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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, May 8, 2013

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 8, 2013

The House met at 2 p.m.

[English]

Prayers

• (1400)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

“MP FOR A DAY” COMPETITION

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to welcome Fabien Lavallée-Imhof to Parliament Hill today. He is the winner of the seventh “MP for a Day” competition, which I organize with Jean-François Léonard, a political science and geography teacher at the CEGEP in Victoriaville.

This non-partisan competition helps young people learn about the realities of life as a parliamentarian, while demystifying what a politician does and familiarizing them with how our democracy works.

Fabien will have an opportunity to meet with ministers, senators and members from all parties. He will see us in action, on and off camera. I am sure it will be an unforgettable experience.

I would also like to congratulate Virginie Parent and Paola Gonzales, who finished second and third in the competition, and to thank the partners who enabled us to give scholarships to the winners: the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste du Centre-du-Québec, the Équipe Sévigny-Baril, the UPA Centre-du-Québec and the Association générale des étudiants et étudiantes du cégep de Victoriaville.

UPPER OTTAWA VALLEY

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have real jobs for real people based on real economic policy.

Under the careful economic leadership of our Conservative government, the Upper Ottawa Valley has a new name: innovation valley north. Companies and people like E.T.M. Industries in Renfrew, J.P. Leclerc, Jeff Campbell, John Robertson, Don Bishop at Bishop Water Technologies, Glen MacGillivray at Glenenergy in Petawawa, Jason Lee at ITAXIA, Graeme Cross at Plaintree Systems, Bob Walker and his team at the new Chalk River Laboratories, Barry Mason at Mobility Lab, Michele Lair at Allen-Vanguard, Lianne Ing at Bubble Technology, Matt Fisher at Pacific Safety Products, Mike Poirier at Nu-Tech, Stéphane Lévesque at SRB Technologies, Jamie Church at Sandvik, David Watson at Hypernetics and John Wilbur at Armprior Aerospace.

These companies are well positioned to take advantage of our science and technology innovation agenda.

* * *

• (1405)

[Translation]

WORLD RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT DAY

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, a day that emphasizes the mutual understanding among communities around the world and the humanitarian causes served by these renowned organizations.

Today, let us think of the millions of people around the world suffering the effects of war and malnutrition and the disastrous impact of climate change.

Without the support of these organizations, many of them would not have shelter, food or health care. Quite often, the Red Cross and Red Crescent are the only organizations allowed to bring aid into disaster areas.

I ask this House to join me in congratulating the millions of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers who make admirable efforts to help communities in need. Let us also commemorate this day to raise awareness of their cause.

Statements by Members

[English]

MOTHER'S DAY

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every year in May we celebrate Mother's Day. We are reminded of the important role mothers play in our lives. We celebrate and praise our mothers with gifts of appreciation and generally make a big fuss over them.

The second Sunday in May is Mother's Day and Mother's Day is now celebrated in 13 countries around the world, including Canada. I am reminded of one of my constituents in Don Valley East. When he heard I was visiting my mother, Chinnamma Daniel, living in Windsor, he rushed off and brought me some flowers. When I asked why, he said it was his way of celebrating Mother's Day. His mother died giving birth to him.

I extend Mother's Day wishes to all mothers in my riding of Don Valley East and acknowledge my appreciation for what they have contributed in all our lives. I urge all members to take time out of their busy schedules to celebrate Mother's Day this Sunday.

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MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Laura Francis from Rose Blanche Harbour le Cou in the riding of Random—Burin—St. George's.

As a fifth-year Bachelor of Commerce student at Memorial University's Faculty of Business Administration, Laura, along with her classmate, Krystal Hobbs, competed in Canada's next top advertising executive competition, run by McMaster University's DeGroot School of Business. There were 141 entries from 30 schools. Congratulations to Laura and Krystal on placing in the top 10, the first students from Memorial University to do so.

After completing the three phases required in the competition, including a 30-minute presentation in front of a panel of 22 judges composed of industry executives, both were awarded internships with General Motors. Laura credits much of their success to the business program at Memorial University and said, "To me, this is really the best prize I could have won. ...To be chosen for an internship is simply incredible. ...I can't wait to get started."

I ask all members to join me in congratulating Laura Francis and Krystal Hobbs on this significant achievement.

* * *

SOCIAL FINANCE

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government understands the priorities of Canadians. Our priorities are our families, the safety of our streets and communities, pride in being a citizen of our great nation and our personal financial security.

We are taking steps to enable communities to tackle local challenges, such as homelessness, unemployment and poverty. We are harnessing private sector capital and business practices to better respond to social challenges through social finance. Social finance is about mobilizing capital to achieve social goals, allowing investors to finance projects that benefit Canadians while introducing private sector best practices.

Already the Boys and Girls Club, the Maytree Foundation and the YMCA are developing social finance concepts. Our government will work with the non-profit and private sectors to develop investment-ready ideas into great social finance pilot projects for our communities.

* * *

● (1410)

HUNGER AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Hunger Awareness Week, parliamentarians of all parties are fasting in solidarity with the dedicated volunteers of Canada's food banks in support of our unfortunate citizens upon whom recent economic troubles have visited their most severe hardships.

There is no more precise measure for these difficulties than the persistent growth in demand for food bank services. Proof of the sheer magnitude of our economic challenge nationwide, demand at food banks has increased by a third since 2008. This escalating need is genuinely pan-Canadian. Explosive demand has been as pronounced in the booming west as in Ontario, Quebec, the remote North and Atlantic Canada.

If surging use of food banks reveals the extent of our difficulties, the amazing nationwide response to their appeals reflects the depth of the Canadian character. I am certain all hon. members will join me in saluting Canada's food banks, in supporting their local work in the year ahead and in redoubling our fight for a Canada of shared prosperity that renders their noble work unnecessary.

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BENTLEY GENERALS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker,

Statements by Members

I stand in this House, feeling just a bit cocky,
To pay homage to the Bentley Generals of hockey.
A group of great men armed with sticks and a puck,
Playing to win the famed Allan Cup.

They went undefeated in round robin play,
Earned a bye to the semis, which they played that Friday.
'Twas a close semi-final against the Kenora Thistles,
But it was the Generals still standing after all of the whistles.

The tournament finals were the very next day,
No rest for our boys as they geared up to play.
The Caribous from Clarendville would be their rival,
All were anxious to see who would win in the final.

The stands were jam-packed on that Saturday night,
Generals fans were a'cheering with all of their might.
The Generals, too, did not disappoint,
Allowing no goals and scoring three points.

The buzzer rang and chaos ensued,
Our proud boys from Bentley at centre ice stood.
Alberta has never seen champs times two,
The first team to repeat and undefeated to boot.

We are so very proud of our little town team,
Representing so well in 2013.
Amid all the cheering, applause and foot stamps,
The Bentley Generals, again, are Allan Cup champs.

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CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the action plan for faster family reunification has been a resounding success. Thanks to our government, there was a 15% increase in family class immigration last year, as we admitted almost 65,000 new permanent residents. This includes a 60% increase in the number of parents and grandparents admitted to Canada, the highest level in 20 years.

By increasing admissions, we have dramatically reduced wait times so that parents and grandparents no longer have to wait a long time to be reunited with their loved ones. By the end of this year, the parents and grandparents backlog will have been reduced by 50%, with wait times cut in half. Since 2006, Canada has welcomed the highest sustained levels of immigration in Canadian history, proving that our government is also the party for new Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]**WORLD OVARIAN CANCER DAY**

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we are marking the first World Ovarian Cancer Day. More than 27 organizations dedicated to fighting ovarian cancer in 18 countries are joining forces to raise women's awareness of this cancer. Ovarian Cancer Canada is one of those organizations.

Symptoms are varied, vague and easily missed. Since there is no reliable screening test to detect the disease, knowing the signs and symptoms remains the best way to save lives. Over 2,600 Canadian women are diagnosed every year, and unfortunately 1,700 women succumb to this disease.

I invite all women to take the time to read up on the symptoms of ovarian cancer. For now, that is the best method we have to beat this disease.

* * *

[*English*]**LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has introduced Bill S-2 to protect first nations women and children, but yesterday, the Liberals attempted to remove this important legislation from the Status of Women committee.

Perhaps the Liberal leader does not want women MPs from this committee to have their say on this bill. We know that he shamefully whipped the members of his caucus to vote against these protections for first nations women and children.

Unlike the Liberal leader, we believe that first nations women and children deserve the same protections as all other Canadians. Unlike the Liberal leader, we are not afraid to say that violence against women and children is exactly what it is: barbaric.

Unlike the Liberal leader, we are not in over our heads. The duly elected female members of the status of women committee are more than capable of handling this bill, and our Conservative government is proud to stand up for the protection of first nations women, children and all Canadians.

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● (1415)

[*Translation*]**CONSTABLE ALAIN DAGUERRE**

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to Constable Alain Daguerre, who served with the House of Commons security services with distinction for the past 12 years.

[*English*]

The House of Commons security guards work diligently and faithfully to protect those of us who work in Parliament. Our guards do exceptional work keeping us and those who visit Parliament safe. Working long hours, they serve all Canadians with compassion and true pride.

Constable Alain Daguerre, who tragically lost his fight with cancer at the young age of 37, was a kind and devoted man and was always there for friends and colleagues.

[*Translation*]

On behalf of everyone in the House of Commons, our hearts go out to Constable Daguerre's friends and family, especially his wife, Vicky, and their children, Sébastien and Nadia. We offer them our sincere condolences.

*Statements by Members***CONSTABLE ALAIN DAGUERRE**

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I too rise to inform the House of the passing of Constable Alain Daguerre of the House of Commons security services. He died on Monday of this week, at the age of just 37, after battling liver cancer.

Constable Daguerre was well known to many of us here on Parliament Hill, where he served for over 10 years.

[English]

I knew Alain and had the honour of representing him as his member of Parliament. I would like to thank him for protecting all of us here on a daily basis, and I would also like to thank his family for supporting him in his work. He provided a great service to his country, and he was a great family man.

On behalf of all Canadians, on behalf of us as parliamentarians and of his many colleagues here on the Hill, our thoughts and prayers go to Constable Daguerre's wife, Vicky, as well as his children, Nadia and Sébastien. Their husband and father will be missed.

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NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE WEEK

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ask any health professional, and they will tell you that the best way to sustain a healthy life is by integrating prevention, diagnosis and treatment. Today I am proud to acknowledge Canada's naturopathic doctors and join them in celebrating Naturopathic Medicine Week from May 6-12.

Every day, thousands of Canadians depend on the services of naturopathic doctors. As primary health care practitioners, they use a blend of conventional, traditional and natural medicine to deliver an individualized and collaborative approach to health care.

Throughout this week, naturopathic physicians will be stepping out of their clinics and spending time in their communities teaching others about the value of naturopathic medicine. In my home province of British Columbia, we are also celebrating the 90th anniversary of naturopathic medicine as a licensed health profession in our province.

On behalf of my Liberal caucus, I thank these dedicated doctors for all they do to support the health needs of all Canadians.

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LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader has demonstrated time and time again that he is out of touch with Canadians from across the country. In a CTV interview, the Liberal leader said that Quebeckers are better than other Canadians, simply because they are Quebeckers. At another time, he said he thinks Canada is worse off because we have a Prime Minister from western Canada. Last week, when the Liberal leader went to Alberta, he tried to claim that our government was not doing enough to support the Keystone XL pipeline.

While he believes he is better than westerners, it did not stop him from trying to pander for their support while he was there. Unfortunately for him, he could not be more wrong. Our government has strongly supported Keystone and Canadian jobs.

While the Liberal leader has adopted the traditional Liberal arrogance by saying that "This country...belongs to us", he should realize that western Canada and western Canadians are not going to fall for cheap politicking from a politician who is just in over his head.

* * *

• (1420)

[Translation]

PUBLIC FINANCES

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the tens of thousands of dollars that Senators Brazeau and Harb have to repay are just the tip of the iceberg. The tab for Conservative senators covers not just fraud and other items, yet to be disclosed, but also millions of dollars that have been wasted on maintaining an institution that is both outdated and pointless.

There was a time when the Prime Minister condemned the Senate and called it "a dumping ground for the favoured cronies of the Prime Minister".

Today, the Senate has become a dumping ground for his friends and fraudsters. He has stuffed the Senate with his bagmen and organizers of election tricks.

Canadians deserve better. They deserve better than a government that has lost track of \$3 million and is sitting on \$29 million in uncollected taxes while it cuts services. On top of that, the government is spending taxpayers' money so that politicians who cannot get elected can live the good life in the Senate.

Canadians deserve a party that is serious about managing public money. In 2015, they deserve the NDP.

* * *

[English]

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Robert Goguen (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the leader of the NDP has been trying to temper his blatant commitment to a \$20-billion carbon tax. The leader of the NDP is angry that Canadians are learning about the reckless tax-and-spend agenda of his party. Is he boiling mad that Canadians have no interest in his \$20-billion carbon tax on everything from food to plane tickets to chuckles from the opposition?

The problem is that the leader of the NDP cannot back away from his tax-and-spend agenda, nor his carbon tax, no matter how angry he gets. Canadians will not be bullied by the NDP into supporting its reckless carbon tax. Canadians want the strong, stable leadership of our government. We will not back down from the leader of the NDP, and we will continue to stand up for hard-working taxpayers, who have no interest in the \$20-billion carbon tax.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board has said that losing track of \$3.1 billion in taxpayer money is just an “internal” matter. The Prime Minister has said it is a “categorization” error. The question is this: Is the money just in the wrong filing cabinet? Is it hidden in the minister’s gazebo, or is the money in the banana stand?

This program has become such a mess that according to the Auditor General, the Treasury Board has simply stopped tracking public safety spending altogether and will not even have a new system in place until 2014. Is this how the Prime Minister deals with losing over \$3 billion of taxpayer money—just stop accounting for it altogether?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General said there is no money missing or lost. There are no red flags. The fact of the matter is this is a question of a form of reporting. The Auditor General has made some recommendations on how to do that better in the future. The Treasury Board has accepted those recommendations and will be moving forward on that basis.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): There are blue flags all over the field, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

If the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, will he support the NDP motion calling for the release of all documents related to this spending? Will he support us or not?

[English]

If the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, as he claims, will he support our motion to give Canadians all the documents about the missing \$3.1 billion?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General, as I just said, said no such thing. In fact, he said something completely different.

He has made recommendations, and the government is following up on those recommendations.

* * *

LABOUR

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the last two years, the Conservatives have attacked collective bargaining rights: back-to-work legislation, bad faith bargaining, burying unions in red tape. Now the Conservatives want to give the Treasury Board the power to cut the salaries of non-union employees at crown corporations as well.

The Bank of Canada is one of those crown corporations. Does the Prime Minister really trust his friend from the Muskokas to tell the Governor of the Bank of Canada how much he can pay his staff?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government remains the underwriter, the backstop, for all financial transactions of all crown corporations on behalf of the

Oral Questions

taxpayers of Canada. This government, unlike the NDP, takes that responsibility very seriously.

We have some crown corporations that have very serious financial problems going forward. We will ensure that the measures they take adequately reflect the needs of Canadian taxpayers and respect the rights of Canadian taxpayers.

• (1425)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives take it so seriously they have lost track of \$3.1 billion.

[Translation]

Interference in Bank of Canada negotiations is just as unacceptable as interference in negotiations at CBC/Radio-Canada, Canada Post and VIA Rail. This increased control presents a real risk of interference. We must protect these corporations’ independence. Over 130,000 Canadians have called on the Prime Minister to stop going after crown corporations.

Will the Prime Minister listen or will he continue to interfere in the business of independent crown corporations such as the Bank of Canada?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the taxpayers of Canada, the government has the final responsibility for crown corporations’ finances. We intend to meet those obligations.

[English]

The leader of the NDP, if he wants, as his people have done, can stand with union bosses in press conferences promising to represent their interests around the bargaining table. That is precisely why the taxpayers of this country will never trust the NDP to handle the finances of this country and is one of the reasons—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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

* * *

STATISTICS CANADA

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we have begun to see the consequences of the Conservatives’ backward decision to kill the mandatory long form census. Experts at StatsCan have confirmed that the data in the Conservatives’ new survey is deeply flawed. It contains contradictory information, and 30% of Canadian families did not even bother filling it out. That is five times more than the last census.

The Prime Minister is not just satisfied to make public policy based on flawed information; that is his goal. We have been calling on the Conservatives to reinstate the mandatory long form census for over three years. Will the Prime Minister finally listen?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Statistics Canada on the success of its approach. It has had more responses to the long form than at any time in history. I will read what StatsCan said:

At the national, provincial level, all of this information is pretty solid. It’s high quality.

Oral Questions

In fact, the survey provides useful and usable data for communities representing 97% of the population. Obviously, going forward, we will look for ways to improve things, but always in a way that respects and balances the need for public data with the privacy rights of Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, young people need our help to get job experience. The Prime Minister does not seem to realize that, and it does not appear that he will, since he did away with the census that could have provided reliable data.

As though that were not enough, people watching the hockey playoffs last night were subjected to the famous action plan ads. Hockey fans have to pay for these ads, which cost the equivalent of 32 summer jobs for our youth.

Will the Prime Minister pull these ads and invest the money in the Canada summer jobs program?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party touched on a few topics.

I congratulate Statistics Canada on the work it does. It says that at the national and provincial levels, all of this information is solid and high quality. That includes useful data for communities that represent 97% of the population. We are always looking to balance the need for public data with the privacy of Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will not have a prosperous middle class if our youth are not able to start their careers with good work experience.

Maybe if the Prime Minister were more of a people person and got out more, or failing that, if he had not cut the census, he would have seen that we cannot afford to waste a cent on budget ads when so many young Canadians need our help.

Will the Prime Minister do young people and hockey fans a favour and pull these action plan ads so we can invest in more jobs for young people this summer?

● (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is obviously important to make sure Canadians understand the measures that have been developed by this Parliament that will benefit them.

This country, Canada, has one of the best job creation records in the developed world coming out of the recession. Canadians need to know about that, and more importantly, they need to know about the Canada jobs grant that is contained in this budget that attempts to make sure we engage the private sector, as well as the education system, in making sure Canadians can get jobs that are emerging which are begging for workers.

There is a great future for young Canadians, and we want to be sure we connect those workers, those young people and the private sector to make sure that Canadians have great opportunities.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister asked me for a positive proposal, so I am giving him one: pull these ads and invest in summer job programs for our youth.

[Translation]

What is worse, these ads become increasingly expensive as we get further into the playoffs. If a Canadian team makes it to the finals, every time hockey fans have to sit through this waste of ad space, they will know that it is costing the equivalent of 45 summer jobs for young Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister pull these ads and invest the money in this program for our youth?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic action plan is a huge success. That is clear when we compare ourselves to other developed countries, and Canadians are proud of that.

In the latest instalment of the economic action plan, we announced infrastructure investments to help build Canadian communities with the support of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. We have programs to support job creation for our young people. Furthermore, we are offering measures to encourage innovation in the manufacturing sector.

We will continue to invest in our economy.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after dozens of NDP questions, it has become crystal clear that Conservatives cannot answer our questions about billions in security spending from 2001 to 2009. This is really about Conservative mismanagement of billions of dollars.

To make matters worse, they cannot even say what they are spending now on their anti-terrorism initiative. Why is that? They scrapped the system in 2010, and guess what? We will not have a new one until next year.

If the Conservatives lost \$3.1 billion when they were trying to track it, now that they do not track it at all, how many more billions of dollars will they lose?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General was quite clear. He, in fact, said:

We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that money was used in any way that it should not have been.

He confirmed that opposition characterizations of these funds as "lost" were inaccurate. He confirmed that he was reporting on an internal government reporting process but in fact there was a reporting process to Parliament each and every year.

In fact, the Auditor General said that departments "are responsible for accounting and reporting their spending through the Public Accounts of Canada".

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government refuses to give us an answer when we ask about the \$3.1 billion, yet it claims to manage public money so well. What a bunch of nonsense.

The Auditor General confirmed that his report on spending on the public safety and anti-terrorism initiative covered the period from 2001 to 2010. However, money has been spent since 2010, and the Auditor General does not know if this money is being properly accounted for.

The Conservatives have said that they will fix their mistakes in 2014. In the meantime, can we know how much money has been spent on this initiative since 2010?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the hon. member brought up the testimony at committee, I want to quote the Auditor General at committee just last week, where he said:

The spending within the departments would have undergone normal control procedures in those departments; so there are internal controls in departments about spending and they would go through all of those normal processes. We didn't identify anything that would cause us to say that we felt that anything was going on outside of those processes.

* * *

● (1435)

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of lost money, I want to talk about tax evasion.

Today's announcement of \$30 million to fight tax evasion does not even cover the cuts the Conservatives have made. There is talk of \$68 million in cuts to a single investigations unit. The Conservatives are sitting on \$29 billion in unpaid taxes, and last year they wrote off \$2.8 billion. What they announced will just not cut it.

Do the Conservatives realize how much damage they have done to our taxation system?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year alone, the Canada Revenue Agency recovered about \$40 billion in tax debt.

The Auditor General was very clear when he said:

The improvements the Canada Revenue Agency has made have resulted in a significant increase in the amount of tax debt being collected.

Our economic action plan 2013 proposes a number of measures to close tax loopholes and crack down on international tax evasion. We look forward to the NDP supporting that budget.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today's last minute announcement does not change the fact that they cut \$250

million from the CRA's budget and are getting rid of over 2,500 talented tax professionals.

The government wrote off \$2.8 billion in tax debt last year alone. That is over \$13 billion that they have written off since they took power. Meanwhile, they are cutting \$68 million from the CRA's accounts receivable and returns compliance department.

When are they going to reverse those cuts? When are they going to show real action on tax cheats?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2006, our government has introduced over 75 measures to improve the integrity of the tax system.

We have increased the size of our international audit program by roughly 40%. Since 2006, more than \$4 billion in unpaid taxes have been identified. That is compared to just \$174 million during the last year of the Liberals.

The efficiencies identified in budget 2013 apply only to internal operations and will not affect CRA's audit or enforcement capabilities.

* * *

[Translation]

STATISTICS CANADA

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada released its national household survey today. The results should normally enable the different levels of government to use their resources effectively.

The quality of decisions depends on the quality of the data available. That quality is no longer there. Before the Conservatives got rid of the long form census, the non-response rate was 6%. Now that rate is 30%.

How can the Conservatives say that this information is as accurate as the information obtained using the long form?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was Statistics Canada that said that at the national and provincial level, all of this information is pretty solid. It is high-quality information. That is what Statistics Canada said this morning.

Our government is still determined to find a balance between the privacy of Canadians and obtaining information. I want to remind my colleague that the survey provides useful and usable data for Canadians who make up 97% of the Canadian population. More Canadians responded to this survey than to the mandatory long form census. People should look at the facts before using scare tactics, the way the opposition does.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the non-response rate went from 6% to 30%.

[English]

Good data means governments can make the right decisions; data that determines where hospitals—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order. If members are feeling ill, they should probably go to the lobby, but not disrupt the chamber.

The hon. member for Scarborough Southwest has the floor.

Mr. Dan Harris: They are sick with themselves, Mr. Speaker.

Data determines where hospitals and schools should go. Data helps provinces and cities deliver vital services. However, Conservatives do not care about good data.

Of course, researchers at Statistics Canada do, but they are not allowed to talk publicly about their work. No wonder the former head of Statistics Canada resigned in protest after the Conservatives gutted the census.

Will the Conservatives now admit that it was a mistake to drop the long form census?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, what this government is committed to is collecting statistical data while protecting Canadians' privacy.

That being said, Statistics Canada just said this morning, and I quote: "At the national, provincial level, all of this information is pretty solid. It's high quality." That is what Statistics Canada said.

To repeat, the survey will provide useful and usable data. We have information for Canadians that represents 97% of the population. This time, with our voluntary approach, more Canadians responded than the last time with the mandatory census.

* * *

• (1440)

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES CANADA

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, then there is the other \$2.5 billion.

According to today's *Toronto Star*, the government has spent \$2.4 billion over the past decade on consulting contracts, yet no details on 90% of these contracts have been made public. This is a black hole of accountability.

Treasury Board guidelines specify that departments are to proactively publish information on contracts and are encouraged to provide a brief description of each contract so the public may benefit. Even their own weak guidelines are being infringed.

What happened to the Conservatives' promise of transparency and accountability?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course our government has a responsibility to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used as efficiently as possible. In some cases that does mean that government does contract out. For instance, first nation nurses in first nation communities, experts in that particular field, are contracted out. I think that is exactly the right thing to do.

We did take steps, as the hon. member mentioned, to ensure there was greater transparency. She has cited a particular report that

indicates that not all departments took that up, and I will endeavour to ensure that is looked into.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about \$2.4 billion in contracts with no expenditure reports. Is that sound management of taxpayers' money?

Here is another disturbing example: a contract worth over \$600,000 was granted to a numbered company with a dead phone at a residential address.

Reports are made in as few as 10% of cases, and 60% of those contracts were granted without a tendering process.

When will the Conservatives clean up the management of the contracting process at Public Works?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used as efficiently as possible.

In some cases, the government signs contracts—for example, nursing contracts—with private sector companies, particularly in first nations communities and rural regions.

However, our government is responsible for taking steps to ensure greater transparency. I may be able to find other ways of achieving this transparency.

* * *

[*English*]

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about \$2.4 billion in secret contracts that were funnelled out the back door of government ministries. For example, they gave a \$600,000 contract to a numbered company with a dead phone on a residential address.

The Conservatives promised ethical accountability; instead they gave us Patrick Brazeau, Mike Duffy and these numbered companies. I think it is like the Conservative government and Conservative senators; they just cannot be trusted to police themselves.

Will the government promise to turn over tomorrow's internal Senate audit to the police to ensure there will at least be some investigation of the senators who have been ripping off the Canadian taxpayers? At least do that.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, none of us yet know what those audits say. They will be looked at by the Senate committee tomorrow. Then, I believe, they will be released. Certainly that is our expectation, as it is very much our government's expectation that the rules must be followed and that if any monies were inappropriately reimbursed, they must be reimbursed to the government.

*Oral Questions***GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES**

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, instead of investing in young Canadians so they can put their education to work, the government spent \$2.4 billion on expensive consultants. Worse, in 90% of the cases, the government failed to publicly disclose what Canadians paid for, despite guidelines instructing each department to provide a description of the work done.

Why is the government blindly squandering billions of dollars on high-priced consultants, while doing nothing to help young Canadians who have to live in their parents' basements because there are no jobs available?

• (1445)

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am hoping the hon. member will agree with me that hiring nurses for first nations health in first nations communities is not somehow an abuse of government or an abuse of the taxpayer. Many of these contracts are for those kinds of services. The hon. member should keep that in mind.

Indeed, we have provisions in place for greater transparency. I take the hon. member's interest in this matter on its face and certainly would be happy to look into the fact that some departments have not increased their transparency.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year, the government stopped funding the community access centres. In Ottawa, there are 17 of them used more than 50,000 times per year by seniors who would not otherwise be able to access Internet-based services and by students to apply for work.

Would the government consider cancelling one of its irritating ads on tonight's Leaf-Bruins game, save \$95,000 and resume funding the community access centres? It is just one ad.

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is confused.

The community access program accomplished its mission. This program was implemented in 1995. It had its time and produced the desired effects. Today, with these good results, it is time to move on to other things. It is time to move forward.

We also announced the broadband Canada program in 2009 to make it easier for all Canadians to access the Internet. Naturally, the members opposite voted against this program.

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the cost of the Conservative action plan TV ad during the first round of the NHL playoffs, \$95,000. A Conservative action plan ad during the NHL finals, \$140,000. Conservative action plan ads during the Oscars, \$200,000. A summer job for a Canadian student, priceless.

While Canadian students are drowning in debt, the Conservatives are trying to advertise, telling them that it is a great day for a swim. Why have they cut 40,000 summer student positions each year since they have come to power?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I completely reject that. Our government is investing in young Canadians in helping them get the skills they need for the jobs of today and tomorrow. That is why we introduced the Canada student grant programs so they could get help with their post-secondary education financing without having to pay it back.

We have also, in the current budget, included funding for 5,000 internships for new graduates. It is time the Liberals stop talking and start acting to support young Canadians in getting jobs.

* * *

[Translation]

AIRLINE SAFETY

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives seem to have decided that the safety of Canadian travellers can now be measured in dollars and cents.

After first allowing fewer inspections, now the government is allowing WestJet to save some money by reducing the ratio of flight attendants per passenger, which is one of the most crucial factors in passenger safety.

For instance, in 2005, when an Air France Airbus burst into flames at Pearson airport, the high ratio of flight attendants is what saved the lives of all passengers on board.

Why is the minister playing games with passenger safety?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the hon. member used the example of France, which has the same regulations as the ones we just adopted, as does the United States.

The International Civil Aviation Organization uses the same ratio that we just adopted. Planes entering Canadian airspace from the United States also have that ratio.

We are confident that it is safe, which is why we approved it.

[English]

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, cutting flight attendants is downright dangerous. Flight attendants are the first responders when there is sickness, a disturbance or, God forbid, accidents.

That is why former Conservative transport minister Lawrence Cannon chose not to change the ratio of passengers to flight attendants. That is why the current Minister of Foreign Affairs also rejected this change when he was at transport.

Why are the Conservatives now gambling with the safety of Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that member should really be sad about how she asked that question. Transport Canada's top priority is the safety and security of Canadian passengers and to suggest anything else is ridiculous.

The standard we now have for WestJet, one in fifty, is done with U.S. carriers. It is the standard used every day, including in Canadian air space. It is recognized by ICAO. We have the best air safety in the world, and it will stay that way.

* * *

● (1450)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last night the Minister of Foreign Affairs admitted Canada could and must do more in the crisis in Syria. We must do more diplomatically and we must do more to help humanitarian victims. Over 1.3 million people have been displaced and refugee camps are at the breaking point. The foreign affairs minister promised last night that he would speak to the Minister of Immigration to help with the refugee crisis and also to help reunite families.

Syrian Canadians are waiting. Where is the action?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as was said last night in the debate, to date our government has provided \$81.5 million to those affected by the crisis in Syria. Of that, \$48.5 million has been used for humanitarian assistance.

Also yesterday in the debate it was clearly mentioned that this government had provided extra services for immigration both in Beirut and in Amman so we could process immigration faster and in accordance with Canadian law.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to take the Conservatives seriously when the immigration minister refuses to meet with a number of groups representing Canadians of Syrian descent.

His colleague at foreign affairs said that we should be doing more. What a good opportunity to meet with these groups that have been waiting for a sign from the minister for months. They want to know what the plan is—and I mean a concrete plan—to accelerate the family reunification process for Syrian refugees whose family members have made Canada their home. Some 70,000 people are dead and 4 million people have been displaced.

What is the minister going to do?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the NDP is wrong.

I personally have met with dozens of members of Canada's Syrian community in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal.

In January, I met with Syrian refugees in Turkey. Last month, I met with Syrian community leaders from the Middle East in Baghdad.

We have already accelerated the family reunification process for families of Canadians who are in Syria. Almost all the files have been finalized. We are also among the countries contributing the most to the UN's efforts to help refugees in the region.

* * *

[English]

LABOUR

Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the tax-and-spend socialist NDP continues to stand with its big union bosses to oppose our government's common sense reforms that would better protect Canadian taxpayers. The NDP continues to advocate for expensive gold-plated public sector pensions and entitlements that most Canadians do not receive.

Could the President of the Treasury Board please update the House on the government's intention to ensure crown corporations are sustainable into the future?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's question is very timely because there are two different opinions in the House.

We on this side of the House, as the government, believe the government has the ultimate financial responsibility for crown corporations. We have to ensure, on behalf of the taxpayer, that crown corporations remain sustainable. The opposition NDP does not believe that. We believe we must look at all options for the financial viability of these crown corporations to protect the taxpayer. The NDP does not believe that. We want to ensure that public sector labour costs align across the board and better align with the private sector. Those members do not believe that. The NDP is on the side of public sector union bosses.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was both sad and fascinating to hear the Minister of the Environment say yesterday that he was honoured to receive the fossil award. Obviously he and his government are from a different era, a time that people from my generation do not identify with. By withdrawing from the Kyoto protocol and treaties to combat desertification and by denying the urgency of fighting climate change, the minister is isolating Canada and making future generations foot the bill.

Why does he not do us the honour of thinking before he speaks?

•(1455)

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious the NDP is still struggling with humour and irony. The inconvenient truth is that while the NDP wanders abroad attacking Canadian jobs, Canadian interests and responsible resource development, our government is actually doing something about it.

We are the first Canadian government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We have decoupled GHG emissions from economic growth. We have implemented a world-class monitoring plan for the oil sands. We have launched a web portal for Canadians to see the results.

We can protect the environment and the economy.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the message from the minister is struggling, period.

The minister says that he is proud to be an international pariah, that he is proud of his “fossil awards”. The Minister of Natural Resources says that he is proud to deny climate science. The Prime Minister says that he is proud to vote against the motion for climate change adaptation. Canadians would be proud if we would actually work with our international partners to protect the environment.

Therefore, why is the minister celebrating the loss of Canadian credibility on the world stage?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the inconvenient truth is that the NDP continues to adopt outrageous positions that defy both facts and science. It characterizes responsible resource development as a disease. This week, it has embraced the open sewer concept of a visiting author.

Canadians recognize that our government has a real, tangible and effective commitment to responsible resource development.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is Conservatives are refusing to work with others and it is harming our international reputation.

However, I will move on to another Conservative failure. The government members have made it clear that they have no interest in the ground-breaking work of the Experimental Lakes Area, but even Conservatives have to see that it makes no sense to throw away four decades of research just because they are refusing to grant road access to scientists.

Will the minister do the right thing and will he allow these scientists to keep their experiments going?

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have actually funded, through the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, over \$135 million in climate change and climate related research. On top of that, which the NDP voted against, we have provided more funding for water related research and the clean up of lakes like Lake Simcoe and Lake Winnipeg.

Oral Questions

We are getting it done, not just on the science front, where the NDP draws a blank on this issue, but we are getting it done for all Canadians.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the lobster industry in the Maritimes is in turmoil again this year. The lobster boats in Prince Edward Island are tied up as a result of the prices for lobster beginning to head down to the \$2.50 mark.

This is an industry with a landed value of \$600 million and exports over \$1 billion. Will the minister agree to meet with provincial ministers and with harvesters to try to sort out a solution that will work for coastal communities in Atlantic Canada?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no other government has provided more support for the lobster fishery industry than this one. We have helped ensure a more sustainable future for the industry over the past few years. We invested \$60 million to help the industry with things like improved marketing and promotion, products and technology.

The member opposite knows full well that it is not the responsibility of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to set the pricing. That is market driven. The processors are under provincial responsibility.

* * *

LABOUR

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this week Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, Leadnow.ca, and SumOfUs.org are providing over 120,000 signatures from Canadians calling upon the Conservatives to stop trying to control the CBC's independence.

The Treasury Board president seems to be under some misconceptions and was a bit misleading. In fact, the wage growth at the CBC lags behind that of the private sector. The Conservatives insist that the CBC is at arm's length, but what they are doing at the end of this arm is trying to put a chokehold on the CBC.

•(1500)

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party of Canada can join with the NDP in seeking to defend public sector union bosses, but we on this side of the House will defend the taxpayer to ensure that collective bargaining agreements across government, including those for crown corporations, are fair and reasonable and that they align across all of these departments and agencies.

We will be on the side of the taxpayer. It is clear now that the NDP has some bosom buddies in the Liberal Party of Canada who are going to fight alongside the NDP on behalf of the public sector union bosses. We will not join with them in that fight.

*Oral Questions***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, government changes to EI are hurting seasonal industries and are causing hardship for middle-class Canadian families.

Premiers, including Conservative premiers, have said the changes are wrong. Conservative business leaders have said it is wrong. Now Atlantic Canada Roman Catholic bishops are saying it is wrong as well. Religious leaders are saying these EI changes are negatively impacting the personal dignity of many seasonal workers.

For heaven's sake, what is the minister going to tell the bishops?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will act to ensure that EI is there for people when they need it. However, when there are opportunities for people to work, we also want to ensure that they have access to those opportunities, and that when they work, they are better off than when they do not.

We do have a mismatch and a shortage of skills and labour in this country. We do not need systems that prevent people from getting to work. We are working to help Canadians who are out of work identify new jobs and get the skills they need for those jobs so that they and their families are better off.

EI will be there for them if there are no jobs available, just as it always has been.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people in Eastern Canada can no longer stand listening to that broken record.

The Conservatives continue to undermine the future of the Canadian tourism industry with cuts to national parks, airport taxes that are too high, regional wharves that are not maintained and so much more. Not to mention the employment insurance reform, which is dismantling the human resource base of the tourism industry in the regions.

Furthermore, cuts to the Canadian Tourism Commission are taking their toll. Canada dropped from 7th to 18th place in the list of most popular destination countries at a time when global tourism is booming.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of tourists go elsewhere, and our businesses pay the price.

Does the minister understand that it pays to invest in tourism, tourism infrastructure and marketing?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government and I understand that keeping taxes low for Canadians and properly managing public funds to achieve a balanced budget result in jobs and wealth.

At the same time, we want to ensure that organizations such as the Canadian Tourism Commission have the funds required to promote our country abroad.

I would like to say to my colleague that spending on Canada's tourism industry has increased in the past 10 consecutive quarters. That is good news. He should be pleased about that.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's plan is not working. The number of tourists coming to Canada has dropped in recent years.

His colleague at Fisheries and Oceans is ignoring the importance of Rocher Percé to the tourism industry in Gaspé. Thus, I would like to ask a minister from Quebec to answer my question.

Some 400,000 people travel to Rocher Percé every year. This creates hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars in economic spinoffs. Busloads of tourists will soon start arriving.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is out of touch with the Gaspé. Could his colleague responsible for tourism answer my question, and tell me his plans for reopening the Percé wharf—

The Speaker: The Hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, safety is our primary concern. Our engineering assessments have deemed that the wharf at Percé is unsafe to both pedestrians and vehicles.

As part of our non-core fishing harbours divestiture program, the municipality and the province have been approached several times over the last number of years to see if they are interested in acquiring the wharf at Percé. To date, there has been no interest.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a country, we are committed to fighting terrorism.

Accordingly, our Canadian Armed Forces have played a significant role in any international fight against terrorism in places like Afghanistan and on the oceans around the world.

HMCS *Toronto* is part of the international coalition to prevent terrorist activity in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Last March, HMCS *Toronto* disrupted a massive narcotics shipment on the Indian Ocean, preventing illegal drugs from reaching our shores.

Can the Minister of National Defence update the House on Canada's contributions to the international efforts on the Arabian Sea and on the Indian Ocean?

● (1505)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from Wetaskiwin, a relentless supporter of the Canadian Forces.

I am pleased to announce for the second time this year that HMCS *Toronto* has again made a major drug interdiction in the Indian Ocean.

On May 6, our courageous soldiers searched a vessel in the ocean and recovered approximately 350 kilograms of heroin and a small amount of hashish.

In March, as the member mentioned, HMCS *Toronto* also stopped and boarded a suspicious vessel and recovered approximately 500 kilograms of heroin.

These remarkable efforts of the HMCS *Toronto* are contributing to international efforts to fight terrorism and illegal drugs and to promote global security. We salute the professionalism of the Royal Canadian Navy.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, lobster prices at the wharf are at rock bottom.

Fishermen across Atlantic Canada are tying up their boats in protest. This is an absolute disaster affecting an industry worth hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of jobs.

Is this just another way to cut the feet out from under the fishers in the Atlantic region, or will the Conservative government work with the fishing industry to try to rectify this serious situation?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would have thought there would have been a more responsible question from the member opposite than the one just posed.

It has been this government that has invested over \$60 million in the last three years to help the industry with improved marketing, innovation, products and technology.

The member knows full well that DFO does not set the price of lobster at the wharf. That is market driven. Of course, the processors are subject to the rules of the provinces.

* * *

[Translation]

ASBESTOS

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, former employees of the Black Lake asbestos mine, located in the Minister of Industry's riding, are fed up. Money from the \$50 million assistance fund promised by the federal government is not forthcoming, and people's EI benefits are running out. For years the NDP has been calling for a transition fund for workers in the asbestos industry, but the minister has consistently refused to act.

Does he understand that his inaction is having a serious impact on people's lives? Can he tell us what he plans to do to help them, or has he simply decided to abandon his own region?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is hypocrisy of the worst kind. The NDP constantly lobbies against natural resources and wants to block all natural resource projects in the country. It even cozied up to the PQ in order to kill the asbestos industry.

We are showing leadership on this side of the House. Considering their position, we did not oppose the Rotterdam Convention, but we decided to create a \$50 million fund for the affected workers. The member is being totally irresponsible and, frankly, is going too far. I invite him to go see the workers. He is from Asbestos, so he should go there and talk to them in person.

Oral Questions

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Montreal Science Centre at the Old Port of Montreal is a leader in science, education, entertainment and tourism.

Can the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, who is also the minister responsible for Canada Lands, tell the House about the new developments regarding the Montreal Science Centre?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Montreal Science Centre will continue to be a part of the federal government presence in Montreal's historic district.

[English]

Today Canada Lands announced that former astronaut Julie Payette is the new chief operating officer at the Montreal Science Centre.

Ms. Payette, an engineer and a veteran of two missions in space as one of Canada's astronauts, will be leaving the Canadian Space Agency later this year to join the Montreal Science Centre.

As my colleague at Industry Canada thanks her for her work at the Space Agency, I am very pleased with her decision to join the Montreal Science Centre. I see great potential in the Montreal Science Centre and in the Old Port of Montreal, and her presence, I am sure, will add to that.

* * *

• (1510)

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, at 9:40 p.m., while every Montrealer was glued to the game between the Montreal Canadiens and the Ottawa Senators, Old Dutch Foods announced the closure of its plant in my riding of Lachine.

We will lose 200 jobs with this closure. This cavalier way of doing things is a tragedy for the 200 families who will no longer have a job.

Will the government commit to working with Quebec to replace these jobs in my region?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a private business matter, but our thoughts are with the families affected.

Our government continues to take measures to stimulate the economy through our economic action plan 2013. These measures are significant, since 900,000 net new jobs have been created across the country.

I assure my colleague that we will not adopt policies to shut down our natural resources sector, tear up trade agreements or impose a \$21 billion carbon tax on Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

I hear the members opposite laughing, but I am being serious. We cannot develop a healthy economy by nationalizing private companies. We will continue to fight for the economy.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the Ontario Independent Appraisers Association is alarmed that the Canada Revenue Agency is now taxing insurance appraisal services, which were tax exempt previously. As a result, auto and home insurance rates will go up. Millions of past invoices may need to be reissued and many small businesses could be forced to close.

Will the minister work with industry to ensure that insurance appraisals will remain tax exempt?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we always will work with small business and in the interests of small business. I will look into that situation and get back to the hon. member.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of two distinguished former Speakers of the House of Commons: the Hon. John Fraser and the Hon. Peter Milliken.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Rob Henderson, Minister of Tourism and Culture for the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just have one correction to make.

It was not just millions of dollars that were lost. This government lost \$3 billion and failed to collect \$29 billion in taxes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaties entitled “Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the French Republic on Social Security” done at

Ottawa on March 14, 2013; “Implementing Agreement Concerning the Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the French Republic on Social Security” done at Ottawa on March 14, 2013; “Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the French Republic Concerning Youth Mobility” done at Ottawa on March 14, 2013; and the “Agreement on Air Transport between Canada and the European Community and its Member States” done at Brussels on December 17, 2009 and at Ottawa on December 18, 2009. An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 11 petitions.

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[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the reports of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie respecting its participation at the bureau meeting of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, which was held in Paris, France, from February 7 to 9, 2013; and its participation in the meeting of the parliamentary affairs committee of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, which was held in Balaclava, Mauritius, from March 14 to 16, 2013.

● (1515)

[English]

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Delegation of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the 61st Westminster Seminar on Practice and Procedure, held in London, United Kingdom, from March 9-12, 2012.

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PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.), seconded by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, moved for leave to introduce Bill C-507, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (obstruction).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill to improve government accountability in Parliament and to taxpayers regarding fiscal matters. As we have seen lately, there are currently no penalties for refusing to provide the Parliamentary Budget Officer with information needed for that officer to do her or his work. Neither are there any penalties for obstructing the Parliamentary Budget Officer's investigations or audits.

Routine Proceedings

The bill I am introducing today would give our budget watchdog real teeth. This private member's bill will finally introduce consequences for failing to hand over requested information with regulatory penalties of up to \$10,000 or six months in jail. I hope members from both sides of the House will support this basic accountability here in Parliament.

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

* * *

AUDITOR GENERAL ACT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.), seconded by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, moved for leave to introduce Bill C-508, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act (obstruction).

He said: Mr. Speaker, in the same vein as my bill on the Parliamentary Budget Officer, I am pleased to introduce a bill that will also mandate fiscal accountability in the government's dealings with the Auditor General. There are currently no penalties on the books for refusing the Auditor General information needed for that officer of Parliament to do his or her job. This bill amends the Auditor General Act to bring in non-criminal penalties for failing to provide information requested by the Auditor General or for obstructing an Auditor General's audit or investigation. Consequences, again, could be a fine of up to \$10,000 or six months in jail. "Accountability" should not just be a slogan used to get elected. The government must take accountability to Parliament and to the people who put us here seriously.

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

* * *

NAVIGABLE WATERS PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-509, An Act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act (Goldstream River).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to introduce the bill entitled An Act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act (Goldstream River).

It is with some sadness, actually, that I have to do this, because all the federal environmental protection for the Goldstream River was removed last year in Bill C-38. The bill, very simply, would re-add the Goldstream River to schedule 2 of the Navigable Waters Protection Act and would take this very significant river on Vancouver Island, which is enjoyed by the public every year, in terms of education, with the salmon runs returning, and give it the protection it deserves.

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

• (1520)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1600)

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

(Division No. 676)

YEAS

Members

- | | |
|---|--|
| Ablonczy | Adams |
| Adler | Aglukkaq |
| Albas | Albrecht |
| Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac) | Allison |
| Ambler | Ambrose |
| Anders | Anderson |
| Armstrong | Ashfield |
| Aspin | Baird |
| Bateman | Bergen |
| Bernier | Blaney |
| Block | Boughen |
| Braid | Brown (Leeds—Grenville) |
| Brown (Newmarket—Aurora) | Brown (Barrie) |
| Bruinooge | Butt |
| Calandra | Calkins |
| Cannan | Carmichael |
| Chisu | Chong |
| Clarke | Clement |
| Crockatt | Daniel |
| Davidson | Dechert |
| Del Mastro | Devolin |
| Dreeshen | Duncan (Vancouver Island North) |
| Dykstra | Fast |
| Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Fletcher |
| Galipeau | Gallant |
| Gill | Glover |
| Goguen | Goodyear |
| Gosal | Gourde |
| Grewal | Harper |
| Harris (Cariboo—Prince George) | Hawn |
| Hayes | Hiebert |
| Hoback | Holder |
| James | Jean |
| Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission) | Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's) |
| Kennedy (Calgary Southeast) | Kent |
| Kerr | Komarnicki |
| Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings) | Lake |
| Lauzon | Leef |
| Leitch | Lemieux |
| Leung | Lizon |
| Lobb | Lukiwski |
| Lunney | MacKay (Central Nova) |
| MacKenzie | Mayes |
| McColeman | McLeod |
| Menegakis | Menzies |
| Miller | Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam) |
| Moore (Fundy Royal) | Norlock |
| Obhrai | O'Connor |
| O'Neill Gordon | Opitz |
| O'Toole | Paradis |
| Payne | Poillievre |
| Preston | Raïtt |
| Rajotte | Rathgeber |
| Reid | Rempel |
| Richards | Rickford |

Government Orders

Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shiple
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Twweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer— 149	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Aubin	Ayala
Bélangier	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Coderre	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Mourani
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault

Toone
Turmel

Tremblay
Valeriote— 118

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SAFE DRINKING WATER FOR FIRST NATIONS ACT

BILL S-8—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

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

That, in relation to Bill S-8, An Act respecting the safety of drinking water on First Nation lands, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the Bill; and

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

The Speaker: We will now have a 30-minute question period.

The hon. Minister of National Defence has a point of order.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, this is a very brief point of order.

In question period, in response to a question, due to time constraints I referred at the end of my question to soldiers only, as opposed to soldiers, sailors and airmen. I would like the record to reflect that.

The Speaker: We will now have the 30-minute question period.

The hon. member for Skeena—Buckley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here we are again. I would like to highlight for the government and for Canadians that the Conservatives have suddenly invoked time allocation and closure on this bill, breaking the record even further still, as though they are somehow in a panic. Having just introduced the bill, they want to shut down the debate on it.

This bill was first called before Parliament on November 26. If it were so important, we wonder what they were doing all that time, from November until now, that suddenly they are in such a panic. They have said that it is about safe drinking water. However, we know this is legislation that imposes safe drinking water responsibilities on first nations without any of the resources to ensure that the water is safe.

It is not us alone who are concerned with this. The Expert Panel on Safe Drinking Water for First Nations stated in its report, “Regulation”, which is what this is, “without the investment needed to build capacity may even put drinking water...at risk by diverting badly needed resources into regulatory frameworks and compliance costs”.

Government Orders

In the three years that this legislation has existed in one form or another, the Conservative government has never once identified where those resources would be for first nations. All it has done is brought in legislation. It has now brought in a hammer to shut down debate because it knows debate reveals the truth, which is that this legislation is flawed without the resources to help keep drinking water safe on first nations reserves.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is more of the same. Again we hear the New Democrats opposing a measure that would fill a gap that exists only on first nation lands in this country. They oppose a bill that would ensure we finally have the legislative framework that allows for the adoption of regulations that would be developed in co-operation and partnership with first nations in order to ensure they have access to safe water and a safe waste water system.

This bill is crucial to ensuring that first nations have the same health and safety protections concerning drinking water and waste water treatment that are currently enjoyed by other Canadians.

It has taken seven years for us to get to this point. Again, we cannot get the co-operation of the opposition parties to pass this important legislation and its closure.

• (1605)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to recognize that never before in the history of Canada have we seen a government use time allocation as frequently as the current government has. This is a Reform-Conservative majority government that thinks nothing of abusing the rules in order to ram through legislation.

A minister can stand up and defend why it is that ultimately the Conservative government would like to see the bill pass, but it is wrong for it to continue to bring in legislation time and time again using time allocation. It disrespects the institution. The government needs to rethink its approach in terms of democracy and how things should work inside the chamber.

My question to the government House leader is this. Why does the government continue to want to use time allocation on so many pieces of its legislation? It has almost made it a natural part of processing legislation through the House of Commons.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, if it were only up to the members of the opposition to support any bills in this House, I think Canadians would be disappointed because not much would happen. There is not a single bill that these parties are ready to support. They must believe that somehow it is political capital-building to oppose that things get done in this country.

Even in November of 2011, the Liberal Party submitted a resolution to this House calling for the government to take action to address drinking water safety for first nations communities. This motion was unanimously adopted by the House and yet the member stands there and opposes the legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would remind hon. members that during this 30-minute debate most of the questions and preference are given to opposition members. We will do our best, of course, to accommodate all members. However, I remind all hon.

members to keep their interventions to about one minute, and the same for responses.

The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: Why does the government not want to hear stories like I would want to talk about during a full debate of the bill?

In my riding, the Pacheedaht First Nation went forward with a proposal to create a safe water system. However, the bureaucracy of Indian Affairs said that it had to get outside consultants to study it. The department spent more on the consultants than the project would have cost. In the meantime, the government also spent more on buying bottled water for the first nation than the project would cost. This is the problem with the bill coming before us. In the end, the first nation had all kinds of bureaucratic regulations and studies, but it still did not have safe drinking water.

Is that what the minister is afraid of hearing about in this debate?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are very used to hearing the doom and gloom from the other side of the House. Those members never talk about the successes.

I would never hear that member tell the House and Canadians that since 2006 this Conservative government has invested over \$3 billion for waste water systems and water systems on reserve in Canada. I would challenge any of them to point to any previous government that has invested so much for water for first nations in this country. It just has not happened. They should follow the leadership of this government and get first nations the treatment they need.

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for seven consecutive years we have been working closely with first nations to address the current legislative gap for safe drinking water on reserve. Our government has been engaging with first nation partners since coming to government in 2006, and we continue to engage with first nations on the proposed legislation every step of the way. In fact, engagement has never stopped.

After the last iteration of Bill S-11 died on the order paper, we took action to address some of the concerns that have been raised by first nations and other important stakeholders, by making a number of amendments to the current iteration of the bill that members have before them.

Can the minister please explain how he has continued to elicit the first nations to address the concerns throughout this process, in particular the opt-in provision?

• (1610)

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River for his question. It is an important one.

As a matter of fact, from the former iteration of the bill to this one, we have incorporated some 10 amendments that had been requested by stakeholders and first nations across the country.

Government Orders

Over the last several months, as members may know, concerns have been raised by various stakeholders regarding the opt-in provision in Bill S-8 for self-governing first nations and those who have already concluded land claim agreements. Specifically, it was suggested that this provision could create jurisdictional challenges and impacts for ongoing and future land claim agreements, among other issues.

As a result, I will be recommending to the committee that will be studying this bill clause by clause that there be removal of this provision from the bill, which will be good news for the land claims coalition and for those self-governing nations.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, rising as we are now to debate time allocation, I want to preempt the usual response from government members who say, “What a shame, the member has raised a process question rather than on the substance of the bill”.

This is a moment to debate process on a time allocation motion, and I am on topic.

At the time allocation motion on Bill C-60, I made the point that members of the House who are not members of large political parties in this place never get an opportunity to speak to a bill when time allocation is applied. I have never been given a speaking opportunity on any bill once time allocation is applied. Last time, on the Bill C-60 debate, the minister said, “Why don’t you just go to committee?”

I will make the point. I have never been allowed to speak at committee due to objections from other parties.

This is an anti-democratic process of constantly imposing time allocation. It is unfair to members in this place and I regard it as a violation of the basis of democracy.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: I note the opinion of the member, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP): Another time allocation motion, Mr. Speaker. First nations are not in favour of time allocation and they are not in favour of Bill S-8.

I have a resolution here from the United Chiefs and Councils of Mnidoo Mnising in which they talk about the fact that first nations have the inherent right to self-government as recognized by section 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982, which includes independent jurisdiction.

The resolution also says that the Conservative government has not consulted with them in order to pass these bills. The resolution says:

Therefore be it resolved that; the UCCMM First Nations categorically reject the following assimilation and termination Bills, Acts, policies and procedures used against our citizens;...Bill S-8 Safe Drinking Water...

Could the minister tell us why he is trying to pass this legislation as quickly as possible without consulting first nations and without the proper input of first nations and their members?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, It is obvious that the hon. member is not really aware of what has taken place for the bill to come before the House.

Engagement with first nations and stakeholders across Canada started back in 2006. Knowledgeable people, those who cared to inquire about the facts, would realize that this engagement includes an expert panel on safe drinking water for first nations. The panel held hearings in nine locations across Canada with first nations and other stakeholders from June to August 2006.

A joint workshop was held between federal officials and the Assembly of First Nations technical water expert group in 2007. Meetings with first nations organizations and provincial and territorial officials were held in 2008 to share information on the proposed legislative framework. From February to March 2009, the government launched a series of 13 engagement sessions across the country at which 544 first nations individuals were present. From early 2009 to early 2010, the government met with regional first nations chiefs and first nations organizations to discuss specific regional issues. Between October 2010 and October 2011 the government engaged—

● (1615)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Perhaps the hon. minister will get a chance to add to that comment at the next round.

Questions. The hon. member for Medicine Hat.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for most Canadians access to safe drinking water is taken for granted. This is not the case for many first nations communities. Bill S-8 is crucial to ensuring first nations have the same health and safety regulations and protections concerning drinking water and waste water treatment that are currently enjoyed by other Canadians.

It has taken seven years to get to this point, seven years of continuous dialogue with first nations, including formal engagement sessions and implementing measures to accommodate the concerns of first nations. The legislation before Parliament today is the result of hard work and collaboration. Now is the time for action.

Could the minister explain how time allocating Bill S-8 would help fulfill this long-standing legislative gap and enhance access to safe, clean and reliable drinking water for first nations communities?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, the previous question on the issue of consultation was important, and I could have gone on and on.

Members may remember Bill S-11 in the previous Parliament. That legislation was also the subject of debate in the House and in the Senate. The legislation has been debated a lot since 2006.

In answer to the question from my learned friend, the Government of Canada and first nations have shared the goal of ensuring that first nations communities have access to safe, clean and reliable drinking water. Progress and improvements have been made to address the provision of drinking water, especially with the investment of close to \$3 billion since 2006.

Government Orders

This legislation would enable the development of regulations, in partnership with first nations and stakeholders, that would increase the level of capacity of first nations to provide their membership with the kind of water that all other Canadians enjoy.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise because I have been listening to the debate going back and forth. The minister is making two different points here, and they are contradictory.

On the one hand, he is saying that the government has been consulting for six years and has been trying to work this problem through. On the other hand, he is saying the Conservatives are now going to ram this legislation through, that they are going to use closure and not allow proper debate. Those are two contradictory points.

One that I also want to add is that I think Canadians all want safe drinking water. First nations want safe drinking water.

I held town hall meetings in my riding. When I consulted with the mayor and council of the City of Coquitlam, they were very concerned about this bill and the impact it would have on their city, working with the local first nations. Of course, we all want to them have safe drinking water, but they were concerned about the standards, the funding and the implications on the city. Where is the funding that would accompany what this bill is talking about? That is of grave concern, not just to us in terms of the opposition members who want to talk about this, but also to cities across this country.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, had the hon. member taken the time to read the bill, he could have explained to the mayor in question that the proposed legislation itself would have no impact whatsoever on non-first nations governments. As such, Bill S-8 and subsequent regulations would not force municipalities to provide drinking water services to first nations, nor delegate powers or costs to municipalities. Furthermore, Bill S-8 would not affect municipalities' abilities to choose to pursue or not municipal service agreements with first nations.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about the minister's responses regarding the consultations he held.

He brags that he consulted a number of first nations. However, the Assembly of First Nations strongly opposes this bill.

Had the Conservatives consulted the Assembly of First Nations, the assembly would have told them what amendments should have been made to this bill. I can think of a lot of them. I will not rattle them off for you the way the minister does for the groups he supposedly consulted.

Consulting groups is not enough; we must listen to them as well. When groups ask us to make amendments, we need to do it. That is why we want to continue debate on Bill S-8. The government has obviously not done its job. It has not made the necessary amendments.

Introducing legislation on safe drinking water is not enough. That needs to be done, but funding must be provided too. That is what the

Assembly of First Nations is asking for, but that is not in Bill S-8. That is why we want to continue the debate, to explain all the good amendments and changes to be made to the bill.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, once again, the government has had a number of meaningful discussions with the first nations regarding the proposed legislation, and we will continue to do so.

Just like the Liberals, the NDP member is always talking about throwing money at problems. We are trying to establish a legislative framework so we can adopt regulations regarding the quality of drinking water and waste water services on first nations land.

All other Canadians and all other municipalities have this right. This initiative cannot be completed overnight. This is not smoke and mirrors. By working with the first nations, the regions and stakeholders from the communities, we can develop regulations to bring first nations drinking water and waste water services to a level and quality equal to or comparable to those enjoyed by other Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, many of the reserves across Canada are remote and most of the reserves in northern Ontario are remote. This is not only an important issue to them. Many of them have dysfunctional water systems now, but building water systems in those remote areas is complex and way more expensive than in urban areas of Canada.

I would just like to add my voice on their behalf in asking for a more full and complete discussion of this bill before we go ahead with it because it has such huge implications for cost, complexity and a number of first nations.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, I agree, indeed, that in remote communities it is a particular challenge. As a matter of fact, I visited the Kashechewan community not long ago and saw firsthand a water system in which this government had invested and from which the community benefits. I also visited with Chief Naveau and his community in northern Ontario and he showed me with pride the water system that the serious investment of this government allowed his community to get. The chief was telling me the problem is that they needed trained people to protect the system. This is what these regulations would achieve.

I do not understand why opposition members are arguing that instead of improving the system, we should sit and talk about it. That is all they do: talk about it.

• (1625)

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have introduced this bill so first nations have the same access to drinking water as all Canadians. To me, it is incredible how anybody could even consider not supporting that because many of the communities, as we all know, have waited too long for safe, clean, reliable drinking water and yet, shockingly, opposition members have continually tried to draw out and prolong debate and continue to vote against this initiative.

Government Orders

As the preamble states, the government will work with the first nations to develop federal regulations. Passing this bill is just the beginning. Much work remains to be done.

Could the minister please tell the House how long it will take for regulations to be put in place and why we need to take action now, not tomorrow, not next week, not next month but now, in moving this legislation forward?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, developing federal regulations will take time and will be implemented over a number of years. Regulations will be developed on a region-by-region basis and phased in over time. As I said earlier, this phased-in approach will help to ensure that first nations and system operators are prepared for the coming into force of the regulations.

During this time, the government and first nations will continue to work together to bring in drinking water and waste water infrastructure, monitoring activities and capacity to the level required to meet future federal regulations. That is how we will do it.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I am dismayed because I am thinking about many of the first nations communities I represent and how they would find that the shutting down of a conversation would be fundamentally disrespectful, even with those who happen to disagree.

However, let me read a quote by the Minister of Public Safety when he was in opposition. He stated:

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister of Canada swung an axe across the throat of parliament. While committee members had an opportunity to speak to Bill C-36, members of all parties in parliament lost the ability to express the concerns of Canadians.

If the bill was the right thing to do, why did the Prime Minister do the wrong thing by invoking closure?

If the minister will not listen to the words of the opposition or first nations, maybe he will listen to the words of his own colleagues, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister, who have all said that using these draconian tactics in Parliament is fundamentally undemocratic and also leads to bad legislation, which his government has done time and again on something so important as drinking water on first nations reserves. Would it not be right to get it right?

The minister recently said something wrong. Many of these water integration systems are integrated with the non-aboriginal, non-reserve communities. The fact that he does not know that or does not seem to care raises so many fundamental concerns with his ability to do the job that he is meant to do. Shutting down debate is wrong and he knows it.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, and Canadians must know this, this motion does not shut down debate. It controls the debate.

From here, the bill will go to committee where every section of the bill can be debated and questioned. If members have ideas as to how to improve a bill, they can make their case at committee. Then the bill will come back to Parliament where the people who were elected will vote on it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I heard the minister say that it does not close debate.

I do not think he understands what time allocation is. What the government has proposed is that all members of the House of Commons will be unable to participate in the debate on this very important issue. This is an allocation. It does close debate. It prevents members from being able to contribute their thoughts, ideas and reflections from their constituents to the debate.

Maybe the minister might want to reconsider his statement and reflect on what the government has proposed to do this afternoon.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, what the government is proposing to do is end the spinning of wheels. This has been going on for seven years. For seven years now people have been talking and talking. We say that it is time for action.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, what ignorance from that side of the House.

The fact is that for more than seven years, the governments, both the Liberals and the Conservatives, have not respected their treaty obligations.

Again, here is a quote from April 29, a resolution of the United Chiefs and Councils of Mnidoo Mnising First Nations. It says:

UCCMM First Nations has the right to free and prior and informed consent on anything that affects us. We have not given out free, prior or informed consent on any of the legislation passed by this sitting of the legislature.

Again, one of the bills is Bill S-8. There is no first nation that does not want fresh, clean water.

The minister spoke about the places he had seen where the government had invested in clean water, where there was water that people could actually drink. He is not talking about the ones where they cannot drink it. The minister is forcing first nations to have legislation that they cannot even afford to put a system in place.

First, will the minister put money with that? Second, will he agree that all first nations should be heard, especially the United Chiefs and Councils of Mnidoo Mnising First Nations?

• (1630)

Hon. Bernard Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, if the NDP is arguing that first nations have veto rights on every piece of legislation or regulation that can be made, I respect its position, but then the NDP members can explain that to all Canadians.

The fact is that this is an enabling legislation that will allow the government to develop, in partnership with first nations, a regulatory system that will ensure the provision of safe water for first nations members.

This is what the bill is intended to do. This is not a finance bill. This is a bill to provide a regulatory system that will allow first nations to get the same level of clean water as other Canadians enjoy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We have reached the end of the period allowed.

Government Orders

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 London—Fanshawe, Veterans Affairs; the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, Employment Insurance.

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 yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

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

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 677*)

YEAS

Members

Abлонczy
Adler
Albas
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bergen
Blaney
Boughen
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fast
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goodyear
Gourde
Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Holder
Jean

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Bernier
Block
Braid
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hoback
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)

Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
Opitz
Paradis
Poilievre
Raitt
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Storseth
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leef
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Preston
Rathgeber
Rempel
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 148

NAYS

Members

Andrews
Ashton
Ayala
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Byrne
Casey
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Coderre
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Dubé
Dusseault
Foote
Freeman
Genest
Giguère
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hughes
Jacob
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Mathysen
McCallum

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Aubin
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking
Fortin
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Goodale
Groguhé
Hsu
Hyer
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)
Liu
Mai
Masse
May

Government Orders

McGuinty	Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Turnel	Valeriote — 116

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

I wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, government orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to questions on the order paper, Questions Nos. 1254 through 1259 inclusive.

SECOND READING

The House resumed from November 26, 2012, consideration of the motion that Bill S-8, An Act respecting the safety of drinking water on First Nation lands, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I start today, I would like to say that I am splitting my time with the hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar.

I fully support Bill S-8, the safe drinking water for first nations act, and I encourage my hon. colleagues to endorse the proposed legislation.

Bill S-8 is an important piece of a larger initiative that will have a tangible, practical and positive impact on a long-standing problem: unsafe drinking water in first nations communities.

More than seven years ago, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development conducted an in-depth study of first nations drinking water. The report concluded that a large part of the problem is that responsibility for the various tasks involved in the treatment and delivery of drinking water on first nation lands is shared among many groups.

Here is a definitive statement from the report:

Until a regulatory regime is established that is comparable with the one that is in place in the provinces, INAC and Health Canada cannot ensure that First Nations people living on reserves will have continuing access to safe drinking water.

The same conclusion was reached in every other authoritative report on the matter, including most recently in the National

Assessment of First Nations Water and Wastewater Systems, published in July 2011.

The national assessment was the most rigorous, comprehensive and independent evaluation of on-reserve water and waste water systems ever undertaken by a federal government. The report is full of valuable information that can help point the way toward further progress. It highlights the variations in the quality of drinking water in first nations communities and the diverse reasons for successes and challenges. The report also recommends the “establishment of a regulatory framework for water and waste water systems”.

Bill S-8 alone, of course, will not ensure access to safe drinking water in first nations communities, but it would create a legislative framework to enable the government, together with first nations and other stakeholders, to develop enforceable standards, the chains of accountability that are absolutely necessary to support progress.

Let me remind the House of the tragic examples of water contamination in communities across the country.

In North Battleford, Saskatchewan, in 2001, over 7,000 people became sick because there had been a failure to properly treat the drinking water. I too drank the water and was also sick at that time.

In Walkerton, Ontario, in 2000, seven citizens died and more than 2,500 became sick. In the aftermath of the Walkerton tragedy, the Ontario government developed one of the most stringent drinking water regulatory regimes in Canada.

In order to avoid a tragedy like Walkerton happening in first nations communities, we need regulations. This is what Bill S-8 would enable the government and first nations to do.

To address the other factors that contribute to unsafe drinking water, this government, in partnership with first nations and first nation organizations, has taken a long list of actions. From 2006 to 2014, the Government of Canada will have invested approximately \$3 billion, including \$330.8 million in economic action plan 2012, in water and waste water infrastructure in first nations.

These investments supported more than 400 projects, such as the construction and upgrade of treatment systems, the protection of water sources and the installation of piping networks and holding tanks. More than 40 projects were completed last year alone. Actions were also taken to train and certify hundreds of operators and to publish and distribute treatment protocols and operational guidelines.

The combined effect of these actions has been significant, but much more remains to be done.

The establishment of regulatory regimes would support further progress in a number of ways. Practically speaking, Bill S-8 would enable the development of regulations to protect sources of drinking water located on first nations lands from contamination. The regulations stemming from Bill S-8 would help strengthen oversight and clearly lay out the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved, including private companies operating drinking water and waste water systems on first nations lands.

Government Orders

During the discussions that took place over the last six years to develop this legislation, numerous first nation public works specialists expressed the need to have tools to do their work properly and to have access to appropriate safeguards to provide clean, safe and reliable drinking water to fellow community members. While protocols and guidelines exist to help operators in first nations communities, these documents lay out no enforceable standards. Regulations will offer a mechanism by which standards will be clearly stated, realistic and tailored to the circumstances of first nations. They will also provide a mechanism through which an enforcement body can support the work of these operators and guide them in their important work.

• (1715)

This government recognizes that partnership can be a powerful force, and the process to develop regulations will be key in bringing this commitment to reality.

Incorporation by reference of provincial and territorial drinking water legislation, with the adaptations to reflect the needs and circumstances of first nations communities, will foster collaboration in many ways.

First, regulatory development will enable the government and first nations to work together to develop the regulations that are essential to the health and safety of first nations children, women and men.

Second, incorporation by reference with adaptations will allow for comparable standards to be established between on- and off-reserve communities. Future regulations would extend the possibility of first nations, provinces, territories and municipalities working together to deliver safe drinking water and waste water services on first nations lands, exchange best practices and possibly strengthen partnerships that are already in place.

For instance, first nations and neighbouring municipalities sometimes share drinking water services through municipal-type service agreements, as in British Columbia, where the community of Kwakiutl receives drinking water from the neighbouring town of Port Hardy. We hope that having comparable standards on and off reserve would facilitate these partnerships.

Bill S-8 and future regulations would help support first nations communities by bringing their drinking water and waste water services to a level and quality of service comparable to those enjoyed by other Canadians living in communities of similar size and location.

The bill is a crucial component of this government's numerous actions over the years to improve the safety of drinking water on reserve. It would have a significant and tangible impact on first nations communities.

Ultimately, Bill S-8 would enable first nations to work with federal and regional officials to develop regimes tailored to their circumstances while respecting science-based standards for health and safety.

I urge my hon. colleagues to join me in supporting Bill S-8.

• (1720)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in terms of what we have heard from first nations across the country, and in

view of the devastating report on the state of potable drinking water and waste water systems across the country from July, 2011, I would like to ask the hon. member whether he is prepared to do what I said in the letter I wrote to the minister in the fall of 2011.

In the letter, I said that as the Liberal Party, we would not be able to support any legislation unless there were resources to go with it to actually fix this appalling situation with three-quarters of the water systems within the country. This piece of legislation will do absolutely nothing unless there are resources for first nations to fix these problems.

Will the member tell us where the money is coming from to fix this situation in the first nations across the country?

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, it is quite hypocritical to hear that from the Liberal member over there.

For 13 years they were in government, and for 13 years they did not get anything done. They keep talking about it, but they never put in any legislation. In the past, all they wanted to do was put motions forward.

What we are seeing here right now is legislation to help first nations individuals in first nations communities. Being first nations myself, I hear the rigmarole of what is being said across the floor, and it is atrocious knowing what she is saying. That is what I find appalling.

I look back at November 2011. The Liberal member for Toronto Centre put forward a motion calling on the government to urgently address first nations' access to safe drinking water. Here is another motion. It is not legislation. All she does is talk about it.

Now, more than a year and a half later, we are hearing debate on Bill S-8, now in second reading for the fourth time. This is the second iteration of the bill. We believe that now is the time to move forward.

I hope that my hon. colleagues opposite will put aside their partisanship and support the bill.

• (1725)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am always interested in hearing the member give us some indication of what he thinks and how he feels about an issue that is so important to all of us.

I do not think there is anyone here who does not recognize the fact that there needs to be some action to deal with the desperate need for fresh, clean, safe drinking water in first nations communities. The problem is that bringing in legislation that would make first nations responsible for it, without properly ensuring that there would be funding in place, just compounds an already difficult situation.

Could the member please comment?

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I will just point out what the federal government has done since the Conservatives became the government in 2006.

Government Orders

There was \$333.8 million in 2006-2007. In 2007-2008, we had \$333.2 million for first nations water and waste management. In 2008-2009, the federal government put in \$340.8 million and in 2009-2010 an additional \$412.7 million. In 2010-2011, it was \$427.4 million and in 2011-2012, it was an additional \$343.4 million. In 2012-2013, it was \$374.8 million. Now, in 2013-2014, under Canada's economic action plan, there would be an additional \$374.7 million.

That is a grand total of over \$3 billion assigned to address first nations water and waste water.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the important issue of the health and safety of all Canadian citizens, and, in particular, on Canada's first nations and their right to have access to the same safe, clean, reliable drinking water that other Canadian citizens enjoy.

Bill S-8, safe drinking water for first nations act, will enable the government to develop regulations with first nations to provide access to safe, clean and reliable drinking water to men, women and children living on first nations lands.

My support for Bill S-8 is further founded on two facts: the proposed legislation has been developed in collaboration with first nations; and, upon royal assent, regulations will be developed on a region-by-region basis in collaboration with first nations, provinces, territories and other stakeholders.

Bill S-8 proposes a mechanism to resolve another complex problem: the lack of a regulatory foundation to protect the quality of drinking water available in first nations communities.

This proposed legislation is the product of years of engagement, consultation and collaboration with first nations. There have been formal and informal meetings, town hall sessions, without prejudice discussions and workshops. Hundreds of people, including representatives of the Assembly of First Nations and associations of first nations chiefs, along with residents of first nations communities, have participated in these sessions. Their input has shaped the contents of the legislation now before us in several significant ways.

Bill S-8 calls for this collaboration to continue. Governmental officials would work alongside their first nations counterparts on a region-by-region basis to establish a series of regulatory regimes. Under this process, the parties would craft regimes that could draw on existing provincial, territorial or first nations regimes and adapt them to the particular circumstances of first nations. This is entirely appropriate, as a one-size-fits-all approach could never hope to accommodate the social, economic and geographic diversity of first nations communities. A regulatory approach that works for a remote community in northern Manitoba, for instance, might not work for a first nation in urban British Columbia.

Of course, every regime would have to satisfy minimum standards for safety, the same standards required by the provincial and territorial laws that protect drinking water quality off reserve. Under the regimes established through Bill S-8, drinking water would have to be sampled and tested in accordance with established methods and standards, and contamination thresholds would have to be based on scientific evidence.

This co-operative approach would ensure that those who would be subject to the regulations would have a role in creating them. This would help promote a greater understanding of the new regimes as well as ensure that these regimes are reflective of the diverse needs of each region.

We can expect that the federal regulations governing drinking water in a given first nation would be similar to the regulations governing the drinking water of nearby communities. Complementary regimes would open the door to further collaboration, such as joint training and certification programs or shared treatment and distribution facilities. This would, in turn, inspire co-operation on other common issues and opportunities.

Ultimately, of course, the goal is to ensure that all Canadians, regardless of where they live, can access safe drinking water. Access to clean, safe and reliable drinking water is an important determinant of health and a driver of socio-economic development, yet the truth is that most first nation communities do not have regulations in place that safeguard water quality.

The current regime comprises a tangled web of protocols and funding agreements that are not legally enforceable. As a result, standards are not clear and it is impossible to hold anyone accountable for substandard and unsafe drinking water.

● (1730)

As I mentioned a moment ago, Bill S-8 is the product of a lengthy and collaborative process. Seven years ago, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development called on the Government of Canada to address the regulatory gap related to drinking water in first nations communities. Since then, two other authoritative bodies—an expert panel and a standing committee of the other place—studied the matter and made similar recommendations.

Even the Liberals, back in November 2011, put forward a motion calling on the government to improve first nations' access to safe drinking water. The House fully endorsed that motion. I hope that now my hon. colleagues opposite will put aside their partisanship, honour their noble commitment to improving access to safe drinking water and back this important legislation, which goes far beyond the words of that motion.

The collaboration that inspired Bill S-8 began in 2006, when the Government of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations announced a plan of action on first nations' drinking water. This joint undertaking, the plan of action, called for a number of measures, including the development of appropriate regulations. From the outset, the government has directly involved various first nations organizations in the development of legislative options.

Government Orders

In 2007, the expert panel created under the plan of action met with first nations representatives and technical experts from all over the country and subsequently recommended the development of safe drinking water legislation. Departmental officials met with the Assembly of First Nations technical water experts group to discuss options for this legislation. Then, in 2008, the government began to meet with representatives of first nations groups.

The following year, the government released a discussion paper based on the option of incorporation by reference of provincial and territorial standards and held a series of 13 engagement sessions. It heard from more than 500 members of first nations. Although a consensus emerged about the need to address health and environmental concerns, there remained concerns about the proposed approach to legislation.

After the engagement sessions, the government held a series of meetings with regional and national organizations, including the Assembly of First Nations. These discussions involved a range of concerns about the proposed legislation.

The Government of Canada then introduced into the Senate an earlier version of the legislation, Bill S-11. The Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples began to review the proposed legislation and heard from more than 40 witnesses before the previous Parliament was dissolved.

Rather than simply reintroduce the same legislation, our government chose to collaborate further to identify and incorporate improvements. In particular, officials from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada held without prejudice discussions with first nations groups. Invites were sent to first nations organizations from all over Canada, and some first nations organizations were willing to work with the government to improve the legislation, in particular those from Alberta and the Atlantic.

During these discussions, new ideas emerged to address specific concerns with the previous version of the bill. Several changes were made, and as such, I am proud to say that first nations organizations directly influenced the contents of Bill S-8. As a result of this collaboration, the legislation now before us is stronger.

Thousands of people residing in first nations communities lack regulations that safeguard the quality of their drinking water. Bill S-8 would provide authority for the government to draft and implement appropriate regulations, working with first nations. These regulations would help protect the health and safety of first nations men, women and children.

This important legislation fully deserves the support of the House. I urge my hon. colleagues to vote in favour of Bill S-8.

• (1735)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, the issue of funding remains paramount. In fact, the expert panel on safe drinking water for first nations, which was an initiative of the federal government, I believe, concluded that it is not credible to go forward with any regulatory regime without adequate capacity to satisfy the regulatory requirements.

My second question has to do with the kind of regulations and standards that could be imposed on first nations. My understanding

is that it would be possible to impose provincial regulations, provincial standards, but in some cases, provincial standards are lower than federal standards.

Does the member not agree that our first nations people deserve the highest federal standards?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my remarks, most first nations communities do not have regulations in place that safeguard water quality at all. As we have heard, access to clean, safe and reliable drinking water is an important determinant of health and a driver of socio-economic development.

Bill S-8, safe drinking water for first nations act, will enable the government with first nations to develop the regulations that the member is referring to, to provide that access to safe, clean and reliable drinking water to men, women and children living on first nations lands. As I stated in my remarks earlier, the goal of this legislation is to ensure that all Canadians, regardless of where they live, can access safe drinking water.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this legislation puts responsibility on the government for providing safe, clean drinking water to first nations communities, but it does not ensure that the funding will be available. When I asked the hon. member's colleague this same question, I got in response a list of all of the funding that has gone in this direction in the past seven years. The problem is, it has not done the job, and the question still remains.

I ask the member, is she not as concerned as I am that with the legislation there needs to be the adequate resources directed?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I believe my colleague answered the question that since forming government, we have invested almost \$3 billion in water and waste water infrastructure.

If that member was as concerned as he says he is, he would have supported the \$192.7 million that was included in last year's budget.

• (1740)

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with the member. It is simple. First nations should have access to safe drinking water and those types of measures, the same things that every other Canadian enjoys in Canada, including every member in this House. My understanding is that this legislation before us today has been seven years in the making. There has been continuous dialogue between the Government of Canada and first nations. Some of the concerns first nations brought to the table have been incorporated into Bill S-8.

The member mentioned consultations with first nations. Could she elaborate and provide this House with more information regarding those consultations between first nations and the government, and also, after seven years, why it is so important to move this legislation forward?

Government Orders

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, the member makes an important point: engagement has been ongoing for seven years. The Government of Canada has been involved in extensive engagement since 2006, and we continue to engage with first nations on this proposed legislation and regulatory development.

I would like to highlight the following. In the summer of 2006, an expert panel held public hearings across Canada, at which time they heard from over 110 presenters, and received more than two dozen submissions.

In February and March of 2009, a series of engagement sessions were held with first nations communities, regional first nations organizations, and provincial and territorial officials. There were 700 participants, of whom 544 were first nations.

In the fall and winter of 2009 to 2010, government officials met with first nations chiefs and organizations to discuss specific regional issues raised during the engagement session, and from October 2010 to October 2011, without prejudice discussions with first nations—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. Unfortunately, we have reached the end of the period permitted for questions and comments.

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel has three minutes to speak.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is very important for me to speak to Bill S-8, An Act respecting the safety of drinking water on First Nation lands.

We too often disregard the importance of water in Canada. We have more than two million lakes and the largest supply of fresh water in the world, so we often take water for granted. Even though this resource is essential to life, the environment and our economy, water is not immune to contamination.

Protecting the quality of our water is extremely important to everyone, whether we live in an urban or rural area, or on a reserve.

Unfortunately, it is clear to me that the Conservatives do not care much about protecting our water.

My Motion No. 400 was designed to restore balance between urban and rural areas. This motion, which received unanimous support on the opposition side, aimed to develop a reasoned and comprehensive solution to a problem that affects water quality and public safety.

However, the government has decided not to take action. It claimed that the provinces were responsible for regulating septic tanks, thus shirking any responsibility. If the government had had the political will to take action, we could have worked with the provinces, as stated in the motion, and respected their jurisdictions.

Today, we can see that the government's reaction to my motion was ill-advised and narrow-minded. The same could be said for Bill S-8.

I do not think that the solution offered in Bill S-8 is reasoned or comprehensive. There are many problems with this bill: it does not respect first nations' ancestral rights, it does not include the necessary investment, there was no consultation, and the bill is not compatible with provincial laws.

I will talk about these issues more another time, since they are recurrent problems with this government's aboriginal affairs legislation, especially when it comes to violating rights and failing to consult.

● (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, before concluding today I want to say that I have heard the comments made today by members in the House that we do not have to consult when we put forward legislation. However, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People states that we do need free, prior and informed consent when we are talking about first nations legislation. This is something that the government has failed to do again and again. It is not a choice that we have. It is about rights and something that the international community is begging us to do.

I am looking forward to speaking more about this next time.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:45 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1825)

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

(*Division No. 678*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht

Government Orders

Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison	Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Ambler	Ambrose	Borg	Boulerice
Anders	Anderson	Boutin-Sweet	Brousseau
Armstrong	Ashfield	Byrne	Caron
Aspin	Baird	Casey	Cash
Bateman	Benoit	Chicoine	Chisholm
Bergen	Bernier	Choquette	Chow
Blaney	Block	Christopherson	Cleary
Boughen	Braid	Coderre	Comartin
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Côté	Crowder
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)	Cullen	Cuzner
Bruinooge	Butt	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Calandra	Calkins	Day	Dewar
Cannan	Carmichael	Dion	Dionne Labelle
Chisu	Chong	Donnelly	Dubé
Clarke	Clement	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Crockatt	Daniel	Eyking	Foote
Davidson	Dechert	Fortin	Freeman
Del Mastro	Devolin	Garneau	Garrison
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Dykstra	Fast	Giguère	Goodale
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher	Gravelle	Groguhé
Galipeau	Gallant	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Hsu
Gill	Glover	Hughes	Hyer
Goguen	Goodyear	Jacob	Karygiannis
Gosal	Gourde	Kellway	Lamoureux
Grewal	Harper	Lapointe	Larose
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn	Latendresse	Laverdière
Hayes	Hiebert	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Hoback	Holder	Leslie	Liu
James	Jean	MacAulay	Mai
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Marston	Masse
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent	Mathysen	May
Kerr	Komarnicki	McCallum	McGuinity
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake	Michaud	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Lauzon	Lebel	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Leef	Leitch	Mourani	Murray
Lemieux	Leung	Nantel	Nash
Lizon	Lobb	Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Lukiwski	Lunney	Pacetti	Papillon
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie	Patry	Pécelet
Mayes	McColeman	Perreault	Pilon
McLeod	Menegakis	Plamondon	Quach
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	Rafferty	Rankin
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock	Ravignat	Raynault
Obhrai	O'Connor	Regan	Rousseau
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz	Saganash	Sandhu
O'Toole	Paradis	Scarpaleggia	Scott
Payne	Poilievre	Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Preston	Raïtt	son)	
Rathgeber	Reid	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	St-Denis
Rempel	Richards	Stewart	Stoffer
Rickford	Ritz	Sullivan	Thibeault
Saxton	Schellenberger	Toone	Tremblay
Seeback	Shea	Trudeau	Turmel
Shipley	Shory	Valériote— 121	
Smith	Sopuck		
Sorenson	Stanton		
Storseth	Sweet		
Tilson	Toet		
Toews	Trost		
Trottier	Truppe		
Tweed	Uppal		
Valcourt	Van Kesteren		
Van Loan	Vellacott		
Wallace	Warawa		
Warkentin	Watson		
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)			
Weston (Saint John)			
Wilks	Williamson		
Wong	Woodworth		
Yelich	Young (Oakville)		
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer— 150		

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Aubin	Ayala
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the results from the previous motion to the current motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.[*Translation*]**Ms. Nycole Turmel:** Mr. Speaker, we agree to proceed in this way, and we will vote against the motion.

Government Orders

[English]

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals agree to apply and will vote no.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois supports this bill.

[English]

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, Thunder Bay—Superior North agrees to apply and will vote no.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party agrees to apply and votes no.

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

(Division No. 679)

YEAS

Members

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

Raitt
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 155

Rathgeber
Rempel
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Tilson
Toews
Trotter
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Aubin	Ayala
Bélangier	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Eyking
Foote	Freeman
Gameau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogouh
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McQuinty
Michaud	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Pécllet
Perreault	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	Stewart
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
St-Denis	

Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turnel

Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote — 116

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

SODIUM REDUCTION STRATEGY FOR CANADA ACT

The House resumed from May 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-460, An Act respecting the implementation of the Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions on the motion at second stage of Bill C-460.

• (1835)

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

(Division No. 680)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Aubin
Bélangier
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Byrne
Casey
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Coderre
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Eyking
Fortin
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hughes
Jacob
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston

Andrews
Ashton
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Dubé
Dusseau
Foote
Freeman
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Goodale
Grogulé
Hsu
Hyer
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Masse

Mathysen
McCallum
Michaud
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Mourani
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rafferty
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sgor
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote

Private Members' Business

May
McGuinty
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Quach
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turnel
Vellacott — 122

NAYS

Members

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

Private Members' Business

Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer— 147	

Carmichael
Casey
Chicoine
Chisu
Choquette
Christopherson
Cleary
Coderre
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Davidson
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dechert
Devolin
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dykstra
Fast
Fletcher
Fortin
Galipeau
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Glover
Goodale
Gosal
Gravelle
Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hawn
Hiebert
Holder
Hughes
Jacob
Jean
Karygiannis
Kellway
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lapointe
Latendresse
Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leaf
Lemieux
Leung
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Marston
Mathysen
Mayes
McColeman
McLeod
Michaud
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Murray
Nash
Norlock
O'Connor
Opitz
Pacetti
Paradis
Payne
Perreault
Plamondon
Preston
Rafferty
Rankin
Ravignat
Regan
Rempel
Rickford
Rousseau
Sandhu

Caron
Cash
Chisholm
Chong
Chow
Clarke
Clement
Comartin
Crockatt
Cullen
Daniel
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Del Mastro
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dusseauit
Eyking
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Foote
Freeman
Gallant
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Grewal
Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hoback
Hsu
Hyer
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lamoureux
Larose
Lauzon
Lebel
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leitch
Leslie
Liu
Lobb
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mai
Masse
May
McCallum
McGuinty
Menegakis
Miller
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Mourani
Nantel
Nicholls
Nunez-Melo
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Papillon
Patry
Péclet
Pilon
Poillievre
Quach
Raitt
Rathgeber
Raynault
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Saganash
Saxton

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

[Translation]

KOREAN WAR VETERANS DAY ACT

The House resumed from May 7 consideration of the motion that Bill S-213, An Act respecting a national day of remembrance to honour Canadian veterans of the Korean War, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading of the bill.

● (1840)

[English]

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

(Division No. 681)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Angus	Armstrong
Ashfield	Ashton
Aspin	Aubin
Ayala	Baird
Bateman	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benoit	Benskin
Bergen	Bernier
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blaney
Block	Boivin
Borg	Boughen
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brousseau	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Byrne	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan

Private Members' Business

Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Scott	Seeback
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Storseth
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Toone	Tremblay
Trost	Trottier
Trudeau	Truppe
Turnel	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Valeriote	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 270

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

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

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

The Speaker: It being 6:44 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

● (1845)

ANAPHYLAXIS

The House resumed from April 19 consideration of the motion.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise in the House today to speak to Motion No. 230, which has been put forward by the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, and I thank him for that.

I know the member had a similar motion in the last Parliament, but it did not go further because of the federal election, and so we are debating the issue again. It is always good to see members continue to press on with their issues.

Unfortunately, the vote we just had on sodium reduction was lost, but I am very committed to working with the 50-plus organizations across the country that supported the bill. Even though the vote was lost, we will continue to press very hard because sodium reduction in our country is a major public health issue.

As the health critic for the NDP, I am pleased to speak in support of the motion before us.

The question of anaphylaxis is a very critical issue. It affects about 500,000 Canadians and 50% of Canadians know of someone who has at least one food allergy. In our own personal experiences we can

all think of someone we know who has a serious allergy and who has to be very careful of where and what that person eats.

The motion before us begins to address the issue anaphylaxis, which affects a growing number of Canadians. The NDP is supportive of the motion, but we will demand an accounting from the Conservative government on its health care track record.

The motion asks the House to recognize the importance of taking steps to ensure that Canadians with anaphylaxis have a certain quality of life. However, as we have seen with a number of these motions, this motion is very general and does not go further into precise measures. Therefore, while we support the motion, in as far as it goes, this is an opportunity for us to debate the issue and to keep pressing the government for much better accountability on health care generally and on something like this that does affect so many people.

One of the issues with anaphylaxis is that even the purchasing of the auto-injectors is an added cost for many families, and there are families that cannot afford this kind of injector. However, I find it curious that in the budget bill, which was approved at second reading and which was rushed through the House under another time allocation motion, and will be rushed through the finance committee in five meetings, one of the provisions is taxing hospital parking lots.

I do not know if anybody listened to the CBC story recently. In fact a couple of stories have been done. One of the biggest responses is from people who feel outraged that when they go to a hospital to visit a friend or family member who is sick, they get hit with exorbitant parking fees. Now, to add insult to injury, this budget, the latest omnibus bill from the Conservative government, will add taxes on to hospital parking.

Why I am raising this issue now in this debate on the private member's motion? It is because, while on the one hand we see these sort of window-dressing kinds of motions coming through from the Conservatives, and I appreciate their intent, the fact is there are so many significant issues that are going unaddressed in our health care system. The government has fallen down on or simply retreated from its role on health care. I wanted to get that bit about the hospital parking tax in there because it is something that really grates. The Conservatives have the gall to talk about being the government of tax reduction and yet on something that is as basic as hospital parking, where people are basically a captive audience and have no choice but to pay these exorbitant cost, they will now be hit with a tax. Why would the Conservatives do that? It seems unconscionable.

While I am happy to be debating this motion, as far as it goes, I do want to shed light and illuminate the bigger picture around health care in our country.

Unfortunately, we have seen the federal government basically walk away from the table. The Conservatives made a unilateral decision about health care funding that has now left the provinces and territories about \$36 billion short over the longer term. The government has failed to implement the health accords. Therefore, while we support the motion, we have to look at it in the context of the bigger picture. The government has a miserable failing record, an F, on health care.

Private Members' Business

●(1850)

As the health critic for the official opposition, the NDP, I do a lot of work with organizations across the country. People are just chomping at the bit. They want to see a stronger federal role or any federal role in health care.

In the House, we have had issues around drug safety and drug shortages. We have seen the abysmal health status of aboriginal people and cuts in Health Canada. The list is enormous. We need to put this on the record and hold the government to account. While I am sure the Conservative members in the House will support the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, which is good, they need to question themselves on what is happening to our health care overall.

Why have not made any progress on a national pharmacare program? Why have not made any progress on a home care and long-term program?

All these issues were discussed in 2004 and supported by the federal government and the premiers across the country. We believed, and Canadians believed, that we would see some way forward and that we would see some progress on these issues. However, nothing has happened, and not only has the status quo remained, even worse, the government disbanded the Health Council of Canada, which was the body that monitored the progress and implementation of the health accord.

It is a pretty dismal picture, which I am sure we can all appreciate. I really want to draw it to the attention of members in the House.

I encourage Conservative members that when they bring forward a private member's motion, such as the one we are debating today, they need to link it to the broader health issue. They need to think about what about the public health interest. It is very disappointing that they chose to defeat the bill on sodium reduction, which had incredible support across the country, yet I am sure this motion will go through.

At the health committee, we have had a number of these such bills and I have supported them. That is fine, but we in the NDP do have a plan for health care. We want to see our health care system improve its accessibility. We want to see the kinds of things that people need, like pharmacare, home care and long-term care. We want to see progress made on those very critical health issues.

We are very determined, as we move toward 2015, that there is an alternative on health care that we can present to the Canadian people. If the people want medicare 2.0, we know what that is. We are actually out there, consulting with Canadians on that on a daily basis.

I know many of my colleagues get emails and work with local constituents. We know health care is really the number one issue about which Canadians are concerned. On any poll that is done, health care is always at the top of the list.

I thank the member for presenting the motion. It is very important to draw awareness to this issue, which affects about 500,000 Canadians, and what it means to face a severe allergy.

Let us recognize that we need a federal government that will be responsive to the health care needs of Canadians and willing to be at the table with the provinces, territories and first nations. We need a

federal government that is committed to implementing the accords that were signed in 2004 and to bringing in new accords and a new vision for medicare that is based on the Canada Health Act, accessibility, portability, public administration and universality.

We in the NDP are committed to that. We stand for that. We are the party of medicare. We are proud of the work that we have done and the work we continue to do.

While we support the motion, we know that it is just a bit of the big job that needs to be taken on. We are taking on that job.

●(1855)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I thank my colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook for bringing forward this motion. I had the pleasure of serving with the member a few years back on, I believe, the human resources and skills development committee of the House of Commons. While we were on opposite sides of the floor, we certainly developed a very good rapport. I enjoyed working with him and I indeed appreciate this motion today.

In fact, my hon. colleague from Vancouver Centre, who sits next to me, asked me if I was interested in this. She knew that I have allergies and that one of my allergies was to crustaceans, sadly.

I do not know if the House can imagine—

Mr. Robert Chisholm: That's not fair.

Hon. Geoff Regan: My colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour says that is not fair, and I could not agree more. I love all crustaceans. I love lobster, crab and shrimp, but especially lobster. To not be able to eat it is terrible—

Mr. Robert Chisholm: I will be nicer to you from now on.

Hon. Geoff Regan: My hon. colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour has just promised to treat me much better now that he knows that I have this allergy to lobster. I look forward to that. I appreciate it. I cannot complain too much so far.

One can imagine that during the two years that I was minister of fisheries and oceans it was particularly frustrating to not be able to enjoy lobster. I remember in particular visiting Labrador and having a meeting with the Labrador shrimp co-operative, which invited us to stay for a lovely dinner. They brought out a plate of lobster and shrimp. At that point I had to explain to the guys from the lobster-shrimp co-operative who fished them that I could not enjoy these delicacies of the sea because of my allergy.

Although anaphylaxis can also be caused by insect bites, by some kinds of medicine or by a number of causes, food is the main one. One's throat can close up. There are other kinds of reactions, but it can be deadly.

Private Members' Business

I can recall very distinctly my experience on New Year's Eve 1997 when I was having dinner with some friends in Kentville, Nova Scotia. They happened to have a dog and a cat and I am allergic to dogs and cats. They do not cause anaphylaxis but of course what did we have for supper? We had lobster. At that point I had not come to the conclusion that my allergy to lobster was real or severe even though when I was about 17 the doctor pricked my arm with various needles to test for various allergens. The doctor told me that I was allergic to shellfish. I thought perhaps it was a mistake because I had eaten lobster at various times and did not think the result was that bad. The thing about crustaceans and other kinds of food is that each time the exposure is repeated, it can get worse, and the chance of an anaphylactic reaction becomes greater.

That is why I think this motion is important. That is why it is important for people to have access to information about what is in the food they are eating. It is particularly important to me when I am buying something at the grocery store, to know that it contains one of the things that can cause this kind of reaction.

Many of us are familiar with peanut allergies and how severe they can be. There has been tremendous success in labelling products that contain peanuts, so that people with those allergies can avoid them. My son's best friend has a serious peanut allergy. That has been an issue for a while. Both my son and his friend have been involved in Scouts and now Adventurers. When we go on excursions we make sure that we avoid anything with peanuts for those trips because we know this can be a life-and-death matter.

The government could produce stricter regulations about food labelling to make sure that people who have allergies that can be anaphylactic have access to the information about what is in the food.

● (1900)

[*Translation*]

I would like to speak about how to avoid anaphylactic allergic reactions. The only way is to completely avoid the food that causes the reaction. That means knowing what is in what you eat. When I go to a reception or an event where appetizers are being served, I often ask if they contain crab. It is easy to see if they contain shrimp or lobster, even though shrimp are more difficult to spot. We cannot necessarily see everything, like peanuts. Milk can also be an allergenic food for a lot of people. We need to read food labels carefully.

It is important for families to take precautions when preparing food. People have to wash their hands properly and use proper cleaning methods.

These are all important ways to avoid a potentially fatal anaphylactic reaction.

[*English*]

It is not true that individuals always will die of an anaphylactic reaction. On the evening that I spoke of, New Year's Eve 1997, as we were sitting in the living room having a nice conversation after the meal, I started to close up, and it seemed for about five minutes that I could barely breathe. I did not believe I was going to die, but then again I did not know anything about anaphylaxis at that point. I did not realize it was an anaphylactic reaction, so I did not realize the

risk that I was at. I did not know how important it was for someone who has an allergy to foods such as crustaceans, for example, to have an EpiPen.

It is important to have EpiPens. For instance, people who work, as I do, in two places—Nova Scotia and Ottawa—really ought to have one within 20 minutes of wherever they are, and in both places. That reminds me: I have to visit the doctor, not only to update the one I have at home, which is several years old, but also to get one for Ottawa as well. It would be a good idea. These are important precautions for anyone who has these kinds of allergies.

I am sure my hon. colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook is aware of this and that this is one of the reasons he has brought forward this motion.

What does an EpiPen contain? Why is it that it works? In fact, it either contains epinephrine, which is why it is called an EpiPen, or it contains adrenalin. Both of those will prevent the kind of reaction to this allergen that can cause people to totally constrict and die.

One of the other things the Government of Canada ought to do to help people with this condition is raise awareness about it. As I said, when I had that reaction in 1997, I had no idea about anaphylaxis. It is important that people become more aware of it, not only people who might have it but others who might feed them. Parents who have children ought to understand what this is about so that they can recognize when it is happening and know what to do about it, although perhaps it might be a mild reaction at first.

I think it was 10 years ago that I finally stopped eating lobster when I realized it was the lobster that was having this effect. It was not necessarily immediate, but something of a delayed reaction. I remember having three lobsters one Christmas Eve; for the next two days I was sniffing and sneezing. I made the connection. A month later, I tried just one lobster and had exactly the same reaction for the following two days. I had a runny nose and I felt miserable.

It is important to raise awareness about these things, educate the public about what is involved and ensure that product labels are easy to read and understand. It would also be valuable to have an approach coordinated between the federal and provincial governments across jurisdictions to ensure public health and safety, to raise awareness and to support research to identify root causes and cures for severe allergies.

I want to again thank my hon. colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook for raising what is, from my perspective, obviously a very important issue.

● (1905)

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise in the House today and discuss Motion No. 230. I want to thank the hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook for bringing this matter before the House.

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Anaphylaxis is a severe medical condition and a serious public health issue. Unfortunately, there is no cure for it, or for food allergies in general, at least not yet. The only way to prevent an anaphylactic reaction is to avoid the allergen causing it. The best way to diminish the likelihood of a reaction is through greater public awareness of the condition and its triggers.

Anaphylactic reactions are caused by a negative response to an allergen. Allergens can be in the form of medications, insect bites, latex and certain foods. There are over 200 recognized allergens. The top 10 food allergies are to eggs, seafood, as my colleague just mentioned in his case, milk, tree nuts, sesame, sulphites, wheat, mustard, soy, peanuts and cereal grains containing gluten.

Adults are more prone to reactions from medications, insect bites and stings, while foods are still the most common allergic trigger in children and young people.

There are many symptoms that can occur as a result of an anaphylactic reaction. They generally happen within minutes of coming into contact with the allergen, although a reaction could also occur several hours after exposure.

There are five areas where symptoms present themselves: the skin, the respiratory system, the gastrointestinal system, the cardiovascular system and mood.

When symptoms present themselves, usually two or more parts of the body are affected. Symptoms present themselves on the skin 80% to 90% of the time, while the respiratory system is affected in about 70% of the cases. The gastrointestinal system is affected by 30% to 45%, while the cardiovascular system is affected between 10% and 45% of the time. In addition, the central nervous system is affected in 10% to 15% of anaphylactic reactions.

Therefore, victims of anaphylaxis can exhibit symptoms, such as hives, itching, swelling, rash, coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, hay fever-like symptoms and chest pain. They can experience cramps, nausea, light-headedness, develop a weak pulse and even go into shock.

The most serious symptoms are breathing difficulties and drops in blood pressure, both of which could be life-threatening. If the throat constricts, oxygen cannot be delivered to the brain and one could experience a panic attack and go into shock. When these signs or symptoms arise patients must receive medical attention immediately and a dose of epinephrine specifically. Those with a serious allergy will carry an epinephrine auto-injector, an EpiPen or Twinject, to prevent reactions when exposed to an allergen. If left untreated, one can fall unconscious and possibly die.

It is estimated that 2.5 million Canadians live with anaphylaxis and the number continues to rise every year. It is projected that 3,500 Canadians experience anaphylactic shock each year from eating the wrong foods. Of those 3,500, about a dozen will die unfortunately.

One in two Canadians know someone with a serious food allergy. Alarming, it is most prevalent in young children, specifically those under three years of age. Close to 6% of children below the age of three, and 300,000 youth under 18 are affected by general food allergies. Disturbingly, the frequency of food allergies has increased 350% from 1996 to 2002. The prevalence of peanut and nut allergies

has increased 250% over that time. As such, it is no surprise that more than 40% of Canadians examine the ingredient information on food labels, either for themselves or for someone living with anaphylaxis.

• (1910)

The most recognized allergy, of course, is the one to peanuts. This allergy affects two out of 100 children in Canada. Peanuts and tree nuts are responsible for the majority of fatal anaphylactic reactions. A study examining 13 fatal and near fatal cases in children concluded that 10 of the 13 incidents occurred as a result of reactions to peanuts or nuts.

Even with great vigilance, someone with a nut allergy will have an accidental episode every three to five years. Accidental exposure occurs as a result of not being able to see the residue of a food allergen that has been left on an appliance or a piece of furniture. Airborne protein can also cause serious issues that can induce asthmatic attacks.

These statistics emphasize the magnitude of anaphylaxis and the importance of bringing it to national attention. Many Canadians, including numerous families from my constituency, face the frequent and frightening threat of an anaphylactic reaction, and this concerns me greatly. Those who live with anaphylaxis are most at risk outside the home, where one has little or no control of the surroundings. Parents try to teach their children the risk of the condition so that the children can safely interact with friends and teachers.

Travelling by airplane is perhaps the best example of a high-risk environment, where peanuts and mixed nuts are common snack foods. With airplanes being enclosed, the risk of having an allergic reaction to a nearby allergy residue or airborne protein is very high. Air travel is unnerving for those living with anaphylaxis, as flying 35,000 feet up in the air leaves them highly vulnerable and far from medical facilities. It is my hope that airlines will rise to the challenge of implementing a nut-free policy and an announcement system for passengers so that they avoid consuming nut products when an anaphylactic passenger self-identifies.

I have heard from many people struggling with anaphylaxis. I have also had discussions with members of the Canadian Anaphylaxis Initiative. They improve the lives of Canadians with this condition by promoting anaphylactic-safe environments and by lobbying governments, organizations and other businesses to do the same.

Motion No. 230 is about more awareness so that Canadians will become familiar with the risks of anaphylaxis and will hopefully take precautions to limit accidental exposure for those who may be vulnerable. This, in turn, will create a safer environment for everyone.

There should be a supportive and alert community that ensures that preventive measures are taken to avoid anaphylactic reactions. It is important to mention that preliminary steps have been taken to spread awareness of anaphylaxis and its severity. Individuals, companies and governments have acted appropriately in this regard.

Let us take a quick example. In the private sector, there are the Toronto Blue Jays. I am sure most will be watching hockey tonight, but I think there is a Blue Jays game, too. The Toronto Blue Jays offered a peanut-controlled zone for three of their home games in the previous season. These zones ensured that fans at risk of a severe anaphylactic reaction were given a safer place to enjoy the game. That is good corporate leadership that benefits us all.

More awareness of this serious medical condition is needed on a nationwide level. That is why I urge members of this House to approve this motion and launch anaphylaxis further onto the national stage. By adopting this motion, the Canadian government would be taking another important step forward in ensuring that Canadians living with anaphylaxis are able to maintain a higher quality of life.

I thank Debbie Bruce, from Mississauga, who has been instrumental in helping me prepare these remarks and is a true champion advocate for the thousands of people across the country living with this condition. She should be greatly appreciated for her work.

I look forward to seeing this motion receive the unanimous support of all members of the House.

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I must acknowledge that I really appreciated the speech by the member opposite. I never thought I would say that. I thought his presentation was very well done. Unfortunately, he is not listening to my compliments, but that is all right. I really did find his approach to the subject intriguing. It was very meticulous. I am very allergic to peanuts, so I speak from experience.

I will read the motion by the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, because sometimes we forget what we are talking about.

That, in the opinion of the House, anaphylaxis is a serious concern for an increasing number of Canadians and the government should take the appropriate measures necessary to ensure these Canadians are able to maintain a high quality of life.

I would like to read a definition. I could give a very personal definition of anaphylaxis. However, this is the definition found on the site allerg.qc.ca:

There is no universal definition for anaphylaxis, but it may be defined as a serious allergic reaction that has a rapid onset and is potentially fatal. It is generally characterized by the appearance of several signs and symptoms involving one or multiple bodily systems.

What is the mechanism of an anaphylactic reaction? The answer is very interesting. The following quote is from the same site:

In most cases of anaphylaxis, the reaction occurs when antibodies...recognize a particular allergen. When these antibodies are in the presence of this allergen, there is an activation of certain cell types...which leads to the liberation of different inflammatory products that can affect all the organs and systems in the body.

The word “inflammatory” is important here, because it is the root of the problem. It seems as though the inflammation would be a

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welcome reaction, but it can affect the trachea, which makes it difficult for an individual to breathe. The site goes on to say:

This is the reason for the variety of signs and symptoms that may be observed during an allergic reaction. It is also possible to observe the phenomenon known as a biphasic reaction...

The reaction is phase one. A second reaction can follow much later because there are two phases. That is when you see the second reaction.

What can cause an anaphylactic reaction? There are many triggers, including food. As my colleague across the way said, eight foods are responsible for 93% of reactions in children. They are eggs, peanuts, milk, soya, nuts, fish, shellfish and wheat. The most common food allergens for older children and adults are peanuts, shellfish, nuts and fish.

People can also be allergic to certain medications or insect bites. I invite all of my colleagues to come look at an EpiPen syringe. The concept is very simple. When EpiPens first came on the market, they were primarily meant for bee stings.

The Deputy Speaker: I must inform the hon. member that props are not permitted in the House.

• (1920)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I understand. The subject of this evening's debate is not all that dangerous, fortunately. Some other bills could require props that are much more compromising. I will hide these.

The EpiPen was initially marketed to treat insect bites. Now, of course, it is used much more commonly for food allergies. Indeed, anaphylactic shock is a little like an overreaction in the body's defence system.

I myself have twice experienced anaphylactic shock, which led to unconsciousness and hospitalization. Patients usually have to be intubated in order to protect the airways. An epinephrine injection is supposed to contract the blood vessels in order to return the person's blood pressure to normal. Anaphylaxis is certainly linked to many allergies, but food allergies are by far the most common trigger.

March 21 was food allergy awareness day in Quebec. I would like to quote an excerpt from a press release issued by the Association québécoise des allergies alimentaires:

Food allergies constitute a major and fast-growing health problem. Approximately 300,000 Quebecers suffer from food allergies, which represents 4% of the adult population and between 6% and 8% of children. Between 1997 and 2007, there was an 18% increase in the number of food allergy sufferers under the age of 18. These allergies can trigger an anaphylactic reaction at any time, which can cause death within just a few minutes. About half of the 150 or so food allergy deaths in the United States each year are caused by peanut allergies. That is why the AQAA, or Association québécoise des allergies alimentaires, has joined a coalition that is proposing an official policy for managing anaphylaxis in Quebec schools. Such a policy would help to reduce the number of anaphylactic reactions among children and help us manage them properly when they do occur, thereby reducing the level of associated risk.

I found it relevant to bring my EpiPen because I do not think there are 3,000 solutions to anaphylactic reactions. An injection of epinephrine or adrenalin is the immediate antidote that prevents the worst from happening. What is unbelievably sad about this, as our health critic just said, is that not all Canadians have insurance to cover the cost of medication.

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The cost of this medication is prohibitive. In general, we are talking about \$100 a syringe. I always have two on me because one syringe lasts for 20 to 40 minutes. People who come into contact with an allergenic substance and are in an urban area with a hospital nearby can use the syringe and inform hospital personnel that they think they have had an anaphylactic reaction.

If people know that they are not going to be close to a hospital, then having two syringes is far from an unnecessary precaution since it means that they will have a double dose on hand. Now, I cannot assume that a second dose will have the same effect. I do not imagine that a person can prevent an anaphylactic reaction for three days by taking 19 doses. I do not think that is how it works, but I have not checked. In any case, I always have \$200 worth of medical equipment with me.

We are very fortunate that my two daughters did not inherit this allergy and have not had to live with this stress at school. However, young children who are three, four, five and six years of age carry EpiPens, and that is a big responsibility for them. It is a financial responsibility, but first and foremost it is about health and protecting oneself. It is a major responsibility.

This allergy protection system is quite costly. Fortunately, in Quebec, we are better protected because we contribute to a public prescription drug insurance plan. However, I cannot help but think of the other provinces where there are families that are keeping track of every penny and having trouble making ends meet, families that, sadly, have a child with allergies. These families must ensure that their children have an EpiPen in their bag before they leave for school.

• (1925)

It is a huge responsibility. As someone mentioned earlier, an EpiPen rarely lasts more than a year before it reaches its expiration date. It therefore needs to be replaced every year. It is simple math: to be on the safe side, a person needs to have two EpiPens. If we do the math, for a child diagnosed at age 3 or 4, who needs to have EpiPens on him once he goes to school, it will cost \$200 a year times five or six, depending on the number of years. It adds up.

What we just saw is quite sad, and I understand what my colleague was saying earlier. We are being asked to support this bill, and it goes without saying that we will. However, I cannot help but point something out. Earlier, I noted the result of the vote on the motion to reduce sodium intake in Canada. It was a very important motion. No one can be against doing the right thing. Once again, as usual, the government opposite rather rudely gave us a big fat “no”, with a vote of 147 to 122 against the motion. I think adopting this type of policy is a no-brainer.

The point I want to make is that, at a school, there is a greater chance of an anaphylactic reaction occurring than a fire. If schools are equipped with fire extinguishers, then they should absolutely be equipped with EpiPens.

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand before the House today to speak about anaphylaxis, which is a serious allergic reaction that can occur after exposure to an allergen, such as foods, medications, insect bites

or stings, or even materials like latex. This is a very serious condition that affects the lives of hundreds of thousands of Canadians. I would like to personally commend the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook for once again bringing this important issue to the attention of members of Parliament.

There is a growing concern for a growing number of Canadians, and we can all agree that the government has a role to play in helping Canadians living with serious allergies maintain a high quality of life. I believe I can say with little doubt that a number of us here today either have allergies ourselves or have family members or friends who live with serious allergic conditions.

In 2003, Health Canada reported that an estimated 600,000 Canadians may have experienced life-threatening allergies. More recently, in 2012, it was recorded that more than two million Canadians, many of whom are children, identify having at least one food allergy. These numbers are significant. When someone who experiences allergic reactions is exposed to an allergen, a number of symptoms may develop. Some of these symptoms may be as mild as watery or itchy eyes or a rash. However, more severe symptoms can include difficulty breathing, light-headedness, feeling faint, and even losing consciousness. It may take only minutes for a mild reaction to quickly develop into a potentially dangerous, even life-threatening reaction. Many Canadians may not even be aware that they are allergic to something until they are exposed and experience a reaction.

As I mentioned a few moments ago, there are many common, everyday substances that can trigger an allergic reaction. Not all of these always cause an anaphylactic reaction, but many, including certain foods such as eggs, seafood and various nuts, are more likely to cause such a reaction. There is no guaranteed cure for allergies. It is possible that allergies may develop without warning, and it is also possible they may disappear without warning. There may be steps that individuals can take to help manage their allergies, but once someone develops an allergy, it may be something that individual will have to live with for his or her entire life.

One of the most effective means to combat allergic reactions is to avoid those allergens that trigger such reactions. That is why it is essential that people have information about what products contain. It is very important that the Government of Canada have the necessary measures in place to help minimize the risks associated with anaphylaxis, so that those Canadians who live with severe allergies are able to maintain a high quality of life.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the actions taken by the Government of Canada to support Canadians who live with severe allergies. Our government has put in place regulations to enhance the information about allergens that must be included on product labels. This information helps Canadians make informed decisions about the products they purchase, which in turn will help to minimize the number of allergic reactions to health and food products.

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In 2011, the Minister of Health announced new regulations to strengthen the labelling of food allergens so that Canadians with sensitivities and allergies could make better choices about the food products they purchase and consume. These new food allergen labelling regulations came into force in August 2012, following an 18-month transition period to allow industry sufficient time to come into compliance. Clear, plain-language labelling, a listing of priority allergens, and the identification of gluten sources and added sulphates in pre-packaged foods are among the enhanced requirements set out in these new regulations. If we go to the grocery store today and pick up a food product from the shelf and look at the label, we will see that the ingredient listing includes clear and understandable information about the potential allergens contained in the product.

Also in 2011, amended regulations came into force requiring the manufacturers of health products to list non-medicinal ingredients on the outer label of non-prescription drug products in Canada. This regulatory change enhanced already existing labelling requirements for health products.

● (1930)

Both of these recent regulatory amendments have put in place measures that benefit Canadians who have allergies by providing them with information so they can identify potentially harmful ingredients and make informed choices about the products they use.

The Government of Canada has also put in place measures to monitor allergic reactions and to provide Canadians with reliable and trustworthy information so that they can make informed choices. For example, the Public Health Agency of Canada maintains the Canadian adverse events following immunization surveillance system. Health care professionals, consumers, provincial and territorial public health authorities and vaccine providers submit reports pertaining to adverse events following immunizations. This information facilitates the agency's work with the provinces and territories to monitor adverse events following immunization with disease preventing vaccines. In addition, the Public Health Agency has a number of documents on its website, including a guideline document relating to immunization and information on the management of anaphylaxis, that are readily available to Canadians.

We are all familiar with the Government of Canada's Healthy Canadians website, which provides Canadians with a one-stop shop for a wide range of health and safety information, including product recalls and safety alerts, information about food and health products and information concerning the health of our children. There is considerable information on the Healthy Canadians website concerning allergic reactions, anaphylaxis and how to minimize risks. This information is directed at Canadians and is a valuable resource for all of us.

In addition to the information on Healthy Canadians, many government departments also include information for Canadians on their websites. For example, Health Canada provides a food allergy e-notice, which is accessible to Canadian subscribers as a way to be better informed about food allergens and intolerance in Canada.

Health Canada is committed to promoting allergy awareness among Canadians. In the event a previously unknown allergen risk is identified, Health Canada works rapidly to promptly inform the

Canadian public. Health Canada also produces annual reminders to Canadians relating to food allergies, outlining the risks to Canadians of all ages and explaining safe practices to help people reduce their risks from these allergens.

In May 2012, Health Canada published a reminder for Canadians stating that food allergies could be life-threatening to people of all ages, especially children. It highlighted the importance of reading product labels to assist in minimizing the risks of allergic reactions to food.

Health Canada also works in close collaboration with Canadian consumer associations. For example, the department participates in the annual conferences of Anaphylaxis Canada and the Association québécoise des allergies alimentaires, providing experts for "ask an allergist" training sessions.

Health Canada experts also give presentations in forums and conferences dedicated to education and awareness. Health Canada is committed to sharing resources with Canadians by including hyperlinks to these associations' websites on its website, thereby providing access to educational materials for consumers on anaphylaxis and allergies.

It is my recommendation that the House support the private member's motion from the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook. Anaphylaxis is a very serious concern for Canadians, and protecting the health and safety of Canadians is a priority. Supporting the motion will raise awareness on the challenges faced by those who suffer from anaphylactic reactions. For these reasons, I urge all hon. members to support Motion No. 230.

● (1935)

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues on all sides of the House before I get to my prepared remarks to wrap up. One of the great things about being a member of Parliament is the opportunities to learn on an ongoing basis. I want to thank my colleague from Québec who shared his personal experiences, as well as my colleague from Halifax West who, as we have mentioned, worked on committee before.

I personally have never had family members who have had to deal with this, but as I have gone through the learning process, it has been most educational. The purpose of what we are trying to do with this motion is to make sure we educate people and raise awareness, as has been mentioned. I want to thank the two members on the opposite side of the House for sharing their personal stories. They were very helpful.

I would also like to thank everyone who has spoken on Motion No. 230. Their inspiring words of support are very encouraging. I am glad to see that so many members recognize the dangers of anaphylaxis. When I began this process, I received a lot of support from various individuals and organizations. I would like to thank the hon. member for St. Catharines who first introduced the precursor to Motion No. 230 in the 39th Parliament.

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I also extend a special thanks to the Canadian Anaphylaxis Initiative and the Niagara Anaphylaxis Support and Knowledge. These two organizations do tremendous work. They spread awareness of anaphylaxis and have been unwavering in their support of this motion. They have provided me with much appreciated knowledge and expertise throughout this process, and I am grateful for their insight.

I would also like to thank the numerous people who have called, written and met with me in person to discuss their personal struggles with anaphylaxis. Their stories furthered my commitment to seeing this motion brought to the House and passed. This widespread support is an indication of the magnitude and dangers of this condition.

With 2.5 million Canadians affected, a number which continues to rise every year, it is concerning that many Canadians are not aware of the risks associated with anaphylaxis. An anaphylactic reaction is a very serious and potentially life-threatening experience and, on the average, there are 3,500 reactions per year in Canada, of which 12 will be fatal.

As mentioned in many of the speeches on this motion, epinephrine treats the short-term symptoms of anaphylaxis, but awareness can substantially reduce the amount of anaphylactic reactions in the future. Awareness includes an understanding of anaphylaxis as a condition, its different causes and triggers, and strategies to limit exposure.

On the first day of discussion in the House, I referred to the stories of Lucas, Liam and David. Their daily struggles with anaphylaxis and the fear of reaction can be reduced. Motion No. 230 aims for this goal. By bringing more attention and awareness to the Canadian public, this motion will help these children and many other Canadians who live with this condition. It will help Canadians understand the signs, dangers and consequences of an anaphylactic reaction. As was mentioned in the first hour of debate, important steps have been taken by various businesses and levels of government.

My colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville mentioned that the Toronto Blue Jays, a member of the private sector, introduced a peanut-controlled zone at three of their home games in the previous season. By doing this, they created a safer environment for their fans to enjoy the game. I am pleased to have recently found out that the Blue Jays plan to carry on this policy during the season. There will be at least another three home games that will have a peanut-controlled zone.

As a government, we have provided a significant amount of funds for allergy research, including \$36.5 million to support AllerGen, which is the Allergy, Genes and Environment Network of centres of excellence that conducts allergy research. Also, in August 2012, new regulations were implemented which enhanced the labelling of priority food allergens on prepackaged retail foods. These regulations help consumers classify which foods are safe and which products they must avoid. Our government has also designated May as National Anaphylaxis Month.

Although these considerable steps have been taken, more can be done. Businesses and governments should do more to help those

who live with the condition. More specifically, Parliament should recognize that anaphylaxis is a serious condition and create the necessary awareness to help those living with anaphylaxis have a higher quality of life.

Preventive measures should be taken by everyday Canadians in order to ensure the safety of those around them, especially those at risk of having an anaphylactic reaction. Understanding the condition and which allergens could cause reactions could lead to a reduction of incidents and more peace of mind for Canadians living with severe life-threatening allergies. With the passing of Motion No. 230, Canadians living with anaphylaxis will receive much needed recognition from our government. We stand with them in their efforts to promote awareness of the condition.

Once again, I would like to thank all the hon. members here today, as well as those who have pledged their support for this motion.

● (1940)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for debate has expired.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 22, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the time this evening to discuss the plight of veterans who are trying to get care for their very specific needs. Finding access to long-term care beds is difficult for all Canadians, but finding those beds in facilities that have the expertise to deal with the specific needs of veterans is even more difficult.

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It is important to note that the government is shutting and phasing out long-term care facilities for veterans and offloading the responsibility to the provinces. I want to remind the minister that the responsibility for veterans is federal, and that should include their care as they age or after they are injured in the line of duty. At a time in life when they are fragile and vulnerable, the government is refusing to live up to its responsibility to them.

The member opposite will tell us that we have provincial health care, that we do not need to have separate veterans' hospitals. This is a shameful cop-out.

The men and women who put their lives on the line deserve respect and dignity. Veterans' hospitals have the expertise to deal with the very specific issues that veterans face, while other facilities do not have that capacity. Space is available in hospitals with this particular expertise, but veterans are being turned away.

I have had veterans approach me and tell me that they need a long-term care bed. There are empty beds at Parkwood Hospital, in London, Ontario, a veterans' hospital in my riding, but people cannot get in because of the technicality about the mandate of such hospitals. Doctors have said very clearly in the case of a 33-year veteran that his spinal deterioration was most likely because of his service, yet their opinion was dismissed and the veteran in question was denied a bed.

There was nothing available in a nursing home, so after much cajoling, Colonel Russell did receive a community bed. However, he has to pay for it. He has to pay for it because the government does not recognize his service. It is as if he had never served his country. That concerns me very much, and it should concern this Parliament.

I asked two questions in the House regarding Parkwood Hospital and the case of Colonel Neil Russell.

Neil was without a bed in a long-term care facility, and he quite simply had nowhere to go. After months and months, after going to the media and after many letters to the minister responsible, Neil was finally promised a bed. Then he was told that he had misunderstood and had to split the cost of the bed with the province.

It is a relief, in some ways, that he now has a place to stay, but it makes very little sense to me that he had to fight so hard to get it.

This situation is part of a larger picture, a picture of how low a priority veterans are for the current government and how out of touch it is.

First, according to the Royal Canadian Legion, there are 150 homeless veterans in Ontario. It is a disgrace.

Second, the costs of a funeral and burial services have not been met adequately by the government. Some years ago, the assets cut-off to provide monetary help through the Last Post Fund was \$24,000. That was reduced by the Liberals. Now it is just over \$12,000. That means that 67% of veterans receive no help. This is simply not the way that we, as a country, should be treating our veterans.

I want to say that we on the opposition side will oppose the treatment that veterans receive from this ungrateful government.

● (1945)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the Privacy Act prevents me from speaking publicly about the personal information of an individual Canadian. However, her question gives me an opportunity to explain what our government is doing to help thousands and thousands of veterans who need long-term care.

Our government is proud to support Canada's veterans. They have served our country with honour and courage, and have made great sacrifices, themselves and their families. In doing so, they have also earned our nation's care and support when they need it and for as long as they need it. That is exactly what our government is focused on doing.

The pledge of support goes to the heart of the mandate this government has for supporting our veterans. Canada's provision of service and benefits makes us the envy of veterans around the world. Long-term care is one such example. Our government is helping to fund long-term care for more than 8,700 veterans residing in about 1,750 nursing homes and other similar facilities across the country. We are proud of this, because this is a real and meaningful way to help so many Canadian men and women who need and deserve it.

However, one size does not fit all. That is why we have a variety of options when it comes to caring for elderly veterans. Many veterans prefer to stay in their own home for as long as possible, and that is why we have developed the internationally acclaimed veterans independence program. The VIP provides veterans with things like home care, grounds maintenance and services, as well as home visits. This is the kind of thing veterans can count on from our government.

When institutional care becomes the only answer, we continue to accommodate veterans' individual wishes. A growing number of veterans prefer community beds in long-term care facilities close to their homes. That should not be surprising, that they want to be close to home. What is particularly important, however, is that these community beds are open to all eligible veterans, whether they served in the Second World War, the Korean War or more recently for the Canadian Armed Forces.

We are here to care for all veterans, and that is especially true for those who require long-term care because of an injury in their service to our country. Canadian veterans have earned it, and they deserve it.

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• (1950)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, that is more lip service. The proof is in real action. In the case of the government, there is no action. I should not have to remind the member opposite that these men and women who are veterans and who served in our armed forces put their lives on the line for us. I should not have to remind the member that to support our troops means that we have to support veterans too.

When will the government stop with the platitudes and start looking at the issues that our veterans face every day?

It is the least the government can do, and it is the morally right thing to do. Care for our veterans is part of the contract, the covenant that we undertake with people who enlist and protect our country. We asked them to serve. Now it is our turn to serve them.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear. Our government will continue increased funding and support for veterans. Our strong record includes long-term care for veterans. In fact, our government supports more than 8,700 veterans living in approximately 1,750 nursing homes and other similar facilities across the country.

These are veterans of all types of service. As I mentioned before, they served in the Second World War and the Korean War, and there are our more recent veterans from the Canadian Forces. If they require long-term care because they have been injured in their service for Canada, we will be there to support them. It is that simple.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on February 13, I asked the minister a question in the House, and the answer was reported by the media that day. In fact, thanks to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, we learned that the Conservatives' employment insurance reform was not based on any impact studies.

Naturally, I said that there were many people, including 56,836 in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, with unstable employment status and that workers everywhere were adversely affected by the reform.

At the time, the minister's candid response shocked me. She said that analyses of the worker shortage and the employers' need for temporary foreign workers had been done. We now see the consequences of those analyses. The government may have done studies of situations where they determined the employers' need to locate workers and bring them on site. However, they did not analyze workers' needs.

We must not forget that the driving force in our society, for a company, is the worker, not the company's needs. When we talk about the economy, we also talk about what the company needs. However, we have to match the company's needs to the worker's needs. The worker has to be taken into consideration on a regular basis.

Quebec's Minister Maltais, who is still minister, is like our Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development's counterpart. She is responsible for some status of women issues, but she is also

responsible for the transfer of worker training and employment insurance matters. At the time, she tried to come to Ottawa. She did not make it because of a snowstorm.

She tried to meet with the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development a second time. However, if members remember, there was a second snowstorm. It was a problem at the time because the Minister of Human Resources had asked at the last minute to hold the meeting in the Outaouais. The entire Quebec delegation had to come to the Outaouais in the middle of a storm, and they did not have time to speak to the minister. The meeting lasted just a few minutes and they had to return because there was a vote. Therefore, they were prevented from discussing the situation.

Since then—and there were a number of articles along these lines in the newspapers—it was made clear that an impact study had not been done. It was proven. However, the minister did not change her tune.

This does not make sense to us. The study should have been done before the reform was implemented. Now, we are seeing the consequences, and we know that the Atlantic provinces oppose this reform, as does Quebec. It turns out that five of the country's 10 provinces are against this reform.

• (1955)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure everyone that the changes we have introduced simply clarify claimant responsibilities, and those responsibilities have been a part of the employment insurance program for decades. They are not new.

[English]

As I have said many times, the basic requirements for seasonal workers who claim EI have not changed. Seasonal claimants, like all EI claimants, have always been required to look for work while receiving EI. They have always been required to look for suitable employment during the off-season. These changes are not about restricting access to EI benefits for seasonal claimants or anyone else. The updated regulations simply clarify their responsibilities and obligations by better defining what is a reasonable job search and what is suitable employment.

[Translation]

EI was never meant to be an income supplement for those who choose not to work during the off-season.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

We know that finding work is more difficult in some communities than others, and that is why local labour market conditions are taken into account and into consideration when assessing a claimant's job search efforts. Nevertheless, there are skills and labour shortages in many parts of Canada, even in rural areas and areas of high unemployment. We believe that seasonal workers can fill some of those shortages. Our goal is to get unemployed Canadians back into the workforce quicker, and we are making that possible by providing better labour market information, including daily job alerts. How can that actually be a bad thing?

[Translation]

The truth is we are helping connect Canadians with available jobs and that is good for our communities and good for the economy.

[English]

As the Prime Minister, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and I myself have said many times in this House, if Canadians are unable to find a job in their local community, EI will continue to be there for them as it always has been.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, the minister said that they were first going to implement the reform and then assess the impact. That does not make any sense. The ministers have also said the same thing in the media. They have said that they are going to implement the reform, get it going and then see what happens.

Yesterday, clergy in the Atlantic region spoke out against this reform. Families, parents, fathers and mothers are knocking on their doors to get work. They welcome these people. They see that they do not have enough food or enough money to pay their rent and that they live too far from urban centres to follow the famous rule about accumulating a sufficient number of qualifying hours or to find a job, which the minister told them to do. Canadians are the ones who are suffering the consequences of this reform that should never have been implemented.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, seasonal workers do not need to worry about the changes to employment insurance.

[English]

No one who has made a reasonable effort to look for a job will be cut off from benefits. No one will be forced to move away from their community or to commute great distances to accept a job. No one will be forced to take a job that will leave them financially worse off than being on employment insurance. No one who takes a job in the off-season will be prevented from returning to their seasonal job once the season resumes.

If Canadians are unable to find work, EI will continue to be there for them as it always has been.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 7:59 p.m.)

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