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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, May 22, 2013

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 22, 2013

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

● (1405)

[*English*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

B.C. PROVINCIAL SOCCER CHAMPIONS

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, May 11 was a big day for soccer in British Columbia. The adult provincial championships were held at West Hills Stadium in Victoria. The women's final was claimed, 1-0, by Surrey United when Chelsey Hannesson took advantage of a pass headed by Ally Benes and squeezed a tight-angled shot past the keeper into the net. The Surrey United Women have now won an unprecedented 10 consecutive provincial championships.

A few hours later, the Surrey United Men's team also won its final, 1-0, for its second consecutive provincial championship. The game was won on an early goal when United's Colin Streckman stepped up for a penalty shot and scored with measured accuracy into the bottom corner, giving the goalkeeper no chance.

Both Surrey United teams are from Cloverdale, in my district, where our ideal climate allows teams to practice and play year-round. Surrey United men and women will now move on to the nationals in Halifax this October.

Congratulations Surrey United.

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[*Translation*]

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our constituents are disillusioned with politicians who are mired in scandal and completely unaccountable to Canadians.

As elected officials, it is our duty to give Canadians a voice; we are accountable to them.

Today, I am therefore giving a voice to a constituent who wrote to me:

> Since you have been in your position, this is really the first time I have been kept informed about political issues and decisions being made in Ottawa.
>
> I really feel as though I am being asked to do my job as a citizen—to express myself—and not just to go and vote. This really is the first time.
>
> With this survey I received in the mail, I feel as though someone is listening.
>
> I see that you really embrace the NDP's vision to get young people involved. Well done!
>
> I voted for you, and in no way do I regret it. In return, you are doing a good job. You have earned my trust. You are even motivating me to keep my loved ones informed and to urge them to vote.

I have a message for my constituents: you can rest assured that the NDP is here to stand up for democracy and defend your right to be heard.

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[*English*]

CFB PETAWAWA

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent the fine men and women in uniform at CFB Petawawa. Forty-five years ago this month, 26 paratroopers disembarked from their Buffalo transport aircraft expecting a smooth landing. As young paratroopers descended from the heavens, something was amiss. High winds had pushed the men away from their drop zone into the frigid waters of the Ottawa River. Entangled in their parachutes, the soldiers struggled to reach shore. When exhausted rescuers finally finished their search, seven troopers were still missing. They would never return. Recovery teams retrieved every single body.

On May 8, friends, family and former comrades gathered at a memorial to mark the solemn occasion. The names of the victims were read out for all to hear, as has been done every year since the tragedy: Master Warrant Officer Reginald Riddell, Warrant Officer Michael McDonnell, and corporals Hugh Fields, Bob Knight, Dennis Clements, Jim Misner and Bruce Chiswell.

In the words of Padre Wayne Sollows, “We gather to remember those who trained to defend our great nation, but in doing so, had their lives taken away from them in peace”.

Statements by Members

CHAIR-LEADERS CAMPAIGN

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I join many of my colleagues who are spending the day in a wheelchair in support of the Chair-Leaders Campaign for spinal research in Canada. We are doing this to raise awareness of the challenges and difficulties experienced on a day-to-day basis by Canadians impacted by spinal cord injuries. We also want to highlight the ongoing need for more inclusion and accessibility. We are told that each day, some 12 new spinal cord injuries occur in Canada, an average of over 4,000 a year, and often, those most impacted are young men.

My day in the wheelchair has not been easy. Whether navigating the washroom and elevator or trying to have a coffee, I felt in some small measure what it must be like for Canadians who live with these injuries every day. It is not easy.

We have made a lot of progress, but we must do more, including investing in spinal cord research and development. We must also ensure that buildings and public spaces take into account those Canadians who use wheelchairs.

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B.C. ELECTION

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, British Columbians sent a loud message in the provincial election. The economy and jobs are their number one priority. The NDP campaigned on closing down pipelines, eliminating tanker traffic and having a two-year moratorium on fracking for LNG. The NDP answer is to raise taxes and spend money it does not have.

In Revelstoke and Nakusp, I met with groups who told me that tourism is extremely important to their economy. They rely on people being able to travel and spend money in their communities. In Creston, I met with Kootenay milk producers who have been producing some of the finest milk for over 75 years. They collectively employ 100 people and generate annual sales of $10 million. These hard-working dairy farmers recognize the value of a vibrant economy, and they want to see it stay that way.

As the NDP continues to focus on how to kill jobs and raise taxes, our Conservative government will focus on what Canadians want: a strong economy, jobs and prosperity.

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● (1410)

ABORIGINAL AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, May 21 to 24 is Aboriginal Awareness Week. It was originally intended to increase awareness of aboriginal peoples and their culture within Canada's public service, but it has grown to become a workplace initiative that many employers are taking up as a tool to encourage reconciliation.

The first Aboriginal Awareness Week was held in 1992. It is now a Canada-wide celebration that encourages interactive activities to honour the diverse cultures and traditions of first nations, Inuit and Metis peoples in Canada. The theme this year is "Celebrating the Contributions of Aboriginal Peoples".

I think it is appropriate to take a moment to acknowledge two individuals who have both contributed to the work we do in this place.

Elijah Harper passed away last week, but not before he inspired a generation of activists by insisting that aboriginal peoples be consulted on constitutional changes. Elder Bertha Commonda of Kitigan Zibi also passed away this weekend. Her quiet presence at events around Ottawa helped all participants come together in a good way. She will be missed.

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AIRLINE SERVICE IN MANITOBA

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the City of Brandon and all of western Manitoba received great news last week. I was pleased to join WestJet Encore President Ferio Pugliese and the mayor of Brandon in announcing a new passenger air service between Brandon and Calgary. Community and business leaders welcome this long awaited and tremendous news. Air service is key to our economic growth, and it will connect western Manitoba business to the rest of the country.

This government has made strategic investments to improve Brandon airport, which made it possible to secure the service that WestJet will be offering.

I want to congratulate the thousands of people from Brandon and southwest Manitoba who signed a petition of support and Mayor Decter Hirst and her team for all their incredible work. I also want to acknowledge Art Peters for his tremendous contribution toward this announcement. I encourage the people of Brandon and western Manitoba to get on board.

WestJet Encore, welcome to Brandon.

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HARDEEP SINGH KANG

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise today to pay tribute to a fine individual, a dedicated police officer and a young man I am proud to have known. Peel Regional Police Officer Hardeep Singh Kang passed away this weekend after his battle with cancer at only 25 years of age.

In his short life, Officer Kang dedicated his time to helping others in need, particularly by working with youth and providing guidance as a positive role model and an inspiration to all.

I offer my deepest and sincere condolences to the entire Kang family. It is my hope that we can all come together to provide support for the family and friends of Officer Kang as they cope with this tremendous loss. Officer Kang will be missed dearly by his family, friends, colleagues and everyone who knew him.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives lament a skills shortage in Canada and see temporary foreign workers as the only solution. What they refuse to see is the potential of our country's unemployed youth.

Canada-wide, the youth unemployment rate now stands two points higher than it did seven years ago. That is a net loss of 50,000 youth jobs.

In my hometown of Hamilton, youth unemployment is double the national average. For those who do find work, a Social Planning & Research Council study shows that the reality is very different from what it was in the 1970s. Many youth now face lower wages, fewer hours, decreasing access to permanent jobs and more time unemployed between contracts. TD Economics has said that the spike in youth unemployment will cost our economy over $10 billion. *Maclean's* magazine is referring to young Canadians as the new underclass. Everyone is seized with the problem except the government.

Canada's youth deserve better. They are the most educated and skilled generation in Canada's history. It is time to help them reach their full potential. It is time for the Conservative government to develop a comprehensive youth employment strategy.

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TRIBUTE TO NEIL REYNOLDS AND PETER WORTHINGTON

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week Canada lost two giants of journalism: Neil Reynolds and Peter Worthington.

Neil Reynolds passed away on Sunday at the age of 72. Reynolds' passion for Canadian newspapers was unmatchable. His courage and leadership in journalism will not be forgotten. Born near Kingston, Reynolds was editor of several Canadian newspapers across the country and mentored many journalists who went on to become leaders in Canada's media industry.

Peter Worthington was truly unstoppable. Born in Winnipeg, his journalism took him to the ends of the earth. As founding editor of the *Toronto Sun*, and for so much else, he will be remembered for generations. Peter Worthington passed away Sunday, May 12, at the age of 86.

They will be deeply missed by their families, friends and journalists and by Canadians from coast to coast to coast who were inspired by their dedication to the craft.

I invite all of my colleagues to stand in tribute to Peter Worthington and Neil Reynolds.

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● (1415)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the status of women critic for the NDP, I am here to ask the Conservative government to step up and act to end violence against women.

The Conservatives claim that ending violence against women is a top priority, yet when given the opportunity to take action, they refuse. There is a pandemic of missing and murdered aboriginal women, but the government has yet to launch a public inquiry or commit to action.

The list goes on. Just yesterday, yet another former RCMP officer came forward seeking justice after being sexually assaulted on the job. When the Conservatives had the opportunity to give direction, they refused.

The Conservatives must face a harsh fact: women are still subject to violence in Canada because they are women. That is why I have submitted Motion 444 for consideration, calling on the government to develop, in collaboration with the provinces, territories, civil society, and first nations, Metis and Inuit peoples, a coordinated national action plan to address violence against women.

Violence against women is not just a women's issue; it affects all Canadians. I urge the government to heed the NDP call to work to end it.

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SRI LANKA

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week Canadians will remember the terrible tragedies endured by the Tamil people in Sri Lanka during the 25-year civil war.

My riding of Scarborough Centre is home to many Canadian Tamils. I stand today with Canada's Tamil community in remembering the thousands of innocent civilians who lost their lives or were displaced by the conflict.

Our government has worked hard to address the ongoing and serious human rights concerns in Sri Lanka. We have urged the Sri Lankan government to demonstrate accountability by investigating the allegations that up to 40,000 civilians were killed by Sri Lankan troops in the final phase of the civil war.

Our government calls on Sri Lanka to demonstrate a commitment to fundamental Commonwealth values, including respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Our government is committed to working with the international community to prevent such horrific violence from ever happening again.

* * *

[*Translation*]

VILLERAY SENIORS' CENTRE

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 16, the people of Papineau celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Villeray seniors' centre.

This organization is dedicated to improving the quality of life of people aged 50 and over. It hosts community dinners and leisure activities, and provides referral services. Through its socialization efforts, the centre breaks the isolation of seniors and helps them form friendships and supportive relationships.

When it comes to dignity and respect, we must do more to support our seniors directly and through the organizations that work with them.

As the member for Papineau, I am proud to highlight the 25th anniversary of the Villeray seniors' centre. This means 25 years of essential services and 25 years of get-togethers, friendship and special moments.

Congratulations to the Villeray seniors' centre.

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[*English*]

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP has known about corruption in Quebec politics since 1994, yet he chose to keep it secret for 17 years.

Now we learn that he kept this information to himself because he did not think there was anything wrong with the mayor of Laval offering secret envelopes to "help" him. The leader of the NDP had first-hand knowledge of corruption in Quebec, but he did not think it was wrong. As parliamentarians, we must uphold a culture of accountability.

If the leader of the NDP is called to appear at the Charbonneau commission, will he testify, or will he continue to maintain that there was nothing wrong with covering up corruption for 17 long years?

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE SENATE

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport said that secretly signing a $90,000 cheque to help a senator save face was "exceptionally honourable".

For her part, the member for Calgary Centre said that the current wave of resignations demonstrates "the highest ethical standards".

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons lauded Senator Duffy's leadership over and over again, saying that he did the right thing and that Mac Harb and Patrick Brazeau should do the same. What, exactly, should they be doing? Should they all sign a secret deal with the Prime Minister's chief of staff? Is that it?

I have not even mentioned Pamela Wallin. Wow, and I thought the others were bad.

Most Canadians think that the Senate is a joke and that it has been around long enough. It is time to abolish this relic of the 19th century. Those words—relic of the 19th century—are not my own; they came straight from the Prime Minister himself.

Canadians deserve better. They deserve a party that will put an end to this abuse, not a party that will stack the Senate with friends, on the taxpayers' dime.

● (1420)

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP kept a troubling secret for 17 long years. He knew about the corruption in Quebec for 17 years and never alerted the authorities.

In 1994, the leader of the NDP was offered an envelope by the former mayor of Laval, Gilles Vaillancourt, who wanted to "help" him. However, in 2010, he said that Gilles Vaillancourt never offered him an envelope.

The leader of the NDP owes Canadians an explanation. The leader of the NDP could be called to appear before the Charbonneau commission to explain his actions. The leader of the NDP hid his inside knowledge of corruption from the public for two years before deciding to break his silence last week.

Will the leader of the NDP offer to appear before the Charbonneau commission to explain what he knows about corruption in Quebec?

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday afternoon, 11 times, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that the Duffy affair was going to be investigated by independent authorities, independent bodies, independent officers. When my colleague, the House leader of the official opposition asked him what those were, he could not give an answer.

Twice during the afternoon the Prime Minister's Office said that they were the Senate Ethics Officer. Later it corrected that to say it is the Senate committee, the same one that whitewashed Mike Duffy the first time, that is carrying out the investigation.

Does the minister not realize that is about as credible as Paul Martin asking Jean Chrétien to investigate the sponsorship scandal?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the Leader of the Opposition, for that question.

What I did say yesterday was, and I quote: "Furthermore, this matter has been referred to two independent bodies for review", which is nothing like what he just said.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, are the Conservatives really trying to convince Canadians that a committee controlled by Conservative senators is an independent body?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these two referrals will be looked at independently. There will be members of the opposition, of political parties, on that committee. We will have the opportunity to participate in the process. On the other side in the House, with respect to the House of Commons ethics officer, she is looking into the matter. Let them report back to this Parliament.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday afternoon the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that we were referring to some form of legal document that he was not aware of and that his understanding was that no such document exists.

There is a trust document. There is a cheque. Will the Conservatives let the public see the trust document and the cheque?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, what I said was that there was no legal document which had been referred to in this House by members of the opposition on a number of occasions. I said that our understanding was that there was no such legal document. No one in the government is aware of such a legal document.

● (1425)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was asked again and again, yesterday and today, for this crucial legal agreement. He blindly claims, and does it again, that "no such document exists". Canadians want to know the full truth of this affair.

Can the Conservatives say definitively that there were no documents in the Prime Minister's Office that related to the Mike Duffy and Nigel Wright scandal? To be clear: no emails, no memos, no notes. Yes or no?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this House, this Parliament, passed legislation to strengthen the role of an independent ethics watchdog for members of Parliament and for the cabinet. This individual, I think, has served with great distinction in that capacity. This matter has been referred to her, and the government is prepared to fully co-operate as she looks into this issue.

Yesterday and last week, the opposition member said there was a legal agreement. In fact, no one in the government knows about any legal agreement with respect to this payment.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, somehow the Conservatives think that parsing words is going to satisfy Canadians. What Canadians want is the truth, plain and simple.

The minister keeps saying he is "not aware" or that something is "my understanding". He has no knowledge of the situation, apparently. He has what they call in the cover-up business "plausible deniability".

Given that the minister has no knowledge and no answers, is there anyone over there who knows something about this scandal with Mike Duffy and Nigel Wright? Yes or no? Can anyone answer a straightforward question?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I answered very precisely just a few short minutes ago. No one in the government is aware of any agreement or any legal document with respect to this payment. I cannot be any clearer.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has now been a week since news broke that the Prime Minister's right-hand man secretly paid a sitting senator $90,000 to obstruct an audit. Today, I want to ask a very specific question about that obstruction.

We now know that the Conservatives on the Senate Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration used their majority to doctor the final report on Senator Duffy's expenses. Can anybody on that side of the House tell us who gave the order to whitewash the report on Senator Duffy?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear from the committee's report that these expenses should not have been expensed. No one in the government is disputing that fact.

As I understand it, the report did, in the end, reflect the fact that a repayment had been made.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sending the minister a copy of the original undoctored document, for his information. We will share this information with him since the Prime Minister did not see fit to do so.

Yesterday, Senator LeBreton, the government Senate leader, denied any involvement in the falsification of the final report. If that is true, then who ordered Senator Tkachuk and Senator Olsen to go easy on Mr. Duffy?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is parliamentarians should be here to serve the public interest. It is a tremendous responsibility. It is a tremendous honour to serve Canadians. People should be working to advance the public interest and not to advance their own interests. That is what this government got elected for, that is what this government has been working hard to do, and that is why we have taken the action that we have taken.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree entirely with what the minister just said.

This is truly remarkable. The Prime Minister, through surrogates, of course, denies any involvement. His principal secretary and new chief of staff denies, Senator LeBreton denies, the whole cabinet denies. The government would have us believe that Nigel Wright, a man of "unimpeachable integrity", according to the members opposite just three days ago, is now the only person who knew anything at all about this sordid scandal, and planned and perpetrated the entire thing by himself.

If Mr. Wright is solely responsible, when will the government call him to testify under oath to his malfeasance?

● (1430)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I answered questions very clear yesterday to say the Prime Minister first learned about this payment, the nature of this payment, after it was reported publicly in the media. At a press conference just a few moments ago, responding to questions from the media, the Prime Minister indicated that he was not consulted, nor was he asked to sign off on it, nor would he have signed off on it.

Obviously we take great issue with these actions and we believe that Mr. Wright did the appropriate thing. He submitted his resignation, and it was immediately accepted.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an indictable offence to offer a senator compensation in relation to a controversy before the Senate. Surely the Prime Minister knows the laws of Canada, yet he did not call in the cops; instead the issue is being handed back to the same in camera committee that was part of the original cover-up.

Who on that committee was part of the $90,000 whitewash? As well, will they be allowed to take part in this new review, or will the government do the right thing and call in the police?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this matter has been referred to the ethics officer, Mary Dawson, for review, as it properly should be. It is currently before her. She will obviously take the necessary time to review this matter and report back to the House.

Obviously, we take strong issue with this. We disagree with the nature of this payment and we look forward to hearing back from her in short order. She is an independent officer of Parliament, and we look forward to hearing her views.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with answers like that, I bet the whole Conservative bench wishes they could be hiding out in Peru right now.

Speaking of non-denial denials, yesterday the Prime Minister's key legal adviser, Mr. Perrin, said that he was never involved in Nigel Wright's decision. What he did not explain was if he played a role in implementing the decision that led to the cover-up.

Nobody, including the Prime Minister, has come clean about what happened in the Prime Minister's Office, so who else in the Prime Minister's Office knew about this deal and who in the Senate was involved in the whitewash?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today at a press conference, the Prime Minister took questions on this issue. It was very clear that he was not consulted about this payment. He did not know about this payment in advance. In fact, he only learned about the payment afterwards.

He obviously has spoken substantially earlier today about this issue. I think those comments speak for themselves.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he is once again unable to answer because he did not see the deal. Can we talk to someone who saw this deal and who knows what happened between the chief of staff and Mike Duffy in the Prime Minister's office?

The Conservatives claim that the Prime Minister was not aware of this situation until it was reported in the media.

If I understand correctly, that means that CTV is more aware of what is happening in the PMO than the Prime Minister himself, and he is the one leading our country.

When senators' fraudulent expenditures became too embarrassing, did the Prime Minister ask his chief of staff to solve the problem?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly in this House, the Prime Minister was unaware of this payment. When he learned about the payment, he obviously accepted the resignation of Mr. Wright.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I believe that they are allergic to the idea of answering questions. That must be the case or else they must be completely out to lunch and have no idea what happened in their boss's office.

Enough beating around the bush. Senator Duffy received $90,000. Three other senators are currently under investigation for the misuse of public funds.

Is the Prime Minister aware of any other similar cheques or money transfers that may have been approved by his office staff or members of his government to buy the silence of other senators?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants a document tabled that no one in the government is aware exists with respect to legal documents surrounding this payment.

Nigel Wright accepted sole responsibility for his action. He accepted sole responsibility for his decision, and the Prime Minister immediately accepted his resignation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they are unable to answer the questions simply because they have no idea what happened. Worse yet, it seems as though they do not want to know what happened.

According to the Conservatives, there is no paper trail for this $90,000 deal. They would have us believe that no document or email was signed to confirm the transfer of funds and possibly the repayment of this amount.

Has the Prime Minister's Office submitted any such document to the Ethics Commissioner or the bogus Senate committee as part of the investigation? Can the question be any broader than that?

● (1435)

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was this government that brought in an independent and strengthened ethics watchdog. This government has always fully co-operated with her in her work.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again, they have no answer. That is not surprising, because they did not get a real answer from the Prime Minister before he abandoned ship.

My next question is on the Senate committee that investigated the allegations against the senators accused of wrongdoing and what the Conservatives' connection might be to all this. The committee meetings are supposed to be held in camera.

Was anyone from the PMO aware that these meetings were going on? If so, who was it and what did he learn?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the committee has now publicly reported. It is clear from the committee's report that the expenses in question should never have been claimed. No one in the government is disputing that fact.

I understand the report did reflect that a reimbursement had been made. The member opposite will know that the Prime Minister has spoken to the media earlier today on these questions.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Canada's former law clerk to the House of Commons said that the $90,000 cheque prima facie violates the Parliament of Canada Act and the Criminal Code of Canada.

Will the Minister of Justice stand up today and answer a question, or will he let the Minister of Foreign Affairs stand up, as he did yesterday, to reject the relevance of our criminal law?

Will the minister at least recognize that this financial transaction may have constituted a crime and commit to calling in the RCMP?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government obviously does not direct police authorities.

What we have said is that this Parliament has established an independent ethics officer, Mary Dawson. This matter has been referred to her. Obviously we have said, as we always do, that we will fully co-operate with any review she should choose to conduct.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they can tell that to Helena Guergis.

At the very least it is clear a crime may have been committed, so why the silence from the Minister of Justice? No one is buying the Conservatives' hear-no-evil approach to this issue.

The Parliament of Canada Act, in section 16, states that

> No member of the Senate shall receive...any compensation...in relation to any... matter before...a committee...

yet according to reports, this is exactly what Mike Duffy and Nigel Wright did.

Why will the Minister of Justice not concede that a crime may have been committed and call in the RCMP?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friend opposite talked about a previous case. The independent ethics watchdog did look into that and rendered a rather strong verdict with respect to that file.

We have confidence in the process in place. This matter has been referred to this independent watchdog of Parliament, who operates completely independently of the government. She will conduct her review properly, as she always does, and will report back to us in very short order.

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ETHICS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is going for cocky when he should be going for contrition. A little less swagger and a little more Jimmy Swaggart would be in order.

They rode into Ottawa on their high horse of accountability, and all we have to show for it is the mess that horse left. They should take their Federal Accountability Act and run it through that horse and throw it on their roses for all the good it has ever done us.

My question for the minister is simple: when did it all go so terribly wrong? When did they jettison integrity and honesty and accountability for the sake of political expediency?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my friend from Winnipeg Centre, with whom I work very hard to pass important ethics legislation.

One of the things that we fought for was to have an independent Senate ethics officer that was combined with an independent House ethics officer. The member and I worked very hard to do that, and what was the one thing that stopped us? It was the unelected Liberal senators.

● (1440)

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the cheque in question is another piece of critical information that, if released, would shed light on this scandal. If we had the cheque, we would know if the Prime Minister's right-hand man did indeed write it, whom it was made out to and whether it was held in trust until Senator Duffy lived up to his side of the bargain. In fact, we would know whether there was a cheque at all. Perhaps the good senator was handed a $90,000 bag of cash in small, unmarked bills. We do not know.

Therefore, will the government produce the cheque?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the usual question from that corner of the chamber. I can say, though, that I understand that Mr. Wright has taken sole responsibility for the decision he made on the repayment and for his actions. He immediately submitted his resignation, and it was immediately accepted. An independent officer of Parliament will have the opportunity to review this matter, and we look forward to her reporting back to Parliament in short order.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister said that no document exists about the secret payoff between the PMO and Senator Duffy. Let me rephrase that. An email, which in fact does exist, describes the secret agreement. To help the government find it, I will say it was dated February 20, 2013, and it is currently in the possession of the Prime Minister's Office.

Let me cover all the bases here. Will the government commit to releasing this and any other email or document, electronic or otherwise, that relates to the secret deal between the PMO and Senator Duffy?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously the government, as it always does, will co-operate fully with the independent parliamentary ethics officer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister said that no document exists about the secret pay-off between the PMO and Senator Duffy.

Let me rephrase that. An email, which in fact does exist, describes the secret agreement. It was dated February 20, 2013 and it is currently in the possession of the Prime Minister's Office.

Let me cover all the bases here. Will the government commit to releasing this and any other email or document, electronic or otherwise, that relates to the secret deal between the PMO and their friend, Senator Duffy?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, both the question and the answer are exactly the same as before.

In fact, it was this government that introduced a bill providing for an independent ethics watchdog for the House of Commons. We have always worked hard to strengthen this person's role, and we will continue to do so.

Yesterday, many members of the opposition, and indeed of the party of the hon. member for Papineau, claimed there was some form of legal agreement about this. No one in the government is aware of any legal agreement.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, apparently, it was not enough for the Conservatives to go after just the workers and seasonal industries.

Now they have also ordered Service Canada officials to have no direct communication with the organizations that provide assistance to unemployed workers. The Conservatives require organizations to communicate solely by fax or mail. This is 2013. They need to get with the times.

Why are they trying to muzzle the public servants who follow up on claims with all of the groups of unemployed workers?

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are consolidating EI processing to make the system more efficient and effective for Canadians. Third-party groups will continue to be able to advocate on behalf of their clients. We are looking at ways to ensure that they would continue to do so on a timely basis. Canadians will continue to receive the same service that they always received and that they should expect from Service Canada.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under the Conservatives, insiders are allowed to play by different rules than the rest of us. The Conservative appointees to EI boards clearly violated government guidelines when they donated money to the Conservative Party.

Now, we learn that the Conservatives are repeating their mistakes. They recently appointed 10 more failed Conservative candidates and party operatives to the new Social Security Tribunal.

When is the minister going to stop these patronage binges and when is the government going to make the Conservative Party return these donations?

● (1445)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has actually taken steps to replace the previous employment insurance boards and they are being replaced with the new Social Security Tribunal.

Now, the members of the Social Security Tribunal are, of course, appointed through a rigorous process, a rigorous selection process that ensures that they have to meet specific experience and competence—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. government House leader has the floor.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

They have to meet specific experience criteria and, of course, they have to demonstrate competency criteria. This ensures that appointments are made based upon merit.

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not enough that they are going after unemployed Canadians, Conservatives are also misusing regional economic development agencies to help their Conservative insider friends. Officials at ACOA rigged hiring rules—yes, rigged rules—to ensure that a failed Conservative candidate and former political aides got jobs. The process was so bad that the Public Service Commission revoked two of the appointments.

When will they stop using ACOA as an old boys' club and return to the mandate of providing jobs and economic opportunities for Atlantic Canadians?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the independent investigation by the Public Service Commission did not find any evidence of any wrongdoing or influence on the part of ministers or any political staff in this matter.

I hope that member is listening. The Public Service Commission report clearly states, "No evidence was found to support allegations of political influence in the ACOA investigations."

ACOA has taken actions on all the recommendations of the Public Service Commission.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ETHICS

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2005, the Prime Minister said that anyone who abuses the public trust would go to prison. What is his story now? He says that everyone makes mistakes.

Conservative favouritism is running rampant, whether we are talking about ACOA, the Senate or the employment insurance tribunal. It is not surprising that the Conservatives are spending a fortune on ads for programs that do not even exist. They want to sell the public on this illusion, since they have nothing meaningful to propose. That is what this government does.

Why has breaking the rules become the norm with the Conservatives?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has a responsibility to inform Canadians about the programs and benefits available to them. For example, this year, the government is implementing new measures to help Canadians, including the new Canada job grant, in order to help Canadians get training so they can find a job or find a better job. The government is promoting these measures because it wants Canadians to take advantage of them.

* * *

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past Monday, many Canadians and those in my riding of London West took part in Victoria Day celebrations. It is an annual occasion that marks the strong historical ties between Canada and the United Kingdom. The relationship between our two countries is deeply rooted in our common history, our shared values, our tradition of parliamentary democracy, and our strong family and people-to-people ties.

As chair of the Canada-U.K. Parliamentary Group, I would like to ask the Minister of Canadian Heritage to comment on the Canada-U.K. relationship and ways in which it might be strengthened in the near future.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada-U.K. relationship is broad and deep and, of course, has survived through profound international change. In recent years, our relationship has grown even stronger with the celebration of Her Majesty's Golden and Diamond Jubilees, as well as successful visits of the Prince of Wales as well as the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

On June 13 of this year, for the first time since Prime Minister Mackenzie King had the privilege in 1942, our Prime Minister will be speaking to both Houses of the U.K. Parliament to advance Canada's interests in Europe and work together with the U.K. on our prosperity and security together.

* * *

● (1450)

[*Translation*]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is losing ground to direct competitors in research and development. In 2005, Canada ranked 16th in research investment. In 2011, it ranked 23rd. Prosperity depends on innovation, and innovation means more than just research serving the interests of industry.

My question is simple: Do the Conservatives understand that increasing the percentage of GDP invested in research and development is critical?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, we do. In fact, that is why we have made record investments in science, technology and innovation that the NDP consistently votes against. We have increased support for our granting councils at every single opportunity that we have had. In addition, our government is supporting over 10,000 scientists, researchers and students across the country through the discovery grants program, scholarships and fellowships. Our government is on the right track.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the numbers the Conservatives cite are as fictional as the government's job training program. The fact is the government's own advisory panel is telling it that when it comes to science, it is not getting it done. I quote, "With their significant investments in research and higher education, other countries are catching up and overtaking Canada."

This regressive government has been in power for seven years and every year Canada has fallen further behind. When will the minister admit that there is a problem?

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem actually is that every time we provide new funding and investment, the NDP votes against it. We are in fact committed to carrying forward our science, technology and innovation in Canada. In fact that report actually said that Canada's "Substantial investment in research in the higher education sector has reaped significant rewards, as the production and refinement of scientific knowledge in Canada continues to be characterized by vitality and high quality."

That is our strategy. New Democrats' is to vote no and have a blank page.

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, serious allegations of sexual harassment have once again surfaced at the RCMP, demonstrating yet again the failed leadership of the minister and his government to act on this mounting crisis. For too long, women officers have suffered abuse and have been re-victimized as they have come forward. The government introduced a weak bill, criticized by witness after witness for failing to put an end to sexual harassment in the RCMP.

Will the minister commit today to working with the RCMP, with the women officers affected and with stakeholders to put an end to this endemic problem?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past few months Canadians have heard extremely disturbing reports about the conduct of some RCMP officers over the past number of decades. That is why our government made it clear that we would work closely with the commissioner of the RCMP to take action and restore pride in Canada's national police force. That is why I introduced the enhancing RCMP accountability act that would strengthen the RCMP's ability to deal with these matters. Unfortunately, the NDP voted against it and put nothing in its place.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Caroline O'Farrell, the first female member of the RCMP's Musical Ride, was sexually assaulted and harassed by former colleagues. Now she is suing them because government after government failed to do its job. Canadians and RCMP members deserve better. They deserve better than a bill that does not even include the words "sexual harassment". They deserve better than a Minister who will not let the RCMP speak freely to parliamentarians.

When will the Conservatives stamp out the endemic problems within the RCMP?

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome the member back to the House and congratulate her on the birth of her child.

In respect of the issue, I understand that the RCMP did not advise the officer that he could not attend the committee meeting. However, issues with respect to human resources and the management of the RCMP are the responsibility of the commissioner. I do not involve myself in the day-to-day operations of the RCMP.

* * *

● (1455)

ETHICS

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier the minister said, "We take great issue" with this payment. That is not true. When the story of Nigel Wright's $90,000 cheque broke in the media, the Conservatives were repeatedly praising him for "ensuring taxpayers would not be on the hook".

Why would taxpayers ever be on the hook for this? Did the Conservatives not expect Senator Duffy to pay back these ill-gotten expense gains? Who else in the Prime Minister's Office actually knew about his chief of staff's unethical and illegal gift?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister spoke to this issue at a press conference earlier today. Obviously we believe this payment was inappropriate. That is why Mr. Wright offered his resignation and that is why it was immediately accepted.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister also talked about the public wanting transparency and accountability, but that is certainly not what it is getting here.

Are we really supposed to believe that no one in the Prime Minister's Office knew that giving $90,000 to the senator was unethical and illegal? Why can the government not just be transparent for a change? On what date was the cheque issued? When will the government release a copy of this cheque to the public? Why is the Minister of Foreign Affairs not in Peru on a junket and the Prime Minister here answering these questions as he should be doing?

The Speaker: The member knows that she cannot point out the presence or absence of members. It is a long-standing convention.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Nigel Wright is a Harvard-trained lawyer, a Bay Street deal-maker, and yet we are talking about potential allegations of breach of the Criminal Code.

Has the Prime Minister or anyone in the Prime Minister's Office asked Nigel Wright for a copy of the agreement that he made with Mike Duffy? Will the Prime Minister table the document if he has it? If the Prime Minister does not have the document, why has he not asked for a briefing on what went down?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear. No one in this government is aware of any legal document with respect to this payment.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on May 10 at 4:15 p.m., the Minister of Immigration tried to pass on some bad news in his Friday statement in the hope that no one would notice. Although he lifted the hold that he himself had placed on immigration applications, he changed the rules, and now people will have to pay more than ever for parents or grandparents to be reunited with their families in Canada. Additionally, only a small number of applicants will be accepted next year.

Why is the minister putting up barriers to family reunification?

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to family reunification. In fact, thanks to our plan for faster family reunification, we are on track to cut the backlog and wait times in half so families will be reunited with their parents and grandparents.

In 2012-13, we are admitting the highest level of parents and grandparents in 20 years.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Langley, families have been forced to endure constant turmoil when the sex offender of their child was permitted to serve house arrest in their neighbourhood.

In one case, a sex offender served his sentence across the street from the young victim. In another case, it was right next door. This is why I introduced Bill C-489, the safe at home bill. This bill would prohibit child sex offenders from coming within two kilometres of their victim's home.

Will the Minister of Justice please inform the House as to the government's position on this important bill?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Langley for standing up for the rights of victims. I am proud to indicate that the government fully supports this legislation and I urge all members of the House to do so as well.

The legislation is consistent with our past efforts to crack down on violent offenders. For instance, we have already eliminated the use of house arrest for child sexual offences.

Canadians gave us a strong mandate to promote the rights of victims in Canada. The safe at home bill from the member for Langley would do precisely that.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I spent Saturday afternoon going door to door on Lilac Avenue and Dale Drive in Charlottetown and the feedback was unanimous: disgust and embarrassment.

The Prime Minister should never have appointed his buddy from Ottawa—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1500)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Charlottetown has the floor.

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, it was unanimous. The Prime Minister should never have appointed his buddy from Ottawa to a Prince Edward Island seat. Mike Duffy is now on the ropes and, for reasons still unknown, a full scale cover-up is under way with deals done in secret to protect him. Through all of this, the Prime Minister has shown very poor judgment.

Will the government apologize to the people of Prince Edward Island for the insult of this senate appointment?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister spoke to that issue at a press conference with journalists earlier today.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when a senator needs help, the Prime Minister's Office rushes to his side with a $90,000 cheque.

However, when pyrrhotite victims ask for help, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development tell them over and over again that the federal government will not provide assistance because it is a provincial responsibility.

Yet the federal government did help pyrite victims in the past, as it should. Just today, the National Assembly of Quebec voted unanimously to call on the federal government to do its part.

Will the ministers stop evading the issue once and for all and help pyrrhotite victims?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the pyrrhotite problem falls under provincial jurisdiction.

In August 2011, the Government of Quebec launched a provincial program to provide financial assistance to owners dealing with the damage caused by pyrrhotite.

[*English*]

People who are concerned about pyrrhotite should simply contact the Société d'habitation du Québec.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to protecting the health and safety of Canadians. Today, Health Canada issued recalls for several novelty magnet sets that contain small powerful magnets, which can be easily swallowed by children.

Could the Minister of Health inform the House on what our Conservative government is doing to protect the health and safety of Canadians and their families?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I announced last month, our government is taking action to support the health and safety of Canadians and their families. Canadians expect that the products they find on store shelves are safe. It is clear that some products containing small powerful magnets pose a danger to children, so we have taken action to have them removed from the marketplace.

Speaker's Ruling

As Health Minister and as a mother, I am proud to say that our government has made supporting and protecting families a priority.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, FRAPRU recently released a report prepared by a committee of 14 experts who consulted 200 organizations and over 100 individuals. According to this report, a quarter of a million households in Quebec have critical housing needs.

Will the minister agree to have this report tabled in the House? Will she consider its recommendations and will she finally renew operating agreements with social housing providers? I have repeatedly asked this question—could I get an actual answer this time?

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear. Economic action plan 2013 renewed the homelessness partnership strategy and it renewed the affordable housing agreements. It will continue to deliver new homes for Canadians across the country.

We are very focused on ensuring that CMHC as well as our housing responsibilities are dealt with. I encourage the opposition opposite to support our budget and support economic action plan 2013 so Canadians can have a roof over their heads.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not satisfied with going after the unemployed with its misguided reform, the federal government now wants to isolate them by cutting off verbal contact between public officials and the organizations that have helped the unemployed in Quebec for at least 30 years. From now on, the Boucherville centre can receive only faxes and mail. No one is identified as a contact, and there is no guarantee of a reply. Indeed, the Conseil national des chômeurs et chômeuses is still waiting for a reply to a fax sent last Thursday.

Why would the government want to isolate the unemployed other than to weaken them?

● (1505)

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in the House earlier today, we are consolidating EI processing to ensure the system is more effective and efficient for all Canadians. Third party groups will continue to be able to advocate on behalf of clients and we are looking at ways to ensure they have opportunities to do this in a timely fashion. Canadians will continue to receive the service they have received in the past and that they should expect from Service Canada.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

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

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on May 21, 2013 by the hon. House leader of the official opposition regarding the admissibility of Government Business No. 17, a motion to provide for the extension of sitting hours and the conduct of extended proceedings.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the opposition House leader for having raised this issue and the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons for his intervention.

[*English*]

The opposition House leader claimed that this motion was "contrary to the rules and privileges of Parliament", including Standing Order 27(1), which specifically allows for extended sittings during the last 10 sitting days in June, and therefore that the Speaker should, pursuant to Standing Order 13, find this motion out of order.

[*Translation*]

In response, the government House leader cited pages 257 and 258 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, to demonstrate that the House may deviate from the Standing Orders for a limited period of time by adopting special orders, which can be done by way of a government motion decided by a majority vote.

[*English*]

As Members know, the House frequently extends its sitting hours in the month of June, prior to its summer recess. The opposition House leader is correct in stating that, pursuant to Standing Order 27 (1), the House can extend its sitting hours for the last 10 sitting days in June, prior to its summer recess. This has been done on a number of occasions. However, it is also true that that particular Standing Order does not limit the ability of the House to alter its sitting hours on days other than those in June prescribed by Standing Order 27(1). Should the House wish to extend its sittings at times outside that specific period, it would need to do so either by way of a motion decided by a majority vote of the House, or by unanimous consent.

[*Translation*]

Both of these methods have been used from time to time. I would refer members to footnote 113 on page 404 of O'Brien and Bosc for examples of this type of motion that have been adopted in the past.

[*English*]

A review of past examples also shows that, while motions related to sittings and proceedings are frequently moved under the rubric "Motions" during routine proceedings, such motions have also been moved under government orders. As cited in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, at page 454:

> The Chair has consistently ruled that the Government House Leader should be the one to introduce any motion pertaining to the arrangement of House business, and that the motion may be considered under "Motions" or under Government Orders, depending on where the Minister giving notice has decided to place it.

Therefore, the Chair can find no evidence that either the rules or the privileges of the House have been breached and so I find Government Motion No. 17 to be in order.

I thank all members for their attention in this matter.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

The Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to section 23(2) of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, to lay upon the table a report of the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province of Alberta with an addendum dated April 6, 2013, which disposes of the objections raised by members of the House of Commons.

* * *

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 eight petitions.

While I am on my feet, I move:

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1550)

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

(Division No. 686)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	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
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Poilievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Storseth
Strahl	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 (Vancouver South)
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer– — 144

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Chow
Cleary
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Dubé
Dusseault
Foote
Freeman
Garneau
Genest-Jourdain
Goodale
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Quach
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Trudeau
Valeriote– — 119
Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélanger
Bennett
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brison
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Choquette
Christopherson
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Fortin
Fry
Genest
Giguère
Groguhé
Hsu
Hyer
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathyssen
McCallum
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Turmel

PAIRED

Nil

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

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is rising on a point.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

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

That, in relation to the consideration of Government Business No. 17, the debate not be further adjourned.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

I would invite hon. members who wish to ask questions during the 30-minute period to rise in their places at this moment so I can determine how much time needs to be appropriated for members during this period.

As has been the practice, we ask hon. members to keep their interventions to no more than one minute, and similarly the responses to around a minute. We will try to get as many members in the period as possible. As has been the case in the past, members will know that preference is given to opposition members to put questions to the government.

The hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as you can see from the response from New Democrats, when democracy is being undermined by the government, when the House continues to be abused by the government with more and more closure motions, many of my colleagues join the voices of Canadians who actually want a Parliament and a democracy that functions, unlike the vision and aspirations of the Conservatives who seek to not only muzzle this place but their own members of Parliament.

When asked direct question after direct question on issues that are important to Canadians, such as the potential for fraud that has gone deep into the Prime Minister's own office, and the potential criminal activities that have gone deep into the Prime Minister's own office, we will seek time and again to allow the voices of Canadians to be expressed, to make sure that Parliament functions on behalf of those we seek to represent. The adding of insult to injury to Canada's Parliament that has been done by the Conservative government will be resisted by New Democrats from morning until night.

The government House leader has chosen to add closure to a motion that has already been abusing the parliamentary protocols and precincts of this place. My only question for the government is this. One would think that with its majority and ability to pass legislation that using normal rules would work, but not with these guys. With a complete lack of agenda or any kind of vision, they must force down their agenda, whatever it is, on Canadians and Parliament. When is this going to stop? When are Canadians going to get the kind of Parliament they deserve?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve a Parliament that is willing to work hard. Canadians deserve a Parliament that is focused on job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity. Canadians want their Parliament to be focused on making the streets safe for their families and children. Most importantly, they want the members they have sent here to be willing to work hard.

I heard much bluster from the opposition leader. It was very cute. Let us keep in mind that this is a motion that he says is undemocratic because we are seeking to allow debate to continue until midnight every night so we can get more done, have more debate, have more democracy, have more votes on more bills, and get more things done for Canadians. That is the picture of Parliament that Canadians want: one that is hard-working, productive and orderly.

● (1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of the Liberal Party do not take a back seat to any member in the House. We are committed to working hard for Canadians. At the end of the day, we will do whatever it takes to ensure that Canadians are first and foremost at the top of the House of Commons agenda. That is where Canadians can count on the Liberal Party being. If that means working extended hours, we are prepared to work the extended hours.

The concern we have is the government's attitude. From becoming a Reform-Conservative minority government, we now have a massive Reform-Conservative majority government. It is a change in attitude that is a slap in the face for democracy. We have seen the Conservative government, more than any other government in the history of our country, bring in time allocation after time allocation on a wide variety of bills. The Liberal Party is committed to working hard.

My question to the member is this. Is the government prepared to also work hard, which includes allowing for the necessary time on each and every piece of legislation? One of the ways to do that is not by bringing in time allocation in the manner which the Conservative government has brought in time allocation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I must correct the member. The way in which we have used time allocation has actually been to ensure that there is adequate debate and that bills come to a vote. This is our duty as parliamentarians. Our duty is to debate matters. We have ensured very extensive debates on bills, but we have also ensured that they come to a vote. That is our obligation to our constituents. They elected us and sent us here to do that work, but they also sent us here to make decisions. Making decisions means more than just obstruction.

I know there is probably no member as fond as that member of speaking in the House. Talk and debate have their value, but so does making decisions. We are going to be focused on doing that in the weeks until we rise for the summer, by staying here until midnight, working to get bills passed. We look forward to continuing to work in a productive fashion as, I might add, we have been able to do with his party in coming to agreements on how we can move legislation forward that matters to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am a bit torn about the motion.

I am more than happy to stay here until midnight tonight and other nights. The vote has not been held yet, but knowing how democracy works in a majority situation, I know that the motion will be adopted. Despite being a member of the NDP, my math skills are sharp enough for that. I am torn because sitting until midnight will give us more time to further illustrate how contradictory this government is and how, since 2006, it has been doing exactly the opposite of what it got elected to do, but that comes as no surprise.

The thing I am torn about has to do with the answer I have been trying to get from the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons since yesterday. Sitting until midnight is all well and good. We on this side of the House certainly have no objection to that. However, the Conservatives cannot guarantee that we will be here until the originally scheduled date for summer adjournment. If we sit until midnight until June 21, then I might be tempted to vote with the government because it seems to me that we could get some good work done for the country in that time.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, the objective of this motion is very simple and very clear. It is to sit additional hours to have more debate so more things can get done. That is why the government has moved this motion.

I am pleased to hear the member from the NDP say that the NDP members are content to work late and to work hard. Thus, I anticipate their support for this motion after her intervention.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important that the government continue to support tangible achievements to keep our streets and our communities safe, in Orléans and across the country.

Since the last election two years ago, our government has taken action to protect children from sex offenders and put an end to house arrest for violent offenders who have committed serious crimes. We have targeted organized crime groups that make and possess illicit substances for the purpose of trafficking.

With the additional time provided for in the motion, will we have the opportunity to debate new initiatives to keep our streets and our communities safe in Blackburn Hamlet, Beacon Hill and Convent Glen and from coast to coast to coast?

● (1600)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Ottawa —Orléans has been a very strong spokesman for law and order issues and for tackling crime, particularly in his community. I thank him for the question.

I should add that as House leader, I was pleased to work with members like the member for Ottawa—Orléans from the Conservative caucus to keep the commitment we made to Canadians to pass, within our first 100 sitting days, the Safe Streets and Communities Act, which bundled together numerous pieces of legislation that had been obstructed for many years by opposition members. We were finally able to deliver it as a result of having a majority government.

Over the coming weeks, we will continue to build on this record by moving forward to deliver real accomplishments to keep our streets and communities safe. We will make improvements to the witness protection program, which is very important. We will move forward with the not criminally responsible reform act. We will also move forward with changes to protect women and children on reserves by granting them rights equal to those that women living off reserve have enjoyed in Canada for decades.

I would also like to move forward with our government's plan to get tough on those who traffic in contraband tobacco, if that is sent to us by the other place.

We will continue to take action to keep our streets and communities safe, and we will take advantage of the additional working time this motion proposes to do just that.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to understand what this time allocation motion is really on. It is really on the motion to extend the hours of Parliament. This is coming much earlier than normal.

We do not mind working late hours, but we are incensed that the government is always invoking closure and limiting debate on real issues.

The government is trying everything it can do to avoid the PMO-Duffy scandal. We know that the Prime Minister is out of the country. Is this really an approach to try to get what government business it can get done now so that it can prorogue Parliament earlier and get out of town and not have to answer questions in this House? Is that really the game being played here? This is an extension of hours way ahead of the normal time. It is about three weeks ahead. Is there a scheme at play, coming right out of the Prime Minister's office, to avoid the scandal the government is caught up in?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, as I said, there are many who like to ascribe motives for why Conservatives want to work hard. Conservatives understand that we like to work hard. I know that a Liberal would find it surprising, perhaps, that we want to work hard. Certainly, the hon. member seems to be mystified that we would do this earlier than has occasionally been done in the past. We are doing it because we want to get things done for Canadians, because they have sent us here to work hard. That is exactly and simply the motive behind our effort to have the House sit late and work hard. It is to deliver results on those important things Canadians sent us to do, such as create jobs, ensure economic growth for Canada, ensure our long-term prosperity, and build safer streets and communities.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of trying to enact laws for our neighbourhoods, perhaps it would be better if the Conservatives started making laws and having the Senate comply with them. I think that is the priority.

The government is being cynical once again. It does not know what democracy means. It is showing unprecedented contempt for our parliamentary bodies and for Canadians. Fortunately, Canadians are not fools. They understand the political game the Conservatives are constantly playing.

When will the government act respectfully and ethically toward democracy and Canadians?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, we always conduct ourselves with very high ethical standards. In this case, there is one very important ethic. It is called the work ethic. We on the Conservative side of the House believe very strongly in the work ethic. That is what we are seeking to advance here.

Let us talk about some of the important bills we are looking to have debated in advance as a result of the motion to extend hours here.

There is the technical tax amendments act, Bill C-48. This bill has been around for years. There is uncertainty in our economy and uncertainty among those who are functioning, because these changes have been put in place structurally but need to actually be cemented legislatively. It is about time we got on and did that.

There is the Canadian museum of history act. The bill would help us create relevant history for Canadians and respect for our Canadian national identity in a proper and full way. This is something that is very much overdue.

There is the safer witnesses act, Bill C-51. It is very important for us to provide changes to the Witness Protection Program Act if we want to have safer streets and communities. Why would anyone from any party want to resist having a bill like that debated? Why would they want to limit the amount of debate in this House so as to keep bills like that and the others from moving forward.

I will continue going down this list as we discuss this. These are very important priorities for Canadians, and that is why we are bringing in this motion to work a bit harder.

● (1605)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons wants to make darn sure we all know how hard he plans to work now. Am I to infer that his government has been slacking off since the beginning of the session?

Like all other parliamentarians in the House, I have no problem extending sitting hours to debate real issues, as long as we show respect for Parliament, democracy, elected representatives and, above all, the people. There are some important issues we should be debating.

However, unlike the member for Gatineau, I am worried that, by forcing this superclosure on us, the government is once again trying to push its ideological agenda and bills through with no regard for democracy or Parliament, never mind the wishes, needs and priorities of the people of Quebec and the other provinces.

I would like to hear from the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. I believe that is the government's plan, and I would like him to say so clearly.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, one way to respect the rights and powers of members of Parliament is to give them opportunities to vote on bills that matter to their constituents.

Our record and today's motion prove that we intend to create that opportunity so that we can all work a little harder and deliver results for Canadians, the economy and safer communities.

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt and no wonder there is uncertainty in the economy. Last week's scandal was that the government had misplaced $3.1 billion. No wonder Canadians have concern about the economy. It is the government's inability to manage the economy that has created the uncertainty.

Furthermore, there is all the talk about safe streets the government likes to prattle on about. Every time it mentions that, we get reports in the media about more and more guns coming over the border onto our streets in Toronto. Not only are they coming over and being sold, contraband, they are now being rented. The government has no response to that. The Conservatives go on and on about us on this side of the House, when they are not accountable at all to the people of Canada.

With respect to what we are discussing here today, I would like to ask the government House leader if this working until midnight is a one-off. We are happy to work. Everyone knows that New Democrats are the hardest working people in the House of Commons. Is this a one-off, or are we going to run out the calendar? We are happy to work until midnight to the end of the calendar. Will the member let us know if we are going to the end of the calendar?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, there is some great irony to me in folks proclaiming how hard-working they are while they vote and oppose motions to work harder. That is what this motion is for.

The member raised the issue of economic certainty. Some of the things we hope to deal with are important for economic certainty. They are things that he and the NDP have already voted against. They are things like extending for two years the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for new investment in machinery and equipment. This makes our manufacturers and our workers more competitive, more productive and more able to compete in global markets. This is something the NDP opposes. Indexing the gas fund payment to municipalities to better support their job-creating infrastructure is, again, something they voted against. However, we are determined that it should get through, notwithstanding the NDP's opposition.

There are reforms to the temporary foreign worker program so that the priorities of Canadian workers come first. New Democrats claim to be a workers' party, but they are opposing those measures and our economic action plan, Bill C-60.

I could go on and on, but these are the kinds of measures we are proposing to help ensure that Canada's focus is on job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity.

● (1610)

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents want to make sure that our government is focused on the economy, and they want to make sure that their representatives here in Ottawa are focused on the economy. Could the House leader assure our constituents that with this important motion being put forward in the House today, we are going to use the extra time we are asking for to focus on what matters to Canadians, which is jobs, growth and long-term prosperity?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, that is indeed the case, because it is the number one priority of our government. One can see it in our legislative agenda.

I just went through some of the elements of Bill C-60. There are others, such as support for genomics research for Genome Canada and support for the Canada Youth Business Foundation to encourage an entrepreneurial ethic in the future for future generations. I know that an entrepreneurial ethic is something that is foreign to the NDP, but it is something we believe in and that we believe deserves support.

There is also funding for Indspire, for post-secondary scholarships and bursaries for first nations and Inuit students. This is something we are going to have an opportunity to debate and vote in favour of. Perhaps the NDP members will change their votes from the past, when they opposed it.

Enhancing the adoption expense tax credit is another item. Introducing a new, temporary, first-time donor super-credit for first-time claimants for charitable donations is another. These and many other measures are, of course, included in our budget and in Bill C-60, the economic action plan 2013 bill, which is focused on economic growth, job creation and long-term prosperity.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering if the House leader is aware that tonight we are going to be voting on a motion to extend the sitting hours, which means extra debate. Right now, the House leader has tabled a motion to stop debate. Could the House leader please reconcile the two?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, the debate we are talking about moving forward with is actually one about how long we should sit. We could have lengthy philosophical discussions about how hard we should work. I am hearing everyone say that they have already made up their minds. They are willing to work hard. I believe that is the position I heard from the Liberals and from the NDP.

If the members are not prepared to vote on that now, if they still want to continue debate and extend it, if they want to oppose bringing that to a vote, that suggests to me that there is a gap between their words and their deeds on the other side of the House. It is that gap between words and deeds that breeds cynicism about politics.

Here, on this side, we are straightforward. We want to work hard, deliver results, get bills passed and do this in a constructive, productive, hard-working and orderly fashion. We invite the opposition parties to join us in that quest to deliver results for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my hon. colleague that he did not answer the NDP's question. Will we be going to the end of the calendar? That is what we want to know. We have no problem working until midnight, or even for the entire time allocated to the House of Commons if necessary. We can even extend the motion. The problem is that what we have before us now is another time allocation motion. The House of Commons has been muzzled over 30 times.

The sitting hours of the House should be extended to ensure a democratic process and democratic discourse, not to impose endless gag orders. The Conservative government has set an all-time record in this regard, even managing to beat the Liberals. Something must be done to protect the democratic process and make the Conservative members answer our questions. When asked whether we will be going to the end of the calendar, the Conservatives should tell us. When asked whether they will act on the scandal involving the senators, they should tell us. That issue does not make sense either. It is outrageous. We will rise in the House and we will keep fighting.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, earlier this year I was impressed to watch President Obama deliver the state of the union address in the United States. I was impressed because one of his major themes was that certain elements of American society who cared about particular issues deserved at least a vote on those issues.

What he was addressing were the problems that have gripped the United States because of legislative gridlock. Legislative gridlock is not helpful to their economy and is not helpful to their democratic process, because an important part of the democratic process in a legislature is not just the talking but also the voting, the making of decisions, such as is done here in this House.

This is what I say to the hon. member who is complaining that we brought in measures to ensure that we actually vote as MPs on bills that are before us. I do not apologize for that; I am proud of it. I am proud to give the opportunity to all members of this House to vote on the legislative proposals in this House, to be accountable to their constituents for how they vote on those bills and to be able to make real, meaningful changes to the law in this country. We should all be proud to have the opportunity to do that here in this House.

● (1615)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again we are looking at a time allocation motion. With respect to the bills that the minister says that the Conservatives need to push forward, as we have indicated, we have no problem working until midnight.

[*Translation*]

Last year, we worked through Saint-Jean Baptiste Day, right up until the following morning. We have no problem with working.

Can my colleague tell me how much time will be allocated for our speeches or if he will limit debate on all of the bills the government puts forward? The government is somewhat lacking in the ethics department. Whether it is Mr. Penashue, Ms. Oda or the senators, we can see that this government is not making a difference for Canadians. I will repeat the question.

[*English*]

How many more time allocation motions are the Conservatives planning to move on the bills that they are putting forward, and how long do they think they are going to keep this charade going?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, first I will help out the member. She started her question by saying that what we have before us is a time allocation motion. That is not the case. We are not going to be voting here on a time allocation motion. That is not what is before the House. The member should familiarize herself with it, and I am sure she will do that before we have the opportunity to vote.

I will repeat what I said. The purpose of time allocation in this House has been to allow for debate to occur and to allow for votes to happen, to create certainty for Canadians and for members of Parliament that we will actually get to vote and make decisions in this Parliament. For those who think that there should never be an opportunity to vote and prefer that there just be debate without decisions made, that is a legitimate perspective. If they wish to obstruct and if they think that legislative gridlock is good for the country, then I invite them to encourage that approach.

We on this side do not believe that legislative gridlock is good for the country or good for economic certainty. We believe that actually taking decisions, voting on the bills before us and doing the work we were sent here by our constituents to do are important parts of our job, and we are pleased to continue to do that so that the proposals before the House can be debated, be decided upon and become law when appropriate.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, in continuation of my question, we are going to be voting on extending our sitting hours so that we can continue and increase the hours of debate. Meanwhile we have closure, whereby the House leader, as he just indicated, is going to pick and choose the items we are going to be debating and what we are allowed to say.

In the meantime, we have not even been able to debate what is before the House right now, so why does he not allow the debate to go on and forget about this closure motion?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I have to confess I found that question a little bit confusing, so I will simply say that the purpose of our motion is to allow for late sittings of the House. It will allow us to sit to midnight so that we can get work done by debating bills and ultimately voting on those bills. There are very many important ones for Canadians, and I will continue going down the list of things I thought were important priorities.

One of those is the not criminally responsible reform act. This is a bill that really needs to get to committee so that we can hear from witnesses. There are people who have concerns about the bill. People think it is very important to see these changes take place to make their communities safer. We owe it to them to have a vote on this bill, to have it go to committee, to allow witnesses to appear and present their views so that we can ensure that we strike the right balance.

I think we strike the right balance in the bill, but we need to at least let it go to committee, and that is something the House can do with a vote. With these late hours, we will have an opportunity to make that happen. I hope we will have the support of the hon. member to do just that.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House leader just mentioned the not criminally responsible reform act, which has been before the House but has not been allowed to come to a vote. He also mentioned items before the House being able to come to a vote. Back home we are told many times as parliamentarians that we seem to discuss the same items a lot. People say that every time they turn on the TV, parliamentarians are discussing the same thing over and over again.

Could the minister please tell us again how important it is that we finally get to a vote on the many pieces of legislation before the House?

● (1620)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, who serves his community with tremendous distinction. He is an accomplished local community leader and business leader, and he really has a sense of what is important to people in his community. I think that is why the not criminally responsible reform act, Bill C-54, is important to him. This bill will that ensure public safety should be the paramount consideration in decision-making affecting high-risk offenders who are found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder.

This is an important value question in our justice system, including for those who are found not criminally responsible because of a mental disorder. Are we going to make community safety the first and foremost consideration in all decisions? That is what the bill proposes to do. This issue has affected absolutely every region of this country and has affected many people in a very deep and personal way. The very least we can do is let the bill come to a vote and send it to a committee where, as I said, witnesses can testify about it. With the extra hours we propose, that can happen.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, democracy is a political system that must be nurtured with good governance.

Democracy is not a given. It must be protected and fostered on a daily basis. I have no problem working hours on end. I fought for years against a dictator in another country.

My only problem is that our constituents already feel disillusioned because of these scandals involving politicians who break the law.

Will this government give us some real answers and protect us from these delinquents who are attacking democracy within the Canadian Parliament? I hope that we will get some real answers during the long hours we will be working.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, one way we can earn respect as parliamentarians is by working hard. We can earn respect as parliamentarians by dealing with legislation that proposes to deliver a number of measures that the government is proposing.

One is investing in the Nature Conservancy of Canada so that it can continue to conserve ecologically sensitive land. I know this is very important to constituents in my community.

Another is providing support to the Pallium Foundation of Canada to support training in palliative care for front-line health care providers. Another is supporting the Canadian National Institute for the Blind to expand library services for the blind and partially sighted. These community organizations are very important.

Also important for families in my community is removing tariffs on imports of baby clothing and certain sports and athletic equipment. If we sit late and we all agree here to work hard, these are important measures that we can actually get into law.

I know the NDP and the Liberals have voted against those measures. Perhaps after we have more debate in the House as a result of sitting late, they will come to their senses and see why those measures are good for Canadians and good for the Canadian economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The 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.

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

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

Government Orders

(Division No. 687)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gallant
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Leef
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Saxton
Seeback
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Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Crockatt
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Flaherty
Galipeau
Gill
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Schellenberger
Shea
Smith
Sorenson
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Chow
Cleary
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Freeman
Garneau
Genest-Jourdain
Goodale
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Hyer
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathyssen
McCallum
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
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Comartin
Cotler
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Dusseault
Foote
Fry
Genest
Giguère
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Turmel

PAIRED

Nil

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

* * *

● (1705)

[*English*]

EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS

The House resumed from May 21 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise and address what I believe is a very important motion that members really need to understand.

Apparently we now have a government that wants to work a little harder. The Conservatives say that is what this motion is all about. Well, they are not going to fool the members of this chamber. They are not going to fool Canadians. This motion does not have anything to do with working a little harder.

One of my colleagues asked why the government had decided to bring in this motion at this time. I think it is important for us to start talking a little about that and about the motives of this particular government in terms of the timing.

In the 39th Parliament, before a Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the Clerk of the House of Commons made comments on the cost of running the House. As a part of that cost, about two weeks of extended hours is budgeted for. If the House were to deem it necessary to sit additional hours, and it knows it is going to sit additional hours, then there is an expectation that in fact it would have been budgeted for.

What we have found is that the government did not do that. The government House leader never approached any of his colleagues to say that they could anticipate sitting additional hours because we, the government, "want to work a little harder".

It was not budgeted for. One could ask, as my colleague from the Atlantic region has pointed out quite correctly, why do we now have this motion before us for extended hours?

One of the reasons we have this motion is because of what I would classify as inappropriate behaviour, and because the government, through the Prime Minister's Office, is in a bit of dilemma right now. What the government may really be trying to accomplish is an exit from the House of Commons a little earlier in the hope that maybe the opposition would be more open to rising early due to having extended hours at this time in the legislative calender.

The government is hoping that at the end of the day we will get out a little earlier in June. This was not an issue. It was not being talked about. There was no formal discussion amongst House leaders, no formal discussions about if we do this or that in looking at extended hours.

The government House leader, possibly and most likely, after serious discussions with the Prime Minister's Office, came to the conclusion that what we need to do is lose a little bit of focus on what is happening in the Prime Minister's Office and to try to maybe change the channel.

We in the Liberal Party are not going to buy into that. We are committed to working hard. We are going to work just as hard and, I would ultimately argue, even harder than the government to ensure that there is a higher sense of accountability inside this chamber.

However, a lot has happened over the last week. Yesterday I stood in the chamber and made the suggestion that we should be having an emergency debate. What we are really talking about is the most senior official in the Government of Canada, the chief of staff to the Prime Minister, providing a substantial cash gift to a sitting parliamentarian.

This raises a whole host of issues in terms of whether this arrangement was fully compliant with the rules of the Senate, the Conflict of Interest Act, the Parliament of Canada Act or even the Criminal Code. These are very serious allegations, that Senator Duffy was promised by the Prime Minister's Office that the Senate committee would go easy on him if he kept his mouth shut. That is what was alleged to have happened here.

● (1710)

We are talking about the executive branch of government paying a parliamentarian to stay quiet and in return promising an outcome of an independent Senate committee. These are serious allegations. In the last two question periods, since we have been back in session, this has been the focus of all the attention. The Liberal caucus has focused its questions solely on that issue. We are the only party that has done this. We recognize there is something seriously wrong with this picture.

We cannot choose to believe that this is just something in which one individual, Nigel Wright, took upon himself and did not share any thoughts whatsoever with the Prime Minister's Office. We just do not believe it. He is the chief of staff for the Prime Minister's Office. There is a lot more to this than what the government is letting on. Therefore, we believe there is a need for the Prime Minister to come clean.

However, now the Conservatives have come up with the idea that they want to work hard. We in the Liberal Party have been working hard for Canadians ever since the last federal election and prior to that. We will continue to work hard and fight for the middle-class jobs and try to prevent the government's behaviour of continuously hiking taxes, such as the net tax increases the Conservative's have imposed on Canadians. We recognize what the important issues are for Canadians, and one of those issues is what has taken place in the Prime Minister's Office today.

When the government says that it now has a motion to have extended sitting hours, is it an attempt to try to get the opposition to bow down and say that we agree to exit early? This is not something that is going to fly with us in the House. At the end of the day, the Conservative government and the Prime Minister need to be held accountable for the actions that have occurred over the last number of weeks, and we are committed to doing that.

When the government House leader brought forward this motion, he said that it would provide for extra hours, that it was about managing the votes and that it was about the concurrence motions. This is how he sold the motion that we have been asked to vote upon. However, if the government were really sincere and genuine in wanting to deal with House business in an orderly fashion and it had nothing to do with issues such as the scandal that we have seen come out of the Prime Minister's Office, then the government House leader would have sat down with the opposition House leaders, the New Democrats and the Liberals, and talked seriously and fairly about how we could, in an orderly and timely fashion, have an agenda to pass whatever legislative agreements. That is what should have happened.

If it was deemed among the House leaders that we still needed to had those extra sitting hours, then fine, we would not need to have this type of debate, which is time limited, because there would have been an agreement put into place.

● (1715)

The government could have dealt with its legislative agenda in a fairer fashion, in which opposition members would have been afforded the opportunity to possibly prioritize bills and say which bills most concerned them and wanted to ensure there would be adequate debate on them. If it meant, in order to allow that to take place, there had to be extended hours, then there would be extended hours. A lot depends on what the true legislative agenda of the government is.

We have seen a change in government, from the minority days, when there was a higher sense of co-operation in things that took place in the House to this brand new Reform-Conservative-paranoid government. I suspect we could probably use a whole litany of adjectives.

The current majority government and its agenda is absolutely unacceptable. It says one thing and does another. It says that it is decreasing taxes, and that is not true. It is increasing taxes. It talks about being conservative in managing our finances well. It has taken surpluses and turned them into deficits. When it talks about democracy, no federal government in the history of Canada has been more anti-democratic in terms of presenting—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Trudeau, King.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: The member can name all the prime ministers she wants; she will not find one prime minister.

All we have to do is look at time allocation and understand what it is. Time allocation is the limiting of the ability of members of the House to stand and address the legislative agenda. No government prior to the present one has used time allocation as a tool to pass legislation as much as this one.

Let us take a look at the 2012-13 budget bills. There are two of them. In fact, those two bills consisted of 1,000 pages. I am talking about the omnibus bills that were brought forward by the government. We cannot blame the backbenchers for not really understanding it, because I suspect it was never explained to them. These two bills were being used and manipulated by the government. It was using a budget as a back door to pass a legislative agenda. Numerous bills that should have been stand-alone bills were snuck through the back door of these massive bills.

The Prime Minister of Canada, back in the days when he was in opposition, and hopefully he will be back in those days in a couple of years, talked about one omnibus budget bill that consisted of 160 pages, not a 1,000 pages. This is what the now Prime Minister and then leader of the opposition had to say:

> We can agree with some of the measures but oppose others. How do we express our views and the views of our constituents when the matters are so diverse? Dividing the bill into several components would allow members to represent views of their constituents on each of the different components in the bill.

He asked government members, in particular, to worry about implications of the omnibus bills for democracy and the functionality of Parliament. He was right back then. Imagine what he has done today with the Conservative-Reform majority government. He has swallowed those words. That is the type of behaviour we have seen from the Conservative majority government. It has gone out of its way to limit debate in the chamber.

Does anyone know how many times I have had the opportunity to stand on the issue of time allocation alone? One of the Conservatives asks how many. One would need more than two hands to count as I believe it is now just over 30 times we have had time allocation since the last federal election.

● (1720)

What about the issues we are talking about? We could talk about the Canadian Wheat Board. Time allocation was brought in on that even though the farmers in the Prairies were denied the opportunity in law that they were supposed to have in a plebiscite. The government wanted to not only silence the farmers on the Prairies, but to silence members in the House of Commons too, so it brought in time allocation.

Whether it was the pooled pension plan, copyright legislation, the gun registry, back to work legislation, financial systems review, some of which are relatively simple pieces of legislation, both budget bills, free trade agreements like with Panama, Canada Post, Air Canada, first nations accountability, the government brought in time allocation after time allocation. It is a government that uses time allocation as a tool.

When we talk about democracy, we need to recognize the importance of the House of Commons and what takes place inside it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I appreciate that the members are anxious for the time when we might be going to a different part of business here. I am sure members want to hear what the member for Winnipeg North has to say. I can say that from the amount of noise in the chamber even I am having difficulty myself. Therefore, I would ask members that if they wish to carry on conversations, to please take them out into their respective lobbies.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate why the backbenchers are a little antsy with regard to what they hear. We cannot blame them. This could be one of the first times they have actually heard that. We can see they too are a little nervous in what is happening in the Prime Minister's Office and the whole Nigel affair. I would be nervous too if I were them because the truth will come out. It might take a little while, but the Liberal Party and the leader of the Liberal Party are committed to get to the bottom of this and will get to the bottom of it.

I was in the immigration committee and the Minister of Immigration made a decision to hijack a private member's bill. We just had a Speaker's ruling on this issue. The Minister of Immigration took a private member's bill in committee and literally changed the scope of the bill. Is this a new style of government we can anticipate? Is this a new idea for the current crop of ministers, that they wait for a private member's bill to get to committee, then hijack it and put their own legislative agenda in through that mechanism? It is a way for the government to not have to invoke time allocation because there is already a set form of time allocation agreed upon by all parties under the private members' bills process.

We have a government that is constantly in search of ways to try to shuffle through its agenda.

I will conclude with this thought. When I look at the motion presented today and those four points, what really gets me is that the government is trying to give Canadians the impression that the purpose of the motion is so it can work harder.

The Liberal Party does not need anymore motivation than what we see happening in the Prime Minister's Office today. We have and will continue to work hard in representing Canadians and holding the government accountable.

I would ask the government House leader to reflect on his responsibilities as a government House leader to work with opposition House leaders so we can see a more orderly, democratic, timely passage of what takes place in the House of Commons. We wait for that dialogue to start.

● (1725)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my hon. colleague's comments, and I found them astonishing. He is trying to suggest to Canadians that the reason the Liberal Party is opposing the motion is because it feels we are trying to get out of this Parliament early, and for that reason he feels his party has to oppose it. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are scheduled to sit until June 21. We are merely saying that we want to add additional hours of debate, something the opposition parties have been clamouring for this entire session, so we can address the pieces of legislation we have on the order paper.

One of those pieces of legislation that I want to speak to quite briefly, and ask my hon. colleague a question about, is Bill S-2, the matrimonial property act, which would allow aboriginal women on reserve to have the same basic rights that every other woman in Canada has. Could the member tell me why his party is opposing it? It would seem to be a no-brainer that every Canadian would agree to, and yet the Liberal Party and the NDP oppose allowing aboriginal women on reserve to have the same basic matrimonial rights that every other Canadian woman has. We want to debate that. We need extra time to try to convince the parties opposite to support it.

Could the member opposite please tell me why he wants to deny aboriginal women the same basic human rights that every other Canadian woman has?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am going to pick up on the member's comments with regard to the government wanting extra time. If the government genuinely wanted extra time, why did the government House leader not approach the opposition parties, both the New Democrats and the Liberals, and say the government would like extra time to pass things on its legislative agenda and to work with the opposition parties to facilitate timely passage of legislation? Just adding hours would not guarantee that the government's legislative agenda would pass.

The government could do more by co-operating with the opposition parties rather than continually assaulting democracy inside the chamber. A lot more can be done through co-operation, and that is something the government House leader—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We will try to get one more question in.

The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with some of the member's comments about the government's intention to not allow full discussions to happen, especially when it comes to its accountability and transparency. The member should know about this, given that his Liberal government tried to circumvent the situation when it was in government with respect to the sponsorship scandal.

On that note, I would like to ask the member if he believes the Conservative government is probably going to put more time allocation on bills, which would mean we would not even have the debates the government says we would have with this motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do not necessarily agree with the member's first point. We have to recognize that time allocation in one form or another is a legislative tool that has been used by all political parties. Even though the NDP has never been a federal government, it has formed provincial governments where even it has used time allocation.

The member needs to recognize that the new Conservative-Reform majority, and I underline the word majority, has incorporated time allocation or closure as part of the ongoing process of passing a bill. That is totally unique to the present government. It has never been done before. I spent many years in opposition in Manitoba, a good part of the time when the NDP was in government, and I understand the difference between abuse versus a tool that should and could be used, if it is used properly. The Conservative government abuses the rule.

● (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Winnipeg North will have five minutes remaining for questions and comments when the House next returns to debate on the motion.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

ANAPHYLAXIS

Motion

The House resumed from May 8 consideration of the motion.

Private Members' Business

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion M-230 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

● (1810)

[*English*]

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

(Division No. 688)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Adler
Aglukkaq
Albas
Albrecht
Alexander
Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison
Ambler
Ambrose
Anders
Anderson
Andrews
Angus
Armstrong
Ashfield
Ashton
Aspin
Atamanenko
Aubin
Ayala
Baird
Bateman
Bélanger
Bellavance
Bennett
Benoit
Bergen
Bernier
Bevington
Bezan
Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe
Blaney
Block
Boivin
Borg
Boughen
Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet
Brison
Brosseau
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge
Butt
Byrne
Calandra
Calkins
Cannan
Carmichael
Caron
Carrie
Casey
Cash
Charlton
Chicoine
Chisu
Chong
Choquette
Chow
Christopherson
Clarke
Cleary
Clement
Comartin
Côté
Cotler
Crockatt
Crowder
Cullen
Cuzner
Daniel
Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)
Day
Dechert
Del Mastro
Devolin
Dewar
Dion
Dionne Labelle
Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre
Dreeshen
Dubé
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault
Dykstra
Easter
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Fletcher
Foote
Freeman
Fry
Galipeau
Gallant
Garneau
Genest
Genest-Jourdain
Giguère
Gill
Goguen
Goldring
Goodale
Goodyear
Gosal
Gourde
Grewal
Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn
Hayes
Hiebert
Holder
Hsu
Hughes
Hyer
Jacob
James
Jean
Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kellway
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent
Kerr
Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake
Lamoureux
Lapointe
Larose
Latendresse
Lauzon
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leef
Leitch
Lemieux
Leung
Liu
Lizon
Lobb
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie
Mai
Marston
Martin
Masse
Mathyssen
May
Mayes
McCallum
McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod
Menegakis
Menzies
Merrifield
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Murray
Nantel
Nash
Nicholls
Nicholson
Nunez-Melo
O'Connor
Oliver
O'Neill Gordon
Opitz
O'Toole
Pacetti
Papillon
Paradis
Patry
Péclet
Perreault
Pilon
Plamondon
Poilievre
Preston
Quach
Raitt
Rajotte
Rankin
Rathgeber
Ravignat
Raynault
Regan
Reid
Rempel
Richards
Rousseau
Saganash
Sandhu
Saxton
Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger
Scott
Seeback
Sellah
Shea
Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan
Smith
Sopuck
Sorenson
Stanton
St-Denis
Stewart
Stoffer
Storseth
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Toet
Toews
Trost
Trottier
Truppe
Turmel
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– — 263

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

DISCOVER YOUR CANADA ACT

The House resumed from May 9, 2013, consideration of the motion that Bill C-463, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (travel expenses), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-463 under private members' business.

● (1815)

[*English*]

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

(Division No. 689)

YEAS

Members

Andrews
Bellavance
Brison
Casey
Cuzner
Easter
Fry
Goodale
Karygiannis
MacAulay
McCallum
Murray
Patry
Regan
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
St-Denis
Valeriote– — 31
Bélanger
Bennett
Byrne
Cotler
Dion
Foote
Garneau
Hsu
Lamoureux
May
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Pacetti
Plamondon
Scarpaleggia

NAYS

Members

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Welland)
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Armstrong
Ashton
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bateman
Bergen
Bevington
Blanchette
Blaney
Boivin
Boughen
Boutin-Sweet
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Carrie
Charlton
Chisu
Choquette
Christopherson
Cleary
Comartin
Crockatt
Cullen
Davidson
Davies (Vancouver East)
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Angus
Ashfield
Aspin
Aubin
Baird
Benoit
Bernier
Bezan
Blanchette-Lamothe
Block
Borg
Boulerice
Brosseau
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Chong
Chow
Clarke
Clement
Côté
Crowder
Daniel
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dechert
Devolin
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dykstra
Flaherty
Freeman
Gallant
Genest-Jourdain
Gill
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Holder
Jacob
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kellway
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Larose
Lauzon
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leitch
Leung
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mai
Martin
Mathyssen
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Mulcair
Nash
Nicholson
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Paradis
Perreault
Poilievre
Quach
Rajotte
Rathgeber
Raynault
Rempel
Rousseau
Sandhu
Schellenberger
Seeback
Shea
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Smith
Sorenson
Stewart
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)
Del Mastro
Dewar
Donnelly
Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dusseault
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Galipeau
Genest
Giguère
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hawn
Hiebert
Hughes
James
Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lapointe
Latendresse
Laverdière
Leef
Lemieux
Liu
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Marston
Masse
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Nantel
Nicholls
Nunez-Melo
Oliver
Opitz
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Preston
Raitt
Rankin
Ravignat
Reid
Richards
Saganash
Saxton
Scott
Sellah
Shory
Sitsabaiesan
Sopuck
Stanton
Stoffer
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Turmel
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer– — 232

Private Members' Business

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

It being 6:19 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

● (1820)

[*Translation*]

QALIPU MI'KMAQ FIRST NATION BAND

The House resumed from March 28 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the substance of the motion before us in the House allows me to focus on concepts related to belonging to a clan as a bastion of aboriginal identity.

My speech today in this House will be consistent with what I said yesterday when I was teaching in Wendake. I am occasionally called upon to travel in order to meet with communities that are sometimes rather isolated. Although in this case Wendake is peri-urban, I was asked to go there.

The concepts I will be going over today will be consistent with what I was teaching yesterday, about the bastions of aboriginal identity and the economic growth that certain communities in the country have been enjoying. This will come into play and I will include it all in my argument.

For many generations, Indian identity had a certain negative connotation. It was not that being Indian was intrinsically bad, but members of Canada's aboriginal communities were perceived as second-class citizens for many generations, if not hundreds of years. It was only recently that economics entered into the Indian identity and way of life. When I say economics, I am referring to the results of land claims and the agreements associated with the impact and benefits of natural resource development.

In 2013, this has become a full-fledged industry. These matters are often handed over to law firms that can afford to have just one client because this generates substantial revenues. Sometimes these law firms charge both a percentage and a flat rate. This can be quite lucrative. That is why there has been such enthusiasm, such a keen interest by a segment of the Canadian public in reconnecting with its aboriginal roots in 2013. My speech here today will be from that perspective.

This was brought to my attention when I was preparing my speech, not that I want to jump to any negative conclusions. I was just asked about my position on this.

Development and opportunities related to major economic and regional issues often fuel an upsurge in assertive measures taken by citizens in relation to the specific status that members of first nations in Canada enjoy.

Economic growth and economic issues are creating somewhat of a stir in my home community. Over the past few years, a generation of Indians has appeared out of nowhere in my riding. If we take this new generation or group that has appeared in my riding and compare it with our Ekuanitshit or Unamen Shipu neighbours, it is clear that there is a fairly weak link with Mongolia, if I may say so.

In short, this new band appeared in my riding in a very specific location that was targeted for hydro development, major work sites and natural resource extraction initiatives. Once again, I am not trying to draw negative inferences, but people can make the necessary connections and figure it out for themselves.

It is conceivable that greedy people stand ready to pounce in regions where a socio-economic boom has been observed. The specific measures set out in land claims, the compensation associated with natural resource extraction and the encroachment on a band's traditional lands are incentive enough for people to claim that they have an aboriginal heritage, which is why bands need to set out principles that define and control who can be a band member.

Now, with regard to the issue at hand, the information that has been brought to my attention indicates that there are 100,000 new applicants for the band in question in today's motion.

● (1825)

Since there is a rather limited number of first nations members across the country, we have reason to wonder how likely it would be to suddenly have 100,000 new applicants or 100,000 people applying—or at least hoping—to be on the Indian Register.

That is why it is up to the band to define and establish criteria for membership and for determining whether a person is eligible to be a member of the band. That already happens, and customary law most often applies. In my home community and other communities, customary law is what ultimately determines who is a member.

Some decisions have been brought to my attention when the community's hands were tied and an individual's name had to be added to the list. These issues are generally dealt with within the clan, and that is unheard of. Based on my own perception and my own analysis, 100,000 new applicants is a significant number. That is why things are stalled and the Canadian government is being called on to take a stand and process each of these files fairly.

That is what this motion says. Each application must be examined on a case-by-case basis, and the supporting documentation must be taken into consideration. However, we could very well end up with a backlog in this type of situation, especially with the high number of applicants.

We agree that all applications must be treated the same way. This means that the validity of documents will be called into question and that decisions regarding enrolment will be challenged.

In light of the limited number of people in the region in question, the figure of 100,000 applicants will have to be reviewed in light of aboriginal identity, to avoid applications for purely monetary reasons. Aboriginal people in Canada share some strong values. There must be no detracting from "Indianness" or Indian identity and serious identity issues for purely political or economic reasons.

I submit this respectfully.

[*English*]

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak this evening in favour of my colleague's motion, which seeks to clarify the ongoing confusion regarding the registration process for members of the recently created Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band in Newfoundland.

We must remember that these criteria are the culmination of a process that has extended back, through various phases, for decades. The most recent phase began in 2002, when the previous Liberal government initiated renewed, good faith negotiations with the Federation of Newfoundland Indians to redress the historic exclusion of status for Newfoundland's Mi'kmaq people.

[*Translation*]

The talks focused on the recognition of the Mi'kmaq people in Newfoundland under the Indian Act. After constructive discussions, an agreement in principle was signed in 2007.

[*English*]

We cannot lose sight of what these negotiations were attempting to redress. Generations of prejudice and marginalization induced many to hide their indigenous heritage, and as a result, whole family histories have been buried.

Exclusion from status under the Indian Act not only denied Newfoundland's Mi'kmaq people access to supports available to other first nations but robbed them of recognition of their identity and cultural heritage.

The ongoing process is an attempt to reverse centuries of damage, but the current government's mismanagement has left many Qalipu feeling victimized yet again.

The 2007 agreement in principle proposed specific terms for the recognition of membership in, and operation of, the soon to be created Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band. Canada ratified the agreement in principle in 2008 and made a commitment to the Qalipu that the federal government would honour the terms of that agreement. However, it has been brought to the attention of our caucus that a number of applicants are concerned that despite the fact that their membership application was submitted within the prescribed time period, their application has not yet been reviewed under the processes established within the 2008 agreement.

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

Given that the 2008 agreement expired on March 21, 2013, there are serious concerns about membership applications that may be excluded from the process, especially as the number of applications is higher than expected.

[*English*]

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development added to the concern of many applicants when he spoke in this House, on March 28, and referred to the application numbers as "questionable".

The criteria for enrolment were arrived at through consultation and negotiation. The government must work in co-operation with, not dictate to, the Qalipu to sort out any legitimate registration issues.

However, let me be absolutely clear. The Liberals believe that the federal government must ensure that legitimate applicants are not excluded from the membership process. If the process is flawed, if the criteria are problematic, then the fault lies with the Conservative government, not the applicants, under the current process. It was the current government that negotiated the criteria for enrolment, and now, at the end of the process, has suggested that it wants to change the rules. It is not the fault of the applicants that the number of membership applications exceeded expectations.

The parliamentary secretary also spoke in this House about ensuring "the integrity of the enrolment process", but this is an agreement the government signed, in good faith, only five years ago.

[*Translation*]

Indeed, the Prime Minister himself signed the agreement on behalf of the Government of Canada and publicly announced the creation of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation in November 2007.

[*English*]

When we talk about the integrity of the enrolment process, we also have to consider the honour of the Crown, which requires the government to keep its word. How will the integrity of the process be upheld for the remaining unprocessed applicants who applied under the same criteria as the more than 20,000 applicants who have already received status under the existing criteria? How could it be fair to process the rest under different criteria, or worse, to change the rules for individuals who have already been accepted?

Instead of calling applications made in good faith into question, perhaps the government should work with the Qalipu to ensure that all applications are processed according to criteria already agreed to by the federal government.

[*Translation*]

The Conservative government must honour its commitment to complete the enrolment and registration of all eligible members of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation by extending the process under the agreement.

[*English*]

Chief Brendan Sheppard has asked the federal government for an extension of the 2008 agreement to ensure that the remaining applications are assessed and processed. The motion being debated today calls upon the government to do just that and to extend the 2008 agreement until all applicants who applied on or before November 30, 2012, are processed.

In addition to the extension of that agreement, basic procedural fairness dictates that the current rules of eligibility for membership be followed by all government decision-makers in any continuation of the enrolment process.

I note that this year marks the 250th anniversary of the Royal Proclamation. In that context, it is important to honour the original foundation of that relationship based upon partnership, respect and co-operation for mutual benefit. If, in the 21st century, first nations cannot take the Crown at its word, we will never achieve the reconciliation and trust that is so crucial to moving forward toward a more prosperous common future.

I urge all members of this House to support the motion, which would bring clarity to the government's commitment that no eligible members of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band will be excluded from this important recognition of their proud heritage.

● (1835)

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to our Indian ancestry, the people of Newfoundland, and Newfoundland, in particular, not so much Labrador, have not been overly proud. We are not proud because the aboriginal people of the island of Newfoundland, the Beothuk, have been officially extinct for nearly two centuries. Known as the lost people of Newfoundland, the Beothuk were ravaged by massacres, epidemics and territorial losses, until, by the early 19th century, the group is said to have been completely wiped out.

Some first nations would dispute the claim that the Beothuk are extinct. There is a belief in Mi'kmaq oral history that as white incomers tightened their control of Newfoundland, the Beothuk fled to the mainland and integrated with neighbouring groups. In other words, among us all there is Beothuk blood somewhere in our genes through the marriages that took place. That is the theory and I think it holds weight. One thing is absolutely certain, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the Mi'kmaq bloodline runs through the veins of generations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, tens of thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and that is what this motion is about.

In the fall of 2011, in what a government release deemed an historic occasion, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs granted official Indian status to the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq. The Newfoundland Mi'kmaq had been denied any claim to aboriginal title ever since 1949 when Newfoundland joined Canada. Why is that? Joey Smallwood, who brought us kicking and screaming into Confederation, did not bother to mention the Indian Act and the Terms of Union. Talk about a monumental oversight. There is no mention of aboriginal peoples within the Terms of Union that brought Newfoundland and Labrador, or Newfoundland as it was called then, into Confederation.

Aboriginal Affairs granted official Indian status to the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq finally. They finally got it. It was originally anticipated that fewer than 10,000 people would step forward and apply for aboriginal status. That number has since ballooned to 10 times that. More than 100,000 people have applied. Some of those 100,000 people live in Newfoundland, more live on mainland Canada, and more still live all around the world. The huge number, 100,000, has created a problem in terms of processing applications. There are 70,000 applications that have yet to be processed.

The deadline for applying to become a member of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band was November 30, 2012. The agreement for the recognition of membership in the Qalipu First Nation Band expired this past March 21. This motion calls on the Conservative government to extend that agreement for the recognition process of the Qalipu First Nation Band until all applications are processed and to ensure that the rules of eligibility for membership are followed by all government decision makers in any continuation of the enrolment process.

Further, all previous interpretations, precedents and rulings on matters affecting enrolment that were not specifically addressed within the agreement for the recognition of the Qalipu First Nation Band but were established through the records of decisions made by the enrolment committee and the appeals process should be made known to all participants in all future enrolment processes. In other words, make the process fair and above board so everyone knows the rules of the game. Spell them out, do not change eligibility requirements because more people applied than expected. Do not do that. That is not the right thing to do. All applications received before the original deadline should be processed in a fair and timely manner. That is not the case.

The total number of enrolment clerks hired and trained by the Government of Canada, by the Conservative government, to help with applications is three. There were more than 100,000 applications and we have three enrolment clerks.

● (1840)

Why did so many more Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the province, in the country and around the world apply for status than had been anticipated? Why did the numbers go through the roof?

For generations, aboriginal roots were often hidden in Newfoundland and Labrador by those who preferred to pass as non-aboriginals because of discrimination. People now, finally, are coming forward. They are admitting and embracing their aboriginal heritage and history. Sheilagh O'Leary, a councillor with the city of St. John's who has also applied for status, said, “It's about reclaiming identity and understanding where you came from.” In many ways, people embracing their aboriginal heritage should be a cause of celebration. Instead, the Conservative government is treating it as a cause of concern. The Conservatives are telling them that the rules may now change because too many people are applying.

In the lead-up to the 2006 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, federal officials estimated that a maximum of 12,000 former students would step forward. By last July, the secretariat handling the agreement had processed more than 30,000 claimants, driving up costs by more than $2 billion.

What does that tell us? It goes to show that the Conservative government has a history of underestimating aboriginal populations and ancestry in this country. Once again we see that the Conservative government has not provided the necessary resources to deal with a greater than expected number of applicants. The right thing to do is to provide the necessary resources to finish the job and make sure the job is done right.

Although this application opportunity is no longer available for people, the application process for that membership was lengthy. It certainly was not easy. It involved geological research and compiling all necessary documentation.

However, there is still an opportunity for people to apply for membership through Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, but that is an even lengthier process that can take years.

It is unfair to force these applicants to wait that long when the delay in processing the applications was the fault of the Conservative government that was due, again, to a lack of resources. People whose applications are in limbo are concerned that the government never intended to create a landless band with nearly 100,000 members. They are concerned that the government is going to alter the terms of the agreement and the enrolment process to deny the applicants or apply more stringent means of determining whether they are eligible for membership.

The government's decision to hire a special representative to review the enrolment process and investigate possible measures to address the situation while maintaining the integrity of the process and the spirit of the goals of the agreement only adds to people's concerns. Both the enrolment committee and the people who judge the appeals set up the recognition order that created the Qalipu, and they have had to judge a number of membership applications. During that time, a number of precedents and interpretations were made of documents.

To sum up, this motion calls upon the government to ensure that all of those previous precedents during any extension of the registration process be applied, be above board and be made public so that everybody knows the rules of the game.

New Democrats agree that all applicants should be treated the same way. Let us hope that happens.

● (1845)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and participate in the discussion brought forward by my friend, the hon. member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte concerning what appears to be the very arbitrary and secretive way in which the Conservative government is attempting to alter a formal agreement signed by the Government of Canada and a first nation.

Motion No. 432 addresses concerns about the deregistration of thousands of current members of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band who have already been recognized by The Indian Registrar as status Indians just a few short years ago.

This motion is also about thousands of applicants throughout Canada who have applied in good faith under the existing rules that were established after a lengthy negotiation between the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and the Government of Canada. Under these rules, people throughout Newfoundland and Canada who maintained a connection to the many Mi'kmaq communities of the island were deemed eligible for membership in a newly created first nation band.

These are not rules that were written in haste or on the back of an envelope, as our colleagues on the other side sometimes like to say. In 2007, the Prime Minister personally approved the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation ratification agreement and personally endorsed the criteria for membership in the band when he signed the agreement.

Simply put, the motion brought forth by my colleague from Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte asked that the Prime Minister of Canada fulfill the promise he made to thousands of members of this first nation who have already been accepted and to thousands of applicants to the band who are waiting for their applications to be processed.

Unfortunately, it appears that the Government of Canada has signalled it will break its promise. It has announced that it intends to change the rules midway through the process. This is not the first time we have seen the government break a promise. It is not the first time that we have seen the Conservative government betray Atlantic Canadians or our first nations. We all know that the Prime Minister broke his promise to honour the Atlantic accord. Of course it cost Bill Casey his caucus membership over there.

Ironically, the Prime Minister carried out his betrayal after quoting a Gaelic proverb that states, "there is no greater fraud than a promise not kept". That seems to be applicable here. I suspect he may have learned that from Senator Duffy, but I digress.

Earlier this year, we witnessed the deep distrust the first nations have with the government. Idle No More was a sign of the growing frustration among aboriginal communities, leaders and indeed all Canadians over the litany of broken promises and the complete lack of progress from the government on issues affecting indigenous people in Canada. The government's refusal to consult first nations on matters that may impact their inherent rights or treaty rights gave rise to the Idle No More protest movement.

The Liberal Party of Canada has stood against the cynical actions of the government in Parliament and worked to highlight its short-sighted approach for all Canadians, just like we are standing here today.

In relation to this motion and what happened here, in a nutshell the government is suggesting that the number of members and applicants who presented themselves for recognition is too many and that this situation could not have been foreseen. Standing today at 24,000 members and at 75,000 applicants, the government is suggesting that this is far beyond the intended 8,000 to 12,000 members that the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs originally projected when the Prime Minister ratified this agreement in 2007.

The record is clear. In 2009, the number of members in the band stood at 10,000 and the number of applicants waiting to be processed stood at 20,000, with three years left in the enrolment process. Therefore, if the expectation was that only 8,000 to 12,000 members would be assumed to be eligible for membership in the band, that forecast was proven totally inaccurate almost four years ago. Any belief that those numbers would not grow the way they have is just not credible. What would be the basis for it in view of these facts?

● (1850)

Furthermore, the government has raised no concern in the four years that the agreement has been in effect. Meanwhile, the number of applications and the number of members enrolled have been steadily increasing. Now, after four years of executing the agreement, the government is trying to create a story that there is a problem with the high numbers and that the problem is not its doing, that it is the doing of the applicants. What a silly thing to say. The government is suggesting that people who are applying for membership are doing so without proper entitlement to do so. That is what the process is all about.

It is typical of the government to point fingers. What did the Prime Minister do, even last week, when he had the problems with Senator Duffy? He pointed the finger at his own office. For some reason, he never points it at himself, which is most unfortunate. The Conservatives ought to look at themselves in this case. They were part of the design of the rules. The Prime Minister signed off on these rules that he now does not like.

The agreement spelled out the enrolment criteria for the band in plain language. The agreement stated that to become a member an applicant would have to demonstrate that they or one of their ancestors was of Canadian aboriginal descent. The applicant would not have to show that they were necessarily of Newfoundland Mi'kmaq descent. They would simply have to show that they were of any aboriginal heritage from anywhere in Canada and that would be sufficient.

That is what the Prime Minister signed off on. Those are the rules he agreed to. Now he wants to change the rules. He effectively wants to change horses in midstream. Furthermore, as specifically stated in the agreement, “no minimum blood quantum” or fraction of Indian ancestry was relevant for membership in this band either.

By pointing out these two rules for membership, it might make it easier for people to understand why such a relatively high number of applicants have come forward. It is not surprising. Those are the rules that were set up after the negotiations and these are the rules that the Prime Minister signed onto. If anyone is responsible for the rules that he now does not like, he should look in the mirror. Pointing out that this is exactly what the federal government negotiated, and obviously intended in forming the agreement, is also relevant.

The next criteria for enrolment was that the applicant or their aboriginal ancestor would have to be either (a) a resident of, or (b) connected to the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq community, as listed within the agreement.

The rules were clearly spelled out in the agreement. They were clearly spelled out for people who are no longer a resident of such a community in Newfoundland. They would have to demonstrate an ongoing connection to that community by way of regular telephone calls or visits to such a community. The requirement is spelled out in plain language within both the agreement and the application guides produced by the federal government and Newfoundland authorities for the applicants.

If I have time, I would like to highlight a couple of key elements in what the government signed as part of the agreement with the Mi'kmaq.

Part 13 of annex A specifically states, “The applicant must provide evidence that he is of Canadian Indian ancestry. There is no minimum blood quantum”. The Prime Minister signed onto that. To reinforce that, both the government and the first nation were fully aware of the criteria that they agreed to. The documents produced to assist applicants in preparing their applications, as well as the information found on the government website, specifically stated that residency was not a requirement for enrolment as long as a connection to a Mi'kmaq community can be established, and a connection is described as “visits or communication”.

The government has only itself to blame if it does not like these rules. It ought not to be breaking its promise. It ought to be in this case, unlike so many others, keeping its word to these people, following the process, letting people apply if they wish, and letting the process decide whether or not they qualify under the rules that the Prime Minister signed on to.

● (1855)

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing, to say the least, that an opportunity was held here tonight for all members of this House to speak, to express their points of view and to establish a discussion about the Conservatives' concerns about the Qalipu Mi’kmaq First Nation agreement that they signed.

The House of Commons is the place where these issues can get resolved, if there is a discussion. Not one member of the government took the opportunity tonight to present an argument to the people of Canada, and especially to the applicants and members of the Qalipu Mi’kmaq First Nation. The Conservatives had that opportunity, but they declined. Secrecy seems to be the issue of the day for the current government. They had an opportunity to express, in very clear language, what exactly they were concerned about. Let us be clear. It is the Conservatives who are saying they are concerned about something. However, will they express that on the floor of the House of Commons, the forum for the people's business? No. They are holding these discussions exclusively in secret. Is that the right way to do business? I will let them answer that.

Let us talk about what they will not talk about. Let us talk about their agreement, the agreement that was negotiated in good faith, not in the course of a day, a week, or a month, not even in the course of a year, but over the course of several years. It was signed and sanctioned by the Prime Minister of Canada, and every word of that agreement was taken as if it were his very own. That agreement held the very substance of the enrolment criteria which the Conservatives now say they have a problem with. However, do they say they have the problem? No. They will never admit that the agreement is what they are now taking issue with, the agreement that the Prime Minister of Canada personally sanctioned. No. The fault, according to the Conservatives, is with those darn applicants, those people who are coming forward now who should never be coming forward and applying the rules to them that they negotiated in good faith.

The Conservatives will not talk about the agreement. In order to talk about it, they would have to express why they find fault in their own agreement and promises. If they talked about the agreement, they would have to admit that they no longer support their own agreement, the one they negotiated with the Federation of Newfoundland Indians, the agreement that was ratified through a referendum by every member of the Federation of Newfoundland Indians after a five-month referendum campaign. It was the agreement that was ratified by the cabinet and then ratified in a signing ceremony.

Then, over a four-year period, an enrolment committee, comprised of a majority of members of the federal government's Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and appointed by that department and by the Federation of Newfoundland Indians, then had the opportunity to say who was in and who was out. It was the members of that enrolment committee who actually said that 24,000 individuals would now become members. That enrolment committee had an opportunity to use various means and mechanisms to say there was a problem. Did the members of that committee ever do that? No. In fact, not only did the enrolment committee keep processing applications for the four years that it sat, it actually accelerated the enrolment process, in response to a motion to slow it down by one of the Mi'kmaq elders.

What they are now suggesting, which is really charming, is not to look at the agreement but to look at the census records from 2006. In 2006, only 24,000 Newfoundland and Labradorians self-declared that they were of aboriginal ancestry. That apparently is clear evidence that it would be totally ridiculous that anyone should suggest having anything more than 24,000 members. Well, guess what? That would be the same census that the same Conservative government said was an outrageous invasion of the rights of personal privacy and that no Canadian citizen should ever be forced to fill out. That is the long form census. They are using the long form census, the one they abolished in 2011, as the entire basis of argument to shut down the agreement that the Prime Minister of Canada personally signed off on.

If not even bothering to stand up in the House of Commons is a matter of principle, the members of that party and government should stay sitting down and abide by their agreement.

● (1900)

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for debate has now 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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 93, a recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 29, 2013, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1905)

[*English*]

EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North still has five minutes of questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Halifax West.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's speech today on this topic. We have seen that the government has used time allocation, closure really, a record number of times, more than any other government in history. I wonder if my hon. colleague would care to comment on what he feels is the reason for the frequency for using time allocation, why it uses closure and why it does that so often.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two things of which I would like to make a note.

We need to recognize that, first and foremost, when a government moves time allocation as a motion, what it is really saying is that it is going to limit the number of members of Parliament who can stand and express their thoughts on the matter. On many occasions, if not on all occasions, expressing their thoughts involves ideas and thoughts that come from their constituents. The government is therefore limiting the ability of MPs to represent their constituents on a wide variety of different issues.

The member is right when he makes reference to the fact that the government does use time allocation. In my opening remarks, I made reference to it. The Conservative government, more than any other government, has used it as a legislative tool to the degree in which it is almost automatic in its usage in the House of Commons.

That is most unfortunate and definitely very undemocratic. I would suggest that the government has chosen to use this because the government House leader has failed to recognize the value of sitting down with the opposition House leaders, whether it is the Liberal Party or the New Democratic Party. If the government did that in good faith with the respective House leaders, we would see agreements being accepted, a more timely passing of legislation and more dialogue, so the high priority bills get more debate than others.

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the hon. member for Winnipeg North quite a bit today and, as a matter of fact, most days. Today, his main point is about restriction of debate. His main point is that he does not get enough chance to speak. It is important that he should have an opportunity to speak. The last time I checked he had spoken in the House over a period of months and years more than 50 other MPs put together.

I wonder if the hon. member should be a little more circumspect when he talks about the subject, especially when there are only 34 members in his own caucus and they need a chance to speak.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, this is not about me. It is about all members of the House of Commons. In fact, it is important that all members recognize the role of ensuring members have the right to speak.

Whether an individual MP from whatever region or community decides to take advantage of the opportunity and the privilege of being in the House and addressing the many different issues that come to the House, or decides not to, it is up to him or her. I will defend the rights of those who never say anything and of those who have plenty to say on a lot of issues.

It is consistent, ensuring—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak this evening to Motion No. 17, which everyone on our side of the House knows is simply a motion that will extend sitting hours for the next few weeks to allow increased debate and participation by all members, dealing with a series of what we consider to be very serious and important legislative bills that the government wishes to bring forward.

I should point out at the outset that there is nothing new here. This is not unusual. In fact, as all members know, when they look at their parliamentary calendars, those little plastic calendars that we all put in our wallets to see when the session is on and when we adjourn, they will notice that the last two weeks in June always have asterisks attached to the last two sitting weeks. It is interesting, because every year even the most experienced parliamentarians continue to ask the same questions. They look at those little stars and come to me, or others on our side of the House, and ask if that means they can get out two weeks early. We have to point out that, no, it does not mean we can rise two weeks early. It means the government has the ability to extend the sitting hours for those last two weeks to allow for enhanced and increased debate.

This is quite a common occurrence that occurs every session and every sitting of a Parliament. All we are suggesting this time, hence the motion we brought forward, is to extend sitting hours for a few more weeks than the last two weeks of the scheduled session.

Why are we asking for that to be done? It is simply because we feel we have a very busy legislative agenda. We believe we have a number of pieces of important legislation that have yet to be passed in Parliament. We would like to see many of these, if not all of them, debated, voted upon and hopefully, from our perspective, passed before we rise for the summer. That is all. There is no other ulterior motive, as members opposite seem to be suggesting. We are not trying to engage in increased sitting hours now so we can rise earlier. Not at all, we are simply stating a fact, that our government has many pieces of legislation that have yet to be debated fully in this place and yet to be put to a vote.

We want to see that happen as quickly as possible. Hence, we are recommending that we sit, starting tonight, for an extended period of time. It would be a number of hours every evening, Monday through Thursday so we would be able to engage all parliamentarians in a proper debate of some of these legislative agenda items.

I have also heard some commentary from members opposite who seem to engage in these ongoing conspiracy theories. They suggest, for example, that one of the things the motion would do, in addition to extending the sitting hours, is impair the opposition members' ability to bring forward concurrence motions. I want to speak to that for just a moment.

If one is to adhere to the arguments brought forward by members opposite, one would get the impression that these concurrence motions, in other words debate on reports, are the most important thing that Parliament has to consider. Mr. Speaker, as you would well know, and I think all members know, that is the furthest thing from the truth. Concurrence motions, when brought forward by members of the opposition, are nothing more than dilatory tactics to try and prevent our government from engaging in its legislative agenda.

Mr. Speaker, as you well know, and all members should know, once a concurrence motion is brought forward, it allows for three hours of debate on that motion. In other words, if a concurrence motion was brought forward on a Wednesday, which as we all know is a short day, three hours of government time would be used in debate of an opposition motion. The government then would be unable to bring forward its own legislative agenda and would be unable to debate the bills that we wanted to see debated in the House. Instead, we would be engaging in a debate on a concurrence motion brought forward by the opposition, which means opposition members would simply be trying to delay legislation from being passed.

● (1910)

On one hand, we hear consistently from members opposite the argument that they need more time to debate, that the government is preventing real and fruitful debate in the House. That again is the furthest thing from the truth. In fact, just the opposite is occurring on a regular basis.

Opposition members are using procedural tactics, like concurrence motions, to prevent our government from introducing legislation. Why? Because they are not merely trying to oppose our legislative agenda; they are trying to prevent it from even making it to the floor of the House for reasonable debate.

That is what concurrence motions are and that is what the opposition is arguing that Motion No. 17 would prevent, but that is not true. The reality is, if we adopt Motion No. 17, concurrence motions would still be allowed, even though we all know they are dilatory in nature.

Members of the official opposition and third party would still be able to bring forward concurrence motions. There would only be one slight change, which is that after the first speaker completed his or her remarks, usually 20 minutes, and after the customary 10 minutes of questions and comments, we would then revert to orders of the day. This does not mean the remainder of the three hours would be washed away. The government would be obliged, in fact compelled, within two weeks to resume debate on that concurrence motion.

We are not preventing debate on any motion for concurrence that the opposition members bring forward. We are merely allowing for proper debate on government legislation to be held, without being impaired and delayed unnecessarily. When a concurrence motion is brought forward, normally our government, to try to get back to orders of the day, would move a motion to do just that, to return to orders of the day. However, that precipitates then a 30-minute bell. Committees are interrupted because members have to return to the House to vote on that motion.

There is important work being done in committees. We do not want that unnecessary delay to committees, particularly as we get closer to the end of this legislative session. The committees are seized with very important bills that have been passed through second reading and are at committee stage. We want the committees to engage in an examination of the bills, but if we are continually interrupted by having dilatory tactics brought forward by members of the opposition, that prevents true legislative examination of bills at committee.

Our intent is quite simple. Motion No. 17 merely suggests that we sit a few hours longer each and every day for the last few weeks before the scheduled adjournment on June 21 to allow meaningful debate on many bills that our government has introduced. The opposition members should embrace and welcome this. After all, it is they who continually state that we are preventing them from debating legislation.

This gives them an opportunity of four more hours each and every day, Monday to Thursday. That is 20 more hours per week of debate, yet we hear this hue and cry from members opposite that they do not want to support Motion No. 17. Somehow they are trying to argue that adding 20 hours of debate per week prevents them from speaking effectively on issues that they feel are important. How can that be? How can adding time for debate each and every day be a bad thing? In other words, we cannot have it both ways.

● (1915)

If members of the opposition are trying to make an argument that they need more time for debate on bills, if members of the opposition argue that time allocation prevents them from speaking on bills, how can they then oppose our attempt to add more hours to the day to give them the ability to debate the very bills they are complaining about now, saying that they do not have proper time for thorough examination? It makes no sense. Their argument does not seem to make any sense whatsoever.

Let me give one small example of a bill we want to debate and hopefully pass before we rise for the summer. This is only one of many. Bill S-2, on matrimonial property rights for aboriginal women on reserves, is a bill that has been criticized and opposed by members opposite, both of the official opposition and the third party, for reasons that I can only think about. Again, it defies any rational or logical thought, in my opinion.

What is Bill S-2? Bill S-2 proposes to enact legislation that would allow women living on reserves to have the same basic rights that every other woman in Canada enjoys now. Canadians may be quite appalled to learn that currently, on reserve, if a woman is married and living in a house, but then becomes divorced, she has no right to 50% of the property that she and her husband co-own.

Let me repeat that. An aboriginal woman living on a reserve, living in a house with her husband, who gets divorced, cannot claim 50% of the property that she and her spouse previously owned. That is abominable. That defies any logical thinking by any fair-minded Canadian.

However, both opposition parties in this place oppose our attempts to give aboriginal women the same rights every other woman in Canada currently enjoys. Why? I have asked them. We have yet to hear a logical answer. We have yet to hear an answer that makes any sense.

Members opposite continually seem to criticize our government, saying that we really do not have the best interests of Canadian woman at heart, yet this very bill, which they should be embracing, they oppose, for no good reason. I asked the member for Winnipeg North earlier tonight to give me one reason the Liberal Party of Canada opposes our bill. He could not do so. Why? I can think of several reasons, but none of them make any sense.

The basic point is that we want to debate that bill. We want Canadians to understand what this bill would mean to aboriginal women. We are asking for additional time in this place over the course of the next few weeks to debate this bill, and many others like it, that we believe are important to Canadians.

We have bills that deal with the economy of our country. We have bills dealing with the safety and security of Canadians. We have bills that I know Canadians want to see debated and passed.

However, members opposite are opposing our attempts to do just that. Again, how can it possibly make sense to, on one hand, criticize our government for restricting debate and on the other hand oppose our attempt to add hours to the sitting of this legislature for the purpose of debate? It makes no sense.

I know that I have more time available to me, but I also understand that members opposite wish to make some presentations this evening and that by eight o'clock, this debate will be concluded, so I will conclude my remarks, allowing the opposition members their 10 minutes for questions and comments.

● (1920)

Let me just conclude with this statement, once again. All our government is attempting is to allow more fulsome debate on government legislative agenda items. If members opposite do not want to be sitting extended hours, because they do not want to put in the time for meaningful debate, they should simply say so.

Our government believes that increasing the hours to allow for more debate is something Canadians would embrace.

It is a very simple situation. They either agree that more debate is a good thing, or they say that more debate is something they do not want to engage in. I think one answer is the answer Canadians would embrace; the other answer shows the sheer hypocrisy of the arguments being presented by members opposite.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague from Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, and it leaves me with a strange feeling.

[*English*]

We are in some twilight zone right now. Seriously. Maybe it is the time.

I am a night owl, so 7:30 p.m. is pretty early for me. At midnight, it will be as if it is early afternoon for me, so this is not the problem.

I heard some words from his mouth. He talked about proper debate and important work being done in committee. I wondered who was speaking. Was it this side of the House or the government side of the House? Why? Mr. Speaker, you were sitting on the same committee as I was, acting as our justice critic, when we were reviewing some piece of legislation the committee could not really study seriously.

[*Translation*]

This government limits our participation in committee. It is important for Canadians to know this. In fact, my colleague is suggesting that if we vote against this motion, it means we do not take our work seriously. This government has no credibility in that regard.

The Conservatives are telling us that they want to have proper debates, even though they do not take part in them. We know nothing about Albertans' concerns because their members do not rise to talk about them. We feel as though we are talking to a brick wall.

I would like to ask my colleague opposite a question. As I said earlier to his leader in the House, these 20 additional hours a week do not pose a problem if they allow us to do things properly. If the member guarantees that even with these 20 additional hours a week we will continue to sit until June 21, if he guarantees that the bills will be studied without closure being invoked, and if he guarantees that more Conservatives will participate in the debates, then I do not have a problem with it.

Can the member give us these guarantees, or would he rather pretend that he is a great democrat and then do the opposite?

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I have to laugh. We hear the same argument from members opposite as we just heard now. The reality is quite different from what the member opposite is reporting.

The reality is that members opposite are not really interested in meaningful debate. They are simply trying to delay and defeat any legislation our government brings forward.

If it were merely a case of wanting to debate a bill thoroughly, I would have no problem with that. However, the reason our government has been forced—and I say forced—to bring time allocation in on many bills is that the members opposite have proven that they will use any procedural tactic available to them to continue delaying the passage of bills, time and time again.

Now, I get that. That is the opposition's right. Opposition members can delay legislative items as much as they possibly can, because they have procedural tactics at their disposal. However, so do we. Our priority is to get bills passed. We were given a majority government by the people of this country to get things done, to pass legislation, and we are doing so. We are doing so in as efficient a manner as possible.

However, to suggest for a moment that we are preventing debate from occurring, whether it be in the House or in committee, and then to oppose a motion that extends sitting hours to give them the additional hours for debate makes absolutely no sense. It is the height of hypocrisy.

● (1930)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to laugh at the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, because he talks about the mandate the Conservatives were given. The problem is that the way they are utilizing the mandate they were given is not to represent all Canadians; it is to represent just a certain base. Legislation does require more debate.

Certainly, 20 hours per week sounds lovely, does it not? However, let us look at the history. This is coming from a government that does not really listen to any debate. We can talk forever in this place. Does it ever change anything on the government side of the House? No, it does not. This is coming from a government that seldom allows amendments in the chamber and certainly does not allow amendments at committee. This is coming from a government that even shuts down committees when debating motions. It puts committees in camera, in secret, so that they are not transparent when debating motions. That is simply how the government operates.

I worry about this extension of sitting hours. As my colleague in the NDP asked a moment ago, is the government really going to go until June 21, or is this another strategy? We know that the Prime Minister has left Dodge, with a scandal on his desk. Is this really a strategy to have an extension of sitting hours, get through a couple of bills, and allow him to prorogue Parliament? Will the member guarantee—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I know we have 10 minutes for questions and comments, but we still need to be judicious with our time.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of Canadians who may be paying attention to this debate, let me point out one very important fact, which members opposite, in the NDP and Liberals, have failed to realize, or have at least failed to mention, in their comments. Over the last few legislative sessions, we have adjourned a day or two early. However, here is the thing. It took unanimous consent to do that. We have opposition members asking if we can guarantee that we will sit, when they, in fact, agreed unanimously to rise early in the last few sessions. Talk about hypocritical; it is beyond belief. They are trying to suggest that they are the only ones who want to sit here and debate until the legislative session ends on the calendar, when they, in fact, have given unanimous consent to rise early.

Again, their arguments are that hollow, and I think Canadians can see right through those arguments.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Speaking of hollow arguments, Mr. Speaker, this one is echoing like the largest reverb chamber I have ever heard.

On the one hand, the member opposite is saying that the underpinning of democracy is strong debate, and that is what we should be doing in the House. On the other hand, he is giving justifications for the record the government has on time allocation. If there is any hypocrisy going on right now, and if Canadians are paying attention, they understand from what side of the House that hypocrisy is coming from.

Can the member opposite clarify this? On the one hand, you are saying that you want debate, but on the other hand, your government is closing down debate time and time again. If you want debate, you should cross over to this side of the House, where this is what we want, this is what we stand for, and this is what we fight for every single day in the House of Commons.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would remind hon. members to direct their questions to the Chair and not to other hon. members directly.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, again, this is quite amusing. It is quite clear the members opposite do not want to engage in meaningful debate. They are just trying to delay and prevent government bills from being passed. That is their sole purpose.

We have proven time and time again that we have a legislative agenda. We want to see it fulfilled. We want to pass bills. We want to get things done on behalf of Canadians. The opposition simply wants to derail and prevent any government bills from being passed in this place. There is a huge difference between meaningful debate and unnecessary and unwarranted delay. That is what members opposite do.

I would also point out that as opposed to closure, and a lot of members get closure and time allocation confused, when we have brought forward time allocation, we have allowed for sufficient debate. Some bills have been debated over 70 times before we brought forward time allocation. To suggest that we are trying to curtail debate just does not cut the mustard.

● (1935)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will share my speaking time with my colleague, the member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert.

I have been given time to speak to this motion. Once again this week, the government is moving to extend our evening sitting hours significantly. It wants Parliament to sit until midnight.

We have to take a close look at this motion because similar motions in the past have often resulted in a shorter parliamentary calendar.

Since the beginning of this discussion, the Conservatives have continually surprised us with messages utterly at odds with what we are used to hearing.

Just like that, the government wants to extend the time we spend in the House. It claims this approach will enable members to debate bills on the order paper in detail and work hard for Canadians.

How ironic. After constantly curtailing debate ever since the last election, the government now says it wants to extend sitting hours to provide opportunities for debate.

Also ironic is the fact that the government has so much to say about democracy despite its unrelenting and unprecedented contempt for our parliamentary bodies.

Such principles were conspicuous by their absence when the government prorogued Parliament for purely partisan reasons, a move that was bad for Canadians.

Let us not forget that the Prime Minister had absolutely no compunction about letting dozens of bills die on the order paper when he wanted to save his government's hide. How can he say that he wants to let bills move through the normal legislative process when his political agenda has been given top priority in the current legislative cycle?

When a government constantly uses adjournment motions as a tactic to limit participation in and duration of debates, that is not democracy. It is exactly the opposite of what has been moved today.

May 8 was the 33rd time the government brought a vote on a time allocation motion that effectively limits the number of MPs who can speak to a given bill.

It sure looks like the Conservatives have been hell-bent on beating their own record for shutting down debate ever since the beginning of this Parliament.

How can the government say that it wants to promote free debate when it holds the record for cutting debate short? Are we supposed to believe that the government really wants to have it both ways?

Nor is it very democratic when the Prime Minister's Office muzzles its own members in their statements in the House.

Personally, neither I nor my colleagues in the official opposition have to get our speeches approved or adjusted to go with the soup of the day. We speak freely, without constraint from our party, but the government members cannot say the same.

How can the Conservatives stand here today and say that they defend democracy when they put gag orders on their own party's statements and speeches in the House?

Working for Canadians does not mean introducing three mammoth bills like Bills C-38, C-45 and C-60, and then watering down debate, limiting discussion and preventing parliamentarians from learning about what is happening in parliamentary committee, as is the case with a typical bill.

How can the Conservatives claim that they want to let the parliamentary process follow its course when they are the first to short-circuit it by forcing the vote on hundreds of measures without allowing representatives to do their work properly?

Never in the history of this country has a government shown such contempt for our institutions. That is why it is becoming difficult today to understand and believe the lines the Conservatives are trying to feed us.

You cannot on the one hand advocate for extending our sitting time to encourage debate, and on the other hand interfere constantly, as the Conservatives have done with complete impunity.

Therefore, we must question the motives behind the government's desire to extend the sitting hours.

● (1940)

If we look at what has happened in the past, we see that, in general, extending the sitting hours allows the party in power to make the parliamentary calendar shorter. Right now, the Conservatives clearly do not have enough credibility for us to believe their intentions and trust them.

We have to wonder whether the government simply wants to be forgotten as quickly as possible over the summer and to have people forget about all the problems that its wilful blindness caused with the temporary foreign worker program.

Yesterday, the government House leader said that he wanted to accelerate his government's economic measures. If he really cares about the economy, how could he let senators make such extravagant expenditures on the backs of taxpayers? The fact is that the government would rather shirk its responsibilities than face any challenges, answer the official opposition's questions and allow a real debate on issues that are of concern to Canadians. That is the real problem.

If the government wants to fully debate the bills on the order paper, then it should allow the House to sit until June 21, as set out on the calendar. The NDP is prepared to debate. The NDP is prepared to sit until June 21, as scheduled.

We have demonstrated our commitment and dedication to Parliament on numerous occasions. One of our members once even sat for 22 consecutive hours. When the government wanted to lock out Canada Post employees, we were there to debate and to stand up for Canadians.

Every day, we are here to stand up for the interests of Canadians. We routinely propose amendments in order move forward on bills that have sometimes been introduced over a year and a half ago, but these amendments are rejected by a government that wants to promote a political agenda rather than work for Canadians.

First and foremost, we oppose the government's motivations for wanting to impose extended sitting hours. Canadians will not be fooled. They understand the political game that the Conservatives are constantly playing. Canadians know that they cannot trust the Conservatives.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague speak some more about other times when sitting hours have been extended this early in the session. It is a possibility, according to the parliamentary calendar, but not just yet. This has come much earlier than expected.

Can she speak about those precedents? Does she know how things turned out when this approach was used in the past?

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question.

Obviously, this has happened before, and it is clear that the only reason for extending sitting hours until midnight is to cut debate short and end the parliamentary session before the scheduled date of June 21.

The government is not telling us that; it is trying to hide that part. However, as I said, Canadians are not stupid and neither is the official opposition.

That is why we keep saying that this government is not living up to its responsibilities. It is being hypocritical, shutting down democracy and dismissing the House's role.

● (1945)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was a parliamentarian for 19 years at the provincial level, and 17 of those years were during majority governments. I must say that when there was a majority government, there was a sense that to get a legislative agenda through, there was an obligation on the government to work with opposition House leaders. Whether it was Liberals, New Democrats or Conservatives at the time, there was a sense of co-operation as we got closer to June. The government would give the legislative agenda that it wanted to get passed through, and it was done in a timely and efficient fashion. Votes would occur, and so forth.

Does the member feel that since the government's majority has come into play, it has given up on working with opposition parties to try to accomplish more work through the House of Commons?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question.

The government is being very cynical. If there is one word that describes the Conservatives perfectly, it is hypocrisy. They are hypocrites. They are calling the official opposition hypocrites, but they are the real hypocrites. Once again, they are moving time allocation motions to cut debate short or, as is the case today with Motion No. 17, to extend sitting hours.

We are dealing with a majority government, yes, but a majority government that is excluding opposition members, Canadians, from parliamentary debate. That is truly unacceptable.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a strange thing that we are hearing today. NDP members have said in most of their speeches that when a bill is too long, let us say over 10 pages, that it is too much for them to read, and now they are being asked, God forbid, to stay here until midnight to debate.

Do those members honestly think that the people of Canada, who pay us $160,000 a year to be in this place and to debate issues of importance to them, think that we should be going home early at a time when we have so much on our agenda, including Canada's economic action plan and a whole host of bills?

Those members talk about debate. A bill was brought forward by a Liberal member of Parliament with respect to philanthropy day, and NDP members decided to filibuster that bill. They wanted all of their members to speak to it because it was such a controversial bill. Is that the type of debate they are talking about? They cannot even pass a bill that would see us thank Canadians who give so much of their time and their money to help make our communities better. Is that the type of debate they are talking about?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, right from the beginning and at every turn, the government has not been democratic in the least. It has been controlling on every level, especially when it comes to debates, which it has either extended or imposed closure on. The results are the same. Parliamentarians are muzzled and Canadians do not get straight answers.

I repeat, that is unacceptable. Coming from a majority government, that is even more unacceptable.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the motion before us is rather bizarre. As many members have said before me, it is quite surprising that the government is using the excuse of urgency.

The government has imposed closure a record 33 times, as well as restrictions on the time allowed to study bills in committee. With Bill C-60, this same government gave notice of a time allocation motion after only one hour of debate. I did say only one hour of debate. This is the same government that introduced monster omnibus bills because it did not want the committees and parliamentarians to properly study their legislative proposals in good faith.

I am not afraid of hard work. I am a doctor by training and I am used to 12-hour and even 24-hour shifts. It is not pleasant, but you get used to it.

My colleagues and I have not hesitated to stand up to the government and to do our jobs, as was the case with legislation to force Canada Post employees back to work and regarding their working conditions. We stood our ground when necessary.

It is obvious that the Conservatives do not have any respect for democratic institutions. I just mentioned the 33 time allocation motions they have imposed since May 2, 2011. What a sorry record.

The omnibus bills, such as Bills C-38 and C-45, are perfect examples of this. The Conservatives have steamrolled their way through adopting measures that Canadians and parliamentarians did not have the chance to scrutinize.

As everyone knows, the appropriate committees were unable to properly study Bill C-38 because it was not split up. That is disrespectful. With Bill C-45, the Conservatives used a different approach in order to curry favour with the public.

However, I can speak from my experience with the Standing Committee on Health. What a joke. The committee's meeting on Bill C-45 started late because of yet another time allocation motion. We then heard from witnesses and had just one round of questions. It is clear to me that the government did not really want the committees to study the impact of the measures. It just wanted to look better without having to do better. That too shows a lack of respect for our democratic institutions.

I also think that what is happening in committee is not right. Many witnesses take the time to come here to speak to subjects or bills that are important to them. Most of the time, however, their contributions are ignored. It is as though the committees were a waste of time. In any event, the outcome is prepared in advance by the Prime Minister's Office and so are many of the Conservative members' statements.

Yesterday, the House Leader of the Official Opposition said that 99.3% of all amendments proposed by the opposition have been rejected by the government.

● (1950)

This implies that every single one of the bills the government introduces is practically perfect.

In 99.3% of the cases, the government outright rejected all of the testimony from witnesses and experts, all of the comments from the public and all of the amendments proposed during the study of the bill. That is simply impossible.

Based on what we heard from witnesses, and after studying some bills in the Standing Committee on Health, I know that some of these bills could have benefited from the proposed amendments.

The NDP is not afraid of work. The problem is that I am not sure the government wants to extend our hours in order to get more work done. It has not guaranteed that we will be here until the summer recess.

I belong to a party that has the word “democratic” in its name, and I take these issues very seriously. The people of Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert put their trust in me on May 2, 2011, and I am doing my best to represent them.

Canadians sent us here to ask the necessary questions and to implement the best policies and public practices. We think that the government should take action so that we can do our job properly. The Prime Minister is now playing the victim over what happened in the Senate with senators he himself appointed solely to raise money for the Conservative Party of Canada. The Prime Minister is now playing the victim and wondering how this could have happened.

How could his chief of staff give a $90,000 cheque to a senator the Prime Minister himself appointed? How could his chief of staff—who sat right next to him every single day, who knows the government's deepest, darkest secrets and who the Prime Minister put in charge of major trade files and negotiations with other countries—do that?

Of course, the Prime Minister's hands are clean, and he has nothing to say about this. He believes that his hands are so clean that he is not going to answer any questions about it. He is going to South America for trade talks with countries we already have trade deals with.

Parliament should become less irrelevant. We think it is wrong that it ever became irrelevant. When the government is wrong in its treatment and abuse of Canada's Parliament, that affects all Canadians, whatever their political persuasion. We think what the government is doing is fundamentally wrong and that it needs a little adult supervision from time to time to take some of those suggestions and put a little, as we say, water in its wine. The government needs that more than anything.

It has the majority. This is the irony of what the government is doing. In moving more time allocation than any government in history, shutting down debate more than any government in history and relying on the tactics it is using today, it is showing weakness, not strength.

The Conservatives have the numbers to move legislation through if they saw fit, but they do not. They move legislation, they say it is an agenda and they hold up a raft of bills.

● (1955)

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to the beginning of my colleague's speech.

She spoke about the fact that the Conservatives' sense of urgency is driving them to extend the sitting hours of the House of Commons. I believe she is aware that there are costs associated with extending the sitting hours and that, in the end, Canadians foot the bill.

Personally, dealing with the Senate is the only urgent issue I can see. I believe there is some urgency in that case. People have cheated and really shown a lack of goodwill.

Is that why the government wants to extend the sitting hours?

● (2000)

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her brilliant question.

She is quite right. We do not understand this urgency. As she so aptly put it, what is urgent is that we look into what senators are doing with taxpayers' money.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 8:01 p.m. it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

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

● (2045)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 690)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bellavance
Bennett	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brison	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Easter
Foote	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Goodale
Groguhé	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse

Laverdière
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathyssen
McCallum
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Valeriote– — 113

LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Quach
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
St-Denis
Stoffer
Turmel

NAYS

Members

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Flaherty
Galipeau
Gill
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Leef
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber

Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gallant
Goguen
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Rempel
Saxton
Seeback
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
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)

Richards
Schellenberger
Shea
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer– — 146

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (2050)

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

(Division No. 691)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Del Mastro

Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin

Dreeshen
Dykstra
Flaherty
Galipeau
Gill
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Leef
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Saxton
Seeback
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
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)
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gallant
Goguen
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Schellenberger
Shea
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer– — 146

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bennett
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brison
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Choquette
Christopherson
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Dubé
Dusseault
Foote
Fry
Genest
Giguère
Groguhé
Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bellavance
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Chow
Cleary
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dion
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Freeman
Garneau
Genest-Jourdain
Goodale
Hsu
Hughes
Jacob
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathyssen
McCallum
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Valeriote– — 113
Hyer
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Quach
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
St-Denis
Stoffer
Turmel

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

● (2055)

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY ACT

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC) moved that Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Museums Act in order to establish the Canadian Museum of History and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to open the debate in the House on Bill C-49, an act to amend the Museums Act to establish the Canadian museum of history.

This legislation would change the name and mandate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, an institution with a remarkable and proud history. It is a history that traces its way back to 1856 when it was then known as the Geological Survey of Canada. In 1968, its mandate shifted and its name changed again to the Museum of Man. In 1986, it was renamed the Canadian Museum of Civilization and was moved to its current home on the bank of the Ottawa River.

This museum is the largest of Canada's museums. It is the largest both in size, with over one million square feet, and visitors, averaging 1.3 million visitors over the past couple of years. It receives the largest share of government funding of any museum and it is one of the museums with the highest level of self-generated revenue.

While the Canadian Museum of Civilization is our country's most visible national museum, it is not our only museum. In fact, there are over 2,500 museums in communities all across the country, some large, some small, and all these museums tell our stories. They tell them in different ways and in different locations and they tell them in a way that is unique to these local communities.

For example, in the small town of Midway, British Columbia, there is an exhaustive display of material from the Japanese internment during the Second World War. Japanese Canadians living in the region collected materials and put together a narrative of what Japanese Canadians dealt with and suffered through in the south Okanagan during the Second World War. There are countless examples of exhibits like this in museums all across Canada.

[*Translation*]

This museum describes Canada's history, yet Canada does not have a national institution that connects all of these local museums across the country to tell Canada's story.

[*English*]

Geographically, Canada is the second largest country in the world, but in terms of population, we are the 34th largest country in the world. Therefore, what unites us together as Canadians? What unites us as a people? It is our languages, our culture, the arts and the ability to tell our stories one to another and to have an understanding of our shared history. A museum devoted to our history will provide a focus on the people, the places and the achievements that bring us together as Canadians.

[*Translation*]

We are counting down to Canada's 150th birthday in 2017. The road to Canada's 150th birthday offers us an unprecedented opportunity to celebrate our history and the achievements that define who we are as Canadians.

Our stories are vast, and they deserve to be told. From Samuel de Champlain's arrival on our shores to the last spike that marked the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks that took us from east to west and back.

[*English*]

From Terry Fox's journey in the Marathon of Hope that still inspires millions of Canadians today to raise money and fight cancer to Maurice "Rocket" Richard to James Naismith and his invention of basketball to our brilliant scientists like Frederick Banting and Charles Best, these are the people, the events, the stories that inspire us always and need to be told and retold again.

Canada needs and deserves a national institution that will tell the stories of Canada. Canada needs an institution that will independently research and explore Canada's history. Canada needs a national institution that celebrates our achievements and what we have accomplished together as Canadians. Our children need to know more about Canada's past. That is why last year our government announced the creation of the Canadian museum of history.

Let me read the mandate that we are proposing in Bill C-49 that is at the heart of this debate and of this legislation. This is what the new mandate of the museum will read:

> The purpose of the Canadian Museum of History is to enhance Canadians' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of events, experiences, people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada's history and identity, and also to enhance their awareness of world history and cultures.

We have chosen not to build a new national museum from the ground up. We are doing that right now in Winnipeg with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. We have also established the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax, building on an existing institution.

The home of this new museum will be what is currently the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

● (2100)

[*Translation*]

We will build on its reputation and popularity to create a museum that will showcase our achievements as a nation.

The United States has the Smithsonian. Germany has the German History Museum.

[*English*]

Let me share with the House something I think is really important to understand about the details of what we are proposing here with this new museum.

Beginning shortly, the museum will renovate over 50,000 square feet of public space, roughly half of the permanent and temporary galleries that are currently part of the museum. Those areas of the museum that will remain as they are include the very popular Canadian Children's Museum, the First Peoples Hall and the IMAX theatre. A $25-million one-time investment will allow the museum to make this happen.

It should be noted that the current Museum of Civilization in Gatineau has not been updated in over 20 years. In fact, in the Canada Hall at the museum, aboriginal people are excluded from the narrative that is Canada's history. It is a museum that needs to be updated and needs to be improved upon, and that is what we are proposing.

The museum will also allocate internal resources to the project and will launch a fundraising campaign with the intent to raise $5 million. I am told that the fundraising campaign is already well under way and having success. This investment will be funded within existing budgets from the Department of Canadian Heritage at no new additional cost to taxpayers. It will allow the Canadian Museum of Civilization to begin the transformation that will be completed in time for Canada's 150th birthday in 2017.

More than changing the name, the mandate and the exhibits, more will change. We want to ensure this great national institution, which we have the benefit of visiting in Ottawa, reaches out across the country and connects Canadians. To achieve this, we are building partnerships, partnerships that will be created between the new Canadian museum of history and museums across Canada that have the same mandate, but are doing it at a local level. These local museums will have the opportunity to become official partners of this new great national museum.

In fact, we already signed our first memorandum of understanding with the Royal B.C. Museum in Victoria. What this will mean for that museum and other museums across the country is they will have access to the 3,500,000 items currently in the collection at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, soon to be the museum of history. Approximately 90% of these items are currently sitting in storage because we do not have a network to moves these items across the country and share our history. This is a really important move forward to tell our history and allow us to tell our stories to all Canadians.

I am also very pleased to say that since we announced this project, it has received broad-based support from Canadians, including countless historians and people in historical associations from every corner of the country. These are not people, by the way, who frequently agree with our government, but they agree with the need to create a national infrastructure for the teaching of Canada's history.

I am grateful, for example, of the support of Douglas Cardinal, the original architect of the Canadian Museum of Civilization and a very well-known Canadian for all of his life's accomplishments. In response to the creation of this museum, he said, “I love the fact that the museum keeps evolving and growing, and people still feel that it’s a national monument that can expand and serve all of Canada”.

This project has the support of and has been celebrated by Canadian historians as well. It includes the award-winning historian and author, Michael Bliss, who said that it was very exciting that Canada’s major museum would now be explicitly focused on Canada’s history and he thanked the government for making the museum possible.

Jack Granatstein, who, as many in the House know, wrote the book *Who Killed Canadian History?* a few years ago said, “This move (to create the Canadian Museum of National History) is exactly what I thought should happen. I'm delighted the government and the museum are doing it”.

Deborah Morrison of Canada's National History Society said, “the potential for the new Museum to help create a national framework for our history is compelling. And the time is right”.

John McAvity of the Canadian Museums Association said, “the renaming of the museum is essential, that it is good news and that it will give Canadians greater access to their heritage and history”.

The Historica-Dominion Institute said, “We enthusiastically welcome the creation of this new Canadian museum of history”.

The Ontario Museum Association said, “We welcome the initiative to strengthen partnerships among museums in Ontario and across the country”.

John English, a former Liberal member of Parliament and a biographer of P.E. Trudeau, said, “Congratulations on the Canadian museum of history”.

That is a great boost for the museum.

● (2105)

[*Translation*]

From Marie Senécal-Tremblay, of the Canadian Federation of Friends of Museums, representing volunteers from smaller museums across Canada: “We support these changes to one of our country's most important national museums.”

[*English*]

I am also very pleased, and I should highlight this as well, that the museum proposal does have the support of the mayors of Gatineau and Ottawa, Marc Bureau and Jim Watson. They both support this initiative as being important to the national capital region.

As well, many historians have added their names to the list of those who support this initiative: Réal Bélanger, Charlotte Gray, Anne Trépanier, Norm Christie, Yves Frenette, Bob Plamondon, Richard Gwyn, Jane Fullerton, Suzanne Sauvage, Brian Lee Crowley and many more. Again, people who may not be Conservative understand that on items like this we should work together, put partisanship aside and support the creation of institutions that bind this country together.

I think the *Toronto Star* said it very well in their editorial on this subject, and I quote:

> It was welcome to hear [the government] announce...the rebranding of the Canadian Museum of Civilization...as the Canadian Museum of History. Canada's history should be celebrated in [this] revamped museum. ...we want to make history come alive, ensure we don't forget our shared past and [that we] honour our heroes.

In conclusion, I understand that this is an issue that has brought some great debate across the country. However, Canada's history is far from dead. It is alive and well and a story that needs to be told.

It is a true statistic, but a sad one, that in only four of Canada's 13 provinces and territories is it necessary for a child to take a history class to graduate from high school. That is provincial jurisdiction, of course, but it does not mean we should step away from the importance of it as a national government, as a national Parliament. We can work together and do what we can to talk about Canada's history and improve education, by supporting our museums, building a great national museum, uniting all of our museums and working together on this project.

In the past, this Parliament has come together. When a former Liberal government decided to create the Canadian War Museum, people said it was divisive, a waste of money and that we ought not do it now. However, the Liberal government had a vision and said it was the right thing to do. The War Museum is now one of the best museums in the world, rivaled only by Les Invalides in Paris and the Imperial War Museum in London. It is one of the great museums in the world.

We are now asking for what this Parliament has done before when it unanimously supported the creation of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. We were working together, and it is going to be a great institution for all of Canada. This Parliament also unanimously supported the creation of the Canadian Museum for Immigration at Pier 21, in Halifax. It is a great institution and doing good things for this country.

I have approached this in as non-partisan a way as I can. I have reached out to my opposition colleagues in the NDP and the Liberal Party, provided them with the text of this legislation and tried to work with them so we can make sure this museum will go forward and be a constructive piece of Canada's social fabric. We have worked together in the past on institutions. This is a good project for this country, and I hope my colleagues will work with us to make it happen.

A couple of years away is Canada's 150th birthday. We deserve to have a great national institution that will teach Canada's history, bring Canadians together and work toward a celebrated goal of keeping this country united and strong. Support this bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to congratulate the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages for expressing his deeply held convictions on this plan to dismantle the current Canadian Museum of Civilization. I also have to recognize that the system for promoting the museum's mandate is, in fact, well-stated.

[*English*]

However, when I hear our Minister of Canadian Heritage tell us that he believes Canadians deserve this, I say they do not deserve what you designed, they deserve history. The problem—

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member may make his comments, but they must be made through the Chair.

● (2110)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: You are right, Mr. Speaker.

I am asking the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages to explain to us how we can trust him when he is telling us not to talk about partisanship, although we see that he has favoured a certain part of our history so far, in terms of promotion.

[*English*]

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, I brought this issue before a parliamentary committee. I have spoken to the member opposite about this project, and I do think that this should be about partisanship. As I said, when we created the Canadian Museum of Immigration, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, and when the Liberals created the Canadian War Museum, those were all moments where we were actually able to work together.

He mentioned partisanship. Again, I would read into the record the new mandate. This is what is in the bill, and this is the new mandate of the museum. I do not think there is anything ideological or misguided about this at all. It states:

> The purpose of the Canadian Museum of History is to enhance Canadians' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of events, experiences, people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada's history and identity, and also to enhance their awareness of world history and cultures.

That is a mandate that is focused on history. It is open. The Museums Act creates a barrier between politicians and the minister, telling a museum what it can or cannot do on a day-to-day basis. That is what the Museums Act does. This gives the museum a focus, by the way, a focus in a way that I think has long been needed by this museum, and a refreshing of a mandate that will serve all Canadians very well.

It is not just about this, as I said. This is about creating a pan-Canadian infrastructure to bind all of our institutions together so that all museums, not just the museum in the nation's capital, but all museums in the country, will benefit from this proposal. All museums in the country that become official partners will have access to the 3.5 million items in the collection, 90% of which are in storage right now, so we can tell all of Canada's stories, one to another.

We often know our local histories very well. I can tell the House about Captain Cook and Colonel Moody. I can tell everyone about my community very well, and I am sure my hon. colleague can talk about his hometown, but very often we do not know national histories as well as we ought to. One of the things we can do to try to fight that is to build this infrastructure, work together, and get collections moving around the country. Let us do this.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken personally with the minister and have heard publicly what the minister has to say about this new museum. I heard what he said in his speech, and quite frankly his sincerity is pretty good. I hear what he is saying and I like his sincerity, but I want to ask him a question. I want to ask him about the fact that recently there was a motion in the committee that talked about the history of this country. It was incredibly prescriptive in how we should go about doing this.

I want to ask him a question, in a sincere way. With regard to this money that he hopes to put into this new museum, is it going towards allowing this museum to put itself out to the rest of the country to create these partnerships? Is it one that is sincere and provides the money for all these museums across the country to share in the history of this country? How will the operations of the museum go forward under this new title? In other words, I do not want this to be simply a rebranding exercise.

I sincerely hope that what he is saying tonight is that he wants to put this museum to the rest of the country and tell a story that is sincere, that is right, but that also has curatorial independence. Are we going to display this to the nation for 2017 and have it be a gem in North America? Is this going to be the case? How is it going to be that with the money he is investing?

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, that was a very good question. I do agree with my colleague's sincerity and genuine curiosity that this be done right.

First of all, the $25 million will be invested for physical renovations within the museum and also to do the reaching out that he describes. Second, this was an item in budget 2012, but it was not a high profile item.

We have in this country what is called the indemnification program, which is exactly what it sounds like. Over the years, the Government of Canada has had exposure liability of $1.5 billion per year to indemnify artifacts coming into the country and moving within the country. Typically in a calendar year that $1.5 billion is consumed in the first four or five months, and it is usually the large institutions that have access to it. These are institutions like ROM and Glenbow, and other institutions around the country. In budget 2012, which has already passed, we doubled the indemnification fund, from $1.5 to $3 billion per year.

The funding is there. There is $25 million to improve the institution here in the national capital, and there is the indemnification fund that local museums can tap into. If one thinks about what that means for local museums, there is no cost to them. They sign an MOU, become part of this national network, have access to the three and a half million items in the collection, 90% of which are in storage, apply for funding in the indemnification program and host items for the national museum locally.

In a sense, this is all about greasing the skids so we can get stuff moving around the country and local museums can have access to this. Most importantly, it is so local museums can tell narratives that are important to local communities. If they want to do narratives on women in sport or great Canadian scientists or great artists in this country, they can have access to the 13,000 items that are just sitting in the art bank right now. I saw it last night. They can access these things and have them in museums. They can have school kids going through their museum in off hours when the public is not there during early exhibits. They can breathe new life into fundraising for local museums.

That is what we are trying to do. The money is there. The independence is there. It is up to local museums to decide their local narratives and to have access to this bank. This is a good project and it is an important one. That is why, as I said, every museum association in this country has supported this initiative. Every historian we have talked to supports this initiative. Every single editorial, from the *Toronto Star* to the *National Post* to *Maclean's* magazine, has endorsed the bill and endorsed this proposal because they see it as something that is good for this country.

● (2115)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am really delighted to hear tonight about the plans to move forward. I had the opportunity within the last month to visit the Museum of Civilization and then to visit a little museum in Clinton, British Columbia, which had an amazing collection from the gold rush times. It was quite a delight to tour this very small museum.

I would like to hear more from the minister in terms of how he perceives that these will knit together. We heard about the opportunity for small museums to bring collection items one way. Will there also be an opportunity to have more of a two-way, and that also includes things like the Japanese camp he acknowledged in his comments regarding Midway? Will there be a bit more back and forth with this plan?

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we have spoken about with Mark O'Neill, who is the current president of the Museum of Civilization, is an idea to have all partner museums across the country, all those who sign an MOU—the CFOs, the board chairs, the presidents—come to Ottawa to talk about best practices, and to maybe talk about collectively having better curatorial services, working together on ideas to digitize their content and make it more available online. It is not just about partnerships between the national museum and local museums, but partnerships between local museums as well.

We would be surprised at some of the collections in these museums, as the member has referred to about the museum in Clinton. I have seen some incredible collections of remarkable things in museums all across this country. When we have the privilege, as I have had, to visit these museums, we find some real gems across this country. However, we also realize that some of these gems have become stagnant in local museums because they have been there for a long time. We want to breathe new life into our museums, allow them to have collections from other museums in the country, to draw from the national museum, and give all of them new life, new energy and new stories to tell, as they choose them, not as Ottawa chooses them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this evening, a number of members have noted the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages's profound conviction when it comes to this bill. Unfortunately, it is strictly because we do not trust the Conservatives that the bill cannot be passed.

Today, I would like to bring the House's attention to some basic contradictions, which are typical of a government that wants to create a Canadian museum of history. It says it is interested in the country's history and wants to celebrate it and make the public more aware of it.

I want to mention something worrisome. This government has done more to hinder people's knowledge and understanding of Canadian history and to undermine research into our history than any other government. It should listen to the historians, archeologists, archivists, anthropologists and ethnologists, all the experts on our history.

This evening, I am not pulling this observation out of a hat, nor am I making it up just for fun. I made this observation after listening to experts on our history, in other words, people who help us learn more about our past. These experts dig into our past in order to better understand it so that we can, too.

These professionals, researchers and experts have told my colleagues and me that their field is in worse shape than ever before. They say that highway robbery masquerading as budget cuts, combined with the federal government's constant, dubious meddling in their affairs, their profession and their field of research, will have lingering negative effects on the work and research that help us understand our history better.

Everything this government does is rife with contradiction. On the one hand, it is so proud of creating a history museum to supposedly improve knowledge of history, but on the other, it is attacking all of the federal institutions that have been preserving, protecting and raising awareness of our history for over a century.

For example, Parks Canada is responsible for maintaining 167 national historic sites, places worthy of preservation because they are historically significant. Parks Canada looks after Canada's world heritage sites. Expert archeologists have helped the agency unearth artifacts from the past, identify them and explain why they are historically relevant. I am delighted to say that there is an archeologist among us today, the member for Hochelaga.

Curators—not Conservatives, mind you, but people who actually care about history—have also helped Parks Canada through their curatorial work. I apologize to the translators for my play on words, which is not translatable.

The Conservatives decided to lay off over 80% of the archeologists and curators who take care of our historic sites and preserve our precious artifacts. There are now only about 10 archeologists working for Parks Canada across the country in all of our national parks, national historic sites and world heritage sites. I should point out that world heritage site status is not a given; UNESCO can revoke that status at any time.

Tonight, the government has the gall to tell us that it wants to promote history even though it is abandoning fragile historic sites across the country. The same government is planning to remove carefully preserved artifacts from Parks Canada's regional facilities. For example, a large collection of artifacts dating back to the days of New France is currently housed in Quebec City. The government is planning to uproot the collection from its home and put it in storage in Ottawa.

That is what the government, which supposedly wants to make history more accessible and more widely known, is really doing.

● (2120)

[*English*]

Conservatives say they are interested in history, but Canadians are not interested in what they say. They want to know what the government is doing. Conservatives like to say they are interested in history but, in reality, they continue to destroy every single federal public institution that is responsible for protecting our history. They have not only destroyed Parks Canada, which is responsible for protecting our 167 national historic sites, as well as Canada's world heritage sites, they have destroyed Library and Archives Canada—we know that, we heard a lot last week—an institution that has been the guardian of Canada's archives for 140 years, both as the national archives and as a national library.

Library and Archives experts, archivists, professional librarians and others are recognized and admired around the world for their work. A few years ago, Library and Archives Canada was an exciting place for those researchers of our history to be. Some people here will remember that there were always exhibitions about Canadian history open to the public on the ground floor of Library and Archives Canada just a few years ago.

Who closed those exhibition halls? The Conservatives did.

Who cut millions of dollars from research and preservation of Canadian history? The Conservatives did.

Who laid off hundreds of archivists, librarians, digitization experts, historians and professionals at Library and Archives Canada? These guys again.

Who destroyed programs such as the national archival development program that supported small communities all over Canada to create their own local community archives, a program that allowed Library and Archives Canada to accomplish an essential part of its mandate? These guys.

● (2125)

[*Translation*]

Who almost put a complete stop to the acquisition of historic documents and artifacts by cutting Library and Archives Canada's $1 million budget to $12,000 a year? They allowed irreplaceable manuscripts, relics of our history, to slip through our fingers and be purchased by auction houses and unscrupulous speculators and exported to shady warehouses in the United States. Who is responsible for this loss, this drain on our priceless cultural heritage? Who else but these guys, the Conservatives.

After the serious damage they have caused, no one would dare say that the Conservatives care about history. That is hogwash. On the contrary, the contradiction is obvious. The Conservatives are not at all interested in the history of Canada or all of the work that goes into the difficult research required to explain our history. The Conservatives are only interested in spectacular and superficial things, such as seeing a wax replica of John Diefenbaker, cutting a ribbon or walking down a sparkling, somewhat cheap red carpet that a person could trip on. They think that, by supporting anything glitzy and glamourous, they are supporting and preserving history. That is very unfortunate for those who know something about history.

I would like to spend a few minutes talking about the specific changes set out in Bill C-49. The Canadian Museum of Civilization is an institution that has existed in one form or another for almost 150 years. Its collections existed even before Confederation. The museum has a mandate that, for 30 years, has allowed it to be independent and to truly become a world-renowned institution, as well as an important economic driver for the Outaouais region, where it provides many jobs and attracts a large number of visitors.

I would like to read the Museum of Civilization's current mandate. It is important to remember this mission, which has been key to the museum's success for years.

> The purpose of the Canadian Museum of Civilization is to increase, throughout Canada and internationally, interest in, knowledge and critical understanding of and appreciation and respect for human cultural achievements [I would like to place special emphasis on cultural achievements] and human behavior by establishing, maintaining and developing for research and posterity a collection of objects of historical or cultural interest, with special but not exclusive reference to Canada, and by demonstrating those achievements and behaviour, the knowledge derived from them and the understanding they represent.

The Conservative government, which never wants to jump in when it is needed, but is always prepared to interfere when its help is not wanted, wants to scrap that and replace it with the following:

> ...enhance Canadians' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of events, experiences, people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada's history and identity, and also to enhance their awareness of world history and cultures.

What is the main difference between these two mandates? The words "critical understanding" were eliminated. The government seems to have an aversion to the word "critical". What a scary word. The museum will no longer have the mandate to share its wealth of knowledge with the rest of the world. It will no longer be mandated to carry out its work "throughout Canada and internationally". The museum will now be interested only in local issues.

I imagine that the Outaouais tourism industry will have something to say about that. Gone are the human cultural achievements and human behaviour. That was part of the museum's mandate, but we are apparently no longer interested in humanity. The government wants the museum to deal specifically with Canadian history and identity, a rather simplistic formula.

Here is what is most alarming: the museum's mandate no longer includes the obligation to maintain collections and conduct research. The Canadian Museum of Civilization was, above all, a museum of collections and researchers. This public institution dates back to 1856. It was initially a place where the Geological Survey of Canada could present its collections. It became a place for anthropologists, ethnologists, geographers and linguists. The museum's entire history is made up of research and collections.

In deciding to change the mandate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the government is casting aside more than 150 years of collections and research tradition. The government is contradicting itself when it claims to care about history but then quashes the work of experts, which is a necessary part of our history.

At this time, over half of the resources at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau have already been assigned to Canadian history. That is why we wonder about the government's real intentions. We are not going to be impressed by a $25 million cheque. The government is sending one single cheque to the museum, usable only once, while tasking it with dismantling and rebuilding such exhibits as the wonderful Canada Hall, which took 20 years to build. This is a renovation project of epic proportions.

Even worse, $1 million has already been committed. A total of $500,000 will be required just for the administrative costs of the change, but $400,000 has already been spent on round tables and Post-it notes, not to mention the promotional materials for the new museum that are already being distributed, even though Parliament has barely started studying the bill.

The reality is that the museum's heavy load and limited resources have forced it to lay off some of its staff. Two weeks ago, the museum cut 14 positions for budgetary reasons. This may well turn out to be just the tip of the iceberg, now that the government is trying to shift the museum's mandate away from its obligations to conduct research and maintain its collections.

In reality, the government is interfering and reshaping the museum because it fancies itself a museum expert. The government, perhaps despite itself, is taking part in the history debates that are raging in academia. The government—a bit naively, I might add—is wading into an academic debate because it wants to abandon the social and material approach to history that the Canadian Museum of Civilization is known for, in particular because of its stunning and spectacular depiction of Canada's history. Those are the very exhibits that the government is proposing to dismantle.

The government is proposing a generic narrative for our history. It wants something linear, something based on the tales of heroes and prominent figures, on biographies, monarchs, colonizers, missionaries, dates and monuments. That approach marginalizes the stories and life experiences of the individuals and groups who anonymously built our country's history from the ground up.

That approach marginalizes the events that make up and underpin our history. Those events cannot be summed up in a date or a famous face or in a museum devoted only to heroes and battlefields. It gives the impression that the government is not looking to create a history museum, but a wax museum.

As New Democrats, we respectfully ask the government to stop acting like a museum expert at the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Archivists have repeatedly suggested that the toxic and disastrous head of Library and Archives Canada, Daniel Caron, stop pretending to be an expert in digitizing archives—as he has done at several international conferences—when he is neither an archivist nor a librarian. Similarly, we are asking the government to stop doing the work that experts know how to do and can do better.

● (2130)

[*English*]

Governments should not be deciding what is in our museums. This seems like a pretty obvious principle. Apparently, there are a few libertarians on the government benches; despite the government spending like there is no tomorrow, they have been pretty discreet. However, they might agree with what I am suggesting, that the content of museums should be left up to the experts and professionals; to historians, archivists, ethnologists and curators; to conservators, anthropologists and the people who do the research and the hard work to help us understand our history. The government and we as legislators have no place in determining the content or the orientation of a national publicly funded museum.

I am relying on the words of the Minister of Canadian Heritage when he announced at the heritage committee that in fact he had been planning this new museum himself since at least May 2011. We know that the minister has been a regular visitor at the Museum of Civilization and he was a regular visitor at the Canadian War Museum. Clearly, this does not come from the Museum of Civilization's ethnologists. Clearly, none of the curators at the museum suddenly decided that they were missing Maurice Richard's hockey jersey. Clearly, what happened was that people high up decided to toy with our most important national museum.

[*Translation*]

This is a completely backwards plan. Instead of listening to the many experts, museum specialists, historians and professionals at the Canadian Museum of Civilization and elsewhere in Canada, instead of consulting first and then moving forward, the government chose to do things its own way and then see what happens.

According to the minister himself, he has been planning this Canadian museum of history since at least May 2011. To hear him talk, it is as though he were building miniature models of the museum in his basement, unbeknownst to everyone or even to the museum.

First the museum consulted with people in the field and then it took the consultations public across Canada. These were held in half-empty rooms or shopping malls, between the Walmart and the hardware store, where shoppers were invited to put colour coded Post-it notes on images of Pierre Elliott Trudeau or Roberta Bondar.

This is no joke. It is true. We asked the minister who he consulted. What interest group, what professional association and, most of all, which first nation and what delegation of Metis and Inuit did he and the museum consult? The minister's answer was a non-response. He said that they proceeded with consultations, but he failed to tell us who they consulted. We did not get an answer.

This lack of transparency occurred on this side of the river, here in Parliament.

We spent months in the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage listening to talk of Canada's 150th anniversary. How is it that there was never any mention of this museum plan, when it was in the cards and being prepared all along, and now we are told that it is being planned to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation?

The official opposition is calling on the government to leave it to the experts to decide the content and direction of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, to listen to and consult with the public, and to invite and listen to the representatives of countless professions whose job it is to survey and enhance our knowledge of history.

We also note the predominance of this government's troubling, detrimental and dubious desire to intervene and obliquely meddle in Canadian history and to rewrite our history.

The Conservatives may find it effective and advantageous, for election purposes, to eliminate all traces of peacekeepers and replace them with Laura Secords who run through the forest, but they have no mandate to revise history. No party is mandated to reinterpret and revise history.

We are asking that our history be more than just instances of official commemoration chosen by the government. It must be a window into the past that belongs to all of us, and it should reflect our many complex and multi-faceted journeys, including the history of the black Loyalists, the Winnipeg unionists in the early 20th century, the creators and pioneers of the National Film Board, the War Measures Act and the deportation of the Acadians.

We reject this government's troubling, detrimental and dubious desire to intervene and to meddle once again. We reject the government's tampering with history. That is exactly what hundreds of thousands of Canadians have told us in recent weeks. Having seen the carnage at Parks Canada, Library and Archives Canada and now the Canadian Museum of Civilization, thousands of citizens have signed and are continuing to sign an on-line petition stating that they are fed up with the interference in and rewriting of history.

We are calling on the government to restore funding and stop interfering in federal organizations responsible for preserving and protecting our history. That was their responsibility long before the Conservatives took an interest in the matter.

This evening, we are asking the Conservatives to show that they care about history. They should prove that they are passionate about the past by not interfering with the work of historians and various experts who contribute to our understanding of history. Above all, they must stop gutting the public institutions that promote and preserve our history.

I would like to conclude by moving the following motion:

> That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following: "the House decline to give second reading to Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Museums Act in order to establish the Canadian Museum of History and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, because it:
>
> (a) represents the government's interference in Canadian history and its attacks on research and the federal institutions that preserve and promote history such as Library and Archives Canada and Parks Canada;
>
> (b) transforms the mission of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the most popular museum in Canada, to give a secondary role to temporary exhibits on world cultures, when it is precisely these exhibits that make it a major tourist attraction, an economic driver and a job creator for the national capital region;
>
> (c) removes research and collection development from the mission of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, although the Museum is an internationally renowned centre of research;
>
> (d) puts forward a monolithic approach to history that could potentially exclude the experiences of women, francophones, First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and marginalized groups;
>
> (e) was developed in absolute secrecy and without substantial consultations with experts, First Nations, Inuit and Métis, Canadians and key regional players;
>
> (f) attacks a winning formula at the expense of Canadian taxpayers; and
>
> (g) does not propose any measure to enhance the Museum's independence and thereby opens the door to potential interference by the minister and the government in determining the content of Museum exhibits, although this should be left to experts."

I would like to take this opportunity to say that this motion is seconded by the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

● (2140)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is often disappointing to listen to the member. He speaks to the very narrow vision of history that the NDP members have.

I know that to this member maybe Laura Secord is not important, but she is important to a lot of Canadians. Canada's achievements in World War I and World War II might not necessarily be important to that member and the members on that side, but they are important to many Canadians, and many Canadians want to hear more about them.

He talked about territorial independence. Clearly, he has not read the Museums Act, because had he read it, he would have seen that it is actually guaranteed. He talked about the fact that international exhibits will not be a part of this. He has not actually read the bill, because if he had, he would have read that it may "organize, sponsor, arrange for or participate in travelling exhibitions, in Canada and internationally, of museum material in its collection and from other sources". It is right in there.

Members opposite have also had the opportunity to vote, since 2006, in favour of $142 million worth of new investments for our museums, and consistently they have voted against, every single time.

Here we have another $25 million investment for another museum, and again they are saying they will not vote in favour of that. It speaks to the NDP's narrow vision. Anything NDP members want is something all Canadians should want, but if we do not agree with what they want, then everybody else must be wrong. That is not how we have built this country.

There are some three million artifacts in storage in the Canadian Museum of Civilization. I wonder if the hon. member would at least agree with me that it is important to bring those artifacts out and to involve museums across this country, small and large, so that all Canadians in all provinces and territories can have access to them. Would he agree it is important that all Canadians have better access to their history?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for his question anyway.

As I said when I answered our colleague, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the plan to create a cross-Canada network of museums may actually be a good one. The committee organizing Canada's 150th anniversary celebrations talked about that.

The problem is not the trailer; it is the car.

● (2145)

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent speech. He really put things in perspective this evening.

I, myself, am from Quebec City, where all of the people in the archeology unit, all 43 of them, were laid off. In addition, the government is planning to relocate five million artifacts from Quebec City to Gatineau. I have a hard time believing the goal is to get them into more museums. That does not make sense.

I would like my colleague to comment on that. I get the sense that the government wants to take Canada's history out of its global context and focus on something overly local.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and his compliment.

The member opposite says that we do not like Laura Secord and that we do not think she is important. That is pathetic, and it is not true. As I said, the vast majority of Canadians believe that the Conservatives have gone too far in their attempts to erase all traces of the blue berets and replace them with pictures of Laura Secord running through the woods. I am sorry, but the Conservatives are putting more emphasis on one event in particular than clients want them to. That was important to everyone, even to us.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Colleagues, ask me the question properly without any heckling. That said, I agree with you. It is unfortunate, because good initiatives are often viewed with some skepticism.

Now we are facing this head-on. The bill could have brought us all together, but it was introduced by people who care more about propaganda and editorializing, and that is not okay.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, you have previously admonished the member about the way he addresses the members of the House. He often speaks to members opposite in the second person. He should always address the Chair and never use the second person. This is how we can keep a civil discourse and debate in the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Again, as I keep repeating in the House, members must direct their comments to the Chair and not to the other members.

The hon. member forWellington—Halton Hills.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will make a quick comment.

I do not support the hon. member's amendment. However, I do support the government's bill. I think it is a good idea to create a new museum. This is part of the museum's natural evolution in Canada.

[*English*]

In fact, this is the fifth iteration of this museum. This museum started off in 1856, with the Geological Survey of Canada. In 1910, it went into its second iteration as the National Museum.

[*Translation*]

In 1968, it was known as the National Museum of Man. Later, in 1986, it became the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Now, we have the fifth iteration of this museum in Canada.

[*English*]

I think it is a natural evolution, as we approach our 150th anniversary, to refocus this museum, along with new investments, on the very important history of this country. It is a wonderful project the government has initiated in this regard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would remind my colleague opposite that I hold him and his contributions, even those he made tonight, in high regard. Nevertheless I would just ask him this.

Given what we see today in the news about this government, would he really trust it? I do not think so.

● (2150)

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher a question.

Does he know how the content for a museum is chosen? Does he know whether it is done by museum experts? For example, could the government override a museum director and decide what a museum should exhibit? I would like the hon. member to answer these questions.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Obviously, there are qualified people who do this, but there are also people who are put in place.

Am I really being asked to list the individuals appointed by the people opposite to run various institutions like this one, who unfortunately have not made good choices and who clearly were following an editorial line?

[*English*]

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to applaud the minister for his thoughtful comments, particularly the focus on the national network of history. I know the Bowmanville Museum, the Scugog Shores Museum and the Lucy Maud Montgomery museum in Uxbridge would be happy to be part of this national network to share our stories as a country.

My question to the member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher is this. There is a museum in or around his riding called Musée de la Femme. What is he going to say to the board members of that museum when he tells them that he does not feel it is important to share their stories in Ottawa and to share some of our artifacts that are in storage in Longueuil? I would suggest it is a narrow vision and I would like to hear what he will tell that museum.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I will tell them what I have already said. I hope that the New Democratic Party will be in power in 2015 and that it will have the time to set up something like an inter-museum pass. For the Longueuil women's museum, for example, it would be good to sell a pass for Canada's 150th anniversary, and the museum could keep a portion of the proceeds for administration.

The museum network idea is a very good one. It came out of our study on Canada's 150th anniversary, and there was consensus on it.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout this evening I have heard this debate, as well as in the last nine years of being here. I have been on the heritage committee since 2005 and I have heard many stories about museums, about curators, about how we deal with history across this nation. I look across the way and see my hon. colleague from Stratford—

Mr. Ryan Leef: The Yukon.

Mr. Scott Simms: Relax, you are not there yet.

I was talking about—

Mr. Joe Preston: Now you are in trouble.

The Deputy Speaker: I will say this to the chamber. All the occupants of this chair do not want to engage in the debate. We want the comments and questions directed to the Chair in a neutral way and not to other members in the House. We do not want to have to respond to "you" and "he". We want to be told directly what members' positions are, and nothing more. We do not want to be engaged in it.

Everybody has done it this evening. There has not been one member on his or her feet this evening who has not breached the rule. I would ask all members to pay attention and direct their comments to the Chair only.

The hon. member for Yukon on a point of order.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Speaker, I would just say, in defence of my colleague, that I think I baited him into making a direct comment to me. For that, I apologize both to the House and my hon. colleague across the way.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I want to continue by thanking my hon. colleague from Yukon for his graceful intervention.

I mentioned my hon. colleague from Stratford, who was the chair of the heritage committee for quite some time, and he spoke eloquently about museums and what museums are all about. I am glad he is here this evening. On many occasions, he has spoken about the importance of the history that is being told in front of us. Whether it is Stratford, Bunyan's Cove, Gander, Vancouver or Ottawa, which is germane to what we are talking about today, it is by far the most important element of what we talk about when we talk about our history.

Our history is the absolute reflection of who we are as Canadians. I have heard from the minister and the critic from the official opposition, and I find myself in the middle of debate on many occasions trying to figure out how we are going to deal with the context we are going to put this museum in.

I have the utmost respect for the Museum of Civilization and what it has accomplished over the years. As my hon. colleague pointed out earlier, it was the Museum of Man, which later became the Museum of Civilization and so on. That is the important question. Do we take that next step and call this the Canadian museum of history in conjunction with our 150-year celebration in 2017?

On several fronts, there are points to talk about. One, should this museum, this institution, share itself with the rest of the country? Absolutely. It should share itself with the virtues that have been put on this nation by places like Stratford, Yukon or every little town in Quebec.

● (2155)

[*Translation*]

Cities in Quebec as well. It is very important to all of Canada, not just to one region of this country, but to all of them. It is for Newfoundland and Labrador and British Columbia.

Mr. James Lunney: Vancouver Island.

Mr. Scott Simms: Sorry, Vancouver Island.

[*English*]

I want to say to my colleagues that what has been put forward so far in the debate, as we have heard in two substantial speeches, is that as Canadians we want to illustrate the history of this country, and we want to do it not just from a national narrative. We all cheered in 1980, when Terry Fox ran across this country. He made it to Thunder Bay. There was not one dry eye in this country looking at Terry Fox on that stretcher in northern Ontario as he wept because he could not make it. In fact, from northern Ontario right to B.C., every Canadian in this country completed that course for him.

In addition, we can look at every hallmark in this country with a sense of pride, whether it was winning the gold medals in the Olympics or the events that mark us as Canadians, such as the recent marking of the War of 1812. A great deal has been brought forward to this country in the celebration of the War of 1812, which we should look at.

Now, here is the problem. We get into the debate about whether we should have spent $35 million to do that. We have done it. I am not sure if that was the right dollar amount to do it, but it was certainly worth marking. There are many aspects in this debate regarding Canadian history, and there are many hallmarks and many monuments in this country.

Whether it is the big wooden moose that stands in Goobies, Newfoundland and Labrador, or whether it is the large nickel in Sudbury, these are the hallmarks of our country. We need to look at every aspect of the country, not just for the national narrative but the local narrative as well.

One of the most popular exhibitions in my riding is in Botwood, Newfoundland and Labrador. It is called the snowmobile. It actually has old snowmobiles there from the 1960s and 1970s. Most of them, by the way, are from Bombardier, a Quebec company. When people of Newfoundland and Labrador look at this one snowmobile from Bombardier, they look at it as a hallmark of what is Canadian. It is not just the fact that their grandfather may have ridden on it, but the fact that it is a Canadian hallmark, and the reason it exists in that particular institution is that the person who runs that museum decided that it was worth putting on display.

I think that is the essence of this debate, and I ask my colleagues to come together for this most important issue, which is that the person who runs the shop decides what is displayed because he or she knows more than any of us what Canadian history is and what displays it.

What is a curator? A curator is not just a fancy title for someone who has a degree from a certain institution; a curator is someone who knows the history of our country and, more importantly, knows how to display it. If we take an institution like the Museum of Civilization and tell the next generation that this is a Canadian museum of history, similar to what exists in nations such as the United States of America or Germany or other nations, then we must make sure that the curators and the experts know exactly what goes on display.

In essence, I ask the government if this is the case. Do we now have a museum that has risen from the bottom up? The minister made an eloquent speech about how we display the history of our country; do we look at this and ask the men and women who work each and every day in the field of history if they have told the country that this is what is on display?

It is not just about the history of what was the Dominion of Newfoundland. That is right. We had our own currency in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have our own encyclopedia. My goodness, we even have our own dictionary, and it is a good read, I might add.

The thing is, each and every region of our country displays its history in the way it knows best, so I am excited to hear that the Canadian museum of history is going to share in a partnership across the country to display history exhibits. I hope the minister is sincere when he says that we will create a bona fide partnership. He talked about indemnification, and I sincerely hope and suspect that what he is telling me is correct when he says that the indemnification he is talking about would allow the smallest of museums to participate in exactly the narrative that the Canadian museum of history is about to embark upon.

How do we celebrate 150 years of Canada when it is the second-largest country in the world? There are millions and millions of square hectares in a place that has its own particular nuance in the way it tells its history.

I am a big fan of CBC/Radio Canada, because it tells the story and the narrative of our country.

● (2200)

I love to hear about how some of the greatest organs of this world in the greatest churches of this world were created in Quebec. How does that happen? It happens in a country like this but the story has to be told not just to the province of Quebec but has to be told to the country. There is an equal amount of pride shown in the smallest community of British Columbia and the smallest community of Newfoundland and Labrador that Quebec has an incredible rich history of new France, of how it has developed some of the greatest churches in the world and how it has developed some of the greatest church organs in the world. How do we put that on display? We put it on display when we have a collective, when we have the same attitude and opinion from coast to coast to coast that shows us that it is worth illustrating.

There are certain things that cause me concern. There was a motion within the heritage committee that wanted to study the historical hallmarks of this country, which I agree should be looked at. Why not? However, the motion itself was overly prescriptive in how it would conduct itself.

If I were to ask members what is the most historical and greatest landmark of this country, the greatest hallmark that defines what is Canada, someone would say the War of 1812, the next person would say it was the hockey series of 1972 or it was when Terry Fox decided that his run was over and we decided to carry on that run for him.

Here we go. We define ourselves in all the historical landmarks that we have and we depend upon the experts in the field. I sincerely hope that what the minister has told us tonight is what will be done in the next little while. I sincerely hope that he will be open to looking at this legislation to amend it to say there needs to be a review. How do the institutions of this country, and certainly of this city, the national institutions, whether it is the War Museum, whether it is the Museum of Civilization, which it is right now, conduct themselves every few years from now? They are Crown agencies. They are products of the government but yet they have to exercise their independence.

My colleague is right in the fact that we have to exercise our independence. I am sorry if we are being looked at as being skeptical but why not? Why not be skeptical? We want the independence from the particular government of the day. I do not care what colour it is or what party it is, it has to be done. We are looking to the government and telling it to prove to us that the independence is there.

I heard the minister and the sincerity with which he speaks. I have known him for quite some time and I hope he is correct and right by saying that he wants this institution to be as independent as it always has been and perhaps even more independent than it was before.

He listed several experts and several institutions that like what is going on. As my hon. colleague said, there are institutions that do not like what is going on.

However, I will say this. I am proud of the fact that we are here debating in an honest and earnest manner, such as my colleague from Stratford did as chair of the heritage committee. He spoke so eloquently, not about his party's position on museums but museums themselves, and not so much about who is telling the story but about the story itself. We need to do this from here to eternity. This country, the G8, the G20, there is a reason why we punch above our weight.

● (2205)

It is because we deserve it. It is because our history dictates that we deserve to be at every major table in this world, on this globe. It is not because of us here today. All of us in this House, all 308, stand on the shoulders of the people who brought us to this institution. This House of Commons, in and of itself, is an historical monument. We brought ourselves here on the shoulders of others, no matter what our party.

I come from a riding that was represented for 27 years by a man named George Baker, a current senator. Many other members can say that they came in here after hon. members who spoke about the very same thing as we are today. Yes, it is the issue of the day, but every issue of the day brought into this House was brought forward by an issue that happened yesterday. We managed to build one of the greatest democracies in the world because of that.

I am not saying that we should start a new museum right here in and of itself. Goodness knows, I would love to joke about the Senate at this point, but I will not—I am sorry, to my colleagues—because it is apropos of the day.

However, I will say this. Let us go forward in this debate and make something that is a valid institution. Let us face it, if we make this museum-to-be the Canadian museum of history, not the museum of Canadian history, then we have a gem to offer to the world. This is not just about an exercise in rebranding. This is about offering a gem to the world that tourists will see. I think that if people come here from, let us say, Asia or Europe, as opposed to saying, "I want to go see the Museum of Civilization", they might just say, "I want to go see the Canadian museum of history".

Now, I throw that out there, but I can only throw that out there if the independence of this institution is maintained. We have a lot to celebrate in our 150-year celebration.

I will end on this. In 1949, my grandfather campaigned for Newfoundland and Labrador to be independent. That is right. He said "no" to Canada. He has passed away. I stand here today in this House and I wonder what he would say at this point. He was not a big fan. However, I want to prove to him that Newfoundland and Labrador has found itself a home.

Can Canada find a home in this, what is to be the Canadian museum of history, I ask members?

● (2210)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time my colleague put into gathering his thoughts and making an intervention on the museum, but this is not a small project. It is a large project. It is a $25-million investment in the museum itself. We are talking about building a national infrastructure. I was saying to the leader of the Green Party a minute ago that this museum has an annual budget from this Parliament of $57 million a year. One-third of that money goes to research. This is a research museum that reaches out to people across the country. This is a museum that does more than just tell these stories, so it is an important project.

I will give my colleague two points on the point he raised in the last half of his speech about the independence of the museum.

First, as was pointed out by my parliamentary secretary, the Museums Act prescribes that. When the Liberals created the War Museum, there was a great deal of controversy. If the member will remember, it had Hitler's car, and that was a great source of debate. There were many Canadians who thought it was offensive or inappropriate. It was not part of our Canadian narrative. Jewish Canadians found it offensive that it was used entice people to come to the museum. There was a great controversy. The Liberal government of the day was frustrated, but on the other hand relieved, that this was a debate to be had at the museum. The museum officials struggled with it, as Jack Granatstein pointed out in his book *Who Killed Canadian History?*, but it was an important debate about the Canadian history narrative and the Second World War, how to tell that story, what kind of language to use and those kinds of debates. They happen all the time. The government of the day could not interfere with the museum in that very touchy debate at the time because of the Museums Act, and that is a great thing. Let the museum officials figure these things out. Let them debate them. Let them make mistakes and figure it out and tell these narratives and move forward.

Second, on the issue of independence, specifically with this museum, he would note, and some people have noted as well, that the name we have put forward is the Canadian Museum of History, not the Museum of Canadian History. There is a particular reason we chose that language. It is because Canadian history does not begin in 1867. There are our first peoples, the north, and aboriginal Canadians. Canadian history does not begin in 1867. We have been precise in talking to people about how to actually name this museum in a way that is inclusive of all of the narratives of those who today call themselves Canadian. The amendment and the legislation talk about broadening the discussion on this, within a Canadian lens, and not assuming that for all Canadians their sense of belonging to what is now Canada begins in 1867. We chose that language deliberately, again, to give the museum the independence to design their narrative such that it is not just the political one that begins with the Constitution Act of 1867. We are being very deliberate about this to —

● (2215)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please. The hon. minister has used up more than 30% of the time allotted for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, if he wants to reply.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I was enjoying that, actually.

I want to thank the minister. He talked about what happened in the case of Hitler's car. I have been there, and I have seen it. It is funny that the minister pointed that out, because I remember at the time being surprised that it was there, because I was sure that it would have raised the hackles of many. However, the fact is that it is a part of history that we need to illustrate in this country and around the world. I agree with him.

I sincerely hope that this curatorial independence is maintained. Some of the people said that some of the language has been changed. They talked about whether this is a critical way of looking at this, and I hope to propose amendments that look at this as well.

Maybe this is a debate that will stand up to the test of time. Maybe we can take this debate on how we do this into other museums,

He mentioned the War Museum, brought forward by us several years ago. I stress that I would not want this bill to be overly prescriptive in how we tell the story about who we are.

We have a major hallmark coming, which is the sesquicentennial. The fact that I have pronounced it at this hour of the night is actually quite stellar, but nonetheless I have. The sesquicentennial is coming up. I would hope that the arm's length attitude the minister has will be maintained. I hope that we will see something like an agency come forward to talk about this 150-year celebration, but right now we have to deal with this, which is, as he points out, the Canadian museum of history. I hope that exhibitions from around the world, such as exhibitions from the Middle East, such as the Dead Sea scrolls and these sorts of things will be maintained in this particular institution. I hope that will be fleshed out during this debate.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hate to interrupt the romance between the Conservatives and the Liberals tonight. It is a sight to behold. It is full of amnesia and falsities.

We have the look at this in the context of the government of the day and its behaviour on all manner of files. We have a government that somehow cannot find $3.1 billion. We have a museum here, and with the snap of the fingers, the minister found $25 million. He could not tell the House where the money came from. I do not know if it was in his motorcycle satchel or under his mattress.

This is the way the government deals. I listened to my hon. colleague's soliloquy and his ode to the Minister of Canadian Heritage with quite a lot of interest. I wonder how the member can separate the actions of a government that misplaces $3.1 billion, that spends $1 million renaming a museum, which by all accounts was the most successful museum in the capital region, and then magically finds $25 million to spend on it, when we have people on affordable housing waiting lists and all manner of living conditions we need to fix.

How can the member say in the House that this is a fantastic idea and that he hopes this new museum will have the independence the government never, ever displays a willingness to accord to the agencies of the government that are supposed to be third-party?

I would argue that the member is being a little naive in this instance. I would like his comments on that.

● (2220)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, as I said to the member earlier, I have been on the heritage committee for several years now. I have seen it all.

The hon. member talks about naiveté, and that is fine. That is all right. However, I will not stand here and be lectured about what is an actual discussion in this House before the discussion actually takes place.

If the member is such an expert, if he is such a person who decides what is going to be within a particular institution, why would he be so prescriptive? If the member argues that the government is being so prescriptive, why is he being so prescriptive himself?

I understand the member's concern. I understand where he is coming from in having certain trepidations about what is going to be told to us about the history of this country. The member can make a choice. He can either go one way, which is to say that he will listen and debate, or go a second way, which is to close this off completely. Honestly, I am not sure what the alternative is to displaying what is Canadian in light of what is a celebration of 150 years.

Now I agree with the member that no doubt the motion that came from the committee was overly prescriptive. Yes, it was, in many ways. Are we willing to engage in debate about the narrative of this country, or are we not? Do we stand here in this House and actually debate, or do we close down debate and say that we do not want to hear exactly what they have to say and that we want to stand here and just throw out talking points or absolute angst?

Members who are in opposition make a choice. They can either say to the people of this country that this is their opinion, and that is that, or they can say instead that they are going to raise the bar in this country. They are going to raise the bar in this House. They are going to raise the debate. They are going to ask questions. They are not going to cast out just opinions.

I have been here long enough, sir. I have been here long enough.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have some disagreement with the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, but we have always had a good relationship in committee and when we have disagreed, we have been done that in a cordial way.

I am excited to speak about this legislation, but before I do I want to point out the extraordinary work of the Minister of Canadian Heritage. I have only been here since 2008, but I have had the opportunity to be a student of politics and a student of our system and I am confident and secure in saying that he is the best Minister of Canadian Heritage that our country has ever had and I will tell the House why.

What the minister understands, and what previous ministers, including those who served on this side understand, is the importance of arts and culture to not only helping people around the world understand how great our country is, but understand that arts and culture is important to the country's economic growth, that it creates jobs and economic activity.

As a result of that, even when the country was going through one of the worst global economic downturns, this government made historic investments in arts and culture. When other G7 countries were reducing their funding, this government, through the leadership of the minister, was increasing funding to the Canada Council for the Arts to its highest level ever. We invested over $140 million in our national museums and we did that for a number of reasons. It is important that Canadians have access to their history and that they have pride in the institutions that are mandated to tell the stories of Canada. This is why we have made some of these important investments.

I have also heard from members of both official parties about the motion that was brought forward at committee. I want to speak briefly to that because it ties into this a bit. They talked about it being overly prescriptive. The motion actually says that we should talk about Canada and its history before Confederation and after Confederation. It says that we should talk about the 20th century and important developments in Canadian history. It referenced some important battles of World War I and World War II.

Why should we talk about that? We should talk about that because significant anniversaries of important battles in Canadian history are coming up for one. Second, there are still people in our country who can give us first-hand accounts of what they faced in battle. This is an opportunity to bring these people before committee before it is too late, hear their stories and celebrate them. It is not meant to be something like the end of it. If members were to read the whole motion, if they do honour to this place, they would talk about the entire motion. I know we will get co-operation.

We want to talk about the people, the places, the events, the things that have helped shape our country. Sometimes those things are good. Sometimes they are things we want to celebrate, things we want to commemorate, but there are instances when things were not good, but we need to remember them all the same. We talked about the internment of Japanese Canadians. We might not be proud of that part of our history, but it is important that we remember it. That is what we are talking about at committee.

We have heard a lot of people talk about how important it is that we go forward with this project. We have heard a lot of historians talk about how happy they are that we brought this initiative forward. We have seen over the last number of years, especially as we approach Canada's 150th birthday, a reawakening of Canadians' pride in their country, in their province and in their local communities. We have heard consistently that there is no way for them to share this pride in a tangible way across the country.

● (2225)

I want to share a story about something in my riding. About 200 metres from my home there was a discovery made in advance of a subdivision being built in the community, which changed entirely the way we think about our first nations, and there has been a documentary on this called the *Curse of the Axe*. We found, 200 metres from my home, a Wendat village.

Why is this important? It is because this village had 70 long houses. It was not a community of 10 or 12 houses as was first thought, but a city of 70 long houses. Thousands of people lived in this village and it completely changed the way we thought about these people in this area.

The excavators found that in order to support a village of this size the cornfields alone would have encompassed the entire city of Toronto. They found that these people engaged in trade with other nations, again changing what we thought about the relationships between our first nations at that time. It was revolutionary in how we thought of the Wendat nation.

There are no large communities of Wendat still in Ontario. They are now in Quebec. However, we had ambassadors from the Wendat nation come to my home town of Stouffville and they talked about how significant this find was for their people. They talked about how important it was that the rest of Canada and North America understood what they were doing, how they were doing it and how sophisticated they were. They were very proud of this.

We had the team that led the excavations come to our town a number of times and had displays of the *Curse of the Axe*. Hundreds of people from our community have come to learn about the local heritage that we just did not know about. Our own community was making headlines across North America. In the town of Stouffville, 200 metres from my front door, there was this amazing discovery. Now we have to find a way to make sure that all Canadians understand it so that we can update what people think of the Wendat and tell them how important and exciting this is.

The minister referenced Douglas Cardinal in his remarks. He said:

> I love the fact that the museum keeps evolving and growing, and people still feel that it's a national monument that can expand and serve all of Canada.

This is important because, although it has a long history, at one point the museum was called the Museum of Man. At the time, I suppose, that was okay. However, time moves on. As the member for Ottawa—Orléans points out, there was a time in this country when women were not even considered persons, but time moves on and we are better for it.

We changed the mandate of the Museum of Man, which became the Museum of Civilization. We got together and said that we had to do better and we did. The Museum of Civilization was brought forward and Canadians have been very excited about that. It has done a spectacular job. Canadians can now be as excited about the new museum of history as they had been about the Museum of Civilization, and for many different reasons.

It is a tragedy that over three million pieces or artifacts in the collection of the Museum of Civilization are in storage and not available for Canadians to see. It is a tragedy, especially when we have museums across this country that have made significant investments.

● (2230)

I look at my own community, the city of Markham, which has massive investments in its local museum. The people of Markham understand how important it is to preserve their local history, their culture. They have made massive investments. They are very excited about the prospect of a museum of history so they can share their collections with the national museum and so the people of Canada can understand just how important Markham was to the development of the GTA.

There are 40,000 people in my home town of Stouffville who poured millions of dollars into our museum. They did that for a number of reasons, predominantly because they knew it was a good investment for the community. They knew people wanted to know more about the history of our community, so they put more money into it. They did it also because so many people were coming, they needed to upgrade the facilities so they could host more people.

I looked at my own community. Last year we celebrated something called the Freedom of the Town for the Governor General's Horse Guards, a unit which, in part, has its history in the development of our community.

Even on that there was not complete agreement. There were people in the community who felt this celebration should not happen in because the community was founded by Mennonites, who did not necessarily support things like the war of 1812. We had fierce debate in the community, but ultimately we had the Freedom of the Town and thousands of people came out from our community to celebrate this historic unit.

However, that does not mean the people who disagreed with it were wrong. They disagreed. They talked about it. I may not necessarily have agreed with them, but they got their message out there. It shows just how exciting history can be when we present it to Canadians in a way they can debate, discuss and share. Then they can go to their local communities.

Think of what this could do to local communities across the country when they have the opportunity to see the last spike in their own little town. Think of what that would do for a local museum, the amount of people who would drive to that museum, the people who would be even more engaged to know about their communities and the things that have helped build our country.

Ultimately, we will always have disagreements in this place. It goes without saying. We are elected from different parties. We all have different attitudes on different things. I know full well that although we have different ideas, that all of us fight and argue, ultimately we are all very proud Canadians. We are all people who want to see our country prosper and do better. We also want to ensure that people around the world can understand what has made our country great. That is what this museum will help us do. That is one of the reasons why I am so proud and excited about this.

We also talked a bit in some of the speeches about the road to Canada's 150th birthday and why that was so important, the sesquicentennial, as the Minister of Veterans Affairs pointed out.

That is such an important time for Canada. It will be a time when we can showcase all the great things Canada has done. So many people came to us at committee and said that the 100th birthday of Canada was one of those remarkable things. Everybody talked about Canada's 100th birthday. I am almost jealous that I was not born then so I could have attended some of the 100th birthday celebrations.

We want to ensure Canada's 150th is the same. We want to really help Canadians from coast to coast to coast understand why they should be so proud of our country.

I had the opportunity to visit Yukon with the fabulous member for Yukon, and he took me to his local museum. That was my first visit to Canada's north. The pride he showed as he toured me around and showed me some of the important places in his community was something that all Canadians should know, yet not all Canadians can get to the north.

When I looked at the treasures and the collection in storage at that museum and when I heard the minister talk about the opportunities with the new Canadian museum of history, to share these collections so we could be proud of what we had accomplished, I thought this was an excellent opportunity.

● (2235)

We see upstairs in this place a display of the Franklin expedition. We saw the pride the Minister of Health had because something so important to her community was not being displayed just outside the offices of the Prime Minister. It was being displayed and celebrated in other areas of the world, such as Norway. I had the opportunity to meet with the ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway and to talk about how important this was, how Norwegians were celebrating and wanted to continue to make connections with the Minister of Health's home town. These are things we have to celebrate. These are things Canadians have to know.

I have had the opportunity, as I am sure a lot of parliamentarians have had, to go to Pier 21. My parents came to this country through Pier 21. It is a shame to me, and one of the saddest parts of my life, that neither one of my parents was alive to see me elected. To go back to Pier 21, where they arrived in Canada, and see my parents' names on the manifest of the boat that brought them to this country, to stand on the pier and look out over the exact place they came to, was truly amazing. It was a truly amazing moment for me, and not just me. Others were visiting Pier 21, and it was easy to know who was going back. I could see them standing there and looking around. I could see in their faces how honoured they were to be there and to be Canadians.

We have to celebrate these things and let other Canadians understand. That is why when I hear things about the Historica-Dominion Institute talking to our veterans, getting first-hand accounts and making them available, that makes me proud. It is also talking to people who came to this country through Pier 21 and getting their stories about what they faced when they came to Canada.

My parents came from Italy. My mother always told me that she was depressed for the first 10 years she was in Canada, because the winters were so harsh and the summer was only a time for her to fear what was coming in the winter. It was brutal for her. My father was a very proud Italian, but also a very proud Canadian. He did not understand hockey at all, but he cheered for it, because he knew it was what Canadians did. He could not understand any part of the game, and he always tried to relate it to soccer, but he was fiercely proud of his new country.

Sometimes it takes going somewhere else to realize just how lucky we are and just how special this country is. Going back to my parents' home town, when I was 14, although it was a beautiful place, made me realize how lucky I was to be here. It also awakened me to something then, even that far back. The many Italians who came to Canada did not know enough about Canada. We have all heard stories of tourists who come to Canada in July with skis on their cars thinking it is going to be snowing. We could do a better job.

There is no problem with members disagreeing in the House about history. That is good. Let us disagree. That is what history is all about. It is not our job to write the history books. That is not what we do. It is our job to be in this place, debate, and make sure other Canadians have access to that history. That is what this new Canadian museum of history would do, and that is why I am so excited.

It is not just about a $25-million investment that will update the museum, as the minister said, after many years. Displays have to be changed. It is not just about that $25-million investment. It is not about the $142 million we have already put into arts and culture and into our museums. It is about giving Canadians access to the things, people, places and events that have helped make this country the best country in the world in which to live. Regardless of how we feel about the policies of one another, we can all agree on that. Surely we can all agree on the fact that everybody, not just Canadians, deserves to understand what has made this country so great.

● (2240)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's speech. Some of it was very touching, I have to say, and I would like to thank him for that. He does talk about how he wants to see Canadians have access to their history.

However, I am having a hard time squaring the circle of the minister's rhetoric on the one hand and the government's actions on the other, particularly with respect to the deep cuts in the arts and culture and heritage funds. We have had deep cuts at Library and Archives Canada. In fact, the interlibrary loan program at Library and Archives Canada, which allowed Canadians to have access to a treasure trove of books and documents, was cut by the government. That is no longer available.

How is the member saying on the one hand that he wants to see Canadians have access to Canadian history, when the government cut those institutions that protect, share and collect Canadian heritage to the bone?

● (2245)

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that everything the member said is actually wrong.

As I said in my opening, this government is one of the only countries that actually increased funding to arts and culture during the economic downtown. In fact, it was the only country in the G8 to do so. We increased funding. The Canada Council had the highest level of funding in its history. Even when other governments were cutting, we were investing more.

Over $140 million in new investments has gone to our museums. This project involves another $25 million worth of investments. We are seeing other organizations digitize their collections, including the National Film Board and Library and Archives Canada. It is important to digitize their collections so that other people can have access to those collections. It is not just for those who are here in Ottawa, but people from across the country.

That is what the Conservatives are doing, and we are proud of that. The fact is that the opposition has voted against every single increase to arts and culture that we have brought in.

Despite that, we are going to continue to do it. It is not only about Canadians and helping other people understand how great this country is; it creates jobs, economic growth and activity. We will continue to do that.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me dig into that question, with the greatest amount of respect, of course. God forbid that I should continue the romance.

The member did mention the Library and Archives. One of the programs in Library and Archives, the NADP, allowed local organizations to better tell their stories through digitization, but more importantly through the eyes of an archivist. People who did not have the individual talents to do this were given the ability by way of this particular program.

In essence, the NADP program at Library and Archives Canada was eliminated. On the other hand, we have what it takes to put the history of this country out to the rest of the country through this museum, but with regard to the actions, I am not so sure.

As for the NADP, is there a program on the way to replace that, or are we looking at the continuation of the local digitization being eliminated?

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, we have heard the opposition say it does not want us to make the decisions for independent organizations, so we are not going to do that. However, Library and Archives is going to be a very important partner in the new museum that we are creating here. They are going to be a very important partner in this, and that is why it is so important that we move forward with this museum.

It is not just about Library and Archives Canada. If we talk about the CBC and the National Film Board, they have amazing collections that they are making available to Canadians. I encourage all Canadians to get access to them and to look at some of the things they have preserved.

Library and Archives is going to be very important to this museum. We cannot have a museum like this without involving Library and Archives Canada.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it certainly is important to discuss Canadian history. I am convinced that the Minister of Canadian Heritage is offering a genuine opportunity to energize our discussion of history, to do more to get collections out of storage. Although I share misgivings with some members of the opposition, I am prepared to support this bill, but I want to make sure that we put on the record through this debate that future governments and future members of Parliament can look at these debates and understand that someone like myself from the opposition benches supports this initiative but wants to make it very clear that the independence of the curators is enshrined in the legislation. We need to make it very clear that the role of women through our history and first nations through our history is not in any way politicized.

I am prepared to take that leap of faith based on what I see before me in the legislation, separate from all the other things, which the member for Davenport quite rightly points out. Some egregious things have been done in other departments by other ministers, but we are talking today about Bill C-49.

I ask the hon. parliamentary secretary if he is prepared to join members of the opposition in understanding, given the record in other areas of loss of information, loss of Library and Archives, that we are now going to be prepared to take the leap of faith and support this bill?

● (2250)

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, let me thank the leader of the Green Party for her support on the bill. As the minister said, the Museums Act guarantees curatorial independence of the museum.

One of the things I want to reference is the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage discussion of Canadian history. Part of that study was to make the debates of this place easier for Canadians to access. It is also an important part of history. Let us make the debates of our prime ministers and significant moments of debates in this place easy for Canadians to access so they do not have to search around for hours to find the debates.

I would submit that the debate tonight, although sometimes difficult back and forth, is an important debate because future generations of Canadians, if this comes up again, will want to reference what we talked about tonight. They do not want to have to go searching for hours through *Hansard* to figure it out. We can do that. That is one of the reasons we brought this study to the Canadian heritage committee. Again, I thank the member for that. That is why history is so exciting. We can disagree a lot of the time on all kinds of different issues, but as long as we tell the story, we are better off for it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

For better or for worse, I am old enough to have been at Expo 67. It was a highlight to be there as the world was welcomed at the Montreal World Expo, at Man and His World.

I want to read part of the mandate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, to explain how it fulfills its mandate.

> ...by establishing, maintaining and developing for research and posterity a collection of objects of historical or cultural interest, [and this is important] with special but not exclusive reference to Canada, and by demonstrating those achievements...

My question is simple: why does that not cover the government's objectives?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member looks at Bill C-49, it talks about all the things that this museum is going to have to do, including organizing exhibits both in Canada and outside Canada. It helps to open up our museums, not only the national museum, but museums in communities across this country so that they can share in the collection of the national museum.

One member's constituency has a museum for Exporail, and he talked about how important that museum was to his community. I cannot think of a better way of making that museum more important and more accessible to Canadians than by becoming a part of the new museum of Canadian history. Does the museum right now have the ability to talk about Canadian history? Yes. Can it do a better job of doing that by bringing in communities across this country, by bringing in artifacts, by sharing the artifacts, but also bringing artifacts that are important in the member's community to Ottawa? Absolutely.

We can do better and that is the whole point of this. With a $25-million investment, we will make sure that all parts of this country can celebrate in their history and all the good things that have helped make this such a great country to live in.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-49.

This bill is an attack on an institution that is very important to me, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, which is located in my riding of Hull—Aylmer.

I am one of those people who is lucky to live in the national capital region, in Hull—Aylmer, who sees the museum every day, who represented the workers at this beautiful museum, who has visited it regularly and who has truly appreciated it. I am saddened to see what is happening at present.

This museum is part of our region's history and identity, just like Gatineau Park, for example, which I am also trying to save. I want to ensure that government legislation will fully protect it. It is an institution that is respected and appreciated by my constituents and everyone.

The Canadian Museum of Civilizations, in its current form, is the most popular museum in Canada. Everyone says so. What a mess the government wants to make of it.

Our museum is a tourist attraction that has economic benefits and creates jobs for the Outaouais. Its special exhibitions on world culture, such as Haitian vodou and ancient Egypt, are an intrinsic part of the museum's popular success in Canada and abroad. What do we want to teach our children and what legacy do we want to leave them?

The museum has proven its worth over the years. The people of Hull—Aylmer are proud to have a world-class museum in their riding.

However, the government is using Bill C-49 to attack the museum's formula for success. It wants to reposition the museum, refocus it on Canadian history and sideline the temporary exhibits that I mentioned earlier.

Because the government is choosing to focus on Canadian history, people are left with the impression that the museum does not pay enough attention to our history, which is untrue. The vast majority of the museum's resources are already poured into exhibits on Canada's history.

For example, the Canada Hall is the most visited area of the museum and contains one of the most acclaimed Canadian exhibits in the country. It took years and millions of dollars to create it, and it seems that it will be undergoing a transformation.

I find it hard to understand why this government is tampering with a winning formula. This museum became famous for its wonderful mix of Canadian history and exhibits on other civilizations.

Canadian history has had an important place in the museum since its creation. The museum has always been open to the world and its cultures, just as Canadians are. Why change that?

Earlier, my colleague spoke about the Yukon. Yes, I have been there. He spoke about the pride of Yukoners. Yes, I have met the people who work to preserve our legacy and our heritage. Government cuts mean that all of that heritage is being storage in poorly ventilated, unheated hangers, where it is deteriorating. Is that the legacy we want to leave our children, the public and the world?

The government argued that the changes it wants to make to the museum will make a positive contribution to the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Confederation. No one has a problem with using the museum to showcase the 150th anniversary. However, using the 150th anniversary as an excuse to change the mandate and focus of Canada's most popular museum worries me, especially given that this government has spent tens of millions of dollars in an attempt to rewrite our collective history and bring it more in line with Conservative values.

The proposed changes are all the more incomprehensible because no one asked for them. No one in the region was consulted before the minister announced his intentions.

● (2255)

The government has gotten into the habit of acting unilaterally, which is very unfortunate for Canadians and very unfortunate for parliamentary democracy.

The public consultations had nothing to do with finding out whether people wanted us to change our museum's mandate, and everything to do with finding out what people wanted to see displayed in the new museum. Back where I come from, we call that putting the cart before the horse. No wonder people spoke out against Bill C-49.

The NPD is not alone in worrying about how out of control things could get if Bill C-49 is passed. In November, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the CAUT, which represents 60,000 university teachers, publicly expressed concern about overt political manipulation of the museum.

The CAUT's executive director had this to say:

> [This] initiative...fits into a pattern of politically motivated heritage policy.... [This] initiative reflects a new use of history to support the government's political agenda.... This is a highly inappropriate use of our national cultural institutions, which should stand apart from any particular government agenda....

I have heard the same concern expressed by the CAUT expressed by a number of my constituents. I received many emails, letters and comments on Bill C-49. An overwhelming majority of my constituents are against the government's plan, and since the museum is in their riding, it seems to me that this government should take their opposition seriously.

I will give a real example of the kind of email I received. One of my constituents, Alexandre Pirsch, told me that he was concerned about Bill C-49 and asked me to speak on his behalf in Parliament. He said that he has had a family membership at the museum for four years and that he does not see himself reflected in the changes that the government wants to make. He said he was dismayed when he learned that the Canadian government wanted to change the mandate and name of a museum that has meant so much to him. He even wrote that he was thinking about not renewing his family membership.

I have received many emails like that.

One of the problems with Bill C-49 is the proposed mandate, which sets out not only the museum's general direction, but also the historical approach it should adopt. Normally, decisions about the type of approach adopted by a museum are left up to museum specialists and historians, specifically to avoid political interference.

The approach set out in Bill C-49, which is based on events, experiences, people and things, is restrictive. It does not leave any room to showcase important developments in our shared history, such as gender relations, colonization and first nations, and environmental changes, for example.

In April, I asked the minister a question about the loss of unionized jobs at the museum and the money that has been spent to change the mandate of the museum before the bill has even passed. In his response, the minister criticized us for not supporting what he described as an investment in culture.

This "investment in culture" the minister was talking about is the $25 million that will be devoted to implementing Bill C-49. I want to say something about that. If ever there was a government in the history of Canada that cannot brag about championing culture, it is the current Conservative government. This government has been making cuts to culture at every turn ever since coming to power.

That $25 million will come out of Canadian Heritage's budget, which has already been reduced as a result of this government's cuts.

● (2300)

The minister also refuses to confirm where exactly this $25 million will come from, and what programs will suffer from the reallocation of funds.

As for the Conservatives and culture, a study conducted by the Canadian Conference of the Arts indicates that funding for Canadian Heritage and cultural agencies had been cut by $200 million, which represents 6.1% of the federal budget for 2012. That is a lot of money.

In 2011, the Conservatives had already reduced investment in culture by $177 million, or 4.5%. Do not try to tell me that this government invests in culture. It is simply not true.

At this stage:

I move, seconded by the hon. member for Gatineau, that this House do now adjourn.

● (2305)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

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

● (2340)

[*English*]

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

(Division No. 692)

YEAS

Members

Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Cash
Cullen
Freeman
Garneau
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Larose
Mai
May
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Pilon
Sandhu
Sellah
St-Denis
Valeriote– — 31
Caron
Cotler
Davies (Vancouver East)
Fry
Goodale
Lapointe
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Mathyssen
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Nantel
Rankin
Scarpaleggia
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Turmel

NAYS

Members

Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Benoit
Boughen
Chisu
Clarke
Gosal
Kerr
Leef
Lunney
McLeod
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
O'Connor
Opitz
Preston
Toet
Tweed
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Wong– — 32
Anderson
Blaney
Calandra
Chong
Galipeau
Hiebert
Lake
Lobb
MacKay (Central Nova)
Menegakis
O'Toole
Schellenberger
Trost
Van Loan

PAIRED

Nil

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I particularly appreciated the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer's speech because the Canadian Museum of Civilization—I will continue to call it that for now— is in her riding. It is also in my region.

It does not seem to have occurred to the minister, and most of his Conservative government colleagues, to find out what the public thinks about this. In fact, this took almost everyone by surprise. The Museum of Civilization is one of the best-run museums in the country, if not the best. It is extraordinary successful and is world renowned, yet despite all that, all of a sudden the government announced that it was going to change the museum's name and mandate on the pretext of the upcoming 150th anniversary celebration.

Like me, my colleague must be receiving a huge number of letters, emails and communications from people in her riding. I am getting them too, even though the museum is not in my riding. I do not know what to tell these people because I can sense a political move. We spoke a lot about this government's lack of credibility, which makes us distrustful of any new suggestions it makes.

I would like the hon. member to explain why this government, through its then foreign affairs minister Lawrence Cannon, promised the Outaouais Chamber of Commerce that it would move the Canada Science and Technology Museum to the Hull side of the river. That never happened, but—

● (2345)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments.

Both of us, along with our colleague from Pontiac and members from the surrounding area, have been sharing information and concerns. In the past, the Minister of Foreign Affairs promised to move the Science and Technology Museum to the region. I thank her for raising this point.

With everything that is going on with the government right now, with the cuts we are seeing, with the lack of services across the board, people no longer understand what is happening to their region. They no longer understand what is happening to their museum. They are saying that they love their museum and that they should have been told what was going to happen to it.

We know that we cannot call it our museum in the national capital region, but it is part of us. It is very important to us. This is unfortunate. Once again, we could have worked together. This could have been done with the schools, students and families. We could have talked about what we wanted to happen, but no, once again the government is imposing its choice.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is truly unbelievable what we have here. If there is a bill that is over 10 pages, it is too long for those members to read. They talk about closure and how much they want to debate and the first opportunity they get they try to close down debate and go home. It is unbelievable the hypocrisy that comes from that side. They do not want to talk about things that are important to Canadians.

I know the member has a tendency to say one thing in the House, but then another thing when she communicates to the people in her riding. For instance, I know she takes credit for the tax cuts that we have given to families. Therefore, could she give some insight as to how she will be communicating to her riding, in her householders, about how she actually really supports this, like she supports the tax cuts that we have given for Canadian families? Although she voted against it, really she supports it, so she says in her householder.

Could she give me a sneak peek of her next householder and could she explain to Canadians why the NDP members are so averse to working late at night, if they want to give back some of the $160,000 that Canadians pay us to be in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, I understand it is quite late, but the government member is saying that we are talking about closure, when how many times have we had closure? On every bill. It is truly amazing that he is talking about it.

I can understand it is quite late but talking about the issue, if it is so important for the Conservatives to work with Canadians, they should have consulted with Canadians first on the museum.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear what my colleague from Hull—Aylmer has to say about the consultations held in Montreal, which were an incredible sham. I believe that the member is fairly familiar with Montreal. The consultations were held the same afternoon in two underground shopping centres in Montreal, Promenades Cathédrale and Les Cours Mont-Royal.

Does she think those were good places to hold public consultations about this?

● (2350)

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank my colleague for his question.

I am somewhat familiar with Montreal. They consulted Montrealers in the city's downtown area, in underground shopping malls, on a Sunday, when many tourists visit the area.

If they really wanted to consult Montrealers, that was not the place to do it. Any member from Quebec could tell you that. They could have suggested places and maybe could have participated in a good consultation, but no. It was held underground in downtown Montreal.

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak because what I have heard is not entirely correct.

The kind of people who would have been consulted at Cours Mont-Royal are quite capable of giving an opinion on a museum.

I am very familiar with the museum the member is talking about. I am from Montreal, but I currently live right next to the museum and I have visited it many times. When my friends would come to Ottawa, I always encouraged them to see the museum.

My question is for the member. She said that it was a regional museum. I have visited this museum many times and I have never seen anything about Gatineau or Hull. There is a big focus on heritage; however, I have never seen anything specifically about Hull or Gatineau.

Furthermore—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. We have time for one answer.

The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to set the record straight.

I am sorry that the hon. member misunderstood. In my presentation, if members were listening, I was clearly talking about an accessible museum that is known around the world and visited by tourists and people from across Canada. It is also used by our students in the region for school trips this time of year.

I am very familiar with what our museum represents and what it does. All my colleagues are as well.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there can be no doubt that the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages introduced a very promising bill for Canada, a bill about a Canadian museum of history that the City of Gatineau, historians and the museum's architect wholeheartedly support. This museum will facilitate a better understanding of our history.

My question is very simple. Why refuse to acknowledge Canadian history when conventional wisdom tells us that a population that does not know its history cannot know where it is going? Why are the New Democrats being so stubborn? That is so disappointing. Why are they stubbornly refusing to acknowledge Canadian history? Is the member ashamed of her history? I, personally, am proud of the history of the Canadian people.

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, the debate must continue. It is just starting to get interesting.

Members have talked about the fact that the Canadian Museum of Civilization is a history museum. It is true that parts of it focus on history. I feel that the group I mentioned in my speech said it best. Quite often, if people do not trust the government or the people trying to make changes, an environment of mistrust is created. We cannot work like that.

If consultations had taken place, things might be different. I have said that many times.

● (2355)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. Resuming debate. Before we call on the hon. member for Palliser, I will let him know there are five minutes remaining in the period allocated for government orders so he will have the remainder of his time when the House next resumes debate on this question.

The hon. member for Palliser.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Yukon.

It is nice to see full benches on the other side enjoying a fun-filled evening. Certainly, we are pleased that they are here. It would be rather quiet without them.

I am glad to speak on Bill C-49, the Canadian museum of history act. The establishment of the museum would provide Canadians with an unprecedented opportunity to learn about and appreciate the richness of Canada's history.

Much consultation has happened and information was gathered up before the construction on this building. There was face-to-face consultation, a web page was set up and there were hundreds of hits on the page with ideas on what the museum should house and how it would be arranged. The consultation was extensive.

The legislation would change the name and mandate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization and begin a transformation that would be completed over the next five years in the lead-up to Canada's 150th birthday in 2017. Let me be clear. Our government believes in our national museums and we recognize the tremendous value that they hold for all Canadians. As we approach Canada's 150th birthday, it is an unprecedented opportunity to celebrate our history and those achievements that define who we are as Canadians.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization is an institution to be proud of. It is one of Canada's most popular museums. It is important to understand that this is not the end of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. It is the beginning. It would be given a new name and indeed a new mandate.

Let me read the current mandate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization:

> ...to increase...appreciation and respect for human cultural achievements and human behaviour by establishing [and] maintaining...a collection of objects of historical or cultural interest, with special but not exclusive reference to Canada—

This is a mandate that states its collections do not have exclusive reference to Canada.

Our government is proposing a new mandate for this museum. Let me read it as it is described in the legislation. It states:

> ...to enhance Canadians' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of events, experiences, people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada's history and identity, and also to enhance their awareness of world history and cultures.

This new mandate would allow the museum to create a national narrative of the history of Canada for all Canadians.

We should think of this initiative as a rejuvenation of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. This significant investment would allow a major renovation of more than 43,000 square feet of permanent gallery space, some of which has been in place since 1989, in order to present a comprehensive and chronological history of Canada to Canadians and to the world.

It is important to note that this legislation would not affect the internal workings of the museum. The museum's board would remain intact. The Canadian War Museum would continue to be an affiliate.

● (2400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Palliser will have five minutes remaining and the usual five minutes for questions and comments when the House next returns to debate on the question.

It being 12 a.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 a.m.)

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