be chair.

The House agreed with that rationale and adopted the motion with an overwhelming majority of 174 to 87; in other words, the House voted to adopt the current system of electing committee chairs by a

margin of two to one. Members of all recognized parties at the time supported the motion. In fact, there were over 30 members who supported the motion who are still members of this House today. I should note that although the previous Liberal government did not support the motion, many of its members did.

With respect to other jurisdictions, I would like to point out that most Westminster-style legislatures have the same system we do with respect to electing committee chairs. Australia and New Zealand, and most provinces, for that matter, have systems for electing committee chairs that are essentially the same as the approach currently used by this House. An exception to this general approach is the United Kingdom, which only recently changed to a preferential ballot system for electing committee chairs, in 2010. That was further to mounting public pressure due to patronage-related expense scandals.

With respect to our Canadian system, it should be noted that the Standing Orders already include a provision for a review of the operation of our rules by the procedure and House affairs committee. That occurs in each Parliament, as it is currently doing, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(a) and House order from February 17, 2012.

I believe that it is important that any changes to the rules of the House be carefully considered and be based upon parliamentary principles and traditions that reflect the interests of its members. Prudence, due diligence and broad support among members are extremely important before making any significant changes to the Standing Orders.

That being said, the motion before us today proposes a significant change to the manner in which committee chairs are elected. This proposed change raises some important questions and necessary considerations.

Some of these include the following: Is there a pressing need for changing the current system? What is currently not working? What would be the mechanism for removing chairs from their positions once elected? Would all members of the House need to address such a matter?

The current proposal could also lead to some unintended consequences with respect to adequate gender or regional representation of committee chairs. These are important considerations to look at. The reforms to the U.K. model for electing committee chairs were only implemented in 2010. The verdict is still out on the longer-term unintended consequences of its implementation.

Notwithstanding these questions and concerns, I do believe this motion could be improved and would be worthy of support with a simple rewording of sections A and B of the motion.

● (1900)

Currently, section (a) of the motion asks the procedure and house affairs committee to first:

—consider the election of committee chairs by means of a preferential ballot system by all the Members of the House of Commons...

Section (b) of the motion would ask the committee to:

—study the practices of other Westminster-style Parliaments in relation to the election of Committee Chairs.

*Private Members' Business*

On the face of it, the motion as currently ordered is asking the committee to first consider a specific option without having first considered and identified all the options that exist.

I would like to propose a simple amendment to improve this motion. Switching the order of the first and second sections of the motion would create a more logically coherent and ordered motion. It would allow members to review how committee chairs would be elected without first prescribing a particular solution and without presupposing any one specific alternative only after having considered all the options and determining whether a new system of electing chairs would be warranted.

As I said, I am happy to support the motion with a friendly amendment. I hope the sponsor of the motion accepts this amendment, which to be clear, does not change a single word of his original motion, but simply changes the order of sections (a) and (b). Before I propose the amendment, I would like to conclude by re-emphasizing that I believe it is important that all members recognize there are potential important and unintended consequences with the implementation of any change to the Standing Orders.

Before making the significant changes the motion is proposing, there should be a careful and thorough review of the current rules for committee chairs and serious consideration should be given to the potential, unintended consequences. We need to fully examine all potential consequences before we implement this.

Therefore, I move that the motion be amended by replacing the words in section (a) with "study the practices of other Westminster-style Parliaments in relation to the election of committee chairs", and replacing the words in section (b) with "consider the election of committee chairs by means of a preferential ballot system by all the members of the House of Commons, at the beginning of each session and prior to the establishment of the membership of the standing committees".

• (1905)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty to inform hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 93(3) no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or to the motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent.

Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt if he consents to this amendment being moved.

**Mr. Brad Trost:** Mr. Speaker, could I ask for some more time to consider? At this point, if the member in the second hour or another member would move it again, I suspect I would support it. As it is at this moment, I would like to have a little more time.

I am not opposed to it, I would just like a little more time to review it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There being no consent from the author of the motion, the amendment cannot be moved at this time. However, for the member for Oxford, it is possible that he may entertain it at some point in the future in the second hour of the day.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight on the

motion of the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt on reforming how the House elects committee chairs, Motion No. 431.

I would first like to thank the member for his efforts to improve the vitality of our democracy. It was a real privilege to second his motion on this important subject. I look forward to working in this cross-partisan way in the future.

We should always be open to finding new ways of making Parliament transparent and more democratic. If passed, Motion No. 431 would initiate a comprehensive study by the procedure and House affairs committee of the practices governing the election of committee chairs. It further recommends that the study propose amendments to the Standing Orders so that committee chairs would be elected through a preferential ballot by all MPs. In principle, this is a very good idea.

Let me begin my remarks by outlining some of the virtues of this proposal and why we support the motion as it stands currently.

One of the fundamental challenges facing all Westminster parliaments is how to maintain a balance between the legislative branch and the executive branch. In recent years we have seen a troubling trend of the Prime Minister's Office and cabinet exerting a dominant influence over more and more aspects of parliamentary life, as well as over the activities of private members, especially those in the governing party.

In contrast, committees remain the lifeblood of any legislature. They are a forum where MPs can be free from the partisanship of question period and undertake in-depth, thoughtful studies on pressing policy issues. Some of that freedom is currently in play, but this may open it up even more. That is an important thing to try to do.

Committee chairs serve an essential role as neutral facilitators of committee business, including reviewing and amending bills coming through the House. Allowing chairs to be selected in a democratic fashion has the potential to enhance the independence of all MPs, allowing them more freedom to represent the will of their constituents. After all, that is what we are all here to do: to represent our constituents as best we can. Although we do of course organize ourselves using political parties, in the end it is our local voters who vote for us, and it is their voices that should be heard through us.

The motion, if the study were to be done and passed into law, could also ensure greater accountability, as qualified candidates for each committee would be selected by their peers in a transparent and fair manner. It would prevent party whips from using their discretion to make appointments that were purely political in nature, perhaps as a reward for good behaviour to the party. It would not only allow a lot more freedom for members to choose but also increase accountability as the committees progressed in their work.

*Private Members' Business*

The reform would extend the current and long-standing practice of how we elect the crucial position of the Speaker of the House. As mentioned by other speakers today, the United Kingdom recently moved to electing committee chairs in a similar fashion. This came in the wake of the U.K. members' expenses scandal in 2009, which really rocked the U.K. parliamentary system. It was the subject of much investigation and a resignation. A select committee was tasked with studying ways to rebuild public confidence and get citizens more engaged in the workings of parliament.

I was in the U.K. during the time of that scandal, and it really was day-to-day news every day. It really changed the way parties looked at themselves and the way members looked at themselves as parliamentarians. It is very worthwhile taking a lesson from the United Kingdom here.

The select committee recommended chairs be elected by way of a secret ballot using the alternative vote, and this system was put in place in 2010. I would like to quote from a report by the U.K. House of Commons procedure committee that assessed the changes one year after implementation. It stated:

...the move to elect candidates to key posts in the House has been right in principle as a sign of greater transparency, democracy and self-assertiveness on the part of backbenchers, and has also worked well in practice.

Being a political scientist myself, I know we talk a lot about theory. Sometimes practice does not match it, but in this case it seems to have done so, and the idea is very well worth considering. I hope we move toward this system.

Some may have legitimate concerns about how to implement this system in Canada, because we are not exactly like the United Kingdom. For example, we need to ensure that having open elections for committee chairs does not undermine gender equality. That is a very important principle that I would like to see enforced more rigorously, both in this place and outside. Appropriate safeguards must be put in place to preserve what we already have.

We must also preserve the practice that MPs from the official opposition always serve as chairs for those key standing committees that are essential to holding the government to account.

• (1910)

If the ideas in Motion No. 431 are implemented, the dominant influence of the Prime Minister's Office over some aspects of parliamentary life and over members of Parliament would be reduced, and this is a good thing. We can all agree that it is a worthy idea in principle and should be given close study and consideration, as the motion proposes to do.

I would like to underscore the importance of working across party lines on initiatives such as Motion No. 431. It is imperative for us to find common ground in improving our democratic institutions, despite partisan differences and ideological disagreements. Reforming our democracy in simple ways to make it fair, transparent and accessible is a worthy goal we all share. In this vein, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt, as well as the member for Edmonton—St. Albert and many members of my own party, for seconding my motion on democratic reform, Motion No. 428.

My motion would instruct the procedure and House affairs committee to conduct a study and make recommendations, similar to this one, within one year, on how to establish an e-petitioning system in Canada. Similar to Motion No. 431, this represents a practical proposal to reform Parliament in a manner that would enhance the vitality of our democracy. E-petitions would empower citizens to communicate their concerns to their elected representatives and to have the opportunity to set the agenda for debate in Ottawa.

Similar to Motion No. 431, my motion has been endorsed by respected leaders and organizations from across the political spectrum. In the case of my motion, it is Ed Broadbent and Preston Manning, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, Samara and Leadnow.

More broadly, there are few issues as critical to parliamentarians as democratic decline. This is a constant theme that comes up in all Parliaments. Periodically we study this, but it is time to get moving and do something about it.

Fewer and fewer Canadians have a favourable perception of our democratic institutions or consider participating in the political process a worthwhile pursuit. In light of these troubling trends, it is incumbent upon all parliamentarians to take immediate action to engage with Canadians and restore public confidence in the strength of our democracy. Achieving meaningful reforms requires taking a realistic approach that identifies small but critical improvements that members from all parties can agree upon. Bringing e-petitions to the House and selecting committee chairs through fair elections both represent positive steps in this direction.

I would again like to thank the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt for his leadership in this area, and I encourage all members of the House to support our efforts. Even if he is forced to amend his motion, or if it is defeated in committee, I commend him for his attempts here, and I hope he continues to fight the good fight.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills will have approximately a minute and a half.

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt for introducing Motion No. 431 in this House. The heart of his proposal is to have the procedure and House affairs committee consider the election of committee chairs by means of a preferential ballot system by all members of this House at the beginning of the session of Parliament.

This motion is very important, because, as Montesquieu once said, what is key to a just society, to an equitable governance system, is the division of powers. In modern western democracies, we have a formal division of powers between the three branches of government: judicial, legislative and executive. Clearly, the judicial branch is separated from the executive and legislative branches. In our system, the legislature holds the executive to account, and a key component of the legislature that holds that executive to account is the committee system of the legislature. Our legislative committees are what we call our standing committees.

Therefore, the proposal from the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt is an important motion, because it concerns the very heart of the governance of the committee system, which is the heart of our legislative system in government.

• (1915)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Wellington—Halton Hills will have eight minutes and thirty seconds when we resume this debate.

The time provided for the consideration of private member's business is now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, further to the question about employment insurance raised in the House a few weeks ago, we understand that the fight against the EI reform continues.

Over a number of months, people right across eastern Canada have joined together to send a clear message to the minister: they want nothing to do with her reform.

We know that, on April 27, there will be a big rally in Montreal with several thousand participants. Once again, we stress that, in eastern Canada, people simply do not want this reform. We are joining forces with others and we want the minister to understand.

No one is against the fact that there is a reform, because we all know that the system is far from perfect, but real consultation with Canadians is needed to implement a reform based on their needs and not on Conservative ideology.

Why does the minister not back off from her reform immediately and engage in real consultation? Why not get this right?

Consultation is of the utmost importance, but reform of this magnitude also requires impact studies. That is really just basic governance, yet the minister still refuses to conduct an impact study. She acknowledged that there never was an impact study. However, the employment insurance reform has serious consequences.

Does she realize that her reform has major implications for thousands of Canadians? Can the minister tell us what exactly she is basing this reform on? Why did she not think it was a good idea to consult people and study the effect this reform would have before she implemented it?

The minister did not consult anyone, nor did she conduct an impact study. She seems to be basing her decisions on ideology. She does not want an employment insurance system that responds to needs. If she did, she would be doing what it takes to support seasonal industries.

She is imposing quotas of more than \$40,000 per month per public servant. These quotas are not flushing out fraudsters, as she would have us believe. They are creating false economies on the backs of the unemployed and workers. The public servants that need to meet these extremely high quotas are not targeting fraud. They

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

need to find ridiculous reasons for taking employment insurance benefits away from people who really need them, like the claimant who had his benefits taken away because he missed two phone calls from Service Canada.

*Le Devoir* released a Service Canada document that proves that the minister just wants to slash employment insurance. The document states that seasonal workers present a high risk of fraud. Now we know exactly what the minister thinks of seasonal workers. She thinks they are lazy and they scam the system. She simply does not understand that it is the work that is seasonal and that in resource regions, there is no year-round work. She would understand that if she had conducted consultations and an impact study.

I will ask my question again: will the minister share the studies that were conducted or will she conduct real impact studies immediately?

• (1920)

[*English*]

**Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to respond to the question posed by the member.

When it comes to the improvements we are making in employment insurance, I want to remind the hon. member that we did consult with stakeholders when implementing these changes.

[*Translation*]

We talked to people all over the country, including what he calls the resource regions.

[*English*]

We continue to do so. In my own travels, I regularly meet with stakeholders, including individuals, employers, employee associations, labour groups and academics to talk about the important subject of EI.

For example, in the year before the changes were announced in employment insurance, I and my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, consulted with Canadians across the country about how to improve the EI rate-setting mechanism system.

[*Translation*]

Canadians told us they need stable and predictable EI premium rates, and a transparent rate-setting process.

[*English*]

Every year, the minister and I hold extensive consultations across the country in advance of the budget to consult with employees, employers, and other stakeholders about many topics, including employment insurance. The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development travelled to all regions of the country on studies related to skills and labour shortages still being experienced across the country. I can assure the House that employment insurance was discussed by many stakeholders. All of these consultations were considered as part of the ongoing policy process by the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

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Our government strongly believes that a person is always better off working than not. Through our various initiatives to connect Canadians with available jobs, we have increased the labour market information to employment insurance recipients, including skills training, and now with the Canada jobs grant, we are providing direct support to employers to train Canadians for jobs that currently are unfilled. We are confident that under the new rules, employment opportunities will increase as many more people work, leading to greater economic opportunities.

[*Translation*]

I am sure that is what the hon. member would like to see in his own region.

The updates we have made to the EI program encourage and help Canadians to find jobs in their local area that match their skills.

[*English*]

Our common sense approach to EI is in keeping with our government's direction with respect to job creation, economic growth, and long-term prosperity.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Philip Toone:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for her interesting response.

We are aware of the fact that perhaps there were some informal consultations with Canadians in some parts of the country. The problem we have with the reform is that the results of those consultations were never made public. The studies, if there were any, were never released. We are asking once again if any studies were conducted and, if so, we would like to see them. We are particularly concerned about the economic impact of this employment insurance cut.

The Conservatives have made all kinds of cuts affecting workers and benefits, and they have reduced the availability of benefits.

We are not talking about a simple reform whereby people who need EI still have access to their benefits. There are simply not enough benefits to go around all year long. In resource regions, people are terribly worried because they simply do not have enough income to make ends meet throughout the year.

Why this attack on resource regions?

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Mr. Speaker, the changes to the EI program were made to help EI claimants get back into the job market, not to make life more difficult for those who are already facing challenges.

• (1925)

[*English*]

We understand that people who want to work at times lose their jobs, through no fault of their own. Employment insurance is there for them, providing temporary income support while they look for jobs or upgrade their skills. The updates that we have made are fair and supportive and are helping Canadians find jobs as quickly as possible.

As I have said many times in this place before, personal circumstances will always be considered and for those who require EI, it will always be there for them, as it always has been.

[*Translation*]

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP):**

Mr. Speaker, with regard to shale gas, the government's inaction is irresponsible and very dangerous. We know that the industry uses different techniques, such as hydraulic fracturing, to extract this gas. In this process, chemicals are injected into the ground along with very large quantities of water. However, we do not know exactly which chemicals are used. That is a major problem because some of these products are considered toxic, which makes this an even more serious concern.

That is what the former Commissioner of the Environment, Scott Vaughan, revealed in his last report, which was published in February. We also know that shale gas production could double over the next 20 years, but we do not know the extent to which the chemical products used by the industry are harmful to health and the environment. The commissioner has received petitions from concerned Canadians. These dangerous extraction techniques caused an oil well blowout in Alberta and seismic activity in Ohio.

Despite all of these concerns, shale gas drilling and export are not bound by the rules in Canada. Under federal law, pollutant releases must be declared, but this requirement does not apply to shale gas. Why? Should the precautionary principle not apply given all of the unfortunate incidents in the past? What is the reason for this lack of leadership? Is the federal government not responsible for protecting the environment and the health of Canadians? Is it waiting for yet another accident?

The University of Victoria and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives published a report by researcher Ben Parfitt stating that neither the National Energy Board nor Environment Canada studied the implications of shale gas drilling, including its impact on water quality and quantity.

The government keeps shirking its responsibility even though everything points to the fact that Ottawa can and must do something to regulate the industry. The Canadian Environmental Protection Act states that the federal government is responsible for water quality—contrary to what the Conservative government says—and the impact of pollutants on fish and federal and aboriginal lands. It is also up to the federal government to regulate toxic substances.

A working group at the Department of Natural Resources looked at this industry and came to the conclusion that the Government of Canada must better regulate the extraction of underground shale deposits through hydraulic fracturing.

In response to a question that I asked in the House on May 28 of last year in this regard, the Minister of Natural Resources chose to repeat that the issue falls under provincial jurisdiction, when we know full well which federal programs apply.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Nevertheless, a memo written by a senior official from Environment Canada last year recommended that the Minister of the Environment do more scientific research in this area. Departmental staff pointed out that the industry uses millions of litres of water and hundreds of unidentified chemicals.

Finally, the environment minister himself admitted in the House on June 16, 2011, that his department was responsible for regulating toxic substances under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and that the department would intervene where required. His predecessor promised to better regulate this industry.

I am therefore asking the question again today: will the government make it mandatory for companies to disclose the dangerous chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing or not?

[*English*]

**Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to work with my colleague in the House and on the environment committee.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with the viewers of these proceedings tonight that the environment committee recently published a study on urban conservation that was an excellent exercise in committee and a good piece of work that I think anybody watching tonight would want to read because it has some very good principles in it.

On the question put this evening with regard to shale gas, my colleague has made a very long list of different issues. However, I would remind her that for the most part the fact remains that when we look at policy and procedure, oil and gas drilling and production fall primarily within provincial jurisdiction. Therefore, we have to respect the land use planning frameworks that are being adopted across the country and the different regulatory frameworks that fall within provincial jurisdiction with regard to these practices. As an Alberta MP, I have been closely watching the process of land use planning in Alberta. There are numerous other frameworks that regulate and discuss how natural resources are developed. Certainly, this is an area that is of provincial jurisdiction.

That said, there are many implications in my colleague's speech that somehow the federal government was not working to protect the quality of water, air, and the like. There are numerous frameworks in which the Government of Canada has actually put forward policy to ensure health and safety in general, at a macro level, including the Great Lakes water quality initiative, and funding that we have put in place to look at Lake Winnipeg, a water basin that is very near and dear to my heart. Therefore, there are many different frameworks

that the government uses to ensure that Canadians have clean air and clean water. However, it is very important to note that this particular issue falls under provincial jurisdiction.

● (1930)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:** Mr. Speaker, I remind my colleague that the Minister of the Environment himself admitted to the House that his department was responsible for regulating toxic substances under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

We need to adopt higher Canadian standards regarding the use of water in fracturing. For example, we should require companies to disclose which chemicals and toxic products they use and we should impose safety measures for things such as seals on wells.

In 2011, the minister announced that he had asked the Council of Canadian Academies to bring together a group of experts to conduct an independent study on the state of scientific knowledge on shale gas. I asked the committee of the whole what became of that study.

I repeat my question. When will the federal government reveal the results of this study and will it commit to regulating the shale gas industry?

[*English*]

**Ms. Michelle Rempel:** Mr. Speaker, as we close the proceedings here in the House today, it is worth noting and repeating, as I have done many times before in the House, that this is a matter of provincial jurisdiction.

To correct my colleague slightly, it is also worth noting that the government does have a large framework in other areas to ensure the health and safety of Canadians when it comes to assessing chemicals. It is called the chemical management plan. This is an initiative that our government put forward, has managed, and has included extra funding for.

We have a good track record where our jurisdiction applies. However, with regard to this particular issue, it is a matter of provincial jurisdiction.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** 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 7:33 p.m.)





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