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Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 17, 2013

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1100)

[*English*]

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT

The House resumed from April 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-473, An Act to amend the Financial Administration Act (balanced representation), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to speak to this bill, for several reasons. I would like to start by supporting the notion behind this bill, which is that we need to see an increase in the participation of women on corporate boards in this country. Certainly there is a lack of women on corporate boards. Women are not equally represented on corporate boards now, and that is worthy of debate in this House. Our government has looked at different ways to address this issue, one of which I will speak to a bit in my speech.

As far as the functionality of this particular bill, I do have some concerns with regard to the prescriptive nature of the mechanisms included therein. I have always questioned the notion of prescribed quotas for any type of legislation or mechanism. As a woman, and as someone who has worked my way through life, I have to raise in this House today the argument of merit over tokenism. I will give a bit of my story to give some context to why I have this feeling.

When I was 18 years old, I started to put myself through school full time. I worked full time in a professional job, and gradually increased my responsibility. I remember working full time, taking evening classes, doing my homework at 12 a.m., doing housework at 3 a.m. and then going back to work at 7 a.m. I also put my husband through school during this time. It was tough. It was a real learning experience. However, progressively I increased my responsibility in my job. During this, I took a lot of time to volunteer in my community. I became politically active and started to run political campaigns. I participated in my party's policy development process. I took professional training opportunities. I asked for increased opportunity in my job, and here I am today.

I am not saying that is a path that most women can or should follow because everybody has their own unique experience. One issue that faces women in the development of their career is the reality that women are the primary caregivers. This is a role that should be celebrated within our society. Women who choose to raise a family, or to forego the advancement of career opportunities that may otherwise be afforded them but for the time they would put into their families, are to be celebrated. This is an issue we have to look at when it comes to women's participation in the workforce, and certainly in politics as well.

My story is from the perspective of one who has foregone having a family in order to achieve my career. That said, any type of advancement that I achieve in my career, I want to be measured on merit and not on gender. If one were to talk to many of my colleagues in this place, this could be fundamentally described as the next wave of feminism in this country. Equality means equality in performance and merit. That is why I have an issue with this bill. I think it suggests that women cannot get there on their own. Rather than prescribing quotas as to how many women should be or need to be on a board legally, we are doing the women in this country a disservice if we do not first ask why women are not on corporate boards right now.

To mirror this policy, our government announced, in budget 2012, that we would launch an advisory council on women on corporate boards. My colleague, the Minister for Status of Women, chaired the first meeting of this group last week. This is a positive step in the right direction. This group is on a very tight timeline. It expects to table recommendations after a full review, but in due course because it is such an important topic.

● (1105)

However, the fundamental question we have to ask is why. I have sat on round tables across the country on this particular issue. If there is one thing I have heard from colleagues who are both my contemporaries and mentors is that simplifying the issue of women's participation on corporate boards down to the issue of quota does a disservice to women. We need to talk about things like how women balance the reality of being a primary caregiver as well as obtaining the necessary skills and networks needed for a corporate directorship position.

Private Members' Business

I heard one colleague of mine make a comment that I thought was quite interesting. She is the CEO for a major corporation, and when her corporation looks at the skill set for a board of directors position, it looks at whether a person has led an operational division in a major company, been required to make senior level decisions with regard to projects or consolidation of services, or led a company through a major business decision.

Many of the professions in which woman participate may or may not offer them the opportunity to make those types of operating decisions. A discussion of how we can get women those skills so they are considered for corporate directorship positions is very important. I certainly hope the advisory committee I just spoke about would look at that issue.

The other thing is that we need to make women aware of positions that become open. Quite frankly, in this debate in the House we have addressed the white elephant in the room. Traditionally the selection of corporate directors has been a very closed circle of people making decisions. Where there is a closed circle of folks who may have had opportunities given to them, how do we break that open? How do we make sure, when there are qualified women to take these positions, that they are connected with them? Finally, how do we overcome the notion, which is so inherent in the bill, that women cannot overcome these two obstacles and need to have quotas?

I know that is an esoteric argument to some extent, but it is very important. As women, and men, in this House, debate this type of legislation, it is one we have to be very cognizant about. I do fundamentally believe that if we are to have true equality in this country, we need to be measured on merit, not simply on our gender.

Some of the technical aspects of the bill, which I find a bit troubling, are regarding the quotas therein. It could potentially elevate the consideration of one designated employment equity group, women, above others, such as aboriginal persons or persons with disabilities. It could ultimately fetter the discretion of the Governor in Council in appointing qualified candidates to boards of directors.

The other problem with quotas is that sometimes we encounter the law of unintended consequences. This is one issue that I have not heard adequately discussed in debate. Currently the Governor in Council selection and appointment process needs to be flexible enough to ensure the attraction and appointment of a diverse pool of individuals possessing the right skills, expertise and experience needed by crown corporation boards of directors to effectively fulfill their new stewardship role.

What does this mean? It goes back to what I originally spoke about. Rather than simply legislating in quotas, we need to, as legislators, as people who are concerned with this very legitimate issue, ask how we empower women. How do we enable them to get the skills they need to participate in corporate boards? How do we develop less qualified women, and how do we connect people in positions who are making these decisions for corporate boards?

These are the questions this House should be seized with. I am very encouraged by what the Minister for Status of Women has done with the advisory board on this particular issue. The people she has

drawn from to sit on this board are very qualified. There are some women on that board whom I particularly look up to.

I certainly hope my colleague opposite will understand that I cannot support the bill because I believe it is fundamentally flawed. However, I certainly hope she will support the ongoing dialogue that is taking place with the advisory board.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lise St-Denis: Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member's speech. She is making some interesting proposals, but there is one I do not understand.

How would prescribing quotas for women be doing them a disservice? My question does not go against her suggestions, but I really do not understand how that could be doing women a disservice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There is actually no time allocated for questions and comments right now. That time is allocated only for the first speech during private members' business.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise and speak to Bill C-473. It is clear to the House that the intention of the proposed act is to amend the Financial Administration Act to provide some method of balance. It is a laudable goal of a Canadian just society to ensure that gender equity is not a slogan but a commonplace action within our society.

The fundamental goal, recognition of equality and respect of everyone, is very commendable, and so I am pleased to speak to some of the strengths of the bill. There are some issues that need to be addressed, obviously. The bill does not prescribe any method of attaining the gender equity it attempts to achieve. There is no method laid out as to exactly how this statutory provision would be enacted, controlled and monitored.

That said, I will speak to the general parameters of the bill.

It has been a long-standing and well-established practice that we move, wherever reasonable and possible, to bridge the gap, to prevent an unjust or unfair and disproportionate imbalance in gender within our own federal jurisdiction. We have long moved toward gender equity with pay equity issues. We have seen the value of ensuring that there is gender equity and the recognition of gender equity within hiring in the federal public civil service. Therefore, it only stands to reason that we would also incorporate gender equity within the governance of our major crown corporations, which are governed by the government and accountable to this House through various ministers.

Private Members' Business

Primarily, Bill C-473 proposes to require that the composition of the boards of directors of a parent crown corporation shall be such that the proportion of directors of each gender is not less than 30% the second year following the coming into force of this proposed section, not less than 40% the fourth year and not less than 50% the sixth year following the coming into force of this section. The proposed bill clearly outlines these requirements and stipulates that the aforementioned numbers may vary when the board of directors of a parent crown corporation consist of no more than eight members, and so there is latitude and flexibility built into the bill.

For example, in such instances, it is proposed that the difference between the number of directors of each gender may not be greater than two. For small governed boards, obviously it is a little more difficult at times, such as in the immediate aftermath of the coming into force of the proposed legislation, to be able to reconstruct the board, and the bill does provide that flexibility. However, there are no specific requirements or criteria as to how this would get done exactly. We would like to see a little more detail on that.

It is worth noting that Bill C-473 is premised on Bill C-407, but this new legislative proposal seeks to elevate the percentage to 50% from the current of approximately 30% non-legislated average commencing in the sixth year.

Prior to endorsing Bill C-473, we would like to better understand whether or not the breakdown of gender numbers cited in the legislative preamble are indeed accurate and if there is an appropriate reason for the current levels. However, these issues would come out if the bill were to be passed at second reading and sent to committee.

● (1115)

We would like to know what the real-world impact would be on business if mandated quotas of this nature were established within the timeline suggested, 30%, 40% and 50% within two, four and six years respectively.

We would also like to know what specific penalties would be imposed upon non-compliant boards and agencies. Legislation that is absolutely toothless just merits a public rebuking and does not go beyond that, with no scope of arbitration, no scope of determination of whether or not proper compliance requirements are being met and if not, what the consequences are of such decisions.

It becomes a bit of a fool's errand in the sense that we actually institutionalize non-compliance, even though we could enact laws to prevent this. If it is absolutely baseless and there is no consequence whatsoever except for a public rebuking, which may or may not be scoffed off by those who have been cited, the legislation becomes somewhat worthless. It speaks to a platitude but not to an action. That is really not where we necessarily need to be.

If concrete proposals could be brought forward as to how this could be done and what the consequences of this being done would be, greater comfort would be provided to all of us, I am sure. We should be prepared to say here and now that the concept is not only valid but that it is necessary. It is necessary to work toward gender equity at the highest echelons, in the most prominent and largest profile of organizations within the federal jurisdiction.

We have not had very much feedback from stakeholders at this point in time; in fact, very little. One of the opportunities at second

reading is to be able to receive input from stakeholders as to how exactly they feel about this, what they would offer in terms of strengthening and criticizing and in terms of impacts, and receive their other views about the nature of this legislation and what it would do. That would be extremely helpful.

There also has not been a huge amount of feedback in terms of the real-world analysis of the consequences of this. There are many organizations that can offer that. We look forward to hearing from them so that we have a better idea of exactly what the legislation could present to us.

Finally, it would be helpful at this point in time for the parties within the House to pronounce where they stand on the general principles of the bill. I have pointed to the fact that there are obviously some inherent issues, some concerns, some information that is not contained within the bill, which may be necessary for the enactment of legislation, in the opinion of some. If we are going to pose a statutory requirement on somebody to do something, that statute should also lay out a process as to how that would be done and what the consequences of not adhering to it would be.

While we can all recognize that there are some issues surrounding this, it would be helpful if we could understand a bit better whether or not the parties within the House support the concept of gender equity within the governance structure of our crown corporations, boards and their directorships, instead of just simply saying this is not a piece of legislation that can be supported. That would be very helpful.

I appreciate the work done by the mover of this particular piece of legislation. I look forward to hearing the debate. I also look forward to, hopefully, having this piece of legislation before committee, so some of these questions can be given proper answers.

● (1120)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today about Bill C-473 to help achieve gender parity on the boards of directors of crown corporations.

I would like to start by congratulating my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for her efforts on this file. I know that this issue is important to her and she works very hard to promote gender equality.

Despite the progress women have made over the past few decades to take their place in the workforce, in certain settings they are still grappling with a glass ceiling that prevents them from reaching the highest levels in some organizations. In spite of their progress, women continue to be under-represented in the executive ranks and earn 70% less for every dollar men earn.

For this situation to improve, we must act by using tangible measures such as those proposed in the bill. This bill provides a logically sound and effective mechanism to help increase the number of women in the executive ranks of Canada's crown corporations. This proposal should be relatively simple to implement and has the potential to help improve the situation of women across the country.

Private Members' Business

I would like to give a few examples that really illustrate the scope of the problem related to the under-representation of women in decision-making roles. At this time, over 2,000 Canadians occupy executive positions in more than 200 crown corporations, organizations, boards of directors and commissions across the country; yet women occupy only 27% of senior management positions. In addition, only 16 of the 84 presidents of crown corporations are women. That is only 19%.

Canadian women are also under-represented on the boards of directors of private corporations. According to the Catalyst 2010 study, women occupied only 16.9% of senior management positions in Fortune 500 companies. Worse still, over 30% of those companies counted no women among their senior officers.

In December 2010, Anne Golden, chair of the Conference Board of Canada, appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce and noted that, "At that rate, it will take approximately 151 years before the proportion of men and women at the management level is equal".

In light of these troubling statistics, clearly, we need to take action to promote fair gender representation in the business world. Bill C-473 aims to achieve gender equality on the board of directors of crown corporations within six years by establishing criteria to ensure that women occupy 30% of positions within two years of the bill's coming into force, 40% within four years, and 50% within six years of its coming into force. Implementing these requirements will guarantee gender parity.

In addition, this legislative measure will indirectly force crown corporations to expand their search for qualified, effective candidates and to target non-traditional recruitment pools.

It is important to note that, compared to other countries, Canada is falling behind. According to the World Economic Forum report on the global gender gap, Canada has fallen seven places since the first report was published in 2006, currently ranking 21st. Catalyst Canada noted that the proportion of women on the boards of companies listed on the stock exchange had increased by only 0.1% between 2007 and 2011, rising from 10.2% to 10.3%.

Unlike the Conservative government and previous Liberal and Conservative governments, numerous countries have introduced legislative measures to address the fact that women are under-represented in the boardrooms of various types of organizations. For example, Norway, Spain, France, Iceland and the Netherlands introduced legislated quotas to increase the number of women on various boards of directors, while Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Finland have implemented mandatory disclosure and transparency initiatives.

In some countries such as Australia, Germany and the United Kingdom, corporations have been urged to close the gender gaps on their boards under the threat that quotas could be introduced if voluntary measures are seen to be ineffective.

●(1125)

In that same vein, I would like to dispel a perverse myth that exists within the Conservative government. The government is proposing a voluntary approach to ensure increased representation of women on boards. I am thinking, in particular, about the member for

Mississauga South who, on April 23, stated in the House that legislating a quota system to increase the proportion of women on crown corporation boards "is not acceptable". She said that legislated quotas are rigid and arbitrary thresholds that would adversely affect the appointment process for board members. The member for Winnipeg South Centre said that efforts to promote qualified candidates in the business community and to recognize and encourage business leaders are more effective than legislative measures.

Basically, the Conservatives believe that we can attain parity by using a laissez-faire approach. However, Norway provides us with a case study that puts an end to the far-fetched myth of voluntary parity. Norway was the first country to legislate gender balance on the boards of public limited companies.

The legislation applying to state-owned companies came into force in January 2004. The government had originally tried to negotiate voluntary quotas with the private sector to reach 40% representation of women on boards, with an ultimatum that restrictive legislative measures would be introduced should the desired gender representation not be attained by July 2005. This voluntary measure did not achieve the desired effect.

A survey by Statistics Norway showed that by the July 2005 date, only 13% of companies complied with the voluntary quotas, with women representing only 16% of board members. As a result, legislation was applied to public limited companies. The legislation came into force in January 2006, giving the companies in question two years to comply with the targets. To illustrate how effective a legislative measure can be, in Norway, the representation of women on the boards in question has been more than 40% since 2008.

For progress on similar gender equality measures, we can look at our own successes here in Canada. In 2006, the Government of Quebec introduced Bill 53 in order to set criteria for state-owned enterprises so:

(1) that the boards of directors of the enterprises as a group [would] be composed of members whose cultural identity reflects the various segments of Québec society; and

(2) that the boards of directors of the enterprises as a group [would] include an equal number of women and men as of 14 December 2011.

Although this legislation still has not fully achieved its objective, the numbers are impressive. In December 2011, which marked the end of the five-year period by which crown corporations were to have achieved gender equality, 141 women and 128 men held positions on the boards of directors of 22 Quebec crown corporations. All that remains is to ensure balanced representation in the number of women and men appointed to the board of each crown corporation subject to the act.

The Conservatives' unwillingness to achieve gender parity in the public service is symptomatic of their general attitude toward promoting gender equality. Let us not forget that in addition to deleting the words "gender equality" from Status of Women Canada's mandate, the Conservatives closed 12 of the 16 offices of the only federal agency devoted to promoting gender equality.

Private Members' Business

Hon. members will also recall that the Conservative government cut funding for the court challenges program, which was created to defend equality rights cases guaranteed under the Constitution of Canada.

The Conservative government's dismal record on gender equality is attested to by the fact that Canada ranks 21st in the World Economic Forum's gender gap index, after countries such as the Philippines, Latvia, Cuba and even Nicaragua.

It is obvious that, in reality, Canadian women cannot count on the Conservative government to promote gender equality.

Therefore, I want to reiterate my support for Bill C-473, and I urge my colleagues in all parties to vote for it.

Finally, this bill clearly shows that the NDP has real measures to achieve balanced gender representation when it comes to the management of public finances and thus to better reflect the Canadian population.

• (1130)

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-473, An Act to amend the Financial Administration Act (balanced representation), introduced by my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Gender equality is still an issue for Canadian society today. Progress has been made, but we need only look at the membership of the House to see that we still have work to do.

This bill seeks to achieve balanced representation of men and women serving as directors on boards of crown corporations within six years. It should be noted that it applies only to crown corporations and not private businesses.

First, we must understand that gender equality, in my opinion, is the responsibility of a proactive government. If government sets an example, hopefully others will follow.

Women are still under-represented on boards of directors of crown corporations in Canada. Most of these corporations have more men than women on their boards, and it is estimated that women make up approximately 27% of these boards.

Many Canadian women have the skills and experience needed to serve on these boards of directors. I think that women should have the same opportunities as men to be appointed to these boards of directors.

Equality in how our crown corporations are managed is an important issue, since these corporations offer a window into our country and how it manages gender equality. The fact that there are still too few women leading our political institutions, businesses and crown corporations is a problem that we should be looking at if we want to set an example as a society with equal rights in terms of gender representation.

Of over 200 crown corporations, agencies, boards of directors and commissions, only 27% of all available positions are held by women. Furthermore, fewer than 20% of chairs of these boards of directors are women.

Many people tend to celebrate the achievements made in recent years regarding women's rights. However, I do not think we should fall into the trap of taking gender equality for granted. We must continue to work. A lot of work remains to be done to make more progress and to protect what some may want to take away.

To those who say that appointments to senior government positions must be based on merit, I agree. I do not think this bill will change the fact that people are appointed based on merit. However, we must not forget that there are highly skilled female workers in Canada. There are enough women with the skills required to fill these positions and who deserve to be there. What we primarily need to change are the mindsets and the stereotypes that are perpetuated.

As the member for Mississauga South said, research shows that businesses with more women on their boards are more profitable. These businesses generally outperform other businesses with fewer women.

According to the bill's proposed roadmap, the implementation will be gradual. We are talking about 30% women after two years, 40% after four years and 50% after six years.

The bill also stipulates that:

105.2 Any appointment of a director of a parent Crown corporation in violation of section 105.1 [in other words, the percentages I just gave] is invalid and the vacant position shall be filled without delay by the appropriate Minister, with the approval of the Governor in Council

Therefore:

105.4 (1) Five years after the coming into force of sections 105.1 to 105.3 and every five years after that, a comprehensive review of these sections and of their operation shall be undertaken by such committee of the House of Commons or of both Houses of Parliament as may be designated or established by Parliament for that purpose.

• (1135)

Therefore, there will be a review after this bill is implemented to ensure that we stay on track. This is quite important. According to the Conference Board of Canada, without a quota, gender parity will take over 150 years to achieve. Even I will not be able to live that long. It will take 150 years to reach parity in important positions. I am not sure that waiting one and a half centuries is really the best solution in this case.

Moreover, when a gradual gender representation quota is imposed on the boards of crown corporations, people in charge of recruitment and appointment recommendations will be compelled to expand their recruitment efforts and extend their search to candidates with the required skills in non-traditional or less traditional recruitment pools.

In addition to seeking more women, organizations will also look for women who may have different backgrounds, more varied experience and different visions, which can only help enrich the boards of our crown corporations. Studies have shown that a higher percentage of women in senior management can generate tangible benefits for businesses. This will then foster economic growth and help develop our country to its full potential.

Private Members' Business

Of course we want peak performance from our crown corporations. We have known for some time now that female members of corporate boards offer Canadian companies a different and valuable perspective.

We can work with crown corporations to institute change and raise the bar for corporations that belong to Canadians and play a leading role. This is our opportunity to ask crown corporations to show leadership and say that women should play as great a role as men in managing them.

Drawing from a wide talent pool instead of accessing the assets of only a portion of Canadian society, as we are doing now, would be logical and beneficial. Gender parity will truly benefit Canadians both socially and economically. Bill C-473 can take us one step forward in that direction.

I sincerely believe that those who see impediments to this bill are mistaken because we have seen over and over that there are plenty of competent women. Maybe they are just shy.

Recently, several people have written about female representation on boards of directors and in companies, suggesting that they might be shy. They might not stand out as much or express their interest, but they are still there. Some of them need a little encouragement, a few compliments on their work. Maybe they need to hear that people have been admiring the quality of their work since they have joined a particular company or crown corporation and that they would make an excellent board member. Recruiting such women and helping them reach their potential would be good for both our image and for our crown corporations.

Canada should have high-performing crown corporations. Consider Canada Post, which is dealing with some major challenges at the moment. I think that such a corporation would benefit from having more women on the board. We must enable women to progress. If we do, we will all win.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to speak to this issue in the House and to highlight, once again, how women can help enrich Canadian society. I sincerely hope that all members of Parliament will agree and will enable our crown corporations to move forward because it is clear that we cannot afford to wait 150 years. I would really like to see this happen in my lifetime. Fortunately, I am pretty young, so that gives us a lot of room to manoeuvre.

We cannot stand back and let things happen or merely encourage women. We have to be more aggressive if we want to achieve this goal.

• (1140)

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am truly pleased to speak for five minutes today to Bill C-473, which would amend the Financial Administration Act in order to improve the representation of women on boards of directors of crown corporations.

I would like to reiterate that gender equality must be a priority for Canadians. In its Constitution, Canada recognizes that men and women are equal under the laws of Canada. However, when it comes to economic independence, equality in decision-making, violence against women, pay equity and other issues, there remains a great

deal of work to be done in order for men and women to be equal in economic, social and political terms in Canada.

In the last hour of debate, my colleague from York West raised a number of points that should be clarified for the benefit of all members of the House.

First, I would like to speak about the percentage mentioned in the bill's preamble. The data were provided by the Library of Parliament and indicate that women represent a mere 27% of directors on boards of Canada's crown corporations.

It is the responsibility of parliamentarians to enact legislation on this matter. This morning, the member for Calgary Centre-North spoke about private enterprises, whereas I am referring only to crown corporations. They are two completely different matters, and we must not mix them up.

She also spoke about aboriginal peoples. I would remind the House that when we are discussing women, fairness and representation on boards of directors, the appointment of aboriginal women will also be welcomed.

There were also questions about how to go about this. It is so simple that we could provide ministers with a basic guide on how to appoint women to boards of directors. I would humbly remind members that the minister has people from the crown corporations managed by his or her department make these appointments.

Competency must remain the basis for recruitment. As I explained earlier, it is merely a question of ensuring that male and female candidates are presented for each position. There are enough talented, competent and experienced women in the areas of management, finance, law and engineering to ensure that 50% of the positions are filled by women.

I would remind the House that many appointments are made based on the "old boys' club" model. We all know or have worked with someone who approached us to do some lobbying, for instance. Then, when the time comes to appoint representatives, we think of that individual.

People often go as far as relaxing the qualification criteria, in order to appoint a male candidate rather than a woman who has the required skills. I would also remind the House that, since the late 1980s, more women than men have been graduating with degrees in public administration.

I want to reiterate once again that Bill C-473 deals only with crown corporations. It imposes absolutely no restrictions on private corporations, which is why it is so important for the government, as an employer, to set an example and hold itself to higher standards of female representation among executive ranks.

There is absolutely no downside to this. In Quebec, women make up over 50% of boards of directors of crown corporations. This has no negative impact. Quebec crown corporations have not been altered because they have appointed women as leaders.

Government Orders

Lastly, Bill C-473 aims to achieve gender parity in six years. Why six years? Simply because Quebec managed to achieve it in five years. We therefore believe that the federal government can achieve it in six years.

• (1145)

The NDP has always been a strong advocate for women's rights and always will be. We have an opportunity here to make a significant gesture in support of Canadian women and to allow them to take their rightful place in the decision-making processes that govern our democracy.

In closing, let us not wait 150 years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The time provided for debate has expired.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, May 22, 2013, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 19, 2013, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

• (1150)

[English]

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In accordance with the Standing Orders, the House will stand suspended until 12 noon.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:50 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12 noon)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1200)

[English]

FIRST NATIONS ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed from June 14 consideration of the motion that Bill S-6, An Act respecting the election and term of office of chiefs and councillors of certain First Nations and the composition of

council of those First Nations, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to add my voice in support of this very worthy legislation, which would see the federal government stop meddling in first nations' electoral affairs, which rightly rest with those communities.

As some of my hon. colleagues have explained, current provisions in the Indian Act have created a democratic anomaly within Canada. Instead of empowering first nations community members to exercise their democratic rights and hold their own governments to account, the Indian Act places the responsibility in the hands of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. This is completely backwards. That is why our government has introduced the first nations elections act. It would provide an alternative to the paternalistic Indian Act and would put the accountability squarely back with first nations members where it belongs.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development plays a disproportionately large role in first nations elections, one that he would gladly give up.

Sections 74 and 79 of the Indian Act set out the rules and regulations governing the current electoral system. Under section 74, the minister may declare by order that a first nation hold elections under the act and the Indian Band Election Regulations. Since 1951, approximately 350 first nations in Canada have been ordered to hold their elections under this system. Over time, 100 first nations have been removed from the system and now hold their elections under the community elections system instead.

All first nations that hold their elections under the Indian Act are subject to the same rules and eligibility requirements. The Indian Act sets out the size of a band council based on a first nation's population, generally called "the one per 100 rule". It stipulates that a band council shall be made up of a chief and one councillor for every 100 members a first nation has. Although the act allows a first nation to reduce this complement of councillors, any such change requires the approval of a minister.

A typical election under the Indian Act includes the appointment of an electoral officer charged with managing the overall election process and all related activities. This appointment must be approved by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada provides training support to electoral officers throughout the election to ensure compliance with the election rules under the Indian Act. Once elected, the chief and councillors hold office for two-year terms.

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One of the most serious complaints about the Indian Act system arises when election results are disputed and a lengthy appeals process begins. At the moment, election appeals are received, reviewed, and, if necessary, investigated and decided upon by the department and the minister. The minister has the authority to remove elected officials and to recommend the setting aside of elections. Most appeals relate to election results. The minister can declare that a specific elected official was guilty of corrupt practices in connection with an election. Such a declaration causes the council position to become vacant. The minister may also declare any individuals removed from the office to be ineligible to be candidates for up to six years.

If it is determined that corrupt practices took place or that there was a violation of the Indian Act or the regulations that might have affected the results of the election, the minister reports to the Governor in Council. Only the Governor in Council has the power to set aside an election. If the election of a band council is set aside in its entirety, another election is held under the accelerated process.

It is no secret that first nations are critical of the electoral process under the Indian Act. They complain, with justification, that it sets out an electoral regime that is antiquated and paternalistic. That is not surprising when we consider that the minister even has the power to remove someone for missing band council meetings.

First nations members believe that the minister and his department are far too involved in elections on reserves, especially in handling appeals. The framework for an election appeal under the legislation is one of the most criticized components of the election system. In this day and age, approving changes to the number of councillor positions on a band council, approving a first nation's choices of electoral officer, investigating election appeals, removing elected officials for whatever reason and banning them from running in future elections, and setting aside elections in their entirety are simply roles the government and the minister should not be playing.

● (1205)

I cannot stress enough how paternalistic this is and how it goes completely against the view that first nations band councils are governments and should be treated as such.

Our government agrees entirely that first nations have good grounds for these criticisms. We understand that they want a better alternative. Members on both sides of the House believe that sticking with the status quo makes no sense and is just plain wrong. This simply will not wash with the growing number of first nations that are fed up and frustrated with the current system.

It is long past time for us to fix these structural flaws and it is time to implement the many recommendations brought forward by first nations, which form the foundation of this proposed legislation. They, and we, want to bring the system into line with the way other jurisdictions work.

This modernization is consistent with other first nations legislation, from first nations lands management and financial management to local by-laws. Doing so would strip away some of the electoral system powers that rest with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, a situation that is simply unacceptable in the 21st century.

First nations electors wishing to challenge the results of their election based on violations to the rules and alleged corruption practices would no longer appeal to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Neither would the minister be involved in removing a chief or councillors from office before the end of their term. Instead, election appeals would be addressed by the courts, just as they are in elections in all other jurisdictions.

The courts already offer an independent and transparent appeal mechanism open to public scrutiny. They already have the power to determine wrongdoing in federal, provincial and municipal elections, so they are well positioned to address issues in first nations elections.

As an added benefit, this approach would discourage frivolous complaints, which are prominent under the Indian Act election system. Such complaints create uncertainty over the band council's legitimacy, hurting the community's day-to-day business activities and discouraging economic development, often for a long period of time. An appeal can take anywhere from six to 18 months to be resolved, and in the end little may change.

About 30% of all band council elections under the Indian Act are appealed, which amounts to about 40 elections per year. Of these, usually no more than five appeals result in an election being overturned. Given that applications to the courts require that grounds be clearly presented and supported, it is likely that fewer frivolous appeals would be launched.

We would be hard pressed to find anyone who believes that the minister must continue to hold the powers he does vis-à-vis first nations elections. We certainly would not find first nation leaders saying this, and I doubt Canadians at large would take this position either.

Bill S-6 is what first nations have been asking for. It is what their members want and need. First nations recognize that a sound, open, transparent election process in an important part of a strong, stable and effective first nations governments, effective governments that respect their citizens' democratic right to be informed and to be heard, governments that respond to the priorities of their residents.

Equally essential is that with stable and legitimate first nations governments in place, first nations, businesses and municipal and provincial governments can pursue mutually beneficial projects. First nations would be able to use the income flowing from these investments to build their economies and improve the lives and livelihoods of their members. That is something that people living in first nations most definitely want.

It is now up to parliamentarians to unleash this tremendous potential by passing this worthy legislation. As we do, we will build a better future not only for first nations, but for all Canadians.

Government Orders

•(1210)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the member's speech and it was interesting to hear him talk about sound, open and transparent election processes. Although this is not my question to the member, it would be interesting to see when the government is going to bring forward its changes to the Canada Elections Act, since there were such difficulties in the last federal election.

My question to the minister is with regard to the testimony of representatives of the national aboriginal law section of the Canadian Bar Association before the Senate. When they testified before the Senate, they indicated that it was unfortunate that clause 33 states that everything will go to the Federal Court. They said that there are many recommendations for either a first nations electoral commission or a first nations tribunal to settle any election disputes and that the federal government and all provinces already have this as a regular part of democracy. They questioned why, if it is good enough for the feds and the provinces, it is not good enough for first nations.

I wonder if the member could comment on why there was not a similar kind of process recommended in the bill, instead of only a court process.

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, having lived and worked in first nations communities and witnessed first nations elections, what I have seen throughout the process, specifically under the outdated Indian Act, which goes back to 1876, is that there is a lot of corruption. I have seen first nations chiefs, past and present, campaign during their elections and provide funding or, if I could put it more bluntly, bribes of \$50 to \$100. There has to be some mechanism that looks at that problem.

That is why the framework for election appeals under the Indian Act is one of the most criticized components of that election system, particularly because it involves a paternalistic role for the minister in making decisions to remove elected officials and recommending the setting aside of elections.

One of the key criticisms of this process is simply that the minister should not play a role. In addressing appeals under Bill S-6, the creation of an independent first nations electoral appeals commission was reviewed, and there are a number of reasons that the commission was not deemed the appropriate strategy. One is that this option would require a significant amount of resources, which would be difficult to justify for an optional legislative framework. Second, the role such a commission would play in electoral appeals is questionable, particularly given that the offences and penalties provisions of Bill S-6 would be responded to and addressed by law enforcement, crown attorneys and the courts. That is what first nations are asking for: the same privileges that every other Canadian has provincially and municipally.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, would the member please outline the more important aspects of the opt-in and opt-out provisions?

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, under the Indian Act electoral system, election appeals are received and reviewed by departmental officials based on evidence gathered. If it is determined that there was a corrupt practice in connection with an election or that there was a violation of the rules that might have affected the results of the

election, the minister may recommend that the Governor in Council set aside the election. In the event of a finding of a corrupt practice, the minister may also remove elected officials and prevent them from being candidates in future elections for a period of up to five years.

I have seen this countless times. I am hearing from my constituents on first nations reserves, and currently from Ahtahkoop First Nation, that they are having problems under the old Indian Act in trying to address this current election process. That is why Bill S-6 is pivotal in trying to reform elections for first nations under the current Indian Act.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his previous answer to my question. What I heard him say was that it was too expensive to set up an electoral commission for first nations, but he said nothing about whether resources would be made available to first nations that then end up having to go to court to get this resolved. We all know that most first nations are cash-strapped.

I wonder if he could comment on the fact that this is going to be an expensive undertaking for first nations and that the Conservatives are downloading this on first nations once again.

•(1215)

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, under the current system and the current Indian Act, we see how first nations have to appeal the process. There are numerous funding mechanisms being utilized to address those corrupt or misleading elections.

We have heard from the Manitoba first nations about how they want the system to be. They have gone across Manitoba. Chief Evans has been paramount in trying to address all elections that first nations face across Canada. For one thing, if a mechanism is in place, there would be fewer corrupt practices or fewer first nations appealing the current election system. That is where money will be saved, because under Bill S-6, for first nations to participate and opt in, there will be cost savings.

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in an ideal world, there would be no need for debate on this bill. The outdated and paternalistic elements of the Indian Act governing first nations elections would no longer have any effect, because first nations would be universally self-governing. That is the goal we are all working toward.

Unfortunately, however, this is not yet the case for the majority of first nations across the country. Some communities on their way to self-government have employed different strategies, such as adopting community election codes that help them get around holding their elections under the Indian Act, but not every community has the capacity to take that on either. Others have chosen to focus their energies and resources on the many other high-priority issues that they face.

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We want to meet first nations like these halfway, by providing an alternative to the current Indian Act election system. It is an out-of-date system that has remained largely unchanged since the 1950s. It is riddled with weaknesses and problems that destabilize first nations governments. It is a system that is not only frustrating but also, in many cases, undemocratic.

It is little wonder that so many first nations have demanded another option in addition to the systems currently on offer. That is exactly what Bill S-6 would provide. It would provide another way for first nations to hold elections that is outside of the outdated election system set out in the Indian Act.

Before exploring the many benefits of this legislation, it would be helpful if I first explained a little bit about the various electoral systems currently available to first nations.

Different communities exercise different approaches to elections. At the moment, 238 first nations hold their elections under the Indian Act system. This represents about 40% of all communities. The many problems, and even abuses, under this system have been well documented in numerous reports and reinforced by various speakers during this debate.

The majority, 343 first nations, or 55% of the total across Canada, select their leadership under a community-based system. Most of these first nations develop their own community election codes to elect their leaders. For many, this system offers the essential elements of good governance: open and transparent elections and effective mechanisms for redress when necessary.

Unfortunately, that is not always the case. A small percentage of first nations with community election codes experience recurring disputes, some of which have led to breakdowns in governance, the imposition of third party management and lengthy and costly court actions between community members.

These disputes are usually based on a lack of community consensus on the actual election rules and procedures, exacerbated by the absence of a viable redress mechanism. There have been occasions when two separate election processes have been held in parallel in the same community, with those elected in each case claiming to be the legitimate and duly elected leaders. Needless to say, all of this negatively impacts community well-being and discourages economic development.

The remaining 36 first nations, or about 5%, have leadership election systems based on their community constitutions under self-government arrangements. As I mentioned earlier, this is the ultimate goal to which most first nations aspire.

As I also noted, many communities still caught with the Indian Act system may not be ready to take on self-government or even go so far as to develop community election codes. However, that does not diminish their desire to have an alternative: a fairer, more transparent and more accountable way of conducting elections on reserve.

I want to be clear that I am not talking about every first nation in the country. There is no question that there are some that seem satisfied with the status quo, while others may accept nothing less

than self-government. I can assure the House that Bill S-6 would provide a robust election system for those who may choose it.

John Paul, executive director of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs, testified on these issues before the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples.

This legislation is precisely what many communities want. People in first nations communities all across the country have told us that they want change that leads to self-government, but they want it to be built on a solid foundation. They want certainty and stability, which they do not now have.

● (1220)

What many of these first nations are looking for is what Jody Wilson-Raybould of the Assembly of First Nations described in her appearance before the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples when it examined Bill S-6. She said, "...“stepping stone” legislation, such as Bill S-6...fits into and supports a vision of moving along the continuum of governance....” That is who this legislation is for. At their request, our government has been working in collaboration with first nations partners to develop an optional legislative framework for the election of band councils that covers this middle ground.

We have followed the lead of our first nations partners, the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. They have done the necessary research and conducted consultations in their own regions as well as across the country to come up with the viable new option outlined in Bill S-6. Bill S-6 would provide an optional electoral system that would ensure transparent and accountable governments, while providing first nations with the flexibility to choose the elections system that best suits them.

Our government simply wants to create the conditions for strong, stable and effective first nations governments that are transparent and accountable to their membership. A free and fair leadership selection process promotes accountability of leaders back to their band members rather than to the Government of Canada. It is a cornerstone of greater self-government and better outcomes. Bill S-6 is a concrete step forward in that direction. It is not meant to be a one-size-fits-all remedy for all that is wrong in the existing election system under the Indian Act.

The legislation would help those first nations that choose to opt in to overcome the numerous limitations of the Indian Act election system. It is designed to address the several weaknesses identified in the AFN study on election reform in 2008, the Senate committee's 2009 study and the thorough work of the APC and the AMC, problems that are holding back too many first nations communities at a great cost to their economies and to the well-being of their citizens.

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Ideally, we would do away with the outdated Indian Act altogether. However, it cannot be replaced overnight. That would only create more problems than it solves. As the Prime Minister observed at the historic gathering, after 136 years that tree has deep roots. Blowing up the stump would just leave a big hole. We certainly do not want to do more harm than good.

The alternative is to modernize the most damaging provisions of the Indian Act. This could be achieved not by updating the Indian Act itself but by equipping first nations with new tools and mechanisms to manage their affairs. That is how we could create conditions that enable sustainable and successful first nations. As they build capacity and create the certainty necessary for investments they can unlock the untapped wealth on their lands, creating employment and improving social services for their citizens.

That is exactly what our government has been doing. We are taking important incremental steps forward to achieve the results first nations desire and that our government is determined to deliver. For example, we support Bill C-428, the Indian Act amendment and replacement act. It proposes a series of modifications to the Indian Act, some of which eliminate paternalistic sections such as those dealing with residential schools and bylaws. Other parts of the bill propose amendments that help contribute to healthier, more self-sufficient first nations communities. They dovetail with aspects of Bill S-6, which reduce ministerial involvement in community businesses. Bill C-428 would provide greater accountability and responsibility of first nations governments to their members and improve their capacity to meet the needs of their communities. This would be achieved by diminishing the role played by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development in the day-to-day lives of first nations.

• (1225)

The numerous proposed amendments to the Indian Act contained in Bill C-428 are our government's larger objective of providing first nations with the tools, resources and authorities they need to eventually transition completely out of the Indian Act.

This same objective and philosophy are at play in the First Nations Land Management Act. Prior to the enactment of the First Nations Land Management Act, first nations were hamstrung by the cumbersome land management provisions of the Indian Act. Instead of moving at the speed of business, the Indian Act slows the system to the pace of internal approval processes within the federal government. Needless to say, this often stands in the way of time-sensitive economic opportunities. Both first nations and their private sector partners complained loudly about the challenges of delayed decision-making.

The first nations land management regime enables first nations to opt out of the land resource and environmental management sections of the Indian Act. It removes many of the impediments of the outdated Indian Act, allowing for the creation of greater economic development opportunities and allowing communities to seize business development opportunities.

The legislation gives first nations that opt into the program the freedom to manage reserve lands under their own land codes. They can also negotiate contracts and enter into joint ventures with other

communities, governments and with the private sector without ministerial approval.

Chief Ann Louie of the Williams Lake Indian Band in B.C., one of the first nations that opted in to the First Nations Land Management Act, is on record as saying, "It represents almost freedom, getting into self-governance away from the Indian Act so that we can manage our own lands so that our people can become prosperous and develop economically." Her enthusiasm is backed by studies of the regime by KPMG. It has concluded that in addition to increased job creation on reserves in communities that utilize it, the First Nations Land Management Act option is proving to be a practical step toward self-government.

The First Nations Fiscal and Statistical Management Act is another example of legislation that diminishes the minister's role for communities seeking greater control over their financial affairs. The legislation provides an alternative avenue to the Indian Act for first nations determined to achieve self-sufficiency. It allows first nations to develop a sophisticated, transparent and responsive property tax system on reserve. It also creates a securitized first nations bond regime that gives them access to municipal-style financing to invest in infrastructure on reserve. And it supports first nations' capacity in financial management, all of which support economic development.

Communities that choose to utilize its provisions can draw on the services and supports of the first nations institutions created under the act. As they do, outside investors can proceed with confidence and first nations can negotiate from positions of strength because the act provides the type of certainty that is lacking under the Indian Act.

The improvements contained in the acts I have talked about today have come about at the request of first nations that want greater control over their communities' day-to-day activities. We have been listening, and we are acting.

Bill S-6 is yet another piece to join the family of legislation to support first nations by offering a legislative alternative to first nations elections that would not involve the minister. It would provide the foundations for more stable and effective first nations governments through longer terms of office. With four years between elections, first nations governments would be able to work with potential partners for longer term development opportunities that would bring prosperity.

Bill S-6 fits with what other legislative initiatives have done, which is to provide alternatives to the Indian Act for willing first nations on important subject matters. These acts lay the groundwork and provide the frameworks for first nations to be successful, and successful first nations means a better quality of life for their members.

Bill S-6 is opt-in legislation. First nations could choose to adopt it or not to adopt it as they see fit.

Government Orders

•(1230)

From Bill S-6 to Bill C-428, these examples of modern legislation that empower first nations send a strong signal. We are focusing the federal role to that of an enabler rather than that of an impediment to progress. Our government is committed to putting an end to the historic isolation of first nation communities that has marginalized these members of our society for far too long.

Step-by-step, bill-by-bill, we are responding to first nations calls for greater decision-making powers and less ministerial involvement. In the process, we are creating the conditions for strong, effective and accountable governments for first nation communities. We are providing first nations with the tools they need to become more self-sufficient as they work their way toward self-government.

It is now up to us, as parliamentarians, to take the next step forward on this path of steady progress. We must support first nations, which are demanding change. We are calling for all-party support to unleash the tremendous potential of Bill S-6, the latest in a series of legislative reforms that remove the shackles of the Indian Act for those first nations that opt to take advantage of its new authorities.

I am asking all members to join us in our efforts to help first nation communities achieve their goals, for the benefit of their residents and our country as a whole.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech, but I have some concerns. It was very clear from my discussions and my hon. colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan's interventions with first nations people that not every community acknowledges or buys into what the Conservatives are putting forward. There are legitimate concerns.

I am wondering if the member could advise the House as to what degree the government is willing to acknowledge those concerns and sit down with first nations to resolve issues that affect communities across this country.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I think the member has missed a very key component of this legislation, and that is the fact that this is an opt-in system. It is an opportunity for those first nations that choose to participate in this alternative method. As I outlined in my speech, there are a number of different ways.

Certainly there are about 40% of bands that participate under the current Indian Act process. There are a larger number of reserves which have community election codes. However, this is an opportunity for those first nations that wish to have another alternative. It removes the minister from the appeals process. It gives an opportunity for those willing first nations that want to opt into this type of a process with an opportunity to do just that.

•(1235)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across has spoken about the need to incrementally wean ourselves from the Indian Act. I am in favour of getting rid of the Indian Act now, biting the bullet and making all the necessary changes that we need to do. Why is there this incremental approach? Why is it going to be stretched over possibly

decades, as opposed to attacking this situation which is unacceptable now and going much further than what is being proposed?

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, in response to the member's question, I should point to something I mentioned in my speech. It was a quote from the Prime Minister, who basically said that we cannot take the tree, remove it and blow up the stump because it would leave a big hole. We are moving in steps and creating opportunities and options for first nations governments that choose to do so. Whether it would be looking at new opportunities for economic development creation on reserves through changes to the land management reserves, or whether they would be able to opt into another alternative for elections processes, we would get to where we need to be in an orderly and coherent fashion. I believe that is the approach we need to take.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the methods that can be used to determine whether or not a band wants to opt in is a referendum.

Would the member please explain to this House what possible drawbacks there might be to that method?

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, any time that citizens have an opportunity to make their own choices about their government, obviously that is always something we want to see. I believe that opportunity would be welcomed by first nations members all across this country.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although we certainly support the four-year election term under this legislation, there are a number of other parts of the legislation that are ill-defined. We have to look to other instances where people cannot trust what is in legislation. I look to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its ongoing dispute with the government over relevant documents.

In this piece of legislation, clause 41 sets out the regulation process. This regulation process is important because it covers the appointment, powers, duties and removal of electoral officers and deputy electoral officers, the manner of identifying electors of a participating first nations and so on. There are a number of very important clauses that regulations would define.

Nowhere in this piece of legislation is the process outlined by which first nations will be included in the development of regulations. At least in Bill S-8, the clean drinking water bill, in the preamble it said "working with first nations". However, it does not say that anywhere in this act.

I wonder if the member could address specifically how first nations would be included in the development of regulations.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I will once again remind the NDP member that this is an opt-in process for those bands which choose to do so.

I was glad to hear the hon. member mention in her comments that the NDP support the idea of the four-year terms. The instability created by short two-year terms of office can be problematic for first nations communities.

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I wonder if the NDP also supports some of the other things that the bill would fix. With regard to the lack of rigour in the process to nominate candidates, often frivolous nominations are invited, making for excessively long slates of candidates. There have sometimes been over 100 candidates for positions. Does the NDP support the removal of the paternalistic elections appeals process that involves the department and affords decision-making powers to the minister?

The system now is vulnerable to abuse and to fraudulent activities because of the absence of defined offences and associated penalties that act as a deterrent. I would certainly hope that the NDP is supportive of those measures in the bill—

• (1240)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few things that have come up that I think are key are the willingness to opt in and the incremental versus do-it-all-now approach.

I would ask my colleague about the power of the example that might be set by willing and progressive first nations to those who are not quite so enthusiastic or perhaps not so progressive. Such an example could speed up the process that may start as incremental. It might pick up speed if there were good examples presented by those who are willing and progressive enough to adopt this program.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question and it hits on a very key aspect. Certainly with regard to this incremental approach we are doing as far as working toward changes that would help improve conditions and create new opportunities for those in first nations communities, I would look at things like the changes to land management. There is a number of first nations communities which are very excited about the potential economic developments that could occur there. It would mean jobs for members in first nations communities, which would mean improvements. When we look at some of the more progressive first nations that have taken some of these opportunities and worked toward economic development initiatives, there are some great success stories.

The member is right in saying that those kinds of opportunities, when they are taken, and the examples of the success stories that are out there, would incite and encourage other first nations to follow in those footsteps. I believe that is where the opportunities would be for improvements of the lives of those in first nations communities.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I wonder how the Conservatives feel about some of the alleged legal difficulties of one of their former candidates when they are talking about selection of candidates.

The former chief of Lac La Ronge Indian Band, Tammy Cook-Searson, raised some concerns with regard to the process of first nations being forced into courts whenever there is a dispute around the electoral process. I wonder if the member could comment on the fact that this act does not specifically allow for either an independent tribunal or an electoral commission, similar to what federal and provincial governments have in place.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, what this in fact does is to take the paternalistic parts of an election appeal out of the process.

It takes those decision-making powers away from the minister and the Governor in Council. Those changes are a very key aspect of the bill. I would remind the member of that, and certainly hope there is support from that side on the issue as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to begin, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Windsor West.

We are looking at the election and term of office of chiefs and councillors of certain first nations, with emphasis on the word “certain”. I will be speaking to my own reality at the 52nd parallel and that of the five Innu and Naskapi communities in my riding.

A debate on the election and term of office of chiefs and councillors of certain first nations is an appropriate time for sharing realities that Canadians still know nothing about. I should say that it was honourable of the government to include the notion of corrupt practice in connection with elections when drafting this bill. It gives us an opportunity to discuss the notions of influence peddling, lobbying, conflict of interest and financial wrongdoing. I will therefore be making reference to those notions.

Over the past two years of my current term, I have shared with Canadians some realities that are far too often ignored. The truth is that the national media and the media in general have an editorial policy that means that the public does not hear about certain first nations realities. One reason is that the issues are restricted to reserves, another is that there is an agenda dictating the kind of news that is reported about Indian reserves.

In my speech today, I will make Canadians aware of the financial and political wrongdoing that is found on certain reserves. More often than not, the key players involved are off the reserves and outside the clan dynamic. As always, I will speak to my own reality.

I have mentioned this many times before, but far too often, shysters lurk around Indian reserves, including all kinds of lawyers, professionals, anthropologists and all kinds of people claiming to be “first nation specialists”. This is seen most often on Indian reserves that are rich in natural resources, because resource extraction is a very lucrative business. In fact, keeping Indian reserves at a certain cultural, social and educational level allows the work to be done in obscurity and with impunity. That is why there is political interference during the election of the chief and councillors.

As a lawyer and a member of Parliament, my services have been requested many times over the past few years. People have told me about situations involving influence peddling and wrongdoing in connection with band council elections. My reputation as a whistleblower has probably reached certain isolated communities because I have had to deal with several dozen of these cases recently, including in my own community.

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It seems there was some interference by mining companies during the last tribal election at home. Currently, at the 52nd parallel, "extractivist" measures are being introduced. In other words, natural resource extraction is perceived as the only driver of economic development. The mining companies and various lobbies are putting their pawns in place in the band councils. That is why some community members have gradually distanced themselves from democratic life on reserve and even nationally.

People in the communities are disillusioned, and voter turnout for democratic elections on reserves is very low. I proved that wrong when I was elected, since 4,000 Indians voted for me. Many of them had never voted before. I had to get out there. People likely felt I had integrity because of my reputation and my youth. That is why people voted for me, and I think I represent them well here.

Although the situations I have repeatedly denounced in my speeches are not generalized, I will focus on my own reality and talk about the reserves in my riding. Because I saw these issues come up in both my legal and political experience, I would like to talk about the harmful socio-political effect they can have on tribal life.

● (1245)

I said that first nations members have no interest in or choose not to participate in democratic measures. The Conservatives often say that they conducted a consultation and that only 15 people showed up. I have heard that a lot. Even before the Conservatives that was often the easy answer. They would say that very few Indians showed up, so why should they invest all that money to go meet 15 people?

That is the reality. Few people show up because they are disillusioned. Some people have gradually become disinterested as a result of repeated abuse over generations, wrongdoing and the lack of transparency in tribal politics. It exists in Canada too; we preach by example.

Although this bill contains some interesting measures, we also need an independent process to investigate, challenge and question the government's tribal measures. This will require investigative powers and the necessary personnel. Since reserves tend to be tough to penetrate, this will take some specialized individuals.

When I met with Indian Affairs officials to discuss this bill, they told me that, ultimately, it would be up to the RCMP to conduct investigations on the reserves and to track down those who commit abuses. Knowing full well that the RCMP is already overstretched and that this is a rather specialized field because of the closed nature of Indian reserves, it is my humble opinion that the RCMP will have to be granted supplementary funding and that some staff will have to be assigned exclusively to this matter, not only for elections on reserves, but also for economic abuses in the broader sense, because there are some.

The succession of statutory measures drafted and unilaterally introduced by this government during the current mandate shows how important it is for people to be involved in and contribute to the democratic process in this country. I am going to talk about the importance of that. In fact, citizen assertiveness, by Indians and Canadian citizens as a whole, is viewed as a barrier to economic expansion. That is why the Conservatives are currently taking every back-door measure possible to ensure that the public is ultimately

not consulted. When you consult people, they have the opportunity to agree with a project or to oppose it. I am well aware that the Conservatives fear public opposition and mobilization more than anything else. That is why no effort has been put into the census to truly seek the public's opinion.

The same type of reasoning applies to aboriginal issues because aboriginal assertiveness is also perceived as a barrier to economic expansion. That is deplorable and utterly reprehensible. The true barrier to economic expansion is not citizen assertiveness, but rather a lack of transparency. If people were transparent, there would be no reluctance to consult the public.

Although the bill before us provides for the codification of offences and penalties under which charges may be laid and penalties imposed for any fraudulent activity related to elections, it is apparent from my discussions with the various stakeholders and legal experts in this matter—and there are a lot of them—that they are unclear about what entity will have investigative authority and about the actual scope of the coercive power that will then be exercised. I was briefly told that the courts could hear this matter at trial, but more user-friendly measures that are more tailored to first nations will be necessary. More user-friendly measures will be needed so that people can finally share their opinions and speak out against the abuses, particularly given the literacy problems as I understand them and see them on a daily basis in my community.

This is a major investigative task. At the risk of repeating myself, substantial funding will have to be allocated. Staff will have to be assigned exclusively to this case if we ultimately want the RCMP to investigate it.

Lastly, although the bill addresses certain aspects in a way that suggests an improvement in the first nations electoral system, it does not directly address the Indian Act. Under the proposed provisions, the minister would be able to determine the future of a band without consultation, for a change, which violates the principle of self-government.

I will now let the House absorb all that.

● (1250)

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for that speech. I know he was pointing to some challenges in first nation communities with elections. However, we know in Canada that in the last federal election there were a number of challenges for Canadians, with low voter turnout, robocalls and some MPs being under investigation for allegedly not following the Elections Canada spending rules.

Government Orders

With regard to first nations, this piece of legislation would only provide for courts as a remedy. There would be no provision in this piece of legislation to have an independent tribunal or a commission, like Elections Canada, for first nations.

I wonder if he would comment on the fact that for many first nations the cost would be prohibitive if they have to end up in courts to dispute elections rather than having that independent process.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I mentioned more user-friendly methods. Ultimately, our critic in this area obviously has a clearer idea than I of the form that will take.

We will really need a kind of parallel tribunal assigned exclusively to aboriginal matters, not simply election-related issues. Too often I mention the idea of puppet governments. I know perfectly well that pawns are put in power on reserves by lobbies, but also by the governments that have succeeded one another here and that always make sure they choose who they deal with. That is probably why, even though this bill addresses some essential concepts, it nevertheless transfers responsibility to the law courts.

That may be off-putting for some, particularly considering the burden of proof associated with it and all the subtleties of the legal system in this country. Some first nations members might view all this as an obstacle to the exercise of their most basic rights.

I submit all that to you.

• (1255)

[English]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have noticed a pattern with the official opposition. That is that those members seem to oppose all the reforms we are trying to bring forward, from what we are talking about today to matrimonial rights for first nations women and children.

It just seems that the NDP is opposing for the sake of opposing and is not being very helpful in working with the government to come up with solutions. Perhaps the member can explain how his party's members could possibly have voted against the matrimonial rights bill, and it seems as if they are going to vote against this one too.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I gave the government credit at the outset when I mentioned that it had included fraudulent election-related activities. Coming from the government, I think that is a major step forward and I therefore congratulate it today.

The current situation is also as follows: we have to be consistent with the position expressed by many stakeholders in the field, many organizations that work with aboriginal communities. They say there is too much government interference under this particular bill. However, we have suggested potential solutions that can be introduced on third reading. There could be an amendment, and everyone would be happy; I would be pleased to support it, provided

certain problems are identified and certain comments that have been made are taken into account.

The problem is that the concept of consultation is being disregarded and the government is not seeking the first nations' consent before unilaterally imposing legislation on them, which is highly reprehensible. However, the government has nevertheless made progress with this bill, and I give it credit for that; it is now on the right track. It should therefore continue on this path, and I will be here to support it.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to contribute to the debate about this issue. It is a very important one for our aboriginal and first nations peoples.

One of the first things I thought about is my good friend who passed away, Earl Scofield, who was a senator. He flew 17 missions in a turret during the Second World War and later on came back to Canada, where he contributed not only socially but politically. He was involved as a founding New Democrat and also contributed many volunteer hours across the community, as a veteran and also as a citizen in our community. I could not help but think about some of the lessons he taught me about inclusion, the importance of listening at times and at times making sure to take the advice of others. Sadly, the government has not done that.

I thought about my own community and its relationship with the aboriginal communities in actually founding this country. There was Chief Tecumseh, who assisted Sir Isaac Brock of the British forces in defeating General Hull in Michigan to ensure our country would be born. There was co-operation. At that time it led to quite a significant quote by Sir Isaac Brock. Talking about Chief Tecumseh, he said, "A more sagacious or a more gallant warrior does not, I believe, exist". That showed the level of developed maturity and relationship of trust that was created there.

It is important to talk a bit about process and then get into the bill. It is interesting that we have the unelected, unaccountable Senate as the kick-start to the bill, none of whose members has the same type of accountability as those in the House do and as others who are elected in the country do. That is unfortunate because often when bills come through the House it allows the elected body to move the bill through the proper process and channels.

In the past in this Parliament, closure has been moved many times and committees have been moved shorter than would allow for what could be done in terms of analysis. Bill S-6 is now going through this process. That is rather unfortunate.

It was interesting as well that one of the members on the government side said the government has introduced Bill S-6 for this, and meanwhile other bills that have been passed in this chamber, such as Bill C-290, the sports betting bill, languish in the Senate. It was passed with unanimous consent in this House, as no members decided to rise during any of the process to oppose it, to force a vote. It went unanimously to the Senate and it still sits there today. It seems we have our processes backed up and backwards. It is important if the House ever wants to get back on track that we look at those issues and a more balanced approach to processing legislation.

Government Orders

Bill S-6 would create an election cycle longer than two years. That is something important. One of the things we heard was that, when there is a controversy or contestation of an election, a two-year turnaround time is not enough because it could take that amount of time to actually do a full-out investigation. As my colleague pointed out, with the limited resources of the RCMP and the technical nature of these types of investigations, they could take a long time and be very burdensome.

Therefore, moving to the four-year element is something we could support. It has also been something consistent with other types of democracies. For example, in recent years city councils in Ontario moved from a three-year cycle to a four-year cycle, giving extra time for governance. That is important because with the turnover that can take place and the types and intensities of campaigns, they can be quite a distraction from actually getting some of the work done that needs to be done.

I point south of the border, where some of the U.S. elections are held every two years. I know from congress and senate that some of those that are on a two-year cycle for governance are literally fundraising constantly for their campaigns. Therefore, moving to the four-year cycle is something that could provide some greater stability and some improvements, and it is something we do support.

There would also be the ability to have a common election date, giving the minister of aboriginal affairs the power to order the first nations with community-designed elections to adhere to new regimes. It would also provide for election appeals through courts rather than through the department of aboriginal affairs. There would also be penalties for breaking election rules, and penalties are important.

First nations initially supported the bill, but here is the catching point. They asked for some amendments related specifically to the opt-in and other amendments as well. They have decided they cannot universally support the bill now.

• (1300)

The bill is just the beginning of what needs to be changed in the Indian Act.

I want to touch on the three election methods. The first is an election according to the provisions of the Indian Act. I will get into the problems later. The second is a community-designed or custom election whereby a first nation is allowed to adopt its own rules for an election rather than follow the Indian Act provisions if it has always been recognized by the federal government as selecting leaders by custom or if it submits written codes, approved by the majority of band members, for the approval of the department. Last is according to the provisions of a self-government agreement. Therefore, three different styles of elections that can take place.

The first, which was enacted under the original Indian Act, has caused several problems over the years on a wide range of social and justice issues that I cannot even get into, given their degree. They have gone on for many years.

The Indian Act displaces first nations' traditional political cultures and political systems. It actually intervenes in some of the existing cultural systems that have been in place, thus undermining them.

The Indian Act created the two-year election cycle. As I noted, and I think it is important, a two-year election cycle is not a lot of time for members and their councils to work together to create good governing environments. Having four years would be a benefit to all.

As well, right now, the minister and the Governor in Council have a significant degree of power over a first nation's elections and governance structures, including being able to determine the size of the council. It is critical that band councils have more flexibility with regard to the size of the governance structure they want. This is done in other governing systems, whether it be the House of Commons or in municipalities in Ontario. Again, the size can be worked on by the government.

The appeals process is lengthy and lacks rigour. As well, there are a number of other issues for which the Indian Act has not been a proficient and effective way of having these types of relationships.

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs is opposed to this and have asked for the opt-in process to be changed. Here I would quote Aimée Craft, chair of the national aboriginal law section of the Canadian Bar Association:

[D]ealing with the level of ministerial discretion to include First Nations in the schedule of participating First Nations, this changes the opt-in nature of the legislation. It continues minister discretion to exercise control over First Nations governance and it would result in some First Nations being subjects of the act rather than participants. In addition, the bill lacks clarity as to the standard that the minister will apply in making determinations about what constitutes a protracted leadership dispute that has significantly compromised the governance of a First Nation.

To conclude, it is important to go back to the fact that the Conservative government has not done its due diligence on the inclusion of the aboriginal organizations and first nations that are affected by this act. We have heard from my colleague on the lack of outreach and the fact that it is very difficult to pull people out to meetings, because the trust is not there, the confidence that something will get done is not there, and the actions taken that would affect members of first nations and their families will not be in their best interests. We cannot blame that situation for the evolution that has taken place over a number of years and different circumstances.

I want to thank our critic on this issue for the very important work that has been done. The Indian Act needs extensive work. This type of half-effort is not sufficient for our partners out there who feel that they would like to have some changes. I hope the amendments called for can take place so that we can have more support and buy-in from those affected.

Government Orders

• (1305)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Windsor West for his comments. One of those comments was on the fact that the bill, like many of the other bills that impact on aboriginal issues, originated in the Senate. Of course, as the member pointed out, it is unelected and unaccountable.

One of the previous members talked about wanting this piece of legislation to ensure a sound, open and transparent process for elections in first nations communities. Of course, what we have recently seen on the Canadian electoral scene is that many Canadians feel that the last federal election, in particular, was not sound, not transparent and not accountable.

I wonder if the member could comment on the difference in accountability first nations would be held to, because they do not have access to an independent tribunal or electoral commission whereas Canadians in the federal and provincial systems do have an electoral commission. I wonder if he could talk about the difference he sees.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that with this piece of legislation, the minister and the Governor in Council would still have far too much power compared to us, who at least have the Chief Electoral Officer who can bring some public accountability to cases.

We have had a number of situations that have taken place that need to be pointed out. We had the robocalls in the last election. We had a member in the House who overspent prior to his election. He had to go back to the people, and he lost his seat. Now we have other Conservative members, in the same situation, who are in a fight with the Chief Electoral Officer.

At least there is that process we can appeal to, and at least there is that process Canadians have, under law, that will be taken up.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am amazed that the NDP members seem to oppose for the sake of opposing.

There is a recognition that there are positive items in this bill. It is an opt-in situation. However, the NDP members oppose it. They oppose matrimonial rights, and if they had their druthers, they would deny rights to aboriginal women that every other woman in the country has. They always fall on the issue of process.

However, is not right right? Sometimes are things not just self-evident and we can move forward, such as having equal rights among all Canadians?

• (1310)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I think the difference is that we listened. We listened and we acted according to what we were being advised. That is the difference. There is nothing amazing about listening and then trying to find a common solution, at the end of the day. That is the difference. If we can actually find that common solution and work to get to that ground, we will have better legislation for all of us. We listened.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like him to comment on something. From what I understand, as a bill evolves, it usually improves. It should be better and enjoy increasingly broad support. Yet, it seems that even though first nations were at first quite supportive of this bill, this is no longer true of the latest version we have before us. Apparently they also suggested a number of amendments but struggled to be heard.

Are aboriginal communities now suffering the same fate as the parliamentary committees on the Hill, namely lack of attention, no consultation, and the total dismissal of any proposed amendments to improve the bill?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question from my friend and colleague.

The reality is that if we look at the omnibus budget bills that have had legislation in them, they have not had proper study. I would point to the Investment Canada Act, which for the third time is being changed in a budget bill, because it has been botched so many times because it has not gone to the committee properly. It has not gone through the due diligence process.

There is common ground we could work on. That is the whole point of bringing in experts and bringing in people to help work on legislation. Even on my own private member's bills I have done that. When we brought in people on my right to repair bill, it made it better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume debate and recognize the hon. member for Brampton West, I will just let him know that there are about six minutes remaining in the time allocated for debate on the motion before the House. He will be able to judge his time accordingly.

The hon. member for Brampton West.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would love to have a full 20 minutes to talk about this exceptional piece of legislation, but I will accept the six minutes we have left here today.

This is another great bill. Bill S-6, the first nations elections act, is another great piece of legislation on an issue that concerns first nations Canadians. It is another great bill, much like the bill for safe drinking water we recently passed in the House. It goes back to things such as Yale, which was recently passed by the House, and the northern jobs and growth act. We have brought forward a suite of legislation designed to assist first nations in moving forward on many fronts.

Government Orders

When we talk about this particular piece of legislation, the first nations elections act, it is very important to note that this is, by definition, truly a grassroots bill. Why would I say that? It is because it was actually initiated and brought forward by two groups in this country: the AMC and the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs. They were looking at ways to reform the election process as it exists under the Indian Act.

What does that mean? They decided that they wanted to have a broad-based and significant consultation on how we could design some electoral reforms that would assist first nations in their governance. What did they do? I can tell the House that they had extensive consultations with first nations. For example, between January and March 2010, then-grand chief Ron Evans travelled to almost every first nation in Manitoba that holds elections under the Indian Act. At the time, there were 37. He held engagement sessions with these communities to find out the kinds of things they would like to see in this legislation.

A similar format was followed by the Atlantic Policy Congress. They had the same kinds of discussions in their own region. They went from community to community and spoke to chiefs. They asked what they would like to see to reform elections for first nations that have their elections governed by the Indian Act. That is the critical thing we have to look at when we look at this particular piece of legislation. This has been driven by first nations communities themselves. By far, the vast majority of the things in this piece of legislation are things brought forward and asked for by first nations communities.

When the first set of recommendations came forward, the AMC and the APC were asked to partner on a national engagement effort to present their recommendations to first nations across the country. Then-grand chief Ron Evans met with first nations organizations in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. He also wrote to every chief and council in Canada elected under the Indian Act. When we talk about the kind of input and consultation that took place with respect to this particular piece of legislation, we can see that this is an enormous amount of consultation.

The other thing that is important when we talk about this particular piece of legislation is that it is opt-in legislation. The difference between that and another piece of legislation is that first nations communities can choose if they want to opt in to this particular piece of legislation. When we combine the fact that it is opt-in legislation with the fact that there was extensive consultation with first nations communities, I can say that this is an exceptional piece of legislation that is going to do a lot of good for first nations communities.

Of course, one of the things they looked at in the legislation was moving the election from every two years to every four years. That just makes sense. Here in the House of Commons, when there is a majority government, there is an election around every four years. For first nations communities that have their elections operate under the Indian Act, it is every two years. We can think about the kinds of things that become difficult when we look at a two-year horizon versus a four-year horizon. It is much more difficult for them to make some of those longer-term plans that are so necessary for good governance, because they end up in a cycle of having another

election so soon after the previous one and they need to start thinking about re-election.

• (1315)

This will be a significant step forward for first nations communities. It will also allow a new, modern and transparent electoral regime for first nations. Why is that important? One has to look at the things one needs, which are good governance and good elections. That will lead to stronger communities. First nations will have a better sense of how their communities will be governed and they will know when elections will take place. It will, in my view, increase accountability and transparency.

I wish I had more time and look forward to perhaps speaking to this legislation in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 1:19 p.m., pursuant to an order made Tuesday, June 11 it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

• (1320)

NOT CRIMINALLY RESPONSIBLE REFORM ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-54, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (mental disorder), as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is not present to move her motions at report stage. Therefore, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to Bill C-54 report stage amendments. In this regard I hope to be brief and I raise the matter, not to secure a ruling from you, Mr. Speaker, but rather for the completeness of the record and so you may take the matter under advisement in conjunction with the Clerk for further action as you both deem appropriate.

Government Orders

Briefly, Bill C-54 completed clause-by-clause review at committee Wednesday evening. I began contemplating report stage amendments immediately thereafter and made a request with the Legislative Counsel for the preparation of amendments with the belief that report stage would begin the House on Tuesday. On Friday, it became clear the debate would actually begin at report stage on Monday, today, and thus the amendments were needed by 2 p.m. Friday to comply with the exigencies of Standing Order 54. This was communicated by my office to the clerks preparing the amendments requested.

As I fully appreciate and understand, the amendments I sought were complex from a drafting point of view. Indeed, while I sought that one concept removed from the bill, this alone required the drafting of 32 separate motions to ensure that the statute would be intelligible if the House were to agree with this initiative. Unfortunately, it seems that the revised version of the bill, reflecting committee amendments, was not immediately available to counsel working on my amendments and as a result of the changed deadline, I was not provided with the amendments I requested before the Friday deadline had passed.

Indeed, I only received some of the amendments back this morning. I do not wish to fault anyone for this. Counsel could only work with the correct clause numbers after the bill had been reported since there were amendments. While I am making this point, I want to comment and commend all the hard-working individuals involved in the law clerk's office, in particular, Wendy Gordon, Marie Beauchemin, Anita Eapen and Doug Ward for their excellence and dedication. I know they are often underappreciated, particularly when asked to, as is often the case at report stage, draft amendments only to have them found inadmissible for procedural reasons.

As such, while there is a privilege issue to be advanced here because had my amendments been timely and ruled admissible, I could speak to them this morning, I simply wish to request that the Speaker and Clerk look into ensuring that the law clerk and parliamentary counsel have the staff and resources they require to complete the drafting task within the tight deadlines that I think only arise in exceptional circumstances such as this one.

While you look into this, Mr. Speaker, I would also ask that you investigate whether the e-notice system could be expanded to work with more browsers. While I acknowledge that I do not understand fully the technology terms, I gather that when the motions were received by my staff, they were unable to upload the amendments on my behalf remotely due to compatibility issues with e-notices and Firefox Chrome.

I realize these amendments, which for those curious would have removed the high risk designation and all references to it, may never yet see the notice paper. Indeed, they might have been ruled inadmissible upon introduction. That said, it is unfortunate that this situation occurred given the seriousness, yet complexity of my request and related deadlines involved.

I would therefore ask that you, Mr. Speaker, take the matter under advisement, while again expressing our support, and I believe all parliamentarians would join me in this for the hard work and dedication of the law clerk and parliamentary counsel's office.

Before I conclude, I am told that the only way these amendments could yet be considered, despite delay notice, which as I explained was unavoidable, is through unanimous consent. Therefore, and so that the hard work of the drafters involved is not completely forgotten, and the amendments proposed, I move: That notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House in relation to the report stage of Bill C-54, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (mental disorder), that the notice requirement in relation to the 32 motions submitted to the Table by the member for Mount Royal be waived and that those motions that the Speaker would normally find admissible and selected at report stage be included for consideration at this same stage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I thank the hon. member for Mount Royal for his intervention. On the first item, the request, I will certainly take that matter under advisement and get back to the House if necessary.

On the request for unanimous consent, does the hon. member for Mount Royal have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

• (1325)

Hon. Steven Fletcher (for the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada) moved that Bill C-54, as amended, be concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When shall the bill be read a third time. By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (for the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada) moved that the bill be read a third time and passed.

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate in support of Bill C-54, the not criminally responsible reform act.

The bill would ensure the mental disorder regime under part XX.1 of the Criminal Code, which deals with persons found not criminally responsible, NCR, for their actions, would be mindful and responsive of the needs of victims. In my view, Bill C-54 would indeed reflect the voices of victims from across the country.

During the review of the bill, the Standing Committee for Justice and Human Rights received important submissions from several victims. In my remarks, I will be reviewing and reflecting on these submissions.

Government Orders

While the committee hearings demonstrated that victims had diverse perspectives about the NCR regime and even Bill C-54 itself, it was equally clear that the bill would address key concerns of victims and would include public safety, victim participation and the overall confidence and the administration of justice, while also respecting the rights of NCR accused.

On June 3, the justice committee heard from two victims who had lost loved ones due to tragic circumstances involving an NCR accused. These two brave women travelled to Ottawa to share their stories with the committee. They had experienced first hand the current way in which victims were dealt with following an NCR verdict and agreed that changes were necessary for the system.

One explained how members of the family had an encounter with the NCR accused who was involved in their case while out shopping in the community. She explained how this encounter had impacted her family and how the provisions of Bill C-54, with regard to the involvement and notification of victims, would go a long way in helping the victims.

Needless to say, she supported Bill C-54.

One of the core victim protections contained in the bill, the availability of no-contact orders, would help ensure that families like hers would have increased confidence in their safety as NCR accused were reintegrated into the community. No-contact orders, as proposed in clause 10 of the bill, can be imposed by either a court or a review board if it is desirable in the interests of security or safety of persons including victims.

These orders would prohibit an NCR accused from communicating directly, or indirectly, with victims or from going to specific places in the order, such as within the vicinity of the victim's residence. This is a targeted and important measure that should be supported.

The second victim who appeared at committee also expressed support for Bill C-54. She was very concerned that victims simply did not have enough information provided to them about the NCR accused, especially if the accused was released from secure custody.

In addition, she highlighted the importance of protecting the safety of the public through the NCR regime. She noted that while it was true that NCR accused were not criminals, in some cases, NCR accused did commit violent acts. There needs to be adequate safeguards in place to ensure that victims like her and her family, as well as the general public, are protected from such persons.

The availability of the "high-risk" designation in Bill C-54 would respond to this concern. Clause 12 of the bill proposes that where the court is satisfied there is a substantial likelihood that the accused will use violence that can endanger the life or safety of another person or where the court is of the opinion that the act constitutes the offence of such brutal nature as to indicate the risk of grave physical or psychological harm to another person, the court may designate an NCR accused as high risk.

The designation would increase the safeguards on that person to both ensure protection of the public safety and to ensure that the person would obtain the treatment that he or she would require to no longer present a threat to society. If treatment were successful and

the risk was no longer present, Bill C-54 would require that designation be removed.

This provision is an appropriate response to address the concerns of these victims and will help ensure that the small number of NCR accused who pose such a high risk to the public safety will be subject to the appropriate and necessary restrictions on his or her liberty in order to protect the public.

I believe Bill C-54 maintains the crucial distinction between persons who are morally culpable for their conduct and found guilty and persons found NCR whose illness at the time of the offence rendered them incapable of appreciating the nature and quality of their actions or of knowing what they were doing was wrong.

The government also acknowledges that while providing mental health services generally falls within provincial and not federal jurisdiction, the government has taken concrete measures in this area. For example, it has increased transfer payments to these levels of government, through the Canada health and social transfer, and also has supported the creation of the Mental Health Commission of Canada to help combat the stigma of mental illness.

● (1330)

At its June 10 meeting, the justice committee had the opportunity to hear from more victims. One victim, speaking on behalf of her cousin, shared the heartbreaking story of her family's loss. No doubt, it was very difficult for her to make this presentation and one that was difficult for committee members to listen to.

But her insights were invaluable. She emphasized that the current process of annual review hearings of an NCR accused disposition has had the effect of re-victimizing her family. In particular, the annual review hearing process for assessing the disposition of an NCR accused, at least in serious cases such as her family's where the underlying act was the killing of three children, has made it more difficult to heal. Every time her cousin, the mother of those children, begins to make some progress a yearly review comes up. In her particular case, the month of review is also the anniversary of the tragedy. This particular example illustrates why Bill C-54's victim-related reforms to the NCR regime in the Criminal Code are necessary.

Clause 15 of Bill C-54 aims to address the concern raised by this victim by empowering review boards to extend the time for holding a hearing in respect of a high-risk NCR accused to up to 36 months if the review board is satisfied that the person's condition is not likely to improve and the detention remains necessary for that time period.

Government Orders

This longer review period may also be imposed with the consent of all parties, including the NCR accused. This measure respects the rights of the NCR accused as it would continue to be based on an individualized assessment of treatment, progress and circumstances. However, it would also allow, in appropriate cases, for review periods to better align with realistic medical expectations regarding a particular NCR accused and in so doing, reduces the burden on victims.

This proposal would also respond to the concerns of the final victim who appeared before justice committee on June 10. He described his frustrations with the NCR progress. Bill C-54 would increase the flexibility and discretion for review boards in determining the appropriate review period for high-risk accused. This should help put victims at greater ease that painful hearings would be held at sufficient intervals to ensure that they are meaningful and enough time has elapsed to ensure how a high-risk accused has responded to treatment received in forensic care.

Also on June 10 the committee was able to hear from a victim via teleconference. This victim explained how his brother and his brother's spouse were killed by a person who was later found to be NCR. The victim explained how after the incident he was not informed of key information about the process and the disposition of the NCR accused. This lack of information added to his feeling of powerlessness and victimization.

While every victim is different and not all want to be involved in subsequent proceedings, for this person it was very important to his healing that he be afforded the chance to learn about and participate in the process. He also expressed how not knowing when the NCR accused was released caused his family, and particularly his parents, to feel unsafe. As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, the no-contact provision proposed by Bill C-54 would help families such as these victims to feel safer.

More than that though, Bill C-54 would also enhance the quality of the information provided to victims and ensure that they would be able to properly observe and participate in proceedings following an NCR verdict. For example, Bill C-54 would make it mandatory for courts and review boards to inform victims of their right to make a victim impact statement before an initial disposition is made or if a high-risk NCR accused designation is referred to a court for review.

Bill C-54 would also require, at the victim's request, that victims receive a notice of discharge from the review board if the NCR accused receives an absolute or conditional discharge.

By strengthening the information and participation rights of victims, Bill C-54 would go a long way toward addressing the concerns that were raised at the justice and human rights committee.

Also on June 10, a further victim addressed justice committee and shared with members the devastation caused to her family by the death of her stepfather after he was killed by a person found NCR. She expressed unqualified support for Bill C-54. In her view, public safety has to be more clearly set out as a central value in the legislation that deals with NCR accused. She expressed concern and fear for her family and the families of others in the future, particularly if the NCR accused involved in her matter were allowed to be released on unescorted passes into the community. For this

victim, public safety must be the paramount consideration in the mental disorder regime.

• (1335)

To respond to concerns of Canadians like the victims I just referred to, Bill C-54 would clarify that public safety is the paramount consideration in determining the appropriate disposition for an NCR accused.

In addition, Bill C-54 would help make the law more accessible and easier to apply. It would introduce the phrase "necessary and appropriate" to describe the permissible restrictions on an NCR accused that may be imposed in order to protect the public safety. This proposal would maintain the existing test provided by the Supreme Court of Canada, but would simplify its articulation and thereby more clearly signal to all Canadians, including victims, that in carrying out their work, review boards must give due consideration to public safety and security.

Also, Bill C-54 would explicitly specify that when review boards assess whether a given NCR accused is a significant threat to the safety of the public that they are to consider any risk posed by that person of serious physical or psychological harm to victims, witnesses and persons under the age of 18, as well as other members of the general public. This proposal speaks directly to the concern we have heard from several victims. Bill C-54 would thus increase confidence in the NCR regime and in the administration of justice more generally.

In addition to individual victims, on June 10, the committee also had the opportunity to hear from l'Association des Familles de Personnes Assassinées ou Disparues, which in English is the Association of Families of Persons Assassinated or Disappeared. It is referred to as AFPAD. It is a victims organization that since 2004 has advocated for families who have survived horrible tragedies. AFPAD supports Bill C-54. It noted that while primary prevention is important in cases involving persons found NCR, secondary prevention must also be meaningfully addressed. Secondary prevention, in this context, means taking reasonable steps to ensure that a person who has been found NCR is not able to commit another serious crime. Bill C-54 would ensure that NCR accused receive the care they require so their illness no longer renders them a threat to society.

Government Orders

I have also addressed several aspects of the bill that would respond to AFPAD and to other concerned victims in this regard. Let me also point out that Bill C-54 maintains important judicial oversight. For example, the proposed high-risk designation can only be imposed by a court and can only be removed by a court acting on the recommendation of a review board. This is important because such judicial oversight would ensure that a high-risk designation is only used in appropriate circumstances, which makes it a proportional and reasonable measure. In addition, Bill C-54 would also empower judges who are experienced in assessing competing rights and interests to carefully balance the liberty of the high-risk NCR accused against the need for public safety. While the review board's recommendation would likely carry a lot of weight in hearings to change or remove a high-risk designation, Bill C-54's proposed scheme of allowing for additional judicial scrutiny of these designations would help preserve the public interest and confidence in the NCR regime overall. Victims and Canadians would demand no less of important decisions that can have severe impacts on public safety and the liberty of the NCR accused.

On June 12, the final day of the justice committee hearings on this bill, members had the opportunity to hear from more courageous victims who stepped forward to share their stories with us. One victim mentioned his experience with review board hearings. He noted that he has had no standing at all at these hearings and that the crown attorney has even been lectured to by the review board for raising the issue of victim safety. Bill C-54's proposed new guidance to review boards, which I referred to earlier in my remarks on the need to take victim safety into specific consideration, would arguably help change the culture of the review boards so they are more receptive to this evidence in future.

That individual also supported the high-risk designation in Bill C-54 overall, noting that each NCR case is unique and that the law must contain the necessary tools to allow review boards and courts to tailor their responses to meet the needs of diverse situations. By adding new tools like the high-risk designation into the mental disorder part of the Criminal Code, Bill C-54 would respond to these concerns.

• (1340)

On June 12, the committee also heard from another victim who raised the common concern that under existing law her participation rights were severely limited. The victim noted that, even though it is very painful reading and presenting victim impact statements, it is critical because it ensures that a victim's voice and perspective are not forgotten by review boards. Without these perspectives, review boards may not make the most appropriate decision in the circumstances, and public confidence in the whole NOR regime could suffer. I mentioned earlier that, if Bill C-54 is enacted, victims would have increased rights to give victim impact statements and to ensure that interests would be taken into account by review boards. This government is listening to victims.

In addition to hearing from victims, on June 12 the justice committee also heard from victims' advocates from such groups the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, which this government established in 2007 to ensure that victims of crime had a voice at the federal level. The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime was also represented. Both of these groups supported Bill

C-54. The ombudsman's office representative acknowledged that Bill C-54 reflected victims' concerns regarding their safety as well as a desire for increased notification and participation. Bill C-54 would provide review boards and courts with new tools to make public safety the paramount consideration.

While no individual bill can completely solve all the challenges faced by the courts, review boards, experts and victims, it could make the needed improvements to properly balance public safety and the liberties of the NCR accused. In my view, Bill C-54 would do just that.

At the justice committee, we had the privilege of hearing diverse perspectives from victims and their advocates. These individuals did not come to Parliament to seek the spotlight, and even appearing before the committee in such a public forum would have necessarily involved a degree of hardship. Rather, the witnesses appeared to share their stories to help us as lawmakers to produce a better NCR system for Canadians. I cannot overemphasize how the experiences of these persons plays a valuable role in forming our debates and decisions of this House. By carefully listening to victims, the government has crafted a bill that would be constitutionally sound and would not detract from the rights of the NCR accused, and yet also would manage to improve victim notification, involvement and protection in the context of the NCR regime. This is a worthwhile initiative that deserves the support of this House.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member referred to Darcie Clarke who lives in my riding. She was the victim who lost her three children to her husband at the time, Allan Schoenborn. That was a very public case, and I understand this legislation would address some of the problems associated with the Schoenborn case; obviously not all but it would be a move in the right direction.

I know there are certain groups across the country that have expressed their concerns with this legislation. In fact, we had made some suggestions at the committee, but overall Bill C-54 would improve the circumstances for victims.

Once the "high risk" designation is assessed, I understand the judge has discretion for providing a term of up to three years before the review is deemed necessary. Could the member comment on that time frame, how that works and where it could be one year, which is what I understand it is now, and where three years may be appropriate?

Government Orders

• (1345)

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, the designation of “high risk” could impose a period where there would be no review for up to three years. Under the current system it is reviewed annually. However, when the “high risk” designation is put into place, first the Crown bears the burden of proving that such a designation should be put in place, in other words that the person is an additional risk to society, and we know that the number of people who would probably fit into this category is very few and far between.

However, what is assessed is also how much time it would take for the person to be treated. Medical and psychological evidence are considered in determining the length of time it would take to treat the person. If it is longer than one year, it could be up to three years. Forensic treatment is put into place to treat the person and reassessed if he or she can be reintegrated into society. It would be discretionary and based on hard evidence of experts.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, not only for his leadership on the committee as parliamentary secretary, but also for the collegiality he has shown in welcoming me to the committee.

We have studied the bill, and I can say that in the seven years I have spent as a member of Parliament, I have never heard more gut-wrenching testimony from witnesses than I have from the victims who appeared before the committee. The victims, virtually unanimously, want the changes.

The defence lawyers association, the bar association and so on have some concerns. One of their concerns is that because of the changes we are proposing, defence lawyers will be advising their clients to go through the criminal path, which could see terms of 25 years' imprisonment to life, for certain offences, in order to avoid the stigma of having a three-year review through the not criminally responsible path.

I do not think that argument holds weight. I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could share his views as to whether that would seem to be a lucid or rational argument from the other side.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and for his fine work on the justice and human rights committee.

It is perhaps no surprise that I do not find the argument holds weight. Let us face it. These are practising lawyers, usually with a degree of specialization when they take these cases on. I cannot see that ethically they would have a client who was suffering from a mental disorder that would qualify them as being not criminally responsible and they would try to put them into the regular criminal system where they would get less treatment.

I believe that the law society members are highly ethical and that this is a tactic that, quite frankly, would not be used. If so, it would definitely be reprehensible.

We cannot forget that whether the period is one year or three years, during that period before which we would review the reintegration, treatment is ongoing. These people are not thrown into a cell and the key is thrown away. Treatment is ongoing. It is a balance of treatment and reintegration versus the protection of the public.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech.

He talked about clause 12, which creates a new category of high-risk accused. This definition refers to offences of a brutal nature. The parliamentary secretary mentioned some victims' cases. When the Minister of Justice and also certain experts were asked about this, they said there was no definition of offence of a brutal nature. We therefore suggested we should rely on what was already in the Criminal Code.

I would like to know whether the parliamentary secretary can define “brutal nature” and tell us why he did not rely on what was already set out in the Criminal Code, as was requested by the Canadian Bar Association, the Barreau du Québec and several experts?

• (1350)

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, the notion of brutality referred to by the member has been defined by the Supreme Court, and several cases have been interpreted based on that definition.

I would also like to point out that when a request is made to designate someone high risk, the decision-makers take more than just the brutal nature of the offence into consideration; they consider all relevant factors, including medical evidence and the circumstances surrounding the offence.

There is more than just a single, isolated factor at play, such as the fact that the individual committed a very brutal crime, as defined by the Supreme Court. All of the circumstances surrounding the individual and whether that individual can reintegrate into society without posing a risk to public safety must be taken into account.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary both for his speech and his work on committee.

Obviously this is an important piece of legislation. Questions have been brought up by members on both sides about the current process for NCR.

One thing I have found out through the process is that in the case of someone who has been designated not criminally responsible, the Criminal Code already allows the review to be extended up to 24 months by the Mental Health Review Board, in the case of a serious personal injury offence. By adding the extra 12 months of flexibility, it actually empowers the Mental Health Review Board.

There is a fine balance between making sure the safety of the public is paramount and that there is ample opportunity for treatment. Under this new high-risk designation, I would ask the parliamentary secretary if he feels there are sufficient provisions for both public safety and mental health treatment, to allow the NCR person to receive the treatment they need, while, again, balancing the aspect of safety.

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, of course there is a balance when it comes to the treatment aspect.

Government Orders

When the period of time is determined for the review, whether it be one year, two years or three years, the main test is determining what length or period of time is going to be necessary for the treatment. If one year is sufficient, then that will suffice. However, to go beyond the two years, which is also provided for, and the three years in this case, there absolutely has to be evidence that the longer treatment will be needed.

When there is a need for longer treatment, there are provisions that these people cannot go into the community unescorted, and when they go into the community escorted, it will be for necessary and obligatory medical or mental health treatment so that they can be reintegrated.

Again, the key is not thrown away and these people locked up. They will not be able to go into the community unescorted because the paramount consideration is public safety. However, they will go, escorted, to necessary medical treatment.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I recognize the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie, I must inform him that I will have to interrupt him at about 2:00 p.m. The hon. member has about seven minutes remaining. Of course, more time will be available when the House resumes debate on this motion.

The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are debating Bill C-54, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (mental disorder), at third reading.

The whole issue of mental health and crime is a very emotional subject. We saw this when we were examining it in committee. This subject really moved us.

I would especially like to thank my colleague from Gatineau, our justice critic, for all of her hard work on this bill.

Few of us are extremely familiar with the topic of mental health. We sometimes generalize. People have a certain idea of what this entails. However, we do not know everything we need to know.

One of the problems we noted in committee was the Conservative government's failure to consult with experts in the field with regard to this bill.

•(1355)

[*English*]

One example I have is from our committee on June 5. Chris Summerville, from the Schizophrenia Society of Canada, mentioned that nine associations were not consulted. We are talking about the Canadian Psychiatric Association, the Canadian Psychological Association, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Mood Disorders Society of Canada, the Canadian Association of Social Workers, the Canadian Association of Suicide Prevention, the National Network for Mental Health, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Schizophrenia Society of Canada, and further, 19 members of the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, all of which are members and none of which were consulted either.

When I asked why, they did not understand. They are the first ones on the ground. They are the people who actually have the knowledge. It is very unfortunate that the government only decided to consult with them when we were working on and dealing with the bill, and then, when we had amendments, those amendments were not accepted by the government.

[*Translation*]

This is a very sensitive issue and victims have asked us not to make it a partisan issue. They have asked us not to play politics. Unfortunately, that is what the Conservatives are doing.

Jenni Byrne, the 2011 national campaign manager, sent an email dated May 29 that reads:

You probably remember the story of Vince Li—a man who, five years ago, beheaded and cannibalized a fellow passenger on a Greyhound bus. He was found to be not criminally responsible for his actions—and was even granted escorted leave in to the community by the Manitoba Criminal Code Review Board. This is an insult to his victim—and this is not what Canadians expect from their justice system.

She then asks for a donation to the Conservative Party.

This is the type of petty politics that we find very disappointing. It is absolutely deplorable to see the government use victims in order to raise money. In addition to what I was saying about the lack of consultation, the fact that the government keeps using cases like this is just as deplorable when it comes to stigmatization. The public does not necessarily understand mental illness. I encourage all Canadians to talk about it. In the House, I have talked about a friend of mine who committed suicide. It is important to talk about it. I think we need to talk about every aspect of mental illness.

Using high-profile cases to raise money is serious. It is not what responsible parliamentarians should do, but it is what the current government is doing. We are asking the Conservatives to show more respect.

Our approach to the bill is simple: this bill is important for victims. As the Conservatives have mentioned, this bill will provide a way to help us inform victims about what is going on with offenders. All the witnesses we heard from agree with this, including the Barreau du Québec, the Canadian Bar Association and mental health associations.

We support this bill and we did even more than that. What is surprising is that the Conservatives accepted one of our amendments to inform victims of the offender's place of residence. Once the offender is released from prison, the victim should be aware of everything that is going on. All of the victims we consulted asked for this. We therefore thank the government for accepting the NDP's amendment to ensure that these victims are better informed.

We are very sensitive to this situation, and we were touched by the victims who came to testify. I want to acknowledge these victims, who showed extraordinary courage. Talking about their problems and their experiences was very difficult for them. As I said, it is very emotional for members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to hear people share their stories, but that is what pushes us to keep going.

Statements by Members

One of the problems is the lack of consultation from a legal standpoint. The government proposed changes, but it is reassuring to know that the court will have the last word. That is why we supported some of the amendments proposed by the government. However, we would have appreciated it if the government had considered more of our amendments.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie will have 14 minutes when the House resumes debate on this motion. Of course, he will have the usual 10 minutes for questions and comments.

We will now proceed to statements by members. The hon. member for Ahuntsic.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

NATHALIE MORIN

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this weekend we learned that two human rights advocates in Saudi Arabia have been sentenced to 10 months in prison and will be prohibited from leaving the country for two years after that simply because they brought food to Ms. Morin.

I would like to remind the House that for eight years, Ms. Morin and her three children have been detained in Saudi Arabia by her husband, the children's father, yet the Conservative government has stood idly by.

In June 2011, Quebec's National Assembly unanimously called on the federal government to bring Ms. Morin and her children back to Canada. At the time, the federal government said that it hoped "for a positive resolution". We have heard nothing since then.

The government needs to stop calling this a private dispute and hiding behind that excuse to justify its lack of action. Let us hope that officials at the Canadian embassy in Riyadh will be able to propose a solution to Ms. Morin the next time they interview her. It is Canada's responsibility to protect Ms. Morin, as well as her children.

* * *

[*English*]

BOWMANVILLE HISTORIC SITE

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are fortunate to have a network of national parks and historic sites to allow our citizens to explore this magnificent country and learn about the people and places that made it great.

I am happy to inform the House that very soon the Municipality of Clarington and the town of Bowmanville may be the home to the latest national historic site. For almost a century, the place known as the boys' training school or, during World War II, Camp 30, has been a part of Bowmanville. During the war, Camp 30 was perhaps best known for the concept of Ehrenwort, where local prison guards would allow German prisoners to leave the camp unescorted, provided they gave their word of honour that they would return.

No major project like this happens without the tireless energy of many. I would like to thank Martha Rutherford Conrad, Faye Langmaid, Kelvin Whalen and the Kaitlin Group, as well as Mayor Adrian Foster and Clarington council for their vision and energy on this project.

In the coming years, I would like to invite Canadians to explore the Clarington area and our national history.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EXPRESSIONS OF THANKS

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the parliamentary session winds down, I would like to thank a few people.

I would like to thank the members of my staff, who fight every day to ensure that our constituents receive their due from the government, a government that too often portrays Canadians as cheats and fraudsters.

I would also like to thank the organizations in Trois-Rivières that work with me. One example is Culture Mauricie, which led the fight against Parks Canada for the Forges du Saint-Maurice and made some progress on that front. I am also working with Proprio-Béton to make the Conservatives understand that they are the only ones taxing people's misery instead of helping them.

I would like to thank all public servants who continue to provide services on par with the best in the world despite the tension and fear overshadowing their working conditions.

I would like to thank everyone who has taken our message about working together to heart. In 2015, let us work together to elect a government with a clean record when it comes to cronyism and scandal, a government dedicated to the best interests of the people, economic growth and sound management: an NDP government.

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[*English*]

EVENTS IN MISSISSAUGA EAST—COOKSVILLE

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, several great events took place in the riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville last Saturday.

The 13th annual Race Against Racism, hosted by Peel Regional Police diversity relations unit at Mississauga Valley Park, was a great success and provided a positive environment for members of diverse cultures and an important sense of inclusiveness. Funds raised will go toward scholarships for Peel students. Congratulations to Chief Jennifer Evans, Constable Lovejeet Bains, the entire Peel police force, volunteers and participants for a great event.

Statements by Members

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre celebrated the 25th anniversary of its service for Mississauga communities. Its mission “to foster an atmosphere which will encourage our community as a whole to participate in and develop a positive, healthy and caring neighbourhood” describes it all.

Many thanks and best wishes to the board president and chair, Kelly McDonald, and all other board members and volunteers on this special anniversary. I thank them all for their involvement and participation.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today in 20 cities across this country, including here on Parliament Hill, health care workers, social workers and concerned citizens have gathered together to protest the cruel cuts to refugee health that have been brought on by the government. The minister continues to say that all he is doing is denying gold-plated health care to these people.

Children with extreme asthma cannot get help, children with epilepsy cannot get help, and mothers who are pregnant and have toxemia cannot get help. As every physician knows, toxemia puts the mother and her child at great risk, so we know that what the minister is saying is absolutely untrue.

The position the minister has taken may well offend the rights of the child under section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In the name of common decency and fundamental justice, will the minister please rescind the cuts and give people the health care they absolutely need?

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● (1405)

TURNAROUND ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently a very special event was held in my riding called the Turnaround achievement awards. Started a number of years ago, this event pays tribute to students at the elementary, middle and secondary school levels who have turned their educational experience and their lives around.

Listening to the individual stories as told by the teachers took the people in the attendance on a roller coaster ride of emotions ranging from humour to tears.

A quote from Michael Jordan typifies what this event is all about: “If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it”.

In every case, these young people tackled their obstacles and turned their lives around. They took personal responsibility and learned valuable skills that will benefit them for years to come. The next time they face adversity, they will not sit on the sidelines. They will get back in the game.

Special thanks to John and Betty Lou Craig of Craig Manufacturing for taking on the sponsorship of this event. Thanks to the teachers who have made a difference in these young people's lives. Congratulations to all the students, including grade 12 students Brandon Sharpe and Dallas Greer, who will be graduating this week.

I wish them the best of luck as they pursue their post-secondary education and careers in the workforce.

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RAIL SAFETY

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, VIA train 92 derailed last year, killing 3 and injuring scores. Last week the Transportation Safety Board made three recommendations: that railway cabs be made safer so that engineers are better protected; that recorders be on board so that investigators can find out what happened after a crash; and the most important recommendation, that railways be required to put into place automatic braking systems to prevent these crashes.

Recorders were recommended 10 years ago. There has been no action from the Conservative or predecessor Liberal government. Safer cabs are mandatory on new locomotives, but too many are grandparented. Automatic braking systems, the norm in most of the world, are not even on the minister's radar when he talks about the reports of the safety board.

The board said the conditions that resulted in the Burlington crash happen once a month, a frightening statistic. It recommended action on the part of the government to prevent future deaths.

We in the NDP are calling on the government to act to implement these sensible recommendations. To do otherwise is to fail to stop a ticking time bomb.

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MEMBERS' PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND DEDICATION

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the privilege of holding this office demands the highest level of personal accountability and dedication. Most of us hold this principle true, because while we may fundamentally differ on ideology, many come here first seeking to build a country that is healthy, prosperous and just.

While there are those who lose sight of this because of the trappings power can afford, I first choose to think of my colleague from the NDP who came back here a month after giving birth, my independent colleague who battled cancer of the lymph nodes, my Liberal colleague who only just left to be with his very expectant wife, and my Conservative colleague who overcomes a severe physical restriction, all these things done to be here in support of our democracy. Then I think of the greatness that is in fact Canada.

To this, and to all of us here, to our families, who shoulder the often lonely reality of absence and the sometimes painful nakedness of public life, this role is indeed honourable and it is incumbent on each of us, as well as those who hold the lens through which this role is perceived, to uphold this above all.

*Statements by Members***HOUSE OF COMMONS PAGES**

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this session of Parliament begins to wind down, I would like to take a few moments to recognize the hard work that has been done this past year by pages in the House of Commons.

Each year, 40 students from across Canada are selected from hundreds of applicants to serve as pages in the House of Commons. They perform very important duties for all of us members of Parliament, which can often go unnoticed. From delivering messages from our respective lobbies and serving water to the handling of important documents, pages have a great deal of responsibility in this place. I would like to thank each and every page for his or her hard work. It has indeed been a pleasure to get to know some of them on a first-name basis.

I am also very pleased to recognize Hannah Nicholls-Harrison from my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, who has served as a page this past year. Her family, I and everyone in Bruce and Grey counties are proud of her accomplishments.

I would like to congratulate all pages on a successful term of duty. It has been a pleasure getting to know all of them. I wish them all the best of future successes.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

CANADA'S FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's foreign service officers are currently on strike. These workers have been without a contract for two years. They represent our international trade and diplomatic interests.

The current situation is having a serious impact on the processing of visa applications. For example, the largest festival in the Drummondville region, the Mondial des Cultures, invites more than 800 artists from all over the world. This event's executive director is worried about the negative effects of delays in processing visas.

The NDP believes that Canadian workers have the right to improve their working conditions. The Conservatives must negotiate in good faith with public sector unions and workers. The Conservatives must abandon their confrontational approach and settle this labour dispute as quickly as possible.

A fair and equitable settlement for everyone can be achieved by negotiating with Canada's foreign service officers.

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[English]

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my community, the charitable sector makes a significant impact. As a member of Parliament, I like to volunteer in support of these organizations.

I have been a celebrity dancer in the Dancing with the Stars Halton competition for Easter Seals, which I lost, by the way. I was a model and auctioneer for the Joseph Brant Hospital fashion show. I

think I was the "before" of the before and after models. I walked a kilometre in women's high heels as a participant in the Hope in High Heels fundraiser for Halton Women's Place. Those shoes hurt and they were red. I was a young Elvis in an Elvis-impersonator contest for the Compassion Society of Halton. I sang *Hound Dog*, and I sounded like one.

I want to thank the charities in my community for allowing me to volunteer to be part of their efforts to raise money and awareness in Burlington. As a member of Parliament, I should be an asset to my community's charities and not an expense.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS PAGES

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we approach the end of this parliamentary session, on behalf of the NDP, I want to thank all of the House of Commons pages for their extraordinary work over the course of the past session.

The pages worked very hard and put in long hours, especially in recent weeks, but they always remained very professional, courteous and available.

Congratulations to the pages and thank you.

I also want to thank the page supervisors, Sylvain Desrochers and Daniel Cardinal, who help make our work easier and more pleasant every day.

I want to mention that Sylvain will be retiring when we adjourn for the summer. My colleagues and I wish him an enjoyable retirement and commend him for his dedication over the years.

Happy retirement, Sylvain.

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LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, being friends with the Liberal leader is not cheap. Nor is it cheap for charitable organizations to have him come and grace them with his presence. After seeing him prepared to do anything, even take his shirt off, now we know that charities are paying an arm and a leg in exchange for his services.

We always thought that the Liberal leader's policy of charging charitable organizations, churches and seniors' groups tens of thousands of dollars was wrong and that it was against conventional practices in relation to his duties as a member of Parliament.

We encourage the Liberal leader to follow the example set by the hon. Prime Minister, who donated thousands of dollars to charities when he was an ordinary MP.

The fact that the Liberal leader is prepared to take hundreds of thousands of dollars from charitable organizations demonstrates that what the Liberal leader cares about the most is the Liberal leader. This is proof that the Liberal leader is simply incapable of being charitable.

Oral Questions

• (1415)

[English]

CONVERSATION ON THE HILL LAST WEEK

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *Reflections of a Conversation on the Hill Last Week*:

“Don't you know who I am?” in a tone forced and feared.
 “You're the lead-footed driver with a grey suit and beard”.
 “I'm the big shot in O'Town; I'm a really big deal”.
 “I'm certain you are sir; now take your hands off the wheel”.
 “I'm the NDP leader; I can show you the proof”.
 “Step out of the car, sir; put your hands on the roof”.
 “I'll talk to your boss; you will sure change your tune”.
 “Well...it didn't seem to work for Reese Witherspoon”.
 “I'm going to be late for anger management class”.
 “Well, you should have pulled over and not been such a...bad driver”.
 “Lady, you're in big trouble; your job's on the line”.
 “You enjoy question period; I'll be just fine”.
 The moral of this story is, by chance or by plan, never start a conversation with...
 “Don't you know who I am?”

* * *

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “Don't you know who I am?”

The leader of the NDP does not stop for the RCMP. The leader of the NDP does not stop for the interests of national security. The leader of the NDP does not stop when police chase him. The leader of the NDP does not stop for pedestrians visiting the House of Commons. The leader of the NDP does not stop for left turns like a \$21-billion carbon tax. The leader of the NDP does not stop for left turns that kill jobs. The leader of the NDP does not stop for any left-turn tax hike.

If the leader of the NDP does not stop his left turning, “You're going to be in a lot of trouble”.

* * *

THE SENATE

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we can all now understand the look of pain on the faces of parliamentary guides when they have to explain the Senate. It turns out they have been forced to use a manual written during the Mulroney era.

These poor guides have to spin some real whoppers. They have to say that the Senate is “non-partisan”. They are forced to praise the Senate by saying it does not suffer from “excessive media exposure”. The manual even disparages members of the elected House of Commons. It says the work of the House is inferior to that of the Senate. “In a multi-party group system, the voter is liable to be confused” and goes on to describe voters as donkeys.

It is time we revised this outdated manual. Let us free these poor guides so they can tell the truth about the corruption-plagued upper chamber, or even better, let us abolish the Senate and free all Canadians from this unelected, unaccountable relic of the 19th century.

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe as a member of Parliament, one of our fundamental roles is to do everything we can to help people and organizations in need. That is why I believe charity starts at home.

As an auctioneer, I have had the great opportunity to help many charities and organizations throughout the riding of Huron—Bruce and beyond: Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, Goderich Legion tornado fundraiser, Central Huron community living, WOOA, Clinton Hospital and many more. As athletes and hockey players, many of my parliamentary colleagues and I have had the great honour of raising money for the United Way, muscular dystrophy, Robert Warner Memorial Fund, and the RVH Cancer Centre, to name a few.

Martin Luther once said, “Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.”

With \$1.3 million dollars in speaking fees charged to charity, I know which side the Liberal leader has picked.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, the Prime Minister stood in this House and said that he had—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor now and I expect the House to come to order.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, the Prime Minister stood in this House and said that he had not been briefed on the audit of Senator Pamela Wallin's expenses. He insisted that he knew nothing, but last week, Senator Wallin revealed that she had indeed briefed the Prime Minister's Office in detail.

Who is telling the truth: Senator Wallin or the Prime Minister?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, on behalf of all members, I would like to thank the leader of the NDP for being here today without incident.

The Prime Minister has been very clear on this question and the leader of the NDP opposite knows very well that there is, of course, an independent audit and examination of this very matter going forward.

The Prime Minister has been very clear to all senators, including Senator Wallin, that any expenses have to be paid and have to be associated directly with their responsibilities as a senator and that any expenses that are not associated should come directly from their own personal pocket.

Oral Questions

•(1420)

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, so we can expect the Prime Minister himself to come and clear that up for us this week. Is that right?

[*Translation*]

The arrest of one of the Conservatives' star candidates has tainted everyone directly associated with them. After his defeat in 2011, Saulie Zajdel benefited from the patronage of the Conservatives when he was given a bogus job by the Minister of Canadian Heritage. The minister raved about the great job Saulie Zajdel had done for the Conservatives.

What was this great job Saulie Zajdel did?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the charges relate to municipal issues and not the federal government. Until today I had not even heard about an investigation or charges against Mr. Zajdel.

However, to be clear, if Mr. Zajdel, Mr. Applebaum or anybody broke the law, they should be punished to the full extent of the law.
[*English*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we do know that Saulie Zajdel was a star Conservative candidate. We know he got a patronage job from that minister just days after his defeat. We know that he was going around Mount Royal acting like he was the member of Parliament and not our distinguished colleague. We know that a little over a year ago, Zajdel joined the Prime Minister at a happy hour pub stop for some Conservative fundraising. We know that Zajdel was arrested today on a series of corruption charges.

What we do not know is what Zajdel was doing on the payroll of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages. Tell us.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just finished saying in French very clearly, if Mr. Zajdel or Mr. Applebaum have in any way broken the law they should have the book thrown at them and they should be accountable to the full extent of the law.

With regard to what my office has been doing proudly for the city of Montreal, we have been doing things like investing in important events like Les FrancoFolies, Festival International de Jazz, festival Juste pour rire, and inventing a cultural infrastructure in the city of Montreal like les 2-22, le Quartier des spectacles, and expanding the programming and physical space of the Segal Centre for Performing Arts. That is the work that indeed my office is very proud of, because it will serve the people of Montreal and all Canadians.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): It is like Whack-a-Mole, Mr. Speaker. They whack one scandal down and another one pops up. The Conservatives' former shadow MP from Mount Royal was arrested this morning. Saulie Zajdel is now facing charges of abuse of trust, fraud and corruption.

Mr. Zajdel was praised by the Prime Minister and he was hired by the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, and then suddenly, without explanation, he left his lucrative ministerial job. Why?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows very well, I found out this morning, of course, we all found out, that Mr. Zajdel was under investigation and now there are charges pending. If he or Mr. Applebaum or anybody broke the law, they should be punished to the full extent of the law. That is how it works.

The justice system also works best when those who are aware of corruption, like the leader of the NDP, co-operate with police and tell the police about corruption that they know about. The leader of the NDP was offered a bribe 17 years ago, which is a crime, and he did not report that bribe and that crime to the police. Why was he covering for corruption in the city of Laval?

* * *

ETHICS

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, so many Conservatives under police investigation and yet, so little contrition.

[*Translation*]

Let us stay on the topic of criminal investigations involving the Conservatives. In February, the Prime Minister claimed that he had personally reviewed Pamela Wallin's spending and found nothing unusual about it. However, in August 2012, the Senate administration found problems with Ms. Wallin's expense claims.

Why did the Prime Minister choose to ignore this information?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said to the leader of the NDP in English, the Prime Minister made it very clear that any expenses claimed by senators have to be associated directly with their responsibilities as senators.

•(1425)

[*English*]

It is the ethical and responsible thing to do. Just as the ethical and responsible thing to do for any member of Parliament, for example, is to do work for charities and to give money to charities, not take money from charities.

The member for Halifax knows that. The member for Outremont knows that. We know that. A member of Parliament showing up at a charity event should give money to charities not take it away from charities like the leader of the Liberal Party does.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians' confidence in our public office-holders has been shaken by the opening of a criminal investigation into the Prime Minister's own office.

By raising the bar on openness and transparency, we can begin to restore confidence in our public institutions.

Will the government choose transparency over secrecy? Will it publicly release a copy of the \$90,000 cheque written by the Prime Minister's chief of staff to Mike Duffy?

Oral Questions

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, somebody really should advise the Liberal leader not to lead with his chin in question period.

As I said last week, we do not have access to a personal cheque of Nigel Wright.

However, the leader of the Liberal Party does have access to a personal cheque that was given to him, for example, from the Canadian Mental Health Association that paid him. He took \$20,000 from the Canadian Mental Health Association while speaking at a charity event. He also took \$7,500 from the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. He took \$10,000 from the Children of Hope, which is a charity organization that helps orphaned children.

If he believes in accountability and transparency, he should show us the money he took from the charity.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while they break the rules any chance they can get, we do not just follow the rules, we raise the bar.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for Papineau has the floor.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, a simple question. In the weeks following Nigel Wright's resignation, has any member of the cabinet or any senior member of the Prime Minister's Office met with him?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): I have not, Mr. Speaker.

However, if the leader of the Liberal Party wants to talk about raising the bar, I do not think he is talking about an ethical bar. Do members know those novelty thermometers that they have at charity events when they raise the bar when they are increasing money for the charity? He must have one in his home or in his office and he raises the bar of that thermometer of money that he personally gets from charities across the country. That is the bar that is being raised.

Again, if the Liberal leader wants to lecture others about accountability, he should come clean. What is it about the ethical standard of giving money to charities rather than taking money from charities that he does not understand?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will ask the question again to give the minister a chance to think about his answer.

Did any government minister or PMO staffer meet with Mr. Wright in the weeks following his resignation, yes or no?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no, I did not speak to Mr. Wright after he resigned.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a prime minister once said, "The RCMP is doing very independent work...the Auditor General...is a very important independent officer

of the House and both of them are doing their jobs.... I have nothing else to add."

Who said that? That was Jean Chrétien defending the Liberal sponsorship scandal, sounding an awful lot like this Prime Minister, speaking of which we now know the RCMP is investigating the secret payout to Mike Duffy.

Has the current Prime Minister been in contact with the RCMP and who is the point person in his office for ensuring the full co-operation with the RCMP and the PMO staff?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the RCMP operates independently.

Frankly, it would irresponsible for the government to tell the RCMP to whom it should or should not be speaking. I, the Prime Minister's Office and the Prime Minister personally have not been contacted by the RCMP on this matter.

However, if the hon. colleague has questions about how the RCMP is fulfilling its obligations, he should direct those questions to the RCMP. It operates independently of the government.

* * *

• (1430)

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the Liberal speaking notes from the sponsorship scandal.

Let us try something else. Saulie Zajdel was hired by this minister as his special adviser in Montreal. He was part of the Prime Minister's entourage on the trip to Montreal in 2012.

He is now charged with abuse of trust, fraud and corruption. What exactly was he doing working for the Minister of Canadian Heritage? Did the Minister of Canadian Heritage hear any of the rumours that were swirling about Montreal, about the reputation of Mr. Zajdel before he hired him?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague should know, he was a municipal councillor for over 23 years. His job in my regional office was to do the coordination with cultural communities in the city of Montreal.

If in his municipal career, and this is what the allegations are, prior to his involvement in federal politics, he in any way broke the law, he should have the book thrown at him. He should be held responsible and he will be by our justice system.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP is investigating a possible crime in the Prime Minister's Office.

UPAC, Quebec's anti-corruption agency, arrested their former candidate for the riding of Mont-Royal, who is also a former employee of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and a good friend of the Prime Minister's former director of communications. The Conservatives should start taking this a little more seriously.

Oral Questions

Dimitri Soudas's buddy, Saulie Zajdel, pocketed plenty of cash thanks to corruption. Once on a Conservative minister's payroll, he is now facing several charges, including breach of trust, fraud and corruption.

What exactly did the Conservatives know about him before hiring him?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just explained to the member's colleague, we were not aware of any of the activities related to these charges.

I learned this morning that there was an investigation concerning Mr. Zajdel's activities between 2006 and 2011, before his involvement in federal politics. He was involved in municipal politics in Montreal during the period in question. That is what this is about, and we did not know what was going on until this morning.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this all looks very suspicious.

Their man in Mont-Royal in 2011 was Saulie Zajdel. UPAC's charges relate to his activities between 2006 and 2011. We have to wonder what particular skills made the Conservatives nominate him as their candidate and then reward him with a job working for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Let us be honest: trusting Zajdel with any kind of file is like trusting Vladimir Putin with a Super Bowl ring.

Did any law enforcement agency contact the Minister of Canadian Heritage or his office about Mr. Zajdel? Was he contacted, yes or no?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no, because this investigation is related to municipal affairs near Montreal. They never contacted me because this is not a federal issue.

* * *

ETHICS

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if we add Saulie Zajdel to the party's list of friends, which includes Arthur Porter and Bruce Carson, there are quite a few Conservative appointees linked to corruption or influence peddling.

However, let us get back to the Senate expenses scandal.

Has anyone from the Prime Minister's Office spoken to Nigel Wright since the start of the criminal investigation into the \$90,000 payment to Mike Duffy?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, quite simply, the answer is no.

I never spoke to Mr. Wright after May 15, when everything became public.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister spoke to no one. I thank him very much for the information. Perhaps someone could speak for more than just the minister.

Perhaps the Conservatives could add Mr. Zajdel to the list of Senate prospects and include him in the select club of senators appointed by the Prime Minister who are facing charges, such as senators Brazeau, Wallin and Duffy.

Could the minister perhaps tell us if he or his colleagues know whether the Prime Minister's Office obtained legal advice concerning the criminal investigation into the questionable activities of its former chief of staff that occurred in this Prime Minister's Office?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in answer to the first question on her list, Mr. Zajdel will never be appointed to the Senate.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 62 days ago, the Minister of State for Democratic Reform said, "Our government is pleased to announce that it will introduce comprehensive legislation on Thursday".

Nine Thursdays have come and gone since that announcement, and still nothing. It is all well and good for the minister to say that he wants to do things properly, but election fraud legislation needs to be passed by early 2014 so that it can be enforced during the next election campaign.

When will the minister finally introduce his bill?

• (1435)

[English]

Mr. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear that we have committed to introducing legislation to reform election laws and we will introduce that legislation.

What is not clear is this. Why do the NDP members believe they are above the law? It was that party over there that accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars in illegal union donations. The leader of the NDP did not tell the police about a crime for over 17 years. Then just last week he did not stop for stop signs and did not stop for the police. Why do they believe they are above the law?

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, nine months of these feeble lines wore thin a long long time ago. This is about strengthening Elections Canada to be able to go after fraud. The minister promised that he would table a bill so many times. He then met with the Conservative caucus and, poof, up in smoke, he suddenly changed his mind.

The Chief Electoral Officer said that we needed this bill before the next election. Why are the Conservatives dragging their heels, missing deadlines and actually risking not having this bill in place before the next election?

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been clear that we will introduce reforms to our election laws. However, what about traffic laws? What about traffic laws for stopping at stop signs, endangering pedestrians, construction workers and others on the Hill? Why do the NDP members believe they are above the law?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE SENATE

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would not want to be a Conservative minister caught defending the indefensible, any more than I would want to be a tour guide caught defending the Senate.

Documents reveal that Parliament Hill tour guide manuals use outdated Mulroney-era statistics to refer to the supposedly non-partisan Senate. The manual even recommends defending the two-party system. That is not very nice for the few Liberals left.

Has anyone from the Minister of Canadian Heritage's office spoken to the National Capital Commission employees about this guide?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): No, Mr. Speaker, we have not spoken to them about this guide.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning Saulie Zajdel was arrested on five charges from fraud to corruption. This is the person best known as the failed Conservative candidate and then the paid shadow MP in Mount Royal where fraudulent Conservative calls took place, which you yourself called reprehensible, Mr. Speaker.

This was a highly paid senior adviser to the heritage minister. Did the background check on this person not reveal any wrongdoing as alleged by the Montreal police today?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a background check in 2011 would not have revealed a charge that was levelled in 2013. That is not quite how the order of time works in the universe.

If Mr. Zajdel or Mr. Applebaum are found to have broken the law in any way in their behaviour when they were involved in municipal politics, which is what is being referred to here, from 2006 to 2011, they should have the book thrown at them and they should be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law.

* * *

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, election overspending is a serious offence, but Conservative MPs seem to think election laws are optional.

Elections Canada has now said that there are three Conservative MPs who are not entitled to sit or vote in this place: the member for Selkirk—Interlake, the member for Saint Boniface and now the member for Essex. Last week the member for Peterborough tried to abuse his parliamentary privilege and interfere with an Elections Canada investigation in his riding.

The law is clear. Why does the Conservative government refuse to enforce the Canada Elections Act?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these members of Parliament were duly elected. We expect they have the right to speak in defence of the filings they made and which Elections Canada has in the past accepted.

The member across mentions their right to sit in the House of Commons. In fact, we all have the obligation to sit in the House of Commons. That is why we are paid. Unfortunately, her leader actually skipped out on his obligation to vote in this chamber in order to get paid a second time for a charitable appearance that all of us in the House would normally attend for free as a matter of our parliamentary duties. It is time he paid back the money.

* * *

● (1440)

ETHICS

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister hand-picked both Mike Duffy and Nigel Wright. They are now under police investigation for a \$90,000 deal that corrupted a sitting legislator. Another former chief of staff, Bruce Carson, is on trial for influence pedaling. Arthur Porter, the man the Prime Minister put in charge of national security, is in jail in Panama. Then there are Zajdel, Penashue and Brazeau and the list goes on.

Were security checks not done on any of these people before the Prime Minister personally endorsed them, or did he just ignore the risk that his bad judgment would cause for Canada?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what security checks were done on Mac Harb before he was named to the Senate and took \$231,000 from taxpayers? What background check was done on Mac Harb before the Liberal leader said that he was welcomed to come back to the Liberal Party even though he took \$231,000?

What background check was done by the leader of the Liberal Party on these charities that he took money from rather than give it to them? Did he have as a rider on all his contracts, that he would speak to them only if they paid him x thousands of dollars? When will the Liberal members come clear on their corruption and their pocketing of money from charities?

* * *

[Translation]

BULLYING

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this spring, people across the country were shocked by the death of Rehtaeh Parsons.

This is one of countless cases where the Internet was used to bully someone. As is the case with far too many of our laws, the Criminal Code does not take into consideration the reality of new technologies.

Oral Questions

In April, we asked the Prime Minister what he planned to do about this. We are still waiting.

When will the Conservatives finally fill the gaps in the Criminal Code?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a tragic incident and our hearts certainly go out to the Parsons family. However, the hon. member may have missed the announcement by the Minister of Canadian Heritage about some of the efforts this government has made toward anti-bullying.

We are working with the provinces and we will be reviewing the laws with respect to this. Canadians can count on this government to stand up for victims across the country and move forward on this issue.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard what the Conservatives have said, and it is not enough. Rehtaeh's tragic death brought our country together, not just to mourn but to urgently look for ways to ensure these kinds of tragedies did not happen again. We all know that changes are necessary and the proper authorities need the tools to do their jobs.

People who distribute intimate images without consent need to be held accountable. Today, I am introducing a private member's bill that would make the malicious distribution of intimate images without consent a crime.

Will the minister work with us to ensure this bill is passed as soon as possible?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear that a crime that happens on the Internet must still be considered a crime. We have brought forward legislation that would, for instance, require the Internet service providers to report incidents of child pornography. We have raised the age of consent and we have cracked down on individuals who bring this kind of pornography and child sexual abuse.

I wish, for once, we could have received the support of the New Democrats. We would be in a much better position today, if we had received their support on any of these issues.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again today Canadians are condemning Conservative cuts to refugee health care. These changes hurt some of society's most vulnerable people. The changes have been confusing, have failed to save money and have downloaded refugee health care costs on to provinces, families and individuals.

Canada was built on the belief that we would welcome strangers in need and take care of one another. When will the minister reverse these mean-spirited and short-sighted cuts?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The thousands of resettled refugees whom Canada welcomes every year, the largest number per capita in the world, all receive comprehensive

federal health insurance. The bona fide asylum claimants who are demonstrated to be real refugees in need of our protection receive comprehensive federal health insurance until they qualify for provincial insurance.

However, those people whose claims are rejected as being from fake or bogus asylum claimants no longer receive federal health insurance. They never should have in the first place because they are here illegally, are no longer welcome in Canada and we respectfully ask that they leave.

● (1445)

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, only a Conservative minister devoid of feelings could think that children and pregnant women are abusing the health care system. Shame on him.

The provinces, hospitals and health care professionals, who are already overburdened, are suffering the consequences of the transfer of responsibility for refugee health care from the federal level to the provinces.

Will the Minister of Health listen to the provinces, hospitals and doctors and cancel these irresponsible cuts?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is irresponsible is the NDP policy that would force Canadian taxpayers to pay the medical expenses of bogus asylum claimants, failed claimants and illegal migrants, people who have no right to be in Canada. If a person comes here as a visitor, student, worker or new permanent resident, then they have to pay their own medical expenses before becoming a permanent resident.

Why does the NDP want to force taxpayers to pay the universal and supplemental medical expenses of illegal migrants? It makes no sense.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are increasingly concerned about high-risk individuals being released back into the community. While our government is taking strong action to reform laws in this area by empowering victims' groups, the Liberal leader empowers his own bank account by taking hundreds of thousands of dollars from key stakeholders and charities.

Could the Minister of Justice please inform the House of the latest developments regarding the not criminally responsible reform act and the importance of supporting victims rights' groups?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that this important piece of legislation is back from committee and in the House of Commons.

Oral Questions

However, I am troubled that the Liberal leader has picked up speaking fees totalling at least \$270,000 from mental health groups, crime prevention centres and victims' rights groups.

I am proud of the fact that our government works tirelessly for victims. We work to keep our communities safe and we support non-profit groups. The Liberals, on the other hand, think these groups should be supporting them. That is the difference between our two parties.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the F-35 procurement process has been badly botched. Senior officers in the Royal Canadian Air Force warned the government that the F-35s were not compatible with our air-to-air refuelling fleet. Despite the mismanagement of this file and all of the alarm bells, the Conservatives are still in love with the F-35s and refuse to put an end to this misadventure.

Why do the Conservatives still refuse to hold an open and transparent bidding process?

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the RCAF will look at options to deliver air-to-air refuelling capabilities as indicated in the KPMG report. It is the government's intention to maintain a strategic aerial refuelling capability no matter which fighter is chosen.

The evaluation of options being conducted by the secretariat and the Air Force is currently looking at all fighter options and Canada's requirements. The government will inform Canadians once decisions are taken.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been a merry-go-round of ministers on this file, but the one constant has been Conservative mismanagement.

We know that the F-35 is not compatible with our current air-to-air refuelling fleet, and it is in this context that the Canadian Armed Forces has warned the minister that air-to-air refuelling is "critical to the defence of Canada".

When and how is the government going to account for the need for a brand new refuelling fleet to accompany the purchase of the F-35?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just stated the RCAF will look at options to deliver air-to-air refuelling capabilities. That has been indicated in the KPMG report. It is part of the government's options analysis, which is ongoing right now, and we will be maintaining a strategic aerial refuelling capability no matter which fighter is chosen.

The government has a plan to replace Canada's aging CF-18 fighter fleet. The first annual costing report was released in December, and we will inform Canadians once these decisions are taken.

LABOUR

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know the PMO likes to have its dirty work done by backbenchers, and now we have had it confirmed that this is exactly how the unconstitutional union disclosure bill came to be. An access to information request revealed that the government asked the Canada Revenue Agency to provide language for the bill, hardly a normal procedure for a private member's bill.

Will the Conservatives finally come clean and admit that this attack on workers came straight out of the PMO?

● (1450)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, public polling indicates that the overwhelming majority of Canadians, *surtout les Québécois*, support union financial disclosure. They support it because unions receive millions of dollars in tax benefits, and taxpayers deserve to know how those benefits are spent. As well, workers deserve to know how their forced dues are spent.

The only ones who are opposed to it are the NDP members, because the NDP received at least \$340,000 in illegal union money and it has something to hide.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with Bill C-377, the Conservatives are going after unions the same way the IRS went after the Tea Party in the United States. The Canada Revenue Agency is trying to squeeze \$72 million out of unions.

The Minister of National Revenue continues to claim that she has not put a figure to the penalties, but an internal document from her agency proves the opposite. Why?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of Quebecers support this bill. According to Leger Marketing, more than 80% of Quebecers are in favour of union transparency. They know that workers are required to pay high dues. They also know that the New Democrats received more than \$300,000 in illegal union donations.

The time has come for unions to be transparent.

Oral Questions

[English]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has been at the centre of several investigations involving a call on ECBC, one by the Public Service Commission and an ongoing one by the Ethics Commissioner involving John Lynn, with whom he is familiar.

I can inform the House today that a third investigation has now been initiated surrounding ECBC. It is related to the hiring of people right out of the office of the Minister of National Defence, this one by the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner out of concern for potential gross mismanagement at ECBC.

Who will be accountable for all this? Is it the current Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the former minister for ACOA or the Minister of National Defence?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak to any details of any ongoing investigation, but as soon as we became aware of any allegations, I directed ACOA officials to refer the matter to the Ethics Commissioner.

We expect that ECBC will conduct their business with integrity, accountability and respect for Canadian taxpayers. I can say that the proper process is in progress to deal with these issues, and they will be addressed in due course.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the integrity commissioner's report is not whitewashed like the last one.

The member for York Centre lists the Economic Club of Canada as a source of significant income for him, which he continues to receive in addition to his salary as a member of Parliament.

Could the government disclose how many times federal cabinet ministers have appeared at the Economic Club of Canada to the profit of the member for York Centre since the May 2011 election campaign, and could it also tell the House how the rate of attendance of these cabinet ministers compares to two years prior to the May 2011 election campaign?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): I have not spoken at many events, Mr. Speaker, but certainly most of the charitable events I speak at benefit charities, unlike the case with the leader of the Liberal Party.

Further to this list, he took \$7,500 from the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. He took \$20,000 from the Learning Partnership, which encourages students to stay in school, and \$20,000 from the Canadian Mental Health Association.

When we speak at a charitable event, we should always give to the charity, not take from the charity. What is it about the Liberals that they do not understand?

Public service is about supporting charity, supporting our constituents and supporting the public, not ripping them off. Why do they not get it?

* * *

● (1455)

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under this government it is apparently easier to give someone a job in the Senate than to provide employment to young people.

Without a targeted plan to create quality jobs, the Conservatives are mortgaging the future of an entire generation, namely mine. This generation's wage gap and the difficulty young people are having in finding a job are in themselves extremely disturbing. The government should actually be helping young Canadians lead Canada into the 21st century.

When will the Conservatives come up with a real action plan and a real job plan for young Canadians?

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the numbers speak for themselves: 54,400 new jobs for young Canadians.

I urge the member opposite to read the budget and look at all the wonderful things that are being done to create jobs and opportunities for training for young Canadians, whether that be 5,000 paid internships, the Canada job grant or opportunities with pathways to education. These are all great things for young Canadians.

We are getting the job done. We encourage members opposite to get on board.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages keeps insisting that the charges related to Saulie Zajdel's are only related to his time as a municipal councillor.

How does he know that none of these potentially illegal activities happened while he was in the minister's office? Does the minister really have no concerns about fraud, corruption or breach of trust that may have occurred while Mr. Zajdel was working in his office?

Why is he dismissing these concerns so casually?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not dismissing the concerns, but that is the scope of the mandate of the investigation. It is 2006 to 2011, because the police said so this morning. He does not have to believe me, but he might want to believe the Montreal police. That is the scope of the investigation mandate.

Oral Questions

Again, if Mr. Zajdel, Mr. Applebaum or anybody else broke the law, they should have the book thrown at them and be held accountable, because it is what taxpayers expect. If anybody steals money, they should be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is blessed to have the third-largest deposits of oil on the planet. Oil is a vital energy resource, providing one-third of global energy needs.

Canadian oil production is creating jobs and economic growth across Canada, and our government is currently fighting for Canadian jobs overseas by ensuring that Canada has access to markets.

To that end, I wonder if the Minister of Natural Resources can update the House on the latest problems posed by the European fuel quality directive.

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the European fuel quality directive is non-scientific, discriminates against Canada, discourages transparency, undermines European competitiveness and will not achieve its environmental objective, yet the NDP deputy leader told reporters it was a perfectly reasonable way to set regulations.

This bizarre statement is the latest attack by the NDP on Canada's reputation and economic prospects in a foreign country. It is yet another instance that the NDP does not know when to stop.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations recently released its horrific report on death, destruction and devastation in Syria: 93,000 dead, 5,000 killed monthly, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed daily, 4.5 million displaced internally and 7,000 new refugees each day.

While the government has increased aid to refugees in Jordan, will it increase aid to internally displaced persons in Syria, facilitate family reunification and resettlement for Syrian refugees, join the Swiss-led initiative to bring war criminals to justice and, finally, affirm and implement the responsibility to protect doctrine?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government condemns the actions of Assad and his thugs. Canada commends Syria's neighbours for their generosity in welcoming those seeking safety within their borders. Our government has committed additional humanitarian assistance for people affected by the Syrian crisis, and we remain committed to saving lives and addressing the needs of those affected by the Syrian crisis both inside and outside of Syria.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, another cloud of toxic dust engulfed people in the Quebec City area this weekend.

The province is concerned, Quebec City is concerned and hundreds of worried citizens have already signed the NDP's petition. Arrimage du St-Laurent, a stevedoring company, has proposed an action plan that has been addressed by all levels of government, except of course the one responsible for the port.

What does the Minister of Transport, or his Environment colleague, think of Arrimage du St-Laurent's plan?

• (1500)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Port of Quebec is an independent port authority and is responsible for managing its own operations and activities.

That being said, the port has invested \$12 million in preventive measures to remedy the situation. We will continue working with the people in the area and we will continue monitoring the situation very closely.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the leader of the NDP was confused. When he arrived on Parliament Hill, he must have thought that he had arrived at the Montreal Grand Prix. He admitted that he sped through numerous stop signs on his way across the parliamentary precinct, but rather than being greeted at the winner's circle, he was met by an RCMP member who had been pursuing him. Rather than showing contrition for his reckless acts, he berated the female officer, saying he would get her in a lot of trouble.

Could the Minister of Public Safety tell the House the importance of security on Parliament Hill?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, contrary to the suggestion of the NDP member for Timmins—James Bay that female RCMP officers are meter maids, our Conservative government thanks all RCMP members for their service.

Thousands of tourists, including many children, pass through Parliament Hill every week. Last week, the conduct of the NDP leader could have put them at risk. Angry outbursts, intimidation and seeking special treatment are no way to treat the women and men who ensure our safety here on Parliament Hill.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they should be dealing with their own scandals instead of concerning themselves with someone else's.

Oral Questions

The Navigable Waters Protection Act—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, the Navigable Waters Protection Act used to be held up as a model of environmental protection. Any project that could restrict Canadians' right to navigate their country's lakes and rivers had to undergo an environmental assessment, as required by the act. The Conservatives did away with that protection and, instead of acknowledging their error and reversing their decision, they decided to attack the NDP, simply because we want to restore that protection, which is crucial for the environment.

Why are the Conservatives not listening to the thousands of Canadians who have signed our petition and are calling for this protection to be restored?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should read the Navigable Waters Protection Act. She would know that it was never an environmental protection law. There are environmental laws that protect the environment and the habitats of fish and other organisms, but the Navigable Waters Protection Act is not one of those laws.

It was a law about navigation. It was a law that needed to be updated, and we did that.

* * *

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, no one is buying the arguments used by the government to justify the decision to unilaterally impose a new job training program. In a letter sent just last Thursday, Quebec's minister of employment and social solidarity again pointed out to her federal counterpart that there is a consensus in Quebec on the issue.

Employees, employers and trainers, who are members of Quebec's labour market partners commission, all agree that Quebec must retain control over training and are asking for the agreements to be renewed with the existing terms and conditions.

Will the government finally respect Quebec's approach to labour training and renew the agreements as they stand?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to work with the provinces in order to ensure that the training flows from the government to employers and available workers. There are too many vacant jobs in Canada because employers cannot find workers with the right skills.

• (1505)

[English]

We are focused on creating jobs for Canadians and on providing them with the training they need to acquire those jobs. I encourage the opposition to get on board.

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Syria is catastrophic. While the fiercest battles have raged in recent months, the Canadian government has even recognized the use of chemical warfare against the Syrian people. Without any help from the government, I identified 17 Canadian children who are caught up in this hell and cannot leave Syria without their immediate family—father, mother, sister or brother—who do not have Canadian citizenship. I have been forwarding this information to the minister for the past week, but he has done nothing about it.

I gave him this information again today. What does he plan to do? We are talking about the lives of 17 Canadian children.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have explained to the hon. member, my office receives several thousand claims a month. I personally receive over 100 immigration files a week. I am sorry, but I am not a fast-food joint, and I cannot give answers to such complex cases in just a few hours.

That being said, I am happy to say that we have nearly completed processing all of the family reunification applications for people in Syria who were already in our system.

[English]

The Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer is rising.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Ms. Nicole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my statement earlier today, I talked about Sylvain Desrochers' retirement.

I would like to add that Daniel Cardinal will also be retiring at the end of this session.

On behalf of all of my colleagues, I would like to wish him a very happy retirement and congratulate him on the commitment he has shown over the years.

Happy retirement, Daniel.

[English]

The Speaker: Of course, on behalf of the Deputy Speaker and the Assistant Deputy Speakers, I too would like to pay tribute to our page supervisors, Daniel and Sylvain.

It has been a pleasure working with them in my time in the Chair, and I am sure previous speakers would say the same thing; they were very ably and professionally served by two members of the team who had a real sense of dedication to this institution.

[Translation]

Daniel and Sylvain, we wish you both a happy retirement. Congratulations.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in relation to its study of chapter 6, "Transfer Payments to the Aerospace Sector—Industry Canada", of the 2012 fall report of the Auditor General of Canada.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of the Commons, the committee requests the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Finance on Bill S-17, An Act to implement conventions, protocols, agreements and a supplementary convention, concluded between Canada and Namibia, Serbia, Poland, Hong Kong, Luxembourg and Switzerland, for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes.

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

[English]

Mr. Speaker, if you would just allow me, this bill was done in a very quick period. I would like to thank all three political parties in that committee, all members of that committee, for coming together in a very quick period. I would also like to thank all committee staff, especially our clerk, Christine, for all her efforts in putting this together very quickly.

* * *

● (1510)

CONSTITUTION COMPLIANCE REVIEW ACT

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-537, an act to ensure legislative compliance with the Canadian Bill of Rights and the Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the constitution compliance review act, legislation that would require, for the first time, constitutional examination of all bills introduced in Parliament, the tabling of a report of constitutional compliance and an independent non-partisan review and compliance mechanism.

It is imperative that parliamentarians be informed of the constitutionality of bills, given our obligation to uphold the Constitution and to oversee the public purse. This bill would thus seek to improve transparency in the parliamentary process by ensuring that all parliamentarians are given an independent analysis of the constitutionality of all bills, regardless of whether they are

introduced by the government or opposition, in the House or in the Senate.

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

* * *

NAVIGABLE WATERS PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-538, An Act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act (Bear Creek).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the importance of protecting our natural resources is something I value. I feel the need for it every time I take a moment to stop and appreciate all the beauty my community of Surrey has to offer. That is why I applaud the initiative of the member for Halifax to ensure the protection of lakes and rivers across our great country. It is in this spirit of protection that I am proud to introduce this private member's bill to ensure the protection of Bear Creek, a special and very important creek located in Surrey.

Bear Creek is both meaningful and valuable to the people of Surrey, and it is vital that we protect it. The creek is unique, because it provides spawning and rearing habitat for five species of salmon and trout as well as a variety of wildlife.

If people visit the stream in mid-November, they may be fortunate enough to see spawning salmon returning from their long journey from the Pacific Ocean. In one season over 900 spawning chum salmon have been observed at Bear Creek.

I believe that protecting the environment is important to the people of Canada, as demonstrated in my riding of Surrey North. It is my pleasure to introduce this bill and to work hard to keep Bear Creek a protected creek.

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

* * *

[Translation]

PROMOTION OF LOCAL FOODS ACT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-539, An Act to promote local foods.

She said: Mr. Speaker, this is the first bill I am introducing in the House. It is about promoting local foods.

This bill will raise awareness of the work that producers in our regions do and improve access to high-quality, fresh products. It will reduce transportation and associated greenhouse gas emissions.

The bill recommends developing a pan-Canadian local foods strategy. It directs the minister of agriculture to meet with his or her provincial counterparts to develop a definition of what constitutes a local food, to create a forum for sharing best practices, to consult with producers and distributors and to raise awareness of the strategy.

The bill also suggests a local foods procurement policy for federal institutions. The federal government would set an example and enable all of our producers to sell their products to federal institutions.

I hope that all members of the House will be able to vote in favour of this bill to recognize the work of our local producers. They make a tremendous contribution to regional economies and Canada's economy as a whole.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in consultations over the past year. I would especially like to thank my assistant, Isabelle Bourassa.

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

* * *

•(1515)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-540, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (non-consensual making or distributing of intimate images).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and table this very important piece of legislation today. I thank my colleague, the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam, for agreeing to second the bill.

In the constituency I represent, the tragic death a short time ago of Rehtaeh Parsons led to people across the country, and not just across the country, mourning her death and the circumstances around her death. At the same time, people began to urgently ask what they could do to make sure this type of situation or incident was not allowed to happen again.

People in Nova Scotia, Ontario, British Columbia, municipalities, school boards and provinces throughout the country have been working towards developing strategies to make sure this type of event does not happen again.

A cyberbullying task force in Nova Scotia has been working away at developing protocols and standards of contact for identifying who needs to accept responsibility, whether it be in schools, health care or justice.

One thing identified as a gap was the responsibility of the federal government. It is a matter of making sure that the Criminal Code of Canada is brought up to current times to reflect the circumstances of what is happening on the Internet. That is what this bill is intended to do. It is to recognize that there is a gap and that we need to take action to make sure there are consequences for this type of behaviour.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present eight petitions that call upon Parliament to impose a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa in order to allow a proper review of the impact on farmers in Canada.

Routine Proceedings

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by tens of thousands of Canadians who call upon the House of Commons and Parliament assembled to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known. More Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial and occupational causes combined.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all of its forms, institute a testing and removal program for property owners and stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam convention.

EMERALD ASH BORER

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition on behalf of my constituents from the town of Hampstead calling upon the government to increase co-operation with and provide financial compensation to Canadian municipalities in order to combat and prevent the devastating economic and environmental effects of the emerald ash borer. The ash borer has proved to be highly destructive. Since its arrival, it has killed millions of ash trees with its significant impact on both the local and national economy and ecology.

I share the concerns of my constituents who understand the ruination that has resulted elsewhere to both urban and major wooded regions of the country and continent. Complete destruction of the affected resources typically results within six years of infestation, making the need for action in this regard of particular urgency to both my constituents and the region.

As such, the petitioners call for both financial compensation from an increased coordination with the federal government to combat this threat.

The Speaker: Order, please. I see quite a number of members rising who wish to introduce petitions so I will ask members to be very brief in their explanation of the petitions they present.

The hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia.

•(1520)

CANADA POST

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a number of citizens from my riding.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to instruct Canada Post to halt its plan to downsize and downgrade public post offices and consult with the public and others to improve the Canada postal service charter by developing a better process for making changes to the retail and delivery network.

[Translation]

HUMANITARIAN AID

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition signed by 681 people who are calling on Canada to keep its promise to give 0.7% of its GDP in humanitarian aid. The people who signed the petition come from across Quebec.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I present three petitions regarding steps to end violence. The Somali Canadian community left a war-torn community to come to our peaceful country only to have many of their children die at the hand of violence. Almost 50 young Somali Canadian males have been killed in Ontario and Alberta since 2006. In 2012, 6 of 33 Toronto shooting homicides befell Somali Canadian men.

The petitioners call upon the government to investigate these deaths through the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, develop federal-provincial job programs, particularly with the RCMP, and examine witness protection.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of Calgarians and Albertans on a petition which states that as Canada is a nation that has long promoted the right of equal protection and equal benefit of the law, preventing the birth of baby girls through sex-selective abortions is an affront to the dignity and equality of women and girls. Sex-selection abortions have denied millions of girls in Canada and throughout the world the chance to be born merely because they are girls.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to condemn discrimination against girls through sex-selective abortion and prevent sex-selective abortion from being carried out in Canada.

I hear these cries for baby girls loud and clear.

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from thousands of Canadians who ask that measures must be taken to stop the global practice of shark finning and to ensure the responsible conservation and management of sharks.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fins to Canada.

CANADA POST

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post continues to close post offices, including in historic villages on the Island of Montreal. In particular, it recently closed the Pointe-Claire post office in the village of Pointe-Claire. It now has plans to close the Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue post office in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, one of the oldest communities in Canada.

I have petitions from people who object to the closing of the Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue post office and also to the two post offices a little further east, namely in Snowdon and in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to present a petition signed by dozens of local residents who are outraged by the unnecessary death of a young woman killed by a drunk driver.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to enact tougher laws, including mandatory sentencing, for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death. They also ask that the offence of “impaired driving causing death” be redefined as “vehicular manslaughter”.

[Translation]

CROWN CORPORATIONS

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise today to present a petition signed by nearly 800 people who are complaining about the interference in collective bargaining that would arise from Bill C-60. The petitioners are seeking to preserve the autonomy of these crown corporations.

[English]

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions.

The first petition highlights the sad fact that last year 22-year-old Cassandra Kaulius was killed by a drunk driver. A group of people who have also lost loved ones, called “Families for Justice”, wants to see tougher laws and the implementation of new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons found guilty of impaired driving causing death.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition states that citizens are very concerned that sex selection is happening in Canada.

The petitioners reveal a CBC article saying that ultrasounds are being used to tell the sex of a unborn children so expecting parents can terminate the pregnancy if it is a girl. Canadians are outraged, and they want Parliament to condemn this practice.

●(1525)

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by about 175 people from southern Ontario who are concerned about the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The petitioners believe that Bill S-10 contains exceptions which run counter to the object and purpose of that treaty. They ask Parliament to amend Bill S-10 to remove those exceptions, to include an explicit prohibition on investment in cluster munition production and to add mention of the positive obligations Canada assumes by signing the convention.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Questions Nos. 1345, 1347, 1348, 1350, 1352, 1355, 1356 and 1357.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 1345—Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:

With regard to Budget 2012: (a) how many full-time equivalent (FTE) positions has Parks Canada eliminated of the approximately 500 FTEs that existed in the Parks Canada Service Centers before the remaining positions were transferred to other parts of the Parks Canada organization; (b) how many of the FTE reductions have been charged against the Strategic and Operating Review reductions announced in Budget 2012; (c) if Budget 2012 reductions included vacant positions, what are the number, title, group and level of each of the positions that existed in Parks Canada Service Centers before reductions were announced or implemented; (d) what is the number, title, group and level of each of the positions that have been eliminated; and (e) what is the number, title, group and level of those positions that were transferred to other Parks Canada organizational units as a result of elimination of the Service Centers?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as announced in budget 2012, Parks Canada is consolidating and streamlining its service centres and national office as part of its efforts to help reduce the federal deficit. These efforts will improve internal efficiencies and reduce costs while allowing Parks Canada to continue to respect its core mandate and offer Canadians the quality services they expect. In addition to budget 2012, Parks Canada has also had to absorb increases to salaries and inflationary operational costs announced in budget 2010.

Parks Canada sites play a key economic development role in more than 400 communities across the country. National parks, national marine conservation areas and national historic sites are entering another exciting season and are looking forward to welcoming visitors from across the country and from around the world with a full complement of services to discover these special places at their best.

Parks Canada continues to tell the stories that are important to our national identity, manage species at risk, provide meaningful experiences that promote an understanding and appreciation of Canada and support communities through tourism, as it has done for the last 100 years.

Question No. 1347—Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:

With regard to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the Canadian Forces (CF), what is the number of CF members, both Regular and Reserves, which have been diagnosed as suffering from PTSD during calendar years 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2012, broken down by rank and base of affectation?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the most accurate information on post-traumatic stress disorder and other operational stress injuries is based on a recent study that examined the cumulative incidence of these illnesses attributable to deployment in Afghanistan. The study group included all Canadian Armed Forces members enrolled in the regular or primary reserve forces who returned from deployment of any duration in support of the mission in Afghanistan between October 1, 2001, and December 31, 2008. The Canadian Armed Forces identified 30,518 such personnel and examined the medical records of a random sample group of 2,045 personnel. Information available based on this recent study by the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces indicates that 8% of the entire cohort was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder related to Afghanistan. As indicated above, this is based on a sample of Canadian Armed Forces members who deployed in Afghanistan and not a representation of the overall situation in the CAF as a whole.

The Canadian Armed Forces are currently conducting studies to further develop their understanding of the impact of operational stress injuries on their members, including those who deployed to Afghanistan, and on mental health among Canadian Armed Forces members more generally. These studies are ongoing and their results are not yet available.

Question No. 1348—Hon. Wayne Easter:

With regard to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, since August 1, 2012, how many access to information requests have been received and of those, how many (i) were completed within 30 days, (ii) were extended for 30 days, (iii) were extended for 60 days, (iv) were extended for 90 days, (v) were extended for more than 90 days, (vi) missed the deadline to provide the requested information?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there were 286 access to information requests received since August 1, 2012. Please note that some requests have been extended for periods other than 30, 60 or 90 days. Others are still open or have not missed the deadline, so these numbers may not be captured in responses (i) through (vi). In addition, some requests that may have been extended by 30, 60 and 90 days may have also missed the deadline, so these would be reflected twice in the metrics.

Of the 286 access to information requests received, with respect to (i), 104 were completed within 30 days. With respect to (ii), two requests were extended for 30 days; this includes a total of 1125 pages released. With respect to (iii), 66 requests were extended for 60 days; this includes a total of 5648 pages released. With respect to (iv), 13 requests were extended for 90 days; this includes a total of 6494 pages released. With respect to (v), 20 requests were extended for more than 90 days; this includes a total of 50 717 pages released. With respect to (vi), 85 requests missed the deadlines, this could be for a number of reasons, including the volume and complexity of the requests, a requirement to conduct external consultations and the overall workload.

Question No. 1350—Hon. Wayne Easter:

With regard to the Department of National Defence (DND), what are the details of all contracts for consulting services or advice purchased by the department during fiscal years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, including the name of the consultant, the nature of their services, their location, the amount paid, the file or reference number of the contracts, the file or reference number of any reports prepared by the consultant, and was the consultant a retired member of the Canadian Armed Forces or a former civil servant within DND?

*Routine Proceedings***Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces do not possess a central database containing all the contract data requested in this question. The authority to issue contracts resides with more than 20 organizations within the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, each of which retains the contracts that it has issued. A manual search of the estimated several thousand contract records from 2010-11 and 2011-12 would be the only method to obtain the requested detailed information. Information regarding whether a consultant was a former civil servant within the Department of National Defence or a retired member of the Canadian Armed Forces is in many cases not readily available even through a manual contract search, and would require some organizations to contact the consulting companies directly. It is estimated that the research required to respond to this question could take at least six months of full-time work for several officials. Therefore, a response cannot reasonably be produced for this question. However, in accordance with the Treasury Board Secretariat's policy on contracting with former public servants, the Department of National Defence is undertaking efforts to improve, as expeditiously as possible, the data integrity of the system in place to track contracts with former public servants.

Question No. 1352—Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:

With regard to the cost of post-secondary education paid for by the Department of National Defence, for all currently serving Deputy Judge-Advocate Generals: (a) what is the date of their nominations to the position of Deputy Judge-Advocate General; and (b) what are the direct and indirect costs paid for, including but not limited to (i) allowances of all types, (ii) travel and moving expenses for them and their families, (iii) salaries, (iv) reimbursement of the costs for academic books and materials, (v) the degrees obtained, (vi) tuition and academic fees?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), there are currently five serving Deputy Judge Advocates General in the regular force. To protect their privacy, their names were not included in the response. The dates of nomination for these Deputy Judge Advocates General were as follows: Deputy Judge Advocate General 1: September 4, 2009; Deputy Judge Advocate General 2: July 1, 2011; Deputy Judge Advocate General 3: August 2, 2005; Deputy Judge Advocate General 4: May 4, 2012; Deputy Judge Advocate General 5: August 13, 2010.

With regard to (b), these responses do not include post-secondary education provided at the Royal Military Colleges in Saint Jean and Kingston, as the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces own these institutions and do not reimburse any of the costs associated with the degrees obtained there.

With regard to (b)(i), information concerning allowances could not be generated within the allocated time.

With regard to (b)(ii), information concerning travel and moving expenses could not be generated within the allocated time.

With regard to Deputy Judge Advocate General 1, the salary range is \$62,635 - \$87,710; reimbursement of the costs for academic books and materials was \$435; degree obtained was Master of Laws, LL.M., in legislative drafting, 1998; tuition and academic fees were \$6,074.

With regard to Deputy Judge Advocate General 2, the salary range was \$42,096 - \$55,632; costs for academic books and materials were included in tuition and academic fees; degree obtained was Bachelor of Laws, LL.B., 1994; tuition and academic fees were \$12,148. With regard to Deputy Judge Advocate General 2 as well, the salary range is \$134,484 - \$142,920; reimbursement of the costs for academic books and materials was \$2,827; degree obtained was Master of Law, LL.M., in international law, 2007; tuition and academic fees were \$26,938.

With regard to Deputy Judge Advocate General 3, salary range was \$42,096 - \$55,632; information on costs for reimbursement of academic books and materials could not be generated within the allocated time; degree obtained was Bachelor of Law, LL.B., 1993; information on tuition and academic fees could not be generated within the allocated time. With regard to Deputy Judge Advocate General 3 as well, salary range is \$131,460 - \$139,704; reimbursement of the costs for academic books and materials was \$2,471; degree obtained was Master of Law, LL.M., in air and space Law, 2006; tuition and academic fees were \$8,010.

With regard to Deputy Judge Advocate General 4, the question is not applicable.

With regard to Deputy Judge Advocate General 5, salary range is \$138,552 - \$147,240; reimbursement of the costs for academic books and materials was \$2,024; degree obtained was Master of Law, LL.M., in international law, 2009; tuition and academic fees were \$50,311.

Question No. 1355—Hon. John McKay:

With regard to the latest edition of the Department of National Defence's Investment Plan, what is contained within the current list of investments, including (i) description of the investment, (ii) expected costs, (iii) timeline for completion, (iv) current status of each investment?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the latest edition of the Department of National Defence's investment plan is considered cabinet confidence. Neither the document nor extracts from it will be released.

Detailed information on defence investments has been reported in reports on plans and priorities and departmental performance reports, which can be found at the following links: for the report on plans and priorities 2013-14, <http://www.vcds.forces.gc.ca/sites/internet-eng.aspx?page=15184>; for the departmental performance report 2011-12, <http://www.vcmd.forces.gc.ca/sites/internet-eng.aspx?page=14493>.

Question No. 1356—Hon. John McKay:

With regard to the ex gratia payments to Canadian Forces members in relation to the Home Equity Assistance (HEA) provisions: (a) how many members received a payment; (b) what is the rank of each recipient; and (c) what is the date and amount for each ex gratia payment that was made by the Department of Justice, Office of the Department of National Defence Canadian Forces Legal Authority, concerning HEA provisions, as governed by the Department of National Defence HEA, Integrated Relocation Program (CF IRP), between January 1, 2001, and December 31, 2013?

*Routine Proceedings***Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces searched their records and found no instances of ex gratia payments to Canadian Armed Forces members in relation to the home equity assistance provisions between January 1, 2001, and December 31, 2013.

Question No. 1357—Hon. John McKay:

With regard to the Canadian Forces Medical Service and the treatment of ill and injured Canadian Forces personnel, between 2000-2012, what is: (a) the total number of members who were prescribed opioid narcotics for pain management; (b) the total amount spent on opioid narcotic drugs during this time; (c) the total number of Canadian Forces members treated for opioid narcotic drug abuse; (d) the number of Canadian Forces members that have been released from the military due to opioid narcotic drug abuse; and (e) which treatment methods are used to aid in the recovery of Canadian Forces members with opioid narcotic drug addiction?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), (b) and (c), the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces do not maintain a central database to track information related to the prescription of opioid drugs to Canadian Armed Forces members. It is not possible to produce a response in the time available, as this would require a manual search of medical files of all Canadian Armed Forces members who have served during the time period.

With regard to (d), Canadian Armed Forces personnel are not released for drug abuse. Personnel may be released as a result of a violation of the Canadian Forces drug control program, and this may involve the use of opiates. Between 2000 and 2012, eight members were released in relation to opiates under the Canadian Forces drug control program.

With regard to (e), all Canadian Armed Forces members diagnosed with substance abuse problems will be assessed for any underlying medical conditions, such as chronic pain, etc., and offered the appropriate level of treatment, including the opportunity to undergo a residential treatment program for substance abuse.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, furthermore, if Questions Nos. 1343, 1344, 1349, 1351, 1353 and 1354 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1343—Mr. Matthew Dubé:

With regard to the Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund, since its creation: (a) what is the total amount awarded by all regional development agencies; (b) for each agency, how many applications were received and, of that number, how many applications were refused; (c) what was the selection criteria; and (d) for each agency, how many projects were funded and, for each project funded or refused by the Fund, what was the type of community infrastructure (based on the definitions of eligible infrastructure), the amount awarded or refused and the name and place (city, province) of the applicant organization?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1344—Mr. Matthew Dubé:

With regard to the Children's Fitness Tax Credit: (a) how much has this credit cost the government for each fiscal year since its introduction; and (b) how many Canadians have claimed this tax credit by household type, by income bracket and by province?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1349—Hon. Wayne Easter:

With regard to the Canadian Armed Forces, in each year since 2006 inclusive, what has been the number of: (a) harassment complaints other than that of a sexual nature; (b) sexual harassment complaints; and (c) harassment investigations, broken down by the following locations (i) Department of National Defence (DND)/Canadian Forces (CF) establishments located in the National Capital Region, including NDHQ, (ii) Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Halifax, (iii) CFB Cornwallis, (iv) CFB Galetown, (v) CFB Valcartier, (vi) CFB Kingston (not including the Royal Military College), (vii) CFB Petawawa, (viii) CFB Borden, (ix) CFB Shilo, (x) CFB Edmonton, (xi) CFB Comox, (xii) CFB Esquimalt, (xiii) Royal Military College (Kingston), (xiv) Royal Military College (St-Jean)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1351—Hon. Wayne Easter:

With regard to the Department of National Defence (DND), what is the detailed breakdown of: (a) Canadian Armed Forces executives by rank (General, Lieutenant-General, Major-General and Brigadier-General); and (b) DND executives by classification (DM-4, DM-3, DM-2, DM-1, EX-5, EX-4, EX-3, EX-2 and EX-1), on December 31, 2005 and December 31, 2012?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1353—Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:

With regard to the Department of National Defence (DND): (a) what are the ranks of each Canadian Armed Forces member and classification of each DND employee who, on December 31, 2012, attended post-graduate training at public expense at a Canadian or international educational institution; and (b) for each, what is (i) the actual yearly salary of the student, (ii) the program of study, (iii) the number of semesters of study paid for by the government since the start of their career, (iv) all the institutions attended, (v) the total cost of tuition paid with respect to the student's training, (vi) whether relocation costs were paid with respect to the training and the amount of those costs, (vii) any other associated costs?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1354—Mr. Yvon Godin:

With regard to the Centre of Excellence for Evaluation (CEE) of the Treasury Board Secretariat: (a) why is the 2012 Annual Report on the Health of the Evaluation Function not available online; (b) why are official languages not included in the 2011 Annual Report on the Health of the Evaluation Function; (c) how are official languages integrated into the work of the CEE; (d) does the CEE work closely with the Official Languages Centre of Excellence and, if so, how; (e) how are official languages integrated into the evaluation function as regards expenditure management in the public service as a whole; (f) why are official languages not included in the Leadership Competencies for Federal Heads of Evaluation; (g) why are official languages not included in the Policy on Evaluation; (h) how does the CEE ensure that federal institutions have access to external evaluators with official languages experience when necessary; (i) how many CEE employees work on files with an official languages component; (j) does the Framework for Professional Development for Evaluators have an official languages component and, if so, what is it; (k) why has the Audit and Evaluation Database been offline for a number of weeks, and when will it be working again; and (l) how does the CEE ensure that the tools it provides on its website take into account its official languages obligations?

(Return tabled)

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY ACT

BILL C-49—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

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

That, in relation 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, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the consideration at report stage of the bill and five hours shall be allotted to the consideration at third reading stage of the said bill; and

That, at the expiry of the five hours provided for the consideration of the report stage and at the expiry of the five hours provided for the third reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stages of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

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

The hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to speak. I have lost count now as to the number of closure motions the government has put forward to limit debate, but it is clear the members opposite have virtually no regard for what parliamentary democracy is all about. We are now rushing through debate and consideration of every bill that comes before the House, yet when it comes to the democratic process itself, the government has failed to provide the bill that it has promised for I do not know how many months on reforming the democratic system to allow Elections Canada to have more oversight over spending and how elections themselves are conducted.

The government is only interested in pursuing its agenda in a rapid-fire way, in a way that undermines the very ability of Parliament to study and debate matters, while at the same time refusing to put forward the changes to the elections process that it has promised over and over again. We are at the point where we honestly do not believe the legislation will ever come forward.

Could the government tell us when the reforms to the elections process will be coming?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, very clearly the actions that were taken to move forward with Bill C-49 could not have had better testimony than the intervention from the member opposite. Even in this context of a 30-minute question and answer period, he wants to talk about another bill. He does not even want to talk about this legislation.

We are very pleased to have this legislation move forward. It is what we promised to do. On October 12, we tabled Bill C-49, the legislation to create the new Canadian museum of history. Now, more than eight months later, we have had time to debate and discuss this matter. We have had it through all stages of Parliament. We had a thorough conversation about this at the legislative committee process. Amendments were considered and debated. Witnesses have come forward. This has been debated in the media widely.

This legislation has had thorough discussion and debate. We are pleased to see it now move forward so we can have a new Canadian museum of history that will serve all Canadians for generations to come.

• (1530)

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is some sort of record, today. How can the government beat its own record? I guess it has until June 21 to break today's record number of time allocation motions.

An hon. member: I think it will be broken today.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Indeed, it might be today.

We feel that this is a major challenge to our democracy. Whether we are here in the House or at committee, when a time allocation motion is moved, it challenges our democracy, which is taking a beating. At least, that is what the official opposition and Canadians think.

We are once again being gagged by a government exerting unacceptable but continual control over us. We, as parliamentarians from the government side or from the official opposition, are here to do our work, to represent Canadians and, above all, to debate the issues that are important to them.

Canadians across the country are not the only ones who feel this way. People around the world are taking note of this. We are really concerned and frustrated that another gag order is being imposed with regard to this bill.

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to tell my colleague that we are extremely proud of this bill and of our government's new initiative to better support our knowledge of Canada's history in every region of the country.

Marie Lalonde, Executive Director of the Ontario Museum Association, supports this bill. She also supports the process to encourage MPs to vote for and pass this bill before Canada's 150th birthday in 2017. Ms. Lalonde stated that:

[I]n partnership with this new museum, local museums will be able to offer their visitors distinctive exhibits and initiatives that would otherwise not be available.

In addition, Yves Fortier, a member of the Historica-Dominion Institute's board of directors, said that, "the Historica-Dominion Institute enthusiastically supports the creation of the Canadian Museum of History".

We are very proud of our process because we worked with members of the opposition prior to introducing the bill. We launched respectful discussions in the House. In addition, a great deal of input was heard in committee.

Government Orders

However, it is very clear that, after more than eight months of work on this issue, eight months of considering this bill and eight months of debate, it is time to proceed with the bill and pass it so the new Canadian Museum of History can be created.

[English]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess because the House leader is not here or does not have the courage to address the time allocation motion, here we are, once again. I think we are in the fifties of time allocation in the House. If we add committees, we are probably in the hundreds or maybe thousands of time allocation that the government has been imposing—

• (1535)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

I would point out to members that it is improper to note whether someone is not present.

The hon. member.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I just meant that out of respect, not out disrespect for the minister, because I know he will be answering the question.

Do we really need time allocation on this bill? It is not controversial. There are some aspects of the bill that need to be discussed. I know there were some amendments put before committee. However, none of the amendments were accepted.

The minister is more of a conciliatory type individual. From his point of view, would it not have been better if we had just sat down, come to some kind of agreement, accepted some amendments and decided that maybe we did not need to have time allocation on the bill?

I am asking the minister if that is possible.

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, I did indeed try to reach out to opposition members in this House, all parties, to try to gauge their support for this project itself. I approached the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, and showed him the language in the legislation before we tabled it in Parliament; equally with the NDP; as well I extended it to the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, who is the leader of the Green Party and showed her the legislation of what we had in mind. We consulted with the opposition before we tabled the bill. We invited them to support this legislation. It has broad-based support, not non-ideological, I can tell members, but broad-based support across this country, from historic institutions, museums, galleries, heritage organizations and communities all across the country that are supporting this initiative.

I did my best to reach out to the opposition, to invite them to support this legislation before we tabled it, showing them that this was a genuine effort to try to build a great national institution that would be national in consequence, not just a beautiful institution here in the national capital, but one that would benefit everybody. That is why we have broad-based support.

The Liberal Party, to its credit, did show some openness in the early days. Unfortunately, it backed away from that, yet we still have the support of the leader of the Green Party. We have the support of the member from Thunder Bay who was elected as a New Democrat.

We have support from individual Canadians. Provincial governments, NDP, Conservative and Liberal, have all come out and openly supported this legislation and the creation of this museum because it would benefit every region of this country.

We are moving forward after eight and a half months of consideration on this matter. I think it is time. We are looking forward to the doors opening at this new, great institution, with this new vitality that would be injected as a result of our investment and this legislation and its new mandate.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, once again today, we are being cut off; we are being prevented from speaking on this subject. Even though the Minister of Canadian Heritage felt that this was something simple that everyone would rally around, unfortunately, that is obviously not at all the case. What is shocking today is to see how hard the government members are pushing to pass his bill, his idea. That is the problem: it is his idea. That is where the problem lies.

People have spoken out many times to say how important it is that the bill be supported by everyone. Today, everyone is pleased to see what phase 2 of this museum will be, travelling exhibits and exchanges with other museums in Canada. However, it is quite cunning on his part to have included that aspect in the bill, an aspect that was already part of the existing museum's mandate. We are focusing a lot on that, but less on the fact that we could very easily have improved the existing museum rather than demolishing it in order to build another one. That is what is happening.

In conclusion, I would like to ask a question. The minister says that he consulted everyone and that everyone is happy. What then does he think about the comment made by Mr. MacDonald, a director whom I am sure he knows very well? Mr. MacDonald said that he was outraged to hear the minister claim that aboriginal peoples were excluded from the exhibits in the Canada Hall. He added that it was clear that the minister had not understood the mutual obligations nor the meaning of this exhibit to aboriginal communities on the west coast that make a living from fishing. We are talking here about the famous *Nishga Girl*. Again according to Mr. MacDonald, the pressure that the minister is exercising to have that exhibit removed contradicts what he claims are the very objectives of his bill.

What does the minister have to say on the matter?

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, to begin with, I said that the museum bill has broad-based support in every region of Canada, but that does not mean that everybody supports it.

[English]

Nothing is ever fully unanimous. However, we should take note of two things that are most important to take away from the intervention by the NDP member opposite.

Government Orders

I will comment first on the second thing he said. He said that the decision to not put on the Nisga'a presentation at the Museum of Civilization was a demonstration that it was not in the best interests of Canadians. He has also commented that I should interfere. On the other hand, he also got up in the House this past week and said I should not interfere with the museum when it was going to put on an exhibit of underwear. The NDP has to decide. Does it want us to have an arm's-length relationship with museums or not? We think it should be arm's-length. Museums can decide the exhibits that they choose to put forward, first of all.

Second, the most important thing to take away from the comment by the NDP, and why we have had this roadblock against the NDP on this subject altogether, is he has said the NDP does not support this because it is an initiative that I, as the minister, have personally brought forward. On the other hand, we hear from New Democrats from time to time, chastizing other cabinet ministers, asking why they do not show leadership, come up with ideas, do something innovative, why are they not taking risks and moving forward. That is what we have done here.

Yes, I had the idea to create a Canadian museum of history. I brought it to all of the opposition parties, invited them to contribute to support this initiative going forward. We have NDP provincial governments that are supporting this. We have Liberal and Conservative governments supporting it. The leader of the Green Party is supporting it in this House. This has broad-based support because we have approached it in a way that we thought was collaborative and responsible. If the New Democrats do not think cabinet ministers should show some initiative and leadership, then frankly, I think they do not understand part of the responsibility of being a minister.

As Minister of Canadian Heritage, I am proud to stand up for Canada's history, to put in place a great institution that will champion Canada's history as Canadians wish to tell it to each other.

• (1540)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for those responses. I just want to touch further on a bit of the independence that he talked about. The member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher in his speech said governments should not be deciding what is in our museums. That seems like a pretty obvious principle.

He went on to say that the contents of museums should be left up to the experts and professionals and that the government, and we as legislators, have no place in determining content or the orientation of a national—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groghé: Mr. Speaker, are we not debating the time allocation motion rather than the hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher's remarks on Bill C-49?

The Deputy Speaker: This period is set aside for questions regarding time allocation and the bill. Both are allowed.

The parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage may proceed with his question.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, it is kind of odd, since one of the members talked only about the bill with respect to election reform.

As I mentioned that quote, there was also a lot of mention from the members opposite with respect to time allocation. They were talking about the fact that they want more debate, but when we look at committee and what was presented to us with respect to amendments from the opposition, both the NDP and the Liberals, the vast majority, in fact, almost 99%, just dealt with adding one word to the name and had nothing to do with respect to independence.

I wonder if the minister could talk about a couple of things with respect to this. Why does he think that no substantive amendments were brought forward at committee by members of the opposition? Why, and how can we, guarantee the independence of this museum? Could the minister also talk about the mayors of Ottawa and Gatineau and why it is important, if they support the bill, that we move forward with this?

The members opposite noted that this is the 50th time we have had to bring in closure. I think it is a damning indictment of the opposition members that 50 times this government has had to force them to debate issues in this Parliament and to stop filibustering bills that have broad-based support from Canadians across the country. Imagine that, 50 times the Government of Canada has had to force the opposition to actually work in Parliament. That is a damning indictment of the opposition and either their inability to work on behalf of Canadians or their inability to get how important it is that we focus on jobs and the economy, and, of course, something like this, which would bring immense pride to all Canadians and help all regions of the country.

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, only in overly bureaucratic, centre-left thinking does it constitute going too fast when we have eight and a half months of debate on legislation that, frankly, is very non-controversial. The legislation itself is only a couple of pages long. It is not complicated. The change to the mandate of the museum is only a couple of sentences long. It is not complicated or difficult to understand.

The members opposite took a position very quickly. As a matter of fact, there was a leak from one of the stakeholders who supports this museum. In his enthusiasm to support the bill, he spoke to a journalist and said what our government was planning on doing, on October 11, 2012. On October 12, we announced it, but before we tabled the bill in Parliament, NDP members had already commented on October 11 that they were against it. They were opposed to the legislation.

Government Orders

It is a bit rich for New Democrats to suggest that we should debate this more and be more thoughtful and substantive with the legislative process as we are now coming to the end of consideration of Bill C-49 when they showed no respect whatsoever at the introduction of this legislation to wait for it to be tabled before they actually took a position. Before chastising others about our approach to Parliament and how we deal with legislation, it would be great if the New Democrats would show some leadership and some example at the introduction of legislation with some open-mindedness in supporting a bill.

The *Toronto Star* supports this legislation. Here is what it said, showing open-mindedness. They say, “Oh, wow, the *Toronto Star*”. The New Democrats like the *Toronto Star*. It endorsed them in the last election. Here is what the *Toronto Star* said:

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

People get it who are not Conservative supporters. They understand that this is an institution that will benefit all regions of the country.

Even if New Democrats rejected it before we tabled it, we are happy to go forward now eight and a half months later to have final passage of this bill so we can all move forward and celebrate Canada’s 150th birthday in our biggest and best museum.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote Joe Dassin, who stated that, “life is but one day after another, and every day is the same”. This is the 47th time allocation motion. If members were looking for a sign—as if one were needed—that the government is tired and no longer knows what to do, they would be hard pressed to find a better example.

I would remind members that time allocation motions are usually for a specific purpose, and denote some urgent need to act. However, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages certainly knows how to play up the benefits of his bill, and has been doing so for some time. Despite cutting short debate—which he has done 46 times—his colleagues and he claim that they do occasionally have ideas, but that they are not overly interested in debating them. They also claim that they want to be more efficient and insinuate that the parliamentary system is a hindrance to Conservative governance. Basically, the Conservatives wonder whether they might not simply do away with the parliamentary system altogether.

In my opinion, when the House reconvenes in September, an omnibus bill will be introduced that clumps together all the legislation that has been discussed over the course of the year. That will mean voting once, and only once.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Robert Aubin: I can already hear the applause, which is proof that this is, indeed, the approach the Conservatives intend to take.

For once, in a debate on time allocation, might we not debate the urgency of completely disregarding any and all procedure in order to

ram through bills that members would still like to debate? I would like to have time to make my rebuttal concerning the bill itself, and I hope that I will have a few minutes remaining to do so. I will not do so during this debate because it deals with time allocation.

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, to say this is indicative of a tired government is not a strong argument. We want to go through the process. We want to move this bill forward. We want to move ahead with the creation of this new museum, which will benefit every region of the country.

As I just said, we have had eight and a half months of debate. We will have five more hours to debate this bill at third reading in the House of Commons.

The NDP will thus have the opportunity to emphasize that it does not like this bill or this new museum. The Liberal Party will also be able to express its position on the museum and to talk about the amendments it sought in the committee process. It will be able to state clearly what it does not like about the idea of creating a new Canadian Museum of History.

Unlike them, we will express our pride: our pride in Canada’s heritage, as well as our pride in this new museum, which will be created as a result of this bill and the \$25 million that we will invest in it thanks to partnerships that we are establishing with museums across Canada.

I also want to tell my colleagues that I was in Winnipeg last Friday with the francophone communities, historians, and members of the historical community there and representatives of the Metis community. They were there for the signing of the agreement between the Manitoba Museum and the new Canadian Museum of History that will be created.

They were proud and pleased with this process and this bill. They were delighted with the new partnership that will give them access to this new museum’s three million artifacts. They will be able to bring them to Winnipeg and talk about the heritage and history of Winnipeg and the history of Canada.

We are proud of this process. We have had eight and a half months of debate. We will have five more hours to talk about this bill.

The NDP can express its position again. I know that the NDP’s position is not popular in Canada. According to that party, we should not be proud of Canada’s heritage. We should not move forward with this museum bill. We do not want to have a genuine legacy for Canada’s 150th anniversary thanks to this new museum of history. That is the NDP’s position. It is not ours.

We are proud to talk about this bill, about the process, the partnership, the investment, the new museum and the new creations that will start once we have passed Bill C-49.

Government Orders

•(1550)

[English]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, having watched and participated in the debate over these many months, I know how much this means to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages. In fact, it means so much to him that he mistakes approaching members from our caucus in back hallways for consultation with Canadians.

He wants it so badly that he gets the process of consultation backwards. He had the plan. He announced the plan. He announced how much money he would spend, and then he embarked on a bogus consultation with Canadians. He has already made the decision. Now he is asking Canadians to give him some cover on that decision.

He has spent an extra \$1 million on the consultation on the name change. Only the Conservatives would call this an inconsequential, non-controversial move. Only the Conservatives would call \$26 million they plucked out of thin air a non-controversial move, because of course, this is the government that has lost \$3.1 billion and cannot seem to find it. This is a minister who hired a staffer who is now under a cloud of indictment in Montreal. We do not need a lecture on leadership from this minister on this file or on any others, for that matter.

I would ask the minister how he got the process so wrong. Why was he so blinded by his own ambition on this?

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, the real question is how the member for Davenport, who has been involved in this process, could be so utterly and completely ignorant about how this process actually unfolded.

We were clear from the very beginning. It is eight and a half months later, and he still does not understand where the \$25 million for this museum came from. It came from the cancellation of the creation of the Canada Prizes. Does he not know that? I told him that personally. It was reported in the *Toronto Star*. He is from Toronto. It is the largest circulation newspaper in the city of Toronto, where he is from. I am from Vancouver, and I read the *Star* as well. It was reported in the *Star*. The hon. member should read his local paper—he might learn a thing or two—or he could remember the conversation we had when I told him where the money was coming from.

I have been very clear about this process from the beginning. That is where the money came from. We are going to have a vote on this very soon. I hope it is now clear to the member where the money came from. It is the third time it has been reported to him, so he should now know.

With regard to the consultation, he should have been there at the announcement, when we had historians from across the country who have come out in support of this process, in support of this legislation and in support of this museum. As I have said before, these are people who are not by any means small-c Conservatives or ideological allies of our government. They could actually move beyond the knee-jerk partisanship the NDP has shown in this process.

Again, the leader of the Green Party is supporting this bill, because she gets it. The former NDP member from Thunder Bay is

supporting this legislation, because he gets what this will mean to Canada.

The Liberal Party members have shown their openness and willingness to discuss this like adults rather than with the knee-jerk opposition the NDP has shown. It declared its opposition to the bill the day before we tabled it in Parliament. NDP members had not even read it. Now the member chastises me and the government about how we ought to approach these things, be respectful and work with others. He opposed the bill before he even read it. That is the highest level of disrespect that can be shown in this place.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the individuals we spoke to during the committee process was Mr. Rabinovitch, who was the former head. He brought up a very valid point, which was that the former name, the Museum of Civilization, had a very respectable name internationally. He said it would be a crime if we let go of that name for the sake of branding it as something else.

Whether the member agrees with calling it a museum of history is one thing. However, the Museum of Civilization did carry with it a great deal of international significance. One of the things he proposed was that we name it the Canadian museum of history and civilization. That is really not a bad idea. That is a genuine way of keeping what was and pushing forward the agenda of this new museum and the vision he says is there.

None of the amendments was given due consideration. One was to have curatorial independence enshrined in this piece of legislation instead of our just relying on the Museums Act. I thought they were quite genuine and open for discussion, but the discussion really did not take place.

Is a Canadian museum of history and civilization so wrong?

•(1555)

Hon. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing so wrong, I just do not happen to agree. Our government thought about it, and we debated it. We saw the amendment he put forward. We discussed it, and we did not think it was the best direction.

The member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor has been sincere in this process all the way through. I know what he is trying to accomplish with the amendment, and I do not doubt it. We do not happen to agree on what it would be called. The majority will win in the House, and the majority has rights. We are going to move forward on the creation of this museum as we designed it.

I am glad the member raised the more substantive amendment brought forward at committee by both the Liberal Party and the leader of the Green Party, which was the idea of enshrining curatorial independence in a specific section with regard to what would be the Canadian museum of history. Quite frankly, it does not make sense. There is nothing wrong with it on the surface, but it does not make sense for this reason.

The Museums Act already enshrines the absolute curatorial independence of all of our museums. Whether it is the Aviation and Space Museum, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights or the Canadian Museum of Immigration, it already guarantees it in the law. If one of Canada's museums is singled out by saying that this will have a special level of curatorial independence above and beyond all the rest, one could perceive that the government has not gone far enough or that Parliament has not gone far enough in protecting the curatorial independence of all the others. Therefore, it is redundant and unnecessary. It is already enshrined in the Museums Act. Having this one museum singled out would look odd legislatively, so it does not make any sense.

The protections are there for good reason. As the minister, I have never once, nor could I, interfered with the decision of a museum to put on an exhibit or not. From time to time, any individual who goes into any one of our museums or galleries looks at a certain display and says, "I think I would have emphasized more of this or less of that or chosen these artifacts instead of those". Those debates happen all the time, but there is an absolute legal barrier keeping any parliamentarian and/or the minister from telling a museum what it can or cannot do. It is enshrined in law for very good reasons.

We have brilliant museums in this country. They operate independently. They do great work. This new Canadian museum of history will be Canada's biggest and best museum. It will tie all of our local history and local museums in the country together. We will share collections all across the country. They will all be made stronger as a result.

I look forward to passage of Bill C-49 after eight and a half months of consideration. I thank of all my colleagues who have approached this with an open mind. Their vote in support of this will be to the benefit of all of Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: The time has expired for questions and comments. The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1640)

[Translation]

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

Government Orders

(Division No. 756)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Leitch
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Stanton	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trottier
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	Wilks
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Williamson	Yelich
Woodworth	Young (Vancouver South)
Young (Oakville)	
Zimmer — 143	

Government Orders

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bennett	Benskin
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groghé	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Jacob	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani	Mulcair
Nantel	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turnel
Valeriote — 107	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed from June 14 consideration of 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, as reported from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage has four minutes left in his debate time.

Could I ask all members who are not going to stay for the debate to depart the chamber now and those who are staying to stop talking in your loudest voices, please. Try whispering.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): It is okay, Mr. Speaker. I have no problem talking over the opposition.

It is a pleasure to rise again to complete my discussion on the Canadian museum of history. As I said in questions and comments earlier, it is really a shame that for the 50th time we have had to force the opposition to debate a bill in the House. The opposition has been so afraid to do work that, for the 50th time, the government has been forced to bring in time allocation, after eight and a half months of those members delaying and refusing to deal with the important business of the people of Canada. We have been forced to bring in the motion so we can deal with the important matters of governing. It is truly amazing, and I am sure the massive amounts of people watching at home are wondering to themselves what would happen in this country if we ever let the opposition govern. Nothing would get done. Those members would probably talk themselves in circles.

We have heard a lot about what is actually in the bill. Opposition members keep saying we did not listen to them with respect to amendments, and it keeps talking about how we brought in time allocation. As the minister said, this piece of legislation has been before us for eight and a half months, and as much as the opposition has talked about the things it does not like in the bill, 99% of the amendments it brought in were focused on one thing and that was the addition of one word to the name of the museum. Opposition members focused on that in committee. They were okay with calling it the Canadian museum of history, but they wanted us to add the word “civilization”. That made up 99% of their concerns.

After eight and a half months and hours of debate, this legislation sailed through committee. It did not even take us the full amount of time in committee to deal with the proposed amendments. As a result of there being so little opposition by the parties opposite, the legislation sailed through. Because we did not agree to adding that one word, they want to continue debate for many more months.

A number of things have been brought forward by the opposition. I will focus on the opposition critic, the member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, who talked a lot about critical understanding. Using his own words in his speech, he said, “What a scary word. The museum will no longer have the mandate to share its wealth of knowledge with the rest of the world”. That was one of the reasons he will not support the bill. Had he read paragraph 9(1)(h) on the second page of the bill, he would have seen it says that the museum will be continuing to do research.

That member also talked about how the people of Ottawa and Quebec and the tourism commission would react to this legislation. We already know that the mayors of Ottawa and Gatineau support the bill. The original architect Douglas Cardinal supports the bill. Thousands of Canadians participated in discussions and consultations with respect to the new mandate of the museum.

Government Orders

Hundreds of Canadians across Canada are excited about this new Canadian museum of history. Communities across the country are excited at having the opportunity to share in the collections that are currently in storage. Even more important, as we approach Canada's 150th birthday we would have a new institution that would tell the stories of Canada, not only to Canadians but to people around the world. We live in the best country in the world and we should not be afraid to show that off, not only to Canadians but to people around the world.

I commend the Minister of Canadian Heritage for bringing the bill forward. I also commend all those members on both sides of the House who will be supporting it.

• (1645)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has said that no substantive amendments were brought forward, but in fact there were two very substantive amendments. He is mistaking substantive with simple. They were simple and substantive at the same time. Those members over there have a problem with some of this stuff. The amendment was around research and posterity. It was a motion that included bringing research and posterity back into the language. This is important because we heard witness testimony from the former head of the museum stating that, time and time again, he and his staff referred to the mandate of the museum as a way of guiding them in their internal decisions. That is why we thought this amendment was so crucial.

There was another amendment that included just adding the word "civilization" back into the title of the museum.

Both of these amendments were simple and substantive, and the government voted them down. Those members are mischaracterizing the debate that went on in committee. They allowed only one day for witnesses to come forward for this study. Also, earlier this afternoon we heard another motion for time allocation.

Why does the member opposite have such a hard time parsing simple and substantive, when both of those measures were simple and substantive?

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, it is funny listening to the member because he tried to pull this in committee. He said we only allowed one day for witness testimony. Then the Conservative members called him on that and actually went back and unanimously decided to release the minutes of the committee meeting to the public where it had been unanimously agreed how long we would spend dealing with witnesses. They had agreed to how long we would spend talking to witnesses. The New Democrats say one thing in private and another thing in public and they have been caught out on it.

This is the same thing. They ask why we have to bring in closure. It is because they say one thing in public and another in private. The Government of Canada has a responsibility to move forward with things like the Canadian museum of history, as well as jobs and economic growth. We do not have time to play the silly, childish games of the NDP.

Specifically to some of the other questions, the member talked about research. Had he read page 2 of the bill he would have seen that in paragraph 9(1)(f) it talks specifically about research. He

talked about putting history in the name. The whole mandate of the museum is Canadian history. I do not know what more we have to do to put it in. He talked about curatorial independence. The only people who are asking the government to interfere in the museum's independence are the New Democrats.

• (1650)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned something about only a very small portion of the amendments dealing with the name change. In our case actually that represented less than 20% of the amendments that we put forward.

One of the amendments that I thought was a reasonable one was that a review process would be set up, similar to what was proposed in Bill C-11, the Copyright Act. I said every three years, but would have been open to five years. By doing that, we would get to review the mandates of each of the museums, not just this one. This was a golden opportunity to open up all these national museums, because we are now getting into an area where we are looking at these national museums, this one in particular, sharing their resources with the rest of the country.

I thought this was a good way to review how this process would be being played out for the sake of the institutions across the country that want to share in this. How does he feel about this review process?

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Canadian heritage committee, we have jurisdiction to do that any time we want. We do not have to wait three years to review the mandate of any museum.

The Liberals and the NDP have a number of opposition day motions that they can bring forward for us to debate in the House. At committee, we can discuss anything we want whenever we want and call whatever witnesses we want. In fact, if the member looks, he will find that at Canadian heritage committee many of the motions that we have brought forward and that we have discussed recently have been motions that were brought forward by the opposition.

Do I think we should be reviewing it? Absolutely. That is our job. Does it need to be in legislation? No, because I do not think as parliamentarians we need to be told when and how we should be reviewing any of the functions of government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very keen to rise today to voice the opinion of many Canadians, especially many of this country's historians, and to debate the Conservative government's Bill C-49 to amend the Museums Act in order to establish the Canadian Museum of History.

In my humble opinion, this is not a very good or a very welcome idea. Of course, that is quite the opposite of what we have been hearing for a number of hours, but I believe that I have some points that deserve to be shared, considered and discussed.

Government Orders

Why is it a bad idea? First of all, I strongly suspect that the Conservative government—particularly the Minister of Canadian Heritage—does not know what history is, who makes it, and the issues related to teaching, education and Canadian history. In fact, the last few minutes of debate have bolstered my convictions. I am talking about history with a capital “*H*” because we are talking about the science, not Canadian history.

Perhaps there is an excuse. After all, he is the Minister of Canadian Heritage, not the minister of history. That would explain the confusion because when we talk about heritage, it is easier to draw up a list of cultural assets and items that attest to the identity of a country, a people or a nation.

Historical objects are a part of heritage. However, history itself, the historical narrative and the Canadian identity are not as easy to put on display. If that were the case, historians would have stopped producing works about Canada's colonization, the establishment of the parliamentary system in our country or the emancipation of women in our society.

The fact that we continue to debate these phenomena is proof that our understanding of them is not static. When I say “we”, I am referring to historians rather than politicians. By putting these phenomena in a museum, we run the risk of ending debate and dissimulating the reality.

In even clearer terms, creating a museum with objects that represent Canadian history and identity stems from a particularly dated concept or vision of history. There are not many historians left in Canada or the world who describe the science of history in this way.

Many historians would say that this idea could only come from a conservator. I mean that in the sense of a conservator who wants to preserve something in its existing state and perhaps even wants to have something preserved by the state. Who knows? The idea that history is an unchangeable, written, eternal truth that lends itself to being put in a museum is an idea that no longer holds true in this day and age. That goes without saying.

There may be one exception. There was a major history museum project in France, championed by President Sarkozy. However, after much opposition, the project completely fell apart. No, we should not be following France's example. I agree. However, when it comes to museums, it could be useful to look at what our partners are doing. France does have a certain amount of museum expertise that warrants our respect.

It seems that the history museum was, by his own admission, the Minister of Canadian Heritage's idea. I heard him say it. Since when do politicians deal with history-related issues? Leave that to the historians.

As politicians, we may have the luxury—perhaps even the duty—of creating history through our actions and our contributions, but we should never impose our perspective on history. Politicians are involved in commemorating and celebrating historic events, but they are not involved in history with a capital *H*. Those issues are far too serious for us as politicians. It needs to be said: we are not experts in teaching history.

● (1655)

For pity's sake, let us leave history to historians and museums to museologists, or at the very least, let us consult them before going any further. Moreover, the Canadian Association of University Teachers expressed a number of misgivings, particularly about the way things were done. The members of the association said:

We call on the federal Department of Canadian Heritage to stop its process of redesigning that museum until a panel of distinguished figures in historical and museum work is created and has an opportunity to prepare recommendations on a more appropriate direction for re-developing this outstanding heritage site.

Note the use of the verb “call on”. This is rather strong language. The members are not saying, “we ask”, “we advise” or “we suggest”, but rather, “we call on the Department of Canadian Heritage”.

Clearly, therefore, it is not simply a matter creating a new museum out of thin air, a museum that will grow out of nothing. It is about transforming a museum that already exists and that has already acquired a sterling reputation.

As I stated, these issues are far too serious for the humble politicians that we are. Let us leave history to historians and museums to museologists. Let us allow them to decide among themselves how best to define the parameters, the strategic directions, the problems and the subject matter that will be exhibited at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, which will eventually be renamed. The Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation is a crown corporation set up under the Museums Act. The Minister of Canadian Heritage is therefore responsible for it and the act determines the museum's mandate.

Before changing a winning formula—one of the most-visited museums in Canada, and certainly one of the best-known outside our borders—why does the minister not consult the various interested parties more broadly? For example, he might consult the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, stakeholders in the Outaouais region, historians and the first nations, who are heavily involved in and well represented at the current Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Once the announcement was made, public consultations were held in about a dozen Canadian cities, but the consultation process seemed bogus because the decision was already made. Earlier, I heard that contracts had already been signed. I therefore wonder what we are doing right now in the House.

The examples of decisions made on this issue unfortunately leave me no ray of hope. The sudden closing and hasty dismantling of the Canadian Postal Museum show the total lack of transparency around the process. There were tightly controlled consultations, which had limited success. However, the consultations did not allow Canadians to question the decision to transform the museum, despite opposition from a large number of Canadians who traveled to take part in them. The minister is intervening in an area that is not his cup of tea, and without extensive consultation with experts.

Government Orders

Mr. Speaker, I would be lying if I said I had total confidence in this bill and in the future of the museum. Over the weekend, just when I was telling him about the bill, a friend of mine who is a historian said the following. I am quoting him, because I would have great difficulty putting it any better: "It is difficult to express an opinion on the real intentions of a Conservative government that is as reluctant to show exactly what is underneath this matter as it is to show exactly what is underneath women's clothes." We spent the rest of the time just having a friendly discussion.

There is another aspect of this bill that bothers me. With the change in the mandate and the name of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the public is being introduced to the idea that political power, that is, the Conservative government of Canada, may decide on its own about the content and significance of the exhibits that will be presented there, or at least strongly influence them. I find the possibility of partisan politics interfering in a world-renowned scientific and cultural institution to be absolutely unbearable.

The artist that I am, or that I am modestly trying to be, is completely averse to any use of culture and the arts for partisan purposes. While scientists and artists look at the world with creativity and critical judgment, the political world is generally quite risk-averse, especially the party opposite.

● (1700)

As my time is quickly coming to an end, I will leave out some of the arguments that I had kept in reserve. I will conclude by saying that it is because I am certain that Canadian history and Canadian historians deserve better than I cannot support such a bill.

The role of a government in the area of culture is to allow debates to be held and to provide locations for meetings, research and expression. I cannot support this partisan initiative, as it promotes Conservative symbols, such as an attachment to the monarchy, an insistence on military values in a civilian context, an inordinate celebration of old wars, and so on.

This is a deliberate strategy designed to rewrite Canadian identity. This is not the role of the House of Commons, and it is not the role of a member of Parliament or a minister.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will focus my comments and my question specific to the member's discussion with respect to content in the new museum. He talked also about one of the witnesses at committee, the representative of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, James Turk.

At committee, I asked Mr. Turk if professors taught the same lesson plan year after year. Professor Turk answered back as I expected, that they certainly did not. I asked if they modified it and updated it and he said yes. I asked him why they did that and he said that knowledge and information changed. Therefore, I thought that somehow within the teaching of education things changed, but our museums were supposed to stay the same forever. They were never supposed to change.

More specifically, he talked about the content of the new museum and who would put it together.

We heard from the president of the museum. After the consultations, when we had hundreds of thousands of responses from Canadians across the country, he said:

Those comments, suggestions, and pleadings will inform our every decision going forward. The content for this new exhibition is being developed by a multi-disciplinary team of experts at the museum...This team is made up of researchers, curators, and museologists working in close collaboration with advisory committees composed of historians and experts from across Canada.

Does the member know something about Dr. David Morrison, who has a Ph.D. in archaeology, is very well published and has years of experience? Is there something about him that we should know that makes him unqualified to lead the research into these new exhibits?

● (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I am all the more comfortable answering it since I myself changed my lesson plans to adjust them to each new element that shed light on what I was teaching, on my assigned mandate.

The idea today is not to determine whether new light can be shed. The bill in fact changes the purpose of the course. The difference is like night and day. It goes without saying that a qualified teacher who says that updates are always welcome is absolutely right as long as the objective and the subject of the course remain the same. However, the aim of this bill is to change the subject of the course.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Conservatives tell us, this bill does not just change the museum's name. Several amendments have been made to section 8 of the Museums Act. The purpose of those amendments is to change the museum's areas of interest. Thus, instead of covering all of Canada and other countries, it will focus solely on Canadians.

In many instances, culture is also a way of engaging in diplomacy. Under the Conservatives, unfortunately, Canada has become the laughingstock of the international community in negotiations on climate change and in its lack of support for Canadian culture.

As my colleague said, Canadians and Canadian history deserve better than the Conservatives. Does he have any comments to make on that subject?

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for appropriately raising that point.

One of the legitimate fears regarding Bill C-49 is that it will become a symbol of an inward-looking attitude. The Museum of Civilization, as we currently know it, is probably one of the Canadian museums, if not the Canadian museum, with the greatest international reputation. We would be depriving ourselves of that and would stop developing our international brand in order to turn inward and focus on our history. Not that we should stop studying our history, far from it, but we would be studying Canadian history without viewing it in a distinctly broader international context.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak in support of Bill C-49, which would create the new Canadian museum of history. The Canadian museum of history would provide the public with the opportunity to appreciate how Canada's identity has been shaped over the course of its history. Canadians deserve a national museum that tells our stories and presents our country's treasures to the world.

The Canadian museum of history would strive to be a national and international destination, but would also focus on its role as a leader, a hub in the network of Canadian history museums and a centre of expertise. The Canadian Museum of Civilization has always had an international role as a knowledge-creating institution. This will not change. Indeed, the museum will continue to conduct scientific research and share its expertise on collections, management, research and conservation with other museums around the world.

It is important that we all understand that the focus of research in the archaeology, history and ethnology sections of the Canadian Museum of Civilization has always been the advancement of Canada's human and military history. The new mandate confirms that focus and nothing in this legislation will diminish that role in any way.

In fact, it is expected that the museum would create its activities working closely with the network of Canadian museums to make its national collection available through loans and travelling exhibitions. It would also provide a permanent venue and an additional 7,500 square feet at the new museum for other Canadian museums to showcase their collections and contribute to the national narrative.

I am pleased that these partnerships would do four things. First, they would further the collective telling of Canadian history. Second, they would leverage strengths of partners, for example, in the area of loans expertise and exhibitions. Third, they would focus on gaps in the collection. Finally, they would achieve financial benefits, such as cost-sharing and joint initiatives. Partnerships would promote collaboration and co-productions, the sharing of artifacts, the development of online projects and the exchange of professional expertise.

I would like to outline how the museum plans to establish three levels of partnership. These plans include a history museum network, a museum affiliate program and formalized partnerships with federal organizations and other key public and private institutions.

First, the history museum network would consist of several of the largest museums in the country, museums that have significant capacity and have the mandate to cover the history of Canada. There will be many advantages to members of this network, including a venue at the new museum where exhibitions and programs produced by members can be showcased, the ability to receive exhibitions and programs developed by the Canadian museum of history, opportunities for co-production of exhibitions and programs, visual brand association and identity and links to the Canadian museum of history and Canadian War Museum websites.

Second, the museum affiliate program would consist of a group of generally smaller institutions across the country that, subject to

criteria and standards, would be able to borrow or co-operate on collections, programs and exhibits. These advantages to affiliates would include, but not be limited to, the ability to borrow collections, programs and travelling exhibits from the Canadian museum of history, the ability to partner with the Canadian museum of history as a research affiliate and opportunities to showcase affiliate-produced exhibitions at the Canadian museum of history.

I am particularly excited that the smaller museums will be able to borrow collections at the national level. This means that these exhibits, which display our rich history, will travel across the country. Also, affiliates will be invited to an annual affiliates conference in conjunction with the Canadian Museums Association, which will be an opportunity to share expertise and ideas that will benefit all.

● (1710)

Third, the Canadian museum of history would have formalized partnerships with key public and private organizations. It would play a leadership role as the hub in a network of Canadian history museums.

I am pleased to relay that all of the partner museums will have a role to play in shaping and reshaping the network over time. It will be a collaborative effort with local museums being able to contribute and share knowledge.

The museum network will be able to take coordinated, common approaches to the history and exhibits of key moments in Canadian history. These moments will not be defined at the national level, but rather defined by local museums from one end of the country to the other.

The years leading up to 2017 will provide many great opportunities for our history museums across the country to celebrate Canadian history. The millions of people who visit Canadian museums of history will not only see exhibits created by staff at that museum, but they will see exhibits created by museums of all sizes in all part of Canada. They will, perhaps for the first time, be presented with key historical events, people, experiences and objects that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

We all have museums in our ridings. In many ridings, museums are housed in an old mill or factory, or maybe an old school or train station. In these museums, there are often not any employees, only volunteers. These are people who may not be recognized around the world for their expertise in museums, but who are certainly recognized in their communities for their dedication to doing their best to conserve and display objects for future generations.

The network of Canadian history museums is just one of the reasons why I urge my colleagues to support Bill C-49. This is one of the most important bills before us.

Our government believes in our national museums and we recognize the tremendous value 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.

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• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that this is only the beginning, because if we want to explain history to Canadians, it first must be written. We will have to remember what happened in a country where a war of conquest took place, where slavery once existed, where aboriginal populations were repressed and where colonial laws have reigned for the past 150 years.

Who will write it and whose version of history will we be able to agree on?

Hon. James Moore: Canadians themselves.

Mr. Marc-André Morin: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more controversial than history. We have not yet finished learning about our past. Soon we will have no more archeologists to carry out digs where they are urgently needed.

It will be such a disaster the day they begin trying to tell their version of history. We have to wonder who will write this history and how it will be used.

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member asked about the chaotic development of a museum. I am not quite sure what the question was. He kind of rambled around from the history of long ago to the history of today and which venue of history we would believe in.

However, there is only one venue to believe in, and that is the historical truth of Canada. We will rely on museums that are in existence and we will rely on expertise that can help us develop those museums further. As I said in my speech, we have dedicated 7,500 extra square feet to do just those kinds of things.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague spoke about the Canadian museum of history, he talked about the 150th birthday that Canada would soon be celebrating and the importance of the museum.

Could he reflect for a moment on its importance to his riding, how this museum would tie directly into his riding and how his constituents would then celebrate our 150th birthday of Canada?

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague said, 150 years are fast approaching. A couple of years from now we will be there.

In the riding of Palliser there are many museums. One of the finest is in Moose Jaw. It is air conditioned and heated to the tune that it will house any kind of painting. It is the only facility like that between Toronto and Vancouver. There are many opportunities for other smaller museums to enjoy borrowing a display from larger museums for a number of days, returning it and taking another display. I am thinking of those in Assiniboia, Rockland and Avonlea, which are small but unique museums.

That 150th anniversary will be an exciting time, and we are looking forward to it.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how are those museums that the hon. member mentioned going to afford to do that? Do they get in on that \$25 million as well? Perhaps they have their own way of doing it. It

could be problematic if there is no financial support for these places to be able to share in this national collection.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, to answer my hon. member from across the floor, some dollars would be earmarked for the exchange of artifacts between museums. That amount has not been determined. Restructuring of existing dollars may well handle the whole operation without any further drain on the taxpayer.

The museums themselves often stage various fundraising events that make a lot of money. I am always surprised how small communities of 700 or 800 people are able to raise \$10,000. There are avenues to explore other than just government grants. I am sure they would do that.

• (1720)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House and speak on this subject, although the trajectory of some of the changes that are being considered in the bill saddens me to a certain extent.

The government announcement was that the new Canadian museum of history's emphasis will be on dates, events, heroes and narrative timelines: basically, in 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue. That is how many of us learned history back in the day, and it is one of the reasons I hated history.

I have since learned to love history for the simple reason that there have been teaching methodologies, teachers in particular, who have created a link between history and what it means to young Canadians today. They have brought out the relevance of that history.

My concern with this redirection of history into more of a “great man” approach—this person did this on this date, that person did that on that date—is that we lose the context of how certain things came to be. We lose the context of the contribution of so many different groups of people, so many different individuals who have done heroic things but may not be considered heroes in the context of great events.

We all know the adage that history is written by the victors. As the government likes to remind us far too often, Conservatives won a majority back in 2011. They have used that majority as a battering ram, as opposed to taking a responsibility to make sure that not only the majority are taken care of, but the minority as well. What we do not want to see in this situation is a majority museum, where the exhibitions, the explanations and the narrative speak to a selective memory of history, to selected events. It is an environment that is troubling to the work being done right now in the Museum of Civilization. It is something that is troubling even to teachers of history.

According to the Canadian Association of University Teachers, this initiative:

...fits into a pattern of politically motivated heritage policy that has been emerging over the past few years. Alongside the great quantities of public funds that were directed into the celebration of the bicentennial of the War of 1812, this initiative reflects a new use of history to support the government's political agenda—that is, the evocation of particular features of our past as worthy of official endorsement and promotion.

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This is even concerning teachers. They fear that instead of the Canadian history museum creating something that is inclusive of the contribution of people and telling some of the hard truths in the building of this nation, this adage of history being written by the victors is going to take place.

This is a great nation. I have worked very hard over the years to tell its story in our fight to make sure that we have Canadian content on our television stations, that our broadcasters are obligated to tell Canadian stories with Canadians, by Canadians, for Canadians.

• (1725)

That leads me to my second point. The idea of this museum being created to conserve Canadian history is rather ironic when we look at the Conservative cuts to the agencies that are tasked with preserving Canadian history. The budget of 2012 cut \$29 million from Parks Canada, which is responsible for over 167 national historic sites across Canada. More than 80% of Parks Canada archeologists and curators lost their jobs.

Following the 2012 budget, the number of conservation professionals in the service of Parks Canada fell from 33 to 8. That means 8 employees along with 12 archeologists who are still employed by Parks Canada around the country have the daunting task of taking care of 30 million archeological objects under the jurisdiction of Parks Canada. It means that basically 20 people are taking care of 30 million pieces of our history.

It does not take a rocket scientist to see that is a rather daunting task. If we are talking about preserving Canadian history, cutting the number of people who are responsible for the preservation, discovery and care of those pieces of Canadian history does not seem to be a very supportive move.

Parks Canada also had to eliminate three research positions at national historical sites associated with the first nations people, and the Conservatives fired 50% of the Library and Archives Canada's digitization staff. There is a big push to digitize Canadian history and the work that Library and Archives Canada does, but now it is to do that with 50% fewer individuals.

The situation is also exacerbated by the consultation process, or the lack thereof, in the development of this idea of the Canadian history museum.

It was the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages himself who came up with the idea and then launched the consultation process. It seems to me that the naming of a museum should be left to museum professionals, historians, anthropologists, archivists, librarians and such, as well as individual groups who have a vested interest in how their stories are told and in ensuring that their stories are told. Examples are our first nations brothers and sisters, the Inuit and Metis. The contribution by women to Canadian history always tends to be marginalized in the history books in the context of mentioning that a certain person did something. As well, there is the inclusion and consultation of members of the cultural community, in particular the African-Canadian community and its contribution to the building of this country.

[*Translation*]

It is really important to educate people about how Quebec contributed to building Canada and New France.

[*English*]

We must consider all the issues on the subject of the museum of Canadian history, because Canada is made up of a multitude of different types of people from different areas and we have to make sure this history museum takes that into consideration.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague gave an excellent speech.

He seems to know what he is talking about, since he has done a lot of work in the arts. As he mentioned, he has spent much of his life telling our stories. That is basically the role of museums, as we know.

With regard to the name change, as well as the change to the museum's mandate, I think we can all agree that a big part of the activities of the Canadian Museum of Civilization in its current form is to promote and teach Canadian history, including the history of New France as well as more modern Canadian history.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the Canadian Museum of Civilization's mandate and how it will be altered by Bill C-49.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization's exhibits are the most visited in Canada.

[*English*]

Canada Hall is one of the most visited exhibitions. It goes deeply into the building of Canada and its history. Unlike what the website for the Canadian history museum purports, it starts at the arrival of the Vikings, which was some thousand years ago. Some 10,000 years before that, there were people who were living in this country, which would be later named "Canada".

Right off the bat, we have a sense of the limitations and the exclusion of the people who built this country and contributed to building this country.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the members opposite have actually been to the museum. This is what the president of the museum had to say:

As a result of this, while walking through Canada Hall you will learn about life in New France, but you'll find no mention of the Quiet Revolution or anything else about Quebec. You'll learn about the early whaling industry in Newfoundland, but nothing about why, how, or when the colony joined Confederation.

He said that there are modules about Upper and Lower Canada, but there is very little about Confederation. It is only listed on a timeline. He went on:

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You'll find no mention of...the flag debate or the Constitution, no mention of Paul Henderson's goal in Moscow, or the wartime internment of Ukrainian or Japanese Canadians. You'll find no reference to residential schools or peacekeeping, or Terry Fox and his Marathon of Hope. There is no meaningful reference to the Great Depression, the conscription crisis, or even a hint as to where Canada might be headed. But perhaps the most egregious flaw in the Canada Hall is its starting point. If you've been there, you will know that its telling of our national story begins not with the arrival of the First Peoples but with the arrival of Europeans in the eleventh century. Colonization as a term or concept is not mentioned in Canada Hall.

If members had actually been to the museum, they would have known that none of this is actually in there, which contradicts everything the member just asked in his question and that the other member just talked about.

Are these not important things that should be in our Canadian museum, whether it is called the Museum of Civilization or the Canadian museum of history? Do we not owe it to Canadians and to the rest of the world to update the stories in there?

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed important that all the information and all the aspects of history he mentioned be included in the venues that represent Canada and its history.

Rather than basically changing the whole thing, why not create the means to give the resources to the Museum of Civilization to expand its mandate or to include them? I agree that these things should be there. Do we need to make a whole new museum to do that?

• (1735)

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-49, the Canadian museum of history act.

As this bill has progressed through the House and through committee, there has been much discussion and debate about the specific language used in the bill. Every change to the language has been examined for confirmation that nothing in this bill could interfere with curatorial independence, reduce the research abilities of the new museum or end the ability of the museum to manage and maintain its collections.

It is important to understand that none of the changes to the clauses describing the capacity and powers of the museum are particularly new. Instead, changes have been made to ensure consistency with modern drafting standards, including clear, straightforward and understandable language, concordance in understanding between the English and French and language that is as non-restrictive as possible.

Legislation is drafted in both official languages, and both languages have equal validity under the law. They must therefore be interpreted in parallel. For this reason, many small changes, often the change from “and” to “or” or vice versa, were made to ensure concordance between the English and French versions.

The language used in Bill C-49 is, for the most part, not new language. It is completely consistent with the language used to create the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, the most recent amendments to the Museums Act.

It is clear, straightforward and understandable language with concordance in understanding between the English and French

language that is non-restrictive. Legislation is drafted in both official languages.

It is important to remember that the Museums Act was drafted almost a quarter century ago. The drafting conventions in 1990 were quite different from what they are today.

Purpose statements drafted for the national museums in 1990 tended to include not just the purpose of the museum but also language related to how that purpose could be carried out. Over time, the purpose statements have evolved to provide language that keeps as broad a lens as possible.

It is left to the section of legislation dealing with the powers of the museum to list the possibilities for how to carry out the purpose. The purpose statements for the national museums are now drafted to ensure that the capacity and powers of the museums are as broad as possible, that the language is more focused and that the mandate does not unduly restrict the activities of the museums. In other words, decisions on how to implement the mandate are made by museum professionals and experts.

As has been pointed out many times, the museums' ability and even responsibility to carry out research is addressed under powers and capacities and is quite clear. The president of the museum, Mark O'Neill, could not have been clearer. In his presentation to the standing committee, he said that research will remain a key function of the museum.

In fact, Mr. O'Neill announced that the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation has recently, in consultation with academics across the country, developed a research strategy, the first in its history. That strategy will guide the research activities of that museum over the next 10 years.

Mr. O'Neill also confirmed that the strategy will remain in place when the museum is transformed into the Canadian museum of history. Nothing in the revised purpose of this museum will in any way diminish the research capacity of the museum, nor will it interfere with the curatorial independence of the new museum.

Research at the Canadian museum of history will continue to be carried out by qualified, competent researchers as it has been carried out at the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

I also have confidence in the management and board of trustees at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. I am sure that they will continue to guide the corporation through its transformation into the Canadian museum of history.

I would also like to suggest to my colleagues that we should pass this bill, create the new Canadian museum of history and let the museum get on with its business, the business of creating Canada's newest national museum.

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• (1740)

If I may, I will take a minute to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, who announced last week important new initiatives to promote Canadian history, including the Government of Canada's history awards to recognize outstanding students and teachers who promote excellence in the study of history. I had the opportunity to attend that very important event, and I know that it was well received by many of the people there.

The minister also announced the strengthening of programs at Canadian Heritage to improve funding for local and national organizations to promote Canadian history in their communities.

In particular, I note that the terms and conditions of the museums assistance program will be modified to remove barriers to the circulation of museum history exhibitions interprovincially and to assist small museums in borrowing objects and exhibitions from the Canadian museum of history. This is good news for the small history museums that can be found in every corner of the country. There are many of these in my riding of Leeds—Grenville. These museums will now be able to receive assistance to borrow objects and exhibitions from the new museum and will also be able to access funding to develop exhibitions of local and regional interest that will travel within a province.

In closing, I urge my colleagues to support Bill C-49. 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.

In my riding of Leeds—Grenville, where Canada's early history still lives today, we are looking forward to this anniversary. Canadians deserve a national museum that tells our stories and presents our country's treasures to the world. Passing the bill would be an important step in moving forward the creation of the Canadian museum of history.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if we were to say that we wanted to improve the museum, it would not be a big deal. I think we would all be in favour of that; it is how the government is actually trying to change the museum in its entirety.

Let us look at the waste of money. There is no problem investing in the museum and adding more stuff. There is already a lot, and they are going to be storing what is already there. We know that there are problems storing pieces of history. The preservation of it is unique.

When we look at administrative costs for this new museum at a time when we are trying to have a bit of restraint, we can see that it will be an estimated \$500,000 to change the name and logo, et cetera. That would add to the more than \$400,000 that has already been spent on consultations and promotional material for the museum.

How can the member justify putting all of that financing, a waste of money, in redefining the whole museum?

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have heard that an investment in celebrating our history is a waste of money. Canadians from coast to coast to coast would find that rather

offensive. As one who has worked very much over the years in helping present our history and helping Canadians understand that history, never before have I actually heard that it is a waste of money.

By changing the name of this museum such that Canadians can clearly understand what it is attempting to do would be something that would help ensure that young people, especially, learn our history.

There are only four provinces in Canada where it is currently mandatory to have a history course as part of the high school curriculum. We have been able to commemorate the War of 1812 with all the events that have been going on, especially in my part of eastern Ontario. It has helped young people learn more about our history and how our country was actually created.

It is not a waste of money.

• (1745)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague. I was here when the bill was debated on May 28. The hon. member gave some assurances, which I thought were significant, and I will quote him. It is on page 17197 of *Hansard*:

It is important to remember that the Grand Hall and the First Peoples Hall, which present a history of Canada's first peoples, will remain an integral part of the new museum, as will the Children's Museum.

Yet on June 11, the *Ottawa Citizen* ran a story about *Nishga Girl*, which is a fairly significant centrepiece of the Hall, which was being removed.

What value are the assurances, and to what extent are they real, that he and another one of his colleagues gave to the House on May 28?

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, much of what is currently there could be incorporated into moving forward with this new mandate. I know that some of what is there could be part of that presentation, but there is so much more that we could add to that. Canadians, especially outside of Ottawa, and people in my riding, are looking forward to having the opportunity to partner with the Canadian museum of history.

When I first heard about the concept last year and the possibility of having different displays come out to the smaller communities in other parts of Canada, I talked about it with some of the folks in my riding and they really looked forward to it. Having that and having displays going in both directions would definitely be a positive.

We should definitely look at some of the things that are currently there to make sure that they are part of that presentation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, several of my colleagues have shared their fears and concerns about how this bill is yet another Conservative government attempt to rewrite history. This bill would change the museum's mandate as we approach the 150th anniversary celebration of Canadian Confederation in 2017.

Here are just a few examples of the Conservative Party's efforts to politicize Canadian symbols: replacing two paintings by Alfred Pellon with a portrait of the Queen on a wall of the Foreign Affairs building; directing Canadian embassies abroad to display a portrait of the Queen; renaming the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force; installing a stained glass window depicting the Queen at the entrance to the Senate; changing many street and building names; and drawing tremendous attention to the commemoration of the War of 1812, a move still criticized by many historians.

Members of the House are not the only ones who are worried. Some historians say that this change comes at a time when the Conservative government is eliminating tools that are essential to history, culture and education. It has made cuts to Statistics Canada—particularly the long-form census—Library and Archives Canada, Parks Canada and many of our historic sites.

We do not object to the idea of a Canadian museum of history. After all, it is quite common for a country to have a history museum. Some people, including Pierre Anctil, a history professor at the University of Ottawa, fear that “Canadian history may be manipulated or politicized”.

According to Université du Québec en Outaouais professor of museology and heritage, Éric Langlois, “This is not just a change in name; it is a change in mission. It is tendentious.” He is concerned that the government will once again focus on the history of the British military and the monarchy in Canada with a sidebar about the War of 1812. He believes that this could “add fuel to the fire of differences in perspective between Quebec and the rest of the country”.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers echoed that sentiment, rallying over 60,000 professors against changing the museum's mission. In its presentation, the association says:

Alongside the great quantities of public funds that were directed into the celebration of the bicentennial of the War of 1812, this initiative reflects a new use of history to support the government's political agenda – that is, the evocation of particular features of our past as worthy of official endorsement and promotion.

Some journalists have echoed the questions and concerns about this change in mandate. They have said the change is a reflection of “the Conservatives' narrow vision of culture. A vision based primarily on old-fashioned patriotism at the expense of the openness embodied by the Museum of Civilization”. This quote was from a column published in *La Presse*.

Although museums are supposed to be independent under the Museums Act, that did not prevent the Canadian Museum of Science and Technology from opening an exhibition on different energy sources in Canada in November 2011. This exhibition included a section on Alberta's oils sands that took the Conservative government's pro-development stance. The exhibition was financed and designed in part by the oil sands lobby.

When the Canadian Museum for Human Rights was created, the minister at the time, Josée Verner, created an advisory committee whose mandate was to hear from the public and experts about three matters.

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One of the matters was the museum's mission. The people who participated in the web-based consultations and focus group testing expressed concerns that the Canadian Museum for Human Rights could be influenced by political activities or special interest groups, in a manner that could affect, or be perceived to affect, the integrity and balance of its exhibitions and programs.

In addition, the committee's 30th recommendation states:

Be, and be Seen to be, Independent—The Board will need to not only ensure that it remains autonomous and free from influence, but also to be seen to be autonomous and free from influence.

Those are just two examples, and then there are the cases in which the government cuts funding to all the supposedly independent and autonomous organizations when they do not promote the government's values.

The government cannot simply claim that the act will prevent the minister from personally interfering in programming or in the choice of exhibits if it wants to reassure the public and the House about the real reason behind this change.

The Canadian Museum of Civilization is the largest and most popular museum in Canada. Indeed, it welcomed over 1.3 million visitors last year. It is an unrivalled success story.

● (1750)

Yet, in his announcement the minister claimed that:

Canada needs a national institution that celebrates our achievements and what we have accomplished together...They define who we are as Canadians. They define our history—Canada's history.

Diane Pacom, a professor specializing in arts and culture, is not too concerned about the change and pointed out that according to its guiding principles, the Canadian Museum of Civilization is the “national institution responsible for preserving and promoting the heritage of Canada, and contributing to the collective memory and sense of identity of all Canadians”. Therefore there is no inconsistency in terms of the new name intended for the museum. That is precisely where the problem lies.

The museum already had a mandate and mission primarily focused on Canadian history and culture, under the Museums Act. Why change them, then? What changed?

In the new museum's mission, the expression “objects of historical or cultural interest” has been replaced with “objects that reflect and have shaped Canada's history and identity”.

The reference to objects of historical or cultural interest initially contained in the museum's four capacities and powers is kept in only one of the powers of the new museum, that of collecting. They have withdrawn from the new museum the power to sell, give away or lend these types of objects, or to organize travelling exhibits with them, which is quite strange given the new collaborative approach between the Museum of History and the regional museums that this government is promoting.

Government Orders

In addition to removing the reference to “objects of historical or cultural interest”, the bill takes away the new museum’s international vocation. It will no longer have the mandate to increase interest, respect and critical understanding; it will simply have a mission to increase knowledge of and respect for Canadian achievements. It is hoped that the new museum will promote events, experiences, people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada’s history and identity, and that it will make Canadians aware of world history and other cultures. The mission of the Canadian Museum of Civilization was instead to promote human cultural achievements and human behaviour 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 new museum will not have the power to undertake or sponsor research, primarily basic, theoretical or applied research. In the future, it will have the power to “undertake or sponsor any research related to its purpose or to museology”.

Two minor changes also in the two powers listed in the bill could pave the way for the appearance of a lack of independence. The mandate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization included establishing and fostering liaison with other organizations with similar purposes. It will now be up to the Museum of History to establish and promote—not foster—liaison with other organizations with a purpose similar to its own. The mandate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization included sharing the expertise of its staff by undertaking and sponsoring programs for training and apprenticeship in the professional and technical skills involved in the operation of other organizations with a purpose similar to its purpose. This will be replaced by “share the expertise of its staff by undertaking or sponsoring training and apprenticeship programs that relate to its purpose.”

In light of all these ambiguities and concerns arising from this bill, I have the impression that the Conservatives are getting a taste of their own medicine, in that their characteristic mistrust, arrogance and partisanship come through in this bill, rightly or wrongly. This means that if the bill had been introduced by a different government, perhaps no one would have made any fuss about it. It is sad and it is dangerous. With this bill, the government is going to learn that it cannot get away with playing with symbols as it is doing in this case and as it has done in a number of other cases in the past.

• (1755)

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last weekend, we had the Minister of Canadian Heritage come to Winnipeg to announce the museum of history and what it meant to sign a partnership with Winnipeg. The excitement of the people in the museum and the children who came was just a fine example of what they were looking forward to in this country.

What they are looking forward to is sharing the artifacts. One point that was made was that a lot of our artifacts in Winnipeg have never been outside the city of Winnipeg, and people have not had the pleasure of being able to view them. This new initiative is very exciting to Canadians. They could share and enjoy history. They

would not have to come to Ottawa to do that. Everything would be shared across the country.

I have a question for the member opposite. Does this member not want to share our great history with our great nation, from province to province to province, and do it in such a way that ordinary people could see it without having to spend a whole lot of money to come to a national museum in Ottawa? Does he not want them to have it right in their home town or city, where they could learn about what has happened all across our vast nation? I would just like his opinion on that.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat confused about the point of the government member’s question. There was no demand for a Canadian museum of history before Bill C-49 was introduced.

Our offices were not contacted by large numbers of constituents who felt that the Canadian Museum of Civilization absolutely had to be replaced by a Canadian museum of history. That was a government decision.

The fact that people in Winnipeg, Vancouver or Montreal supported or opposed the change at meetings or conferences organized by the government to promote the idea is no surprise. In fact, if any idea is proposed, some people will support it, while others will oppose it.

Consequently, it is utterly false to say that there has been any popular demand to create this museum. There was no specific demand by Canadians for such a museum.

I obviously want to know more about the history of Winnipeg and about the artifacts that the museums and organizations in Winnipeg, Montreal and Vancouver have. That is why there are travelling exhibitions.

The Sea Museum in Rimouski commemorates the Battle of the Atlantic and the sinking of the Empress of Ireland. Exhibits and historical artifacts from that museum travel across the country. One exhibition was at the Canadian Museum of Civilization last week. It will now travel to Vancouver, Toronto and other cities. There are already mechanisms in place that enable us to share Canadian history.

I do not think that there is any justification for changing the purpose of the Canadian Museum of Civilization and turning it into the Canadian Museum of History.

• (1800)

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very interesting speech and for the excellent work he is doing in his riding of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

The issue of changing the name of this world renowned museum is of course a concern. From a commercial standpoint, the name is an invaluable and profitable brand. This museum is quite simply known around the world. A change to its name risks reducing attendance.

Government Orders

As my colleague said, this is a very popular museum about which we had heard nothing regarding a name change. My constituents definitely never phoned me, even once, to ask that its name be changed.

Does my colleague think that changing the museum's name could have an impact on attendance?

I would also like him to talk about the changes to the museum's mission. For example, instead of operating across Canada and internationally, the new museum will target only Canada.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I see that I will not have time to answer two questions, so I will just answer one.

I am a regular at the museum. What is more, I studied communications at the University of Ottawa and, as part of a student project, we had an unpaid contract with the Canadian Museum of Civilization that involved putting together exhibitions on Canadian history. The exhibition I worked on focused on New France.

Civilizations from both Canada and abroad have always been a key component of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

I visited two major exhibitions at the museum: one on the history of ancient Greece, and the other on Egypt called "Tombs of Eternity". The Egyptian exhibition was the most visited exhibition in the past five years. It showcased the history of the pharaohs in ancient Egypt.

The change to the Canadian Museum of Civilization's mandate means that the museum will no longer be able to house exhibitions that have a foreign focus or that emphasize key elements of the history of civilization. The fact is that those kinds of exhibitions were very popular.

Yes, I do have concerns about the future attendance at the museum.

[*English*]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and speak in support of Bill C-49, which proposes amendments to the Museums Act to create the Canadian museum of history.

I could talk about all the wonderful things that Bill C-49 would do. However, given some of the misleading information being spread by the opposition, I would like to take the time to talk about what Bill C-49 would not do.

The bill would make a number of necessary changes to the section dealing with the current Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation to allow it to become the Canadian museum of history. However, one section of the Museums Act that would not change is the section that ensures the independence of the national museums, which is subsection 27(1).

Subsection 27(1) says that no directive shall be given to a museum with respect to cultural activities, including the acquisition, disposal, conservation or use of any museum material relevant to its activities; activities and programs for the public, including exhibitions, displays and publications; and research related to those activities.

The legal protection afforded to all national museums is comprehensive and includes the ability to conduct research. The independence of all the national museums has been guaranteed by law in the most comprehensive manner possible.

This is the case for all national museums. It is the case for the Canadian Museum of Civilization and it would continue to be the case with the Canadian museum of history.

The phrase "arm's length" is more than a concept. It is specific, it is comprehensive and it is the law. Bill C-49 does not propose to change section 27 of the Museums Act.

We all know that, from time to time, museums, including our national museums, present exhibitions that challenge and that arouse debate. That is the mark of a great museum.

Everyone has an opinion. That is normal. From time to time, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages has expressed a personal opinion about an exhibition presented by one of our national museums. That is his right. What the Museums Act prohibits is political interference in decisions related to cultural activities. Bill C-49 would not change that.

Yet, there are still concerns about the curatorial independence of the Canadian museum of history. It has been proposed that we amend the bill to specify that a particular minister, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, and a particular government department, Canadian Heritage, could not infringe on the new museum's curatorial independence.

As we have said before, such an amendment is unnecessary and redundant because comprehensive independence already exists in the law. More importantly, this kind of amendment could have unintended consequences.

Subsection 27(1) ensures the independence of all national museums. The addition of a clause that would apply only to the new museum could call into question, or even appear to diminish by comparison, the independence of the other national museums that fall under the act. In other words, all the national museums would be independent, but one would be more independent than the others.

By singling out a particular minister and a particular department, does that somehow create the impression that others are somehow now being given the option to infringe on the independence of the museums?

As I have already said, the amendment in question was proposed in good faith, and I am sure that none of the possible results I have described were intended. However, this shows that drafting legislation is a really tricky thing. We must consider the wording in legislation very carefully. That is the job of legislative drafters and jurilinguists, professionals trained to watch for the type of unintended consequences I just described.

Government Orders

• (1805)

The independence of the Canadian museum of history would be assured under the existing subsection 27(1) of the Museums Act. Intervention by the government in its activities would be prohibited by law. The new museum would table its annual report in Parliament as a crown corporation, as is the case with all the national museums. It would be accountable to Parliament.

Let us consider the highly qualified professional staff of the museum. There would be specialists who have dedicated their careers to a particular field, whether it be archeology, ethnology, history, folklore or museology. As such, they would also be answerable to their peers. To suggest that, up until now, they have acted independently of government and that with the adoption of Bill C-49 they would suddenly develop feet of clay would be unfair. The idea that we might be seen as calling into question the integrity of the men and women who work at the museum is something I know we all want to avoid.

The Museums Act will continue to guarantee the independence of the national museums and it would guarantee the independence of the Canadian museum of history. Let us support that long-standing legal protection as it currently exists.

Our government believes in our national museums, and we recognize the tremendous value they hold for all Canadians. The Canadian museum of history would provide the public with the opportunity to appreciate how Canada's identity has been shaped over the course of our history. Above all else, Canadians deserve a national museum that tells our stories and presents our country's treasure to the world. I am calling on all my hon. colleagues to support Bill C-49 and support promoting and increasing Canadians' accessibility to our shared heritage.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if my Conservative colleague can tell me whether there is actually any popular support for changing the museum's mandate?

Personally, nobody in my riding has asked the government to change the mandate of the museum, which truly is a Canadian treasure. We also know that it will be very expensive. The administrative cost alone is estimated at \$500,000. And that is on top of the \$400,000 that has already been spent on consultations and promotional material for the new museum.

What is more, the Conservative government is cutting the budget of Library and Archives Canada, thus depriving Canadian historians of the tools they need to do their jobs.

Can my colleague comment on this?

[*English*]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, the claims made by my hon. colleague are quite misleading. More than 20,000 Canadians were consulted before we took action on this.

In listening to the speeches of the opposition and their claims that somehow this would not be accepted by Canadians, that it would change the course of history or that somehow it would create a

history of Canada that Canadians do not want, I do not know where it all comes from. I truly believe we should all embrace the idea and show the world that we are not a cultural desert, that we are a country with a heritage. We have a lot to be proud of and to show to the world.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his inspired presentation.

I have heard a lot of the speeches and questions this afternoon. It is interesting that the last questioner asked whose idea this was as he had not heard anybody in his riding talk about changing the name or recommending that it was a good idea. Once the minister of heritage made the announcement, many people in my riding said it was a great idea and it would be the next generation of a great institution in this country.

With that thought in mind, I should mention that this facility has not been renovated in decades. The \$25 million investment in the facility would really boost the quality of the facility, the display space and presentation ability. I wonder if my colleague could tell us how that money would be used.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, the investment would be used to renovate about half the space of the museum. Part of it would stay the way it is. The IMAX, the Children's Museum and the First Peoples Hall would stay as they are, but the rest would be renovated and we would truly be proud of it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was particularly interested in the very last part of my colleague's speech, when he said that the government believed in our national museums. It practically sent shivers down my spine.

My question is quite simple. If the Conservatives believe in our national museums, why do they refuse to preserve the name and mandate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization?

[*English*]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, they claim in their speeches that somehow we are trying to change history and show it the way we want. I am so surprised that it comes from their side. Not that long ago, it was their member who insulted our First World War veterans and praised commies.

How can anyone come up with this view of history? Communism claimed about a hundred million victims in the world. How can anyone look at the Ukrainian famine, the Holodomor, look into the eyes of the survivors of Tiananmen massacre, or the children and grandchildren of officers who were killed as prisoners of war with a single shot in the head in Katyn, Russia? How can anyone come with this kind of distorted picture of history?

• (1815)

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in support of Bill C-49, which proposes amendments to the Museums Act in order to create the Canadian Museum of History. Today, I would like to discuss the rich and long history of the museum and its transformation over the years. After all, 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.

Government Orders

The institutional origins of the Canadian Museum of Civilization are older than Confederation, dating back to 1841 when Queen Victoria granted £1,500 for the "...creation of the Geological and Natural History Survey of the Province of Canada...". I would like to remind the House that the Geological Survey of Canada, the GSC, was officially founded in 1856, after the Province of Canada had passed an act enabling the GSC to establish a geological museum open to the public. The museum was originally located on James Street in Montreal, where scholars and scientists collected geological, archaeological and biological material. In 1864, the Province of Canada passed an act making the Geological Survey and its work a permanent provision.

In 1877, an act of Parliament ensured the continued existence of the Geological Survey, making it a part of the Department of the Interior. The GSC's official mandate had been broadened to include botanical, zoological and ethnographic specimens, traditions, languages and artifacts. It also suggested that the GSC and its museum be moved from Montreal to Ottawa.

In 1881, the GSC and its museum moved to a former luxury hotel at the corner of Sussex and George streets in downtown Ottawa. The museum attracted some 9,549 visitors in its first year, far more than it had in Montreal. It was in 1890 that the government passed an act making the Geological Survey a department within the dominion.

Construction of the new museum began in 1906. By 1907, the GSC became a branch of the newly created Department of Mines. The GSC museum received approval to add anthropology studies to its official mandate. In the spring of 1910, a new anthropology division was established under the direction of Edward Sapir, which included two sections in charge of archaeological and ethnological fieldwork. By the autumn of that same year, the GSC and its museum occupied the new Victoria Memorial Museum building on Metcalfe Street here in Ottawa.

When fire destroyed most of the Parliament buildings in 1916, the decision was made to house the Parliament of Canada in the Victoria Memorial Museum building. The GSC collections were put in storage until 1920 when the new Parliament buildings were constructed.

In January 1950, the GSC became part of the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys, and the National Museum joined the Department of Resources and Development. The GSC and the National Museum then remained together in the Victoria Memorial Museum building. By 1956, the National Museum of Canada had been subdivided into two branches: natural history and human history.

I would like to also remind this House that in 1968, under the national Museums Act, the Corporation of the National Museums of Canada was established. The museum's human history branch became the National Museum of Man, and the natural history branch became the National Museum of Natural Sciences. The new National Museum of Man continued to be housed in the Victoria Memorial Museum building on Metcalfe Street. In 1969, the Victoria Memorial Museum building was closed for renovations and museum staff and collections were moved to temporary locations throughout Ottawa.

In July 1980, the Corporation of the National Museums of Canada was transferred from the Department of the Secretary of State to the Department of Communications. The transfer was made in recognition of the increasingly close links between culture and communications.

● (1820)

In 1982, the Canadian government announced its intention to house a National Museum of Man in a new building in Hull, Quebec. In 1986, the National Museum of Man was renamed the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the CMC.

In 1988, the National Postal Museum became a division of the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the majority of the material history collection and staff were transferred. Other parts of the collection, including pieces of art, were transferred to the National Archives of Canada.

In 1989, the Canadian Museum of Civilization opened a new facility in Hull, Quebec. Internationally recognized as one of the world's modern architectural wonders, the complex was designed by architect Douglas Cardinal to reflect enduring features of the Canadian landscape. The world's largest indoor collection of totem poles is housed in the facility's stunning Grand Hall which has also been the site of numerous high-profile receptions for visiting heads of state.

In 1990, the federal government passed the Museums Act. The museum became a crown corporation and officially changed its name to the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation which came into effect on July 1, 1990.

I would like to remind my colleagues that the subject matter of many CMC exhibitions, current and past, has been Canadian history. Bill C-49 does not represent a massive change. The mandate of the Canadian Museum of History merely indicates an unequivocal focus on Canadian history, something that I know will be done well for many years to come. It is important to note the historical change to the museum, because the name and mandate of a national museum is nothing new.

The Canadian museum of history would provide the public with the opportunity to appreciate how Canada's identity has been shaped over the course of our history. Canadians deserve a national museum that tells our stories and that presents our country's treasures to the world.

I remain ready and able to take any questions or comments that any member may wish to pose at this time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):
Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague opposite.

It was quite fascinating to take a look at our history and to see that some progress has been made in the past. We would like that progress to continue, but unfortunately, the government seems to be taking us in the wrong direction. A total of 80% of archaeologists across the country are being laid off, yet meanwhile, the Conservative government is telling us that it believes in Canadian heritage.

Government Orders

If the government really wants to preserve and promote Canadian culture and heritage so much, why has it laid off 80% of archaeologists employed by the public service? Why is it keeping artifacts in storage across the country?

The regions are asking that their artifacts be made available, but unfortunately, there are not enough staff to get the items out of storage. The Conservatives want to rename the museum. However, there is a huge collection of artifacts in storage and we cannot see them.

Why does the Conservative government not invest money in making these artifacts available and visible as a means of celebrating Canadian culture, rather than eliminating 80% of the archaeologist positions across the country?

• (1825)

[English]

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Speaker, since 2006 when this government took office, in three parliaments this government has added some \$142 million to national museums and culture across this country. In addition, we have created two new museums, one in Winnipeg and one in the Maritimes.

If the member recalls much of my speech to the House, he will recall that there have been huge transformations to how Canada conducts our museums and how we recognize our past, but one of the most important things, at least to the people I know and to my constituents and to Canadians at large, especially the over 250,000 new Canadians who have chosen to come here, is that this would be a museum that would talk to them about how this country was formed, about our beautiful history. That is something that is currently lacking and one of the principal reasons why the bill is before the House and the change in focus as Canada begins to grow into the 21st century.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we face our 150th anniversary, a very special time for all Canadians, would my colleague tell us how people in his riding will celebrate such a special time and how the Canadian museum of history will impact his riding and the museums and facilities that are local to him?

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Speaker, one of the salient parts of this whole act, and a thing that excites me, quite frankly, is the fact that we have so much right across the country. In my riding, I can think of at least five or six museums that exist and then there are neighbouring museums. One of them is in Stirling, Ontario. It celebrates the agricultural past and present of our country and some of the great advances in agriculture and machinery. I really recommend that Canadians go to the museums in their vicinity.

What this act would allow, and this is what I am most excited about, is the exchange of artifacts from the national museum and bringing in artifacts from the rest of Canada so all Canadians can enjoy them. Canadians come to Ottawa to see some of our national treasures as they are located in a central location.

What a wonderful opportunity for museums right across the country to share their culture and their past with all Canadians and visitors to Canada. That is what the act proposes to do. It is a wonderful opportunity that we should not miss.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the foreshortened debate on Bill C-49. After only one hour of debate, the Conservatives decided it was time to shorten the debate even further by imposing time allocation.

The minister referred to this legislation as having been on the books for eight and a half months. We are not in control of the agenda; the other side is in control of the agenda. If it chose not to bring it forward over the past eight and a half months, that is not our fault. The minister might want to speak to the government House leader to find out why it has taken so long for the bill to come forward.

Members opposite keep saying that we are creating a museum. This bill would not create a museum. It would destroy one museum and out of its ashes build another. It is a good idea. We on this side think a Canadian historical museum would be a good thing to have, but we should not destroy the Canadian Museum of Civilization, which has an entirely different mandate and an entirely different purpose than a Canadian museum of history.

The mandate 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 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.

This is a very broad and ambitious goal and the museum has met some of that goal over the course of the past 23 years that it has been in existence.

I have been there. It is an absolutely amazing place. What it puts forward is way more than just history. It is in fact about the culture and civilization of not just Canada, but of many places in the world, and of Canada not just the country, but Canada as it existed before the white man arrived. This is also in that existing human cultural achievements.

The new mandate of the Canadian history museum 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.

I emphasize the word "Canada's" history and identity because we now lose the notion of civilization. Canada did not exist officially until 1867. Does this mean we are only to discuss things that happened from 1867 forward, that the contributions of the fact that this continent was peopled by native North Americans long before any of us Europeans ever arrived on the scene? Is that not to be considered as part of Canada's history? It is hard to tell from the statement of mandate of what the intention of this history is.

Government Orders

We have in the Canadian Museum of Civilization an internationally regarded icon of something more than just history, and it is associated with the war museum. In France, there is no museum of war. There is a museum of peace and it too is internationally regarded as a place to discuss something other than historical artifacts leading to war, or historical art leading to war or whatever wants to be discussed. That notion of discussing peace lends itself to an international recognition. The notion of discussing civilization lends us to an international recognition, which I fear we will lose by focusing on only history and only the history of Canada.

In terms of the amendments that were proposed by the various bodies in the foreshortened again committee stage, one of the ones that the minister referred to earlier, was the suggestion that there should be curatorial independence. Curatorial independence means that the museum, whether it is the Museum of Civilization or the museum of history, should be in a position to decide itself what it wants to display, how it wants to display it and whether it should take on controversial displays.

● (1830)

The minister said today in the House, “As the minister, I have never once, nor could I ever interfere with the decision of a museum to put on an exhibit or not”. When he said that, I could not believe my ears, because it was just a few short months ago that an Ottawa museum, the Museum of Science and Technology, put on an exhibit that the minister said, “The exhibit does not fit within its mandate. Its content cannot be defended and is insulting to taxpayers”.

The minister will stand and argue that he did not actually tell the museum not to run it. When a minister gets up and publicly states that something is not within its mandate and is insulting to taxpayers, he is questioning the curatorial independence of that museum. To stand here in the House today and suggest he has never done it is beggars belief.

When the museum put on that display, it was clearly going to be controversial, a display that the museum itself and its curators decided was important and within its mandate, but the minister interfered.

Is that making a statement publicly that something is not within its mandate and is insulting to taxpayers somehow not interfering in the mandate of the museum or in the ability of the museum's curators to have curatorial independence? In my view it does. Whether the minister actually pulled the display off the shelves with his own hands is not really the question. The question is whether the minister publicly went against the decision of the museum itself. That is what we, on this side of the House, want to see more strongly placed in legislation as we get the opportunity because of the events of the past year.

The third point I will make is the concerns we have about creating a museum of history at the same time the government has gone about rewriting history. For example, even today, when the minister said that he never did that, yet he did a year ago, is rewriting history. It is suggesting that it did not actually happen.

However, we are concerned we have a government that wants Canadians to be more focused on battles, on wars, on the War of 1812, on the relationship with the British Crown, on the battles that

Canada has been in since Confederation and maybe a little before, because we have been talking about the War of 1812.

Twitter uses hashtags to get people interested in a topic, and the hashtag is, “HarperHistory”. That hashtag was created because the Prime Minister started to rewrite history in the House of Commons in question period by making erroneous allegations about the NDP. That hashtag, “HarperHistory” resurfaced again in the past few weeks when the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage decided to undertake a thorough and comprehensive review of significant aspects of Canadian history.

There was a breakdown, a comparison of relevant standards of courses of study offered in primary and post-secondary institutions and there were considerable numbers of people responding to the hashtag “HarperHistory” who were—

● (1835)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I just caution the hon. member. Generally speaking, we do not make reference to other hon. members in the House by their direct name. I appreciate the hon. member is including it in a hashtag, but in the same way that members' names are used in reference in citations, we cannot do indirectly that which is prohibited directly.

The member has made reference to it. Hon. members will understand what he means by that, but we do not use the names of other hon. members, except by their titles or by their riding names.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I only wish that the Twitter hashtag had been, “PrimeMinisterialHistory”, but unfortunately, that is not what it is and in order to accurately state it—and I will not state it again, because I understood your reference—I had to state the word which was the hashtag.

In any event, the concern has again been raised by the Twitter verse that the party opposite is attempting to rewrite history by its review of the standards that Canadian schools are teaching. I am not sure what the boards of education across the country are thinking, but they cannot be happy.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I revert back to my speech of how museums from way back before Canada was the country it is today have transitioned. However, at the end of the member's statement he made a lot of erroneous statements. In fact, in the act itself there is a part that covers research, and this bill would not change the current direction of museums but rather focus attention on Canadian history.

What we hear, when Canada's official opposition talks about this, is that it cannot do away with its view of the world, that somehow learning more about the history of this great country would be a bad thing and that the bill is bad because the Conservatives want Canadians to know more about Canadian history. Members talk about what they would be giving up.

I have to say that, looking at battles such as the War of 1812, had we not been successful we would not be in this place. What is wrong with focusing on the events that made this country? Other countries in the world celebrate their history. For some reason, it would be a bad thing to celebrate Canadian history.

The hon. member needs to—

Government Orders

•(1840)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I did say at the beginning of my speech that celebrating history is something we should do, but not at the expense of another museum. If the government wants to create a Canadian museum of history, that is a good thing and we would agree. However, to tear down an existing museum and remove its mandate and purpose only to replace it with another mandate and purpose is misguided. I would wholeheartedly support the creation of a museum of Canadian history if it were not for the fact that we would destroy the Canadian Museum of Civilization in the process.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the members across the way like to talk a lot about Canadian history. The member for York South—Weston has been involved in this so I will ask him this. There was a museum of aviation, which celebrated the Avro Arrow among many other planes and has been shut down because of lack of funding, because the government has called money in, because it was not able to stay afloat. The federal government ignored it and left it hanging to dry. I would like to ask the member about that lack of support for Canadian history by the government.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I was hoping to get to the Canadian Air and Space Museum, which existed for many years on the site of the former military base at Downsview Park. It was in a historically designated building, plant 2 of the de Havilland factory. The crown corporation that owns and runs Downsview Park decided to kick out the museum, tear down the historical building and build a hockey rink in consultation with the Maple Leafs. That was somewhat misguided. We should try to preserve, not destroy, Canadian history using whatever government resources are available. That was not done in the case of the Canadian Air and Space Museum.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the record. In referring to the air museum at Downsview Park, the member for York South—Weston said in his remarks that it was situated within a historical building. That is not true. Downsview Park is located in the riding of York Centre, which I am privileged to represent. It was never designated a historical site of any kind whatsoever by the municipality, the province or the federal government. I would like to correct the record on that. I know the member would probably want to correct it himself and would appreciate my saying that.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I have the web page that states that it was a historical site, which was deleted by the federal government from its records the day after we got a copy of it. It is designated by the City of Toronto as a historic property as well as by the Province of Ontario. However, the difficulty is that the federal government believes it has the right to take down designated historic properties without any reference to any municipality. That is what the intention was with that site.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-49, an act to create the Canadian museum of history.

World-class museums are widely respected centres of independent and inspired thinking. The curatorial staff members in these

institutions are provided with the freedom to interpret the artifacts in their collections in a way that promotes independent thought and dialogue.

Our government believes in our national museums. We recognize the tremendous value they hold for all Canadians. To maintain the reputation of our museums as world-class museums, their experts must be given the freedom to present a narrative as they see fit. That is why it is imperative that museums remain independent of political influence.

Subsection 27(1) of the Museums Act makes it clear that our national museums operate independently of political sphere. Subsection 27(1) clearly states:

No directive shall be given to a museum...with respect to cultural activities, including

- ...the acquisition, disposal, conservation or use of any museum material relevant to its activities;
- ...its activities and programs for the public, including exhibitions, displays and publications; and
- ...research....

Bill C-49 would not change the arm's-length nature of the new museum, nor would it change the governance structure that determines the organization's guiding principles.

As is the case with the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the board of trustees of the Canadian museum of history would be "responsible for the fulfillment of the purposes and the management of the business, activities and affairs of the corporation".

The mechanism would ensure that this arm's-length institution remains an independent and respected centre for research and for learning.

The board of directors of the Canadian Museum of Civilization uses five key objectives as its guiding principles. These principles are:

- Knowledge
 - ...focus on the creation and dissemination of knowledge.
- Authenticity
 - ...communicating accurate information which is balanced and in context.
- Coherence
 - ...aim to be consistent, united in purpose and easily accessible.
- Choice and Respect
 - ...we can never include all themes, all perspectives, or all proposed artifacts. Our choices are informed by respect...
- Canadian Perspectives
 - ...present Canadian contexts, comments, or reactions on subjects of wider significance.

In addition, let me bring to the attention of my colleagues, who have expressed concern about the independence of our national museums, the existence of a document developed by the Canadian Museums Association and the Canadian Art Museum Directors Organization.

In 2004, these widely respected organizations collaborated to develop the "Roles and Responsibilities of Museum Boards of Trustees".

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Museums across Canada have been encouraged to adopt these guidelines and use them as a reference point for a board's roles and responsibilities when dealing with issues related to museum policies and procedures.

An important statement is made at the very beginning of these guidelines:

All board members are fiduciaries who have the museum's collections, property, premises and resources in their care as assets in trust for present and future generations.

Clearly, this is a significant legal obligation that board members take seriously. They are in place to ensure the responsible stewardship of the museum, not to accommodate the wishes of members of Parliament.

The Canadian Museums Association's ethics guidelines speak quite clearly to the responsibilities of the board of trustees:

Whatever its formation, it is the legal entity that is accountable to the public and to the museum community for the policy, financing and administration of the museum.

It is evident that the board is not accountable to politicians.

● (1845)

The ethics guidelines also mention two key public trust responsibilities for museums: stewardship and public service. The guidelines state:

The trust of stewardship requires museums to acquire, document and preserve collections in accordance with institutional policies, to be accountable for them, and to pass them on to future generations of the public in good condition.

The trust of public service requires museums to create and advance not only knowledge, but more importantly, *understanding*, by making the collections... available to all the communities served by the museum. To this end, museums seek to be public focal points for learning, discussion and development, and to ensure equality of opportunity for access.

When we speak specifically of the case of boards of trustees for crown corporations, we can also turn to the Financial Administration Act, or the FAA, to provide very clear information on the responsibilities of boards of directors. Especially relevant to the topic, we see in section 109 of the FAA that "the board of directors of a Crown corporation is responsible for the management of the businesses, activities and other affairs of the corporation". This is how we would ensure that the Canadian museum of history would operate freely and independently.

With all these measures in place, one must wonder why there are lingering doubts as to whether the Canadian museum of history would be able to maintain its independence when it came to its quality programming. Clearly, the museum would be equipped with many controls to ensure that it operated as it should.

Our government will continue to play a legislative role when it comes to our national museums, but when it comes to putting that legislation into operation, responsibility for content and exhibitions rests with the administrators, the curators, conservators, researchers, the board of trustees and all those who have helped solidify the reputation of Canada's museums as world class.

The management and staff of the Canadian Museum of Civilization are well respected and they have built a world-class museum. Nothing in Bill C-49 would change how the museum operates. Therefore, I urge my hon. colleagues to support this very important legislation.

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. After all, Canadians deserve a national museum that tells our stories and presents our country's treasures to the world.

● (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for sharing his point of view. It is clear that he believes in this bill and is enthusiastic about it, but unfortunately, it takes more than a name to prove that you believe in Canadian heritage.

The number of people involved in the preservation of our artifacts will drop from 33 to 8, and 80% of the archaeologists in Canada have been laid off. Does this government really want to promote Canadian heritage or is it happy just to hide all the artifacts in the basements of museums with brand-new names? The items will still be hidden away; they will still not be available.

For years now, the people in the Gaspé have been asking for their artifacts to be sent home. It will not cost the government anything. The government will not even do that. It is not taking action, even though it will not cost anything, yet it is going to spend \$25 million to change the name of a museum.

Does the member really believe in the value of Canadian heritage? Are the Conservatives really going to walk the walk and provide funding to make Canadian artifacts available and put them on display so that people can see them, rather than just going around changing names?

[*English*]

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, I have to be honest. I am not sure where the hon. member gets his facts. In fact, I am not sure he even believes what he just said.

Let me provide just a couple of numbers. As I stand for this bill, the Canadian museum of history would be an opportunity to celebrate who we are as Canadians. I have talked to curators and executive directors of museums from across the country who are excited about this bill and about the opportunity to share the artifacts, the history of our country, in their own communities. In my community of Don Valley West, in Toronto, the Ontario Science Centre is one of the facilities that very much looks forward to being part of a partnership that would manage and preserve our history. We heard from other speakers that this is happening across the country.

I encourage the member to read the bill and get on board with this. Let us bring this thing to fruition and celebrate our history.

● (1855)

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Don Valley West comes from a part of this country where there are quite a few new Canadians. They chose to become Canadians. They are hungry to share in the rich history of our country. It means something to them. This is a country they chose to come to. It was not an accident of birth. They chose to come here because of the rich history of our country and because of who we are. We need to celebrate that.

Government Orders

I wonder if the member could talk to me about some of his constituents who are new Canadians and about what he believes the benefits of this change in the museum's focus will be.

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, I have to believe that all of us in the House, regardless of the party we represent, truly celebrate Canada as a wonderful place to live and celebrate our history.

I just mentioned the Ontario Science Centre as one example of a facility in my riding that is looking forward to sharing in our great history. My riding is as ethnically diverse as any riding in this country. When there are PD school days or when teachers have an opportunity to bring children to the Ontario Science Centre to experience what it is all about, the lineups are unbelievable. They line up around the block to get into this place to see what it has to offer. That is the type of excitement coming from school children of all ethnicities who have come to this country to learn about Canada, to live a better life and to have an opportunity. They are going to go to that facility and celebrate and learn about the history we are all so proud of.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-49. I want to begin by reading the current mission of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Its current mandate is:

...to increase, throughout Canada and internationally, interest in, knowledge and critical understanding of, and respect for human cultural achievements and human behaviour 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.

It is rather lengthy. It has long sentences with a lot of big words. Nevertheless, I wanted to read it because the debate on the museum centres on its mission. There are many factors at play in this bill.

Nonetheless, today's debate is not on the importance of Canada's history or on the people who may or may not have played a key role in our country and our identity. The debate is on the museum's current mandate and what the government wants to do with it.

Bill C-49 proposes new wording for the mandate. This could have major repercussions on future exhibits at the museum, its priorities, and how all that will be accomplished.

I will also read the mandate proposed in Bill C-49. If the bill passes, the mandate would be:

...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.

Does that mandate seem so bad? No, it does not. This new mandate proposed in the bill seems very worthwhile. However, compared to the old mandate, one might be concerned about what the new wording leaves out.

For example, what happened to critical understanding? It is now just understanding. Why is that? What was the rationale behind dropping the word "critical" in the expression "critical understanding"? Honestly, it is a question worth asking.

Is it because of a desire to dismiss criticism of our nation's history? Perhaps, perhaps not; there is no explanation, yet when it comes to deciding to strike a word from the wording of the museum's mandate, this is no small matter. We need answers and we also need to understand what impact these changes might have on the direction the museum takes.

Another example of something that has been overlooked or distorted is the focus on social history and cultural achievements. The Canadian Museum of Civilization focuses heavily on social history and cultural achievements. It provides a critical perspective by including elements from outside Canada to compare and assess what is observed, take an interest in it, and develop various perspectives that differ from those based on our own Canadian history.

Under the new mandate proposed in Bill C-49, there is a far greater emphasis on the figures who shaped Canada's history, and a far lesser focus on social history and cultural achievements. It is not as if the focus is no longer there at all. However, what I mean to say is that the wording was chosen for a reason and will have a bearing on how the mandate is interpreted.

It is, therefore, crucial that members be aware of the real impact that the choice of wording will have on the new terms of reference for museum exhibitions, and on the freedom museum curators have to carry out projects that they consider important and relevant.

I would also like to talk about how this bill ended up before us. In fact, the Minister of Canadian Heritage boasted that the museum was his idea. I like the Minister of Heritage. He is, undoubtedly, a very good person and certainly comes up with very creative and ingenious ideas.

● (1900)

However, a museum's orientation should not be determined solely by the revelations of one minister or another. Are they aware that we have museologists, museum experts? Do they know we have historians? University researchers have extensive knowledge in the field and would probably have had a lot to contribute to the development of Bill C-49. However, the minister himself says that changing the museum's name and purpose was his idea. Congratulations!

It seems to me, however, that it is critically important to consult the experts who know about museum administration, exhibition management, the public's interest in the museum's artifacts, and history and how to convey it before announcing this kind of thing. The Minister of Canadian Heritage is not a teacher, museologist or historian, hence the importance of not simply rushing to convert a spontaneous idea into a bill. There were public consultations, but they were held only once the bill was introduced, its wording developed and the museum's new name announced. It was not until the minister's idea materialized that we could tell him what we thought about it.

Government Orders

Will we see any significant changes? Why were these consultations not held before Bill C-49 was introduced? This is unfortunate. It undermines our confidence in this bill and in the approach adopted by the Conservatives. A preliminary consultation would have shown us that they take the opinions of Canadians and museology experts seriously. However, that was not the case, and, in my humble opinion, that undermines the credibility of the process and the very basis for these changes.

When a politician announces changes to the name and purpose of a museum, what is his aim if it is not political? We have challenged many government announcements of this kind because of this partisan angle, and this is another one. This is not necessarily what will happen, but our fears in that regard are definitely warranted.

A newspaper article related the opinion of the previous president and CEO, Victor Rabinovich, who deplors the fact that the name of the Canadian Museum of Civilization has been dropped. In his view, it has been the most successful brand name in Canada's museum sector, "a brand that is known and respected throughout the world." This man, who was a key player at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, has his doubts about the museum's name change and has proposed a compromise. Will he be heard? I very much doubt it, but only time will tell.

Now let us talk about priorities. Right now, the Conservative government is boasting about making Canadian history its priority. However, if this were really the case, would so many archaeologists be laid off and muzzled? Would there be so many archivists and librarians being muzzled and laid off? Would national historic sites be abandoned because they do not have the necessary funding or resources? Parks Canada and Library and Archives Canada are also suffering.

Frankly, if Canadian history were really a priority for the Conservatives, would 80% of the Parks Canada archaeologists be laid off? Would the deputy head of Library and Archives Canada, who was appointed by the Conservatives, be resigning because of spending scandals and the Conservatives' poor management? All of these issues make us wonder.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my opinion: this debate is not about whether or not we think our country's history is important, but rather about the museum's new name and mandate. In fact, we can do both: we can keep our Canadian Museum of Civilization as it is and at the same time find other ways of promoting Canadian history.

●(1905)

Why should we change a winning combination? The Canadian Museum of Civilization is the most successful museum in Canada. Let us think twice before we change it.

[*English*]

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put some of the fears of the member opposite to rest. I would encourage her to put those concerns to rest, because in my speech I talked about the staff and the leadership at the Museum of Civilization and what they are going to bring to this new museum in taking it to the next level of its functionality.

We are on the right path in celebrating our history. Not only do I believe it, but I would like to read what a couple of historians have said, not just stakeholders but historians, great Canadian leaders, talking about the museum of history. Michael Bliss, a Canadian historian and award-winning author, said that it is very exciting that Canada's major museum would now be explicitly focused on Canada's history. In addition, John English, a former Liberal MP and Trudeau biographer, said, "Congratulations on the Canadian museum of history". That is a great boost for this museum. Why does the opposition not agree with respected historians such as these?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for trying to put some of my fears to rest. Unfortunately, we are still not on the same wavelength about everything.

First, he spoke about the independence of the museum directors and their leadership. Perhaps the directors will indeed remain independent and will indeed continue to exercise the same level of leadership, but when the very mandate of the museum is rewritten, they are forced, without consultation, to follow the new mandate. According to the new framework, they may enjoy the same level of independence and the same degree of leadership, but when we ourselves define a framework, we cannot then claim that they will remain independent and that they will remain the leaders.

The Minister himself has admitted that it was his idea to change the name of the museum and its mandate. So much for independence and leadership, since the government has just interfered with something very basic: the museum's mandate.

●(1910)

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, in which she talked about priorities.

At present, there are budget cuts coming from everywhere, and yet the minister has decided to spend \$25 million to change the name of one of our best museums.

I would like to ask my colleague whether she thinks that Canadian Heritage could have found a better way to spend \$25 million for the museum she spoke about, in the field of arts and culture, rather than spending that money to change the name of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, I know he is very involved in his riding. He listens to the residents of his riding, and he probably has a number of suggestions himself about what could be done with the money invested in changing the name of the museum.

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I would also like to come back to another funding-related matter. In fact, Bill C-49 also opens the door to private sector support. I am not opposed to private sector support, but how is this going to happen? This is an important question, but it is not actually clear in Bill C-49. Will we have the Molson or Pepsi exhibition hall? We do not know. Will the private sector have more powers and be more in evidence in the museum? If so, in what way? Before supporting a bill like this, it is important to know what tangible form this is going to take.

I am not saying that we oppose investment from the private sector. What I am saying is that the bill is vague in this regard. It is important to ask the question before passing a bill like this.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to speak in support of Bill C-49, which would establish the Canadian museum of history.

A lot has been said in previous debates about the need to ensure that the research capacity of the new museum would be as strong as the research capacity of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. I think we can all agree that research would be an important aspect of the activities of the new museum and its professional staff.

Research, either ongoing or related to a particular project, is at the heart of what great museums do and it would be at the heart of what the Canadian museum of history would do. In fact, the standing committee heard from Mr. Mark O'Neill, President and CEO of the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, that in consultation with academics across Canada, the corporation has developed a research strategy, the first in its history. Mr. O'Neill indicated that this strategy will guide the work of the museum in its research activities over the next ten years, confirming that the research strategy would be used after the adoption of Bill C-49 and the transformation of the Canadian Museum of Civilization into the Canadian museum of history.

I have confidence in the dedication and professionalism of the museum and its staff. They will continue to do the work of research that needs to be done in order to execute the mandate of the museum and provide a valuable service to the Canadian public.

The museum's research strategy, developed in consultation with experts from within the museum and across the country, will guide research at the new museum. I can assure all hon. members that the absence of the word "critical" in the description of the museum's mandate will have no impact on the research capabilities it would have. In fact, I would go so far as to suggest that the absence of the word "critical" may be a bit of a relief to some of the museum's researchers. Some members may ask why. Let me ask them how they would define "critical research"? The current text of the Museums Act does not define it. Would anyone suggest that, in the absence of the word in the text proposed by Bill C-49, the highly professional staff undertaking important research at the museum would somehow now abandon their professional ethics and judgment? I certainly do not believe so.

That is not what Bill C-49 intends and it is not what would happen. We would simply be allowing the new museum and the competent professionals who work there to have the freedom and

flexibility to determine what research is necessary and how that research should be done.

If we are still concerned about this, let us look at what has been done elsewhere with some of the great museums of the world. The act establishing the Smithsonian Institute in Washington does not mention that research has to be "critical research". It talks about the increase and diffusion of knowledge across the country. Moreover, the word research is not even mentioned in the British Museum Act.

Let us also look at the modern of Te Papa, the groundbreaking museum in New Zealand established in 1992. Its founding legislation simply says that among its principal functions, the museum is to conduct research into any matter relating to its collections or associated areas of interest and to assist others in such research. Does it describe what kind of research? No. It leaves that to the highly trained professionals involved, and that is what the legislation should do.

Enlightenment and communication are central concepts governing the German Historical Museum in Berlin, a museum with impressive permanent and temporary exhibitions whose mandate and activities have been assessed and modernized over time. The absence of the word "research" in its mandate in no way diminishes the ability of the museum to carry out valuable research.

This museum has a long history of research. Research was carried out in the late 1800s, when the museum was part of the Geological Survey of Canada. The names Marius Barbeau and Diamond Jenness come to mind, both researchers who were known and respected around the world. Research was carried out when the museum was called the Museum of Man. The names Dr. J.V. Wright and Dr. William Taylor come to mind. In fact, Dr. Taylor, an archaeologist, was the director of the Museum of Man for many years.

Research continues to be carried out by the Museum of Civilization. I note that the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage heard testimony last week from Dr. David Morrison, director of research and content for the new Canadian history hall. The research strategy recently developed by the Canadian Museum of Civilization is evidence of the central role that research will play in the Canadian museum of history. The research strategy includes subjects such as the changing north and aboriginal histories.

● (1915)

In Bill C-49, nothing will diminish the role of research at the Canadian museum of history. The capacity and power to conduct research can be found in clause 9 of this bill, just as it can be found in the power and capacity sections of the Museums Act. The absence of the word "research" in the purpose of the new museum does not reflect a disregard for the research function of the new museum. It merely reflects modern drafting standards, standards that define a broad overarching purpose, in other words, what the museum can do, complemented by a more detailed capacities and powers statement, in other words, how the museum will carry out that purpose.

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In closing, I know that we are all anxious to ensure that the proud tradition of research in the Canadian Museum of Civilization will not be diminished in any way by Bill C-49 and the establishment of the Canadian museum of history. I know that this will not happen because I have faith in the professionalism and expertise of the museum and its staff.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Apparently, he is very interested in Canadian history, and I congratulate him on that. It is very important.

However, I wonder what reason there is for changing a winning formula. The Canadian Museum of Civilization is the most popular museum in Canada at present. It is absurd, to me, to want to give it a new purpose, because it is the most popular museum. If we change its name and its purpose, it may no longer be the most popular museum. Perhaps the strength of this museum, and what makes it popular, are precisely its present name and mandate.

But let us go further and ask a few questions. The Canadian Museum of Civilization already has a reputation of its own. If we change its name, then we are going to have to make sure that people know the new name and the new direction.

Does the member know how much money will be allocated simply to changing the name and the mandate? I am not necessarily talking about the money that will be invested in new exhibition halls, for example, just the amount of money that will be needed to make the museum known with its new name and its new mandate.

Perhaps the member can quote me some figures.

● (1920)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question about why we want to change what is already working.

All we have to do is look to the south, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. That museum is referred to as America's attic. This would be a version of that in Canada, where we can celebrate what is Canada, what our people have done and what our achievements are. Not only would we be able to celebrate that here in Ottawa as the museum currently does, we would be able to partner with smaller museums from coast to coast to coast.

As anyone involved in museums knows, most of their artifacts and displays are kept in storage. We have literally a treasure trove of great artifacts and displays in storage 90% of the time. This would free those artifacts up. They would be able to travel around Canada and smaller museums from coast to coast to coast would be able to use these displays to attract new people.

Why would we change it? We would be broadening the scope. We would be using this initiative to support small museums from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Bernard Trotter (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have worked with the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley repeatedly. He is very learned

and a former educator. I would like him to talk about how this would help educators learn more about Canada's history.

In addition to the expansion to the museum, there are some other announcements we have made. The Canada history fund, for example, which will be administered by Canada's National History Society, will honour outstanding students and teachers; the museums assistance program will bring some of these exhibitions to different parts of the country; and the virtual museum of Canada includes a teachers' centre.

Could the member please describe how this could be used as a much better learning tool for students so they can learn about our history?

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, I was a teacher for many years. My background was in history and social studies as a teacher, an educational administrator and someone involved in curriculum development.

One of the things that concerns me greatly in Canada is that currently, only three of 10 provinces require Canadian students to take a history course to graduate high school. The delivery of education is a provincial jurisdiction, but that concerns me as a former history teacher. That means that a lot of Canadians are graduating, and have been graduating, and have not had to take a history course. All the provinces offer history as a course, but students are not required to take those courses to graduate. I think that is a shame.

As a federal government, we can encourage the provinces to deliver some history in their curricula by developing, as was said, virtual online courses for teachers so that they have the resources they need to include this in the curriculum.

If our small museums, as I mentioned, had these artifacts and displays, they could really celebrate what is great about this nation. Those artifacts could be moved around the country. Teachers from coast to coast to coast would be able to take their classes to a local museum.

It is awfully hard for a teacher in the Yukon to take a class all the way to Ottawa to see the Museum of Civilization the way it is now. This would enable that museum to send its artifacts and displays all the way to the Yukon through some of the funding we would allocate for this project. This would free up those artifacts and displays, and that is great for education in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose Bill C-49 to amend the Museums Act.

The purpose of Bill C-49 is to refocus and reposition the Canadian Museum of Civilization and amend the Museums Act to change the name and legislative mandate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation. Since 1990, the museum's mandate has been:

...to increase, throughout Canada and internationally, interest in, knowledge and critical understanding of and appreciation and respect for human cultural achievements and human behaviour...

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Bill C-49 changes this mandate. In concrete terms, the changes to the museum's mandate will remove the phrase "critical understanding" and replace it with a general idea of understanding, and replace "human cultural achievements and human behaviour" with a simplistic concept, "Canada's history and identity".

In short, these changes could detract from the diversity of the experiences that characterize our history, for instance, the effects of colonization on first nations, gender inequality, marginalization based on ethnicity, and so on.

In addition, the sudden and surreptitious closure of the Canadian Postal Museum shows a lack of transparency—yes, once again—even though the mail is an integral part of our history. While the changes set out in Bill C-49 might seem trivial, this closure and the Conservatives' approach to Canadian history make me wary of other nasty surprises.

I believe this museum has a winning formula. It is often a must-see destination on any school trip to Ottawa. This museum touches the imagination of all of the youth who visit it. I am thinking of the Canadian Children's Museum, in particular, whose central theme is "the great adventure". This museum gives younger visitors an opportunity to travel the world. Exhibit themes promote intercultural understanding. The Canadian Children's Museum has grown steadily since its inception.

The museum has welcomed over 8 million visitors since 1989, with an average annual attendance of 500,000. It is committed to the promotion of intercultural understanding among children and improving cultural, social, and educational opportunities for children. I recall having visited the museum myself on many occasions and having a remarkable experience every time.

Looking beyond the Canadian Children's Museum, the Canadian Museum of Civilization is the most popular museum in Canada. That is quite something. I wonder why the Conservatives are changing its mandate. Is it really necessary to change a winning formula? What if I were the owner of an ice cream shop, chocolate was my bestselling flavour and then one day I decided to make strawberry ice cream instead. I think that that would be a very poor marketing decision and that I would be taking a risk.

Dr. Lorne Holyoak, president of the Canadian Anthropology Society, said:

You're taking a Rolls-Royce, and you're chopping off the roof and tearing out the backseats so you can turn it into a pick-up truck...It would be a terrible mistake with long-term consequences.

Once again, I believe that the government is making decisions without thinking about the consequences. I believe that this is part of an effort to promote Conservative symbols: attachment to the monarchy, promotion of Conservative values, and so forth.

Furthermore, the changes will be costly. The administrative cost of changing the name and logo is estimated at \$500,000 on top of the more than \$400,000 that has already been spent. It makes no sense. I wonder who this will really benefit. It seems to me that there are more important priorities to be dealt with.

The private sector will be solicited for its support. We are not against involving the private sector but, in recent years, things have gotten out of hand at federal museums. For example, almost all

exhibit halls at the Canadian Museum of Nature have been named after sponsors in the oil and mineral sectors and, in 2011, an exhibit at the Canada Science and Technology Museum was changed as a result of external pressure.

● (1925)

Of course, private funding is useful for the development of museums, but it must not influence their content, especially when it comes to a national history museum.

When I think of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, my mind turns to the hundreds of thousands of children who go on school excursions to the museum every year. My son has visited the museum several times with his school. He always comes home with lots of stories. The Canadian Museum of Civilization is a gold mine of interesting information for young people of all ages, and for adults, too.

The other important thing that disappoints me about this bill is the change in direction of the museum's mission. In fact, the proposal is to remove research and collections from the museum's mission, which were contained in the first paragraph of its initial mandate.

The staff who work in the research and collections departments will be "reorganized", a term that is not really reassuring to museum employees. It will mean that research and collections will take a back seat to exhibition planning and will no longer be based on the work and priorities of museologists. This represents a major shift in the museum's mission.

The government has no business sticking its nose in these matters. Politicians are neither historians nor researchers, nor are they museologists. Perhaps some members are, but they are a rare commodity. The Conservatives are the ones thinking about making these changes. They are meddling in the museum's affairs.

Why not leave it up to the museologists and their interlocutors, including the first nations, to define the museum's mandate and content.

I know how important it is to have employees who are motivated and passionate about their work to present the museum.

In my region, the Forges du Saint-Maurice are grappling with major cutbacks. This year, tourists and visitors to the forges will no longer get to enjoy a dynamic presentation by guide-interpretors. Instead, they will have to read signs set up to replace staff who have been laid off. It is really sad to see a historic and tourist site of such great significance lose its value because the government is imposing its own ideology.

I would also like to draw members' attention to another important problem arising from these changes. The bill was introduced in the House of Commons in November 2012. We have not yet had third reading in the House. It has not yet gone to the Senate. Yet I noticed on the weekend that the minister was already making announcements as if Bill C-49 had received royal assent.

Government Orders

The Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages announced a partnership agreement between the Manitoba Museum and the future Canadian museum of history. I repeat: the future Canadian museum of history. It has not yet been approved by parliamentarians.

We in the NDP want the museum's current mission to be maintained. We are asking that the budget proposed for this transformation be invested instead in a Canada-wide project to preserve Canadian history.

The government has to stop doing away with things that enhance our knowledge of history, in particular research and the protection of historic sites.

• (1930)

[*English*]

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the speech by my colleague opposite. I can tell that a good deal of thought was put into it, and I appreciate that within the context of this debate.

It is a simple question I have. We have a specific piece of legislation here. It is not long. It is a new mandate we are offering for the Canadian museum of history. What is it in the new mandate the member opposite is opposed to? What exactly is it in that mandate? Which word would she take out? What words would she add? What is wrong with the new mandate being proposed in this legislation? Please be specific.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his question.

I was not part of the committee that examined this bill, but I can say that my colleagues worked very hard on it. A lot of thought went into our amendments. In fact, there were 19 amendments proposed.

It is not rare for us to work hard in committee, any committee, and for us to propose amendments and for them not to be considered. It is really important that we work together. Too often, we propose things and we are not listened to.

[*English*]

Actions speak louder than words and we saw that in the 2012 budget.

[*Translation*]

The government has taken \$29 million away from Parks Canada. Parks Canada is responsible for 168 historic sites all across Canada. It is important to preserve these historic sites, because they help with archival research and protection. This is what enriches us, and taking money away like this is like taking a step backward, taking us in the wrong direction and to the wrong place.

• (1935)

[*English*]

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have many validators for our position. My colleague quoted, in particular, Dr. Lorne Holyoak.

We also have the Canadian Historical Association, the Canadian Anthropology Society, Canadian Archaeological Association. They have said, "On behalf of our respective associations, we write to express our serious concern regarding the lack of extensive or systematic engagement of the professional community".

We have Victor Rabinovitch, president and CEO of the museum for 11 years. George MacDonald, founding director from 1983 to 1988, said, "I was shocked to hear", the Minister of Canadian Heritage, "claim that the Aboriginal Peoples are excluded from the displays in the Canada Hall".

The Canadian Association of Universities also backs our position.

There has to be a good reason why these associations are all backing our position, could the member expand on that?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, it is true, we could go back and forth with quotes from people who were at committee and who were involved, stakeholders in the museum, archaeological departments, but what really bothers people is not knowing. The question is this. Do we have trust in the government? Can we trust it?

My constituents do not have any trust in the government. It is a government engulfed in scandals with the Senate. It allows \$3.1 billion to go missing. It is a government that makes changes in omnibus budget bills and years later we are still finding out details. Our children are going to be affected by these changes. Therefore, do we have that trust? I do not think there is enough trust in the government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages introduced a series of new measures to make our history more accessible to all Canadians, particularly our youth.

This announcement exemplifies the government's commitment and dedication to helping Canadians learn more about their history. Following the introduction of Bill C-49, the Canadian Museum of History Act, which is designed to change the name and mandate of the current Canadian Museum of Civilization, our government is forging ahead. It is introducing new measures that will help us to achieve our goal of promoting knowledge of Canadian history.

Included in these new measures is the creation of the Canada History Fund, which represents an investment of \$12 million. This new fund comprises several elements.

First, the Government of Canada History Awards will be created to honour outstanding secondary school students and teachers who show an interest in Canadian history.

Second, the Speakers Bureau of the Memory Project, administered by the Historica-Dominion Institute, will see its funding doubled to allow thousands of students to meet with veterans and serving soldiers in the classroom.

Government Orders

Third, the Canada History Fund will increase funding to the Historica-Dominion Institute to create two new *Heritage Minutes* per year between now and 2017.

Fourth, references such as the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* and *The Canadian Encyclopedia* will receive enhanced financial support to allow for additional Canadian history content. These two invaluable online resources help teachers with their in-class work. This support is important for those initiatives.

For example, this is what Anthony Wilson-Smith, president of the Historica-Dominion Institute, said:

History teaches us how we got to where we are as a country, along with a sense of where we are headed. These new measures give Canadians important new tools to discuss and debate those lessons from our past. We at the Historica-Dominion Institute fully support these important initiatives.

It is clear that the government is honouring its commitment to promote Canada's identity, but that is not all. Starting this year, July 1 to 7 will become Canada History Week.

That week, starting on Canada Day, will be an excellent opportunity for Canadians to explore their country's history through activities organized at the regional and national levels. We will also provide information on activities organized by history lovers as part of national and regional Canada Day celebrations.

They preserve our heritage, shape our collective memory and stimulate our sense of belonging to Canadian society. However, Canada does not have a national museum offering a detailed narrative of our history. That is why our government is preparing to establish the Canadian museum of history. This future national museum will create partnerships with regional museums to form a network.

The objective is to expand access to the national collection and increase its circulation across the country. In this way, Canadian museums, both large and small, will be able to exchange exhibitions with the Canadian museum of history and access some of the three million artifacts from those collections.

An investment of time and money is obviously required to move exhibitions and artifacts. The third measure announced last week is designed specifically to enhance the capability of certain Department of Canadian Heritage programs to do just that.

● (1940)

The Museums Assistance Program, for example, provides financial support for the work of Canada's museums and museum sector. We will ensure that this program, which facilitates Canadians' access to their heritage and history, plays a greater role.

The Exhibition Circulation Fund, one of the program's five components, assists museums in paying the costs involved in hosting travelling exhibitions. Those exhibitions may come from museums in other provinces or territories or simply from a federal heritage institution such as the Canadian museum of history. For a museum, these expenses usually include packing, transportation and installation costs, special costs associated with security and additional insurance premiums as well as general promotional expenses. As I said, the costs involved in moving exhibitions and artifacts are often too high for small history museums. We will therefore ensure that the

Museums Assistance Program enables museums to borrow artifacts from the national collection of the Canadian museum of history to enhance their exhibitions. This activity was not previously funded. In addition, to help the smallest institutions, financial assistance may be provided to cover up to 100% of eligible costs for museums with operating budgets of less than \$500,000 a year.

Mr. Speaker, do you know there are over 1,700 Canadian museums in this situation? We are also going to make sure that the Museum Assistance Program facilitates the creation and sharing of exhibits about history by eliminating the requirement that exhibits circulate outside their province or territory of origin. This will help to encourage the circulation of historical exhibits to multiple towns in the same province or territory. By expanding eligibility and increasing the percentage of funding granted to small museums, these measures will increase the number of travelling historical exhibitions. Canadians will thus have better access to their history.

In closing, as Canada's 150th birthday approaches, Canadians deserve a national museum of the history of Canada that will put their treasures on display for the entire world and tell Canadians about their collective history. Canada needs a national institution that tells its story. Canadian museums need to be encouraged and supported in creating a national network that will give all Canadians the opportunity to explore their history. That is what the government of Canada is proposing to us here today.

● (1945)

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to ask him a question. I do not doubt the importance of the history of Canada or the appropriateness of including a little more of it when it comes to teaching history and the associated exhibitions. What I wonder about is how we should proceed. Why are the name and mandate of the most popular museum in Canada being changed? I find this striking, and I am wondering whether this museum will still be the most popular one, with the highest visitation, if the government changes its mandate and name.

What is even more disturbing is that this idea does not actually come from a museologist or a museum director. It was the minister's idea. He undoubtedly has good ideas, but I find it worrisome for a politician to be proposing a new name and a new mandate for the museum.

Does my colleague know whom the minister consulted before drafting Bill C-49? He has said it was his idea, but apart from that, did he consult the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, stakeholders in the Outaouais region, historians and museologists?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to underscore the leadership of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages and congratulate him on his initiative to establish this national Canadian museum, so important for the future.

I would like to come back to the mandate, because I think it is an important point. The Museum of Civilization Corporation will have new mandate that focuses on Canada's history and identity, and its name will be changed to the Canadian Museum of History, a name that clearly communicates its role.

Government Orders

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague wanted to know who the Minister consulted before making his decision.

I find it interesting, particularly because one of the questions that we often ask the members of the government concerns why we disagree with a position that is so popular with Canadians. However, not one of the members can tell me whether their own constituents have contacted them to ask them to change the name and the mandate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, which from now on will be called the Canadian Museum of History.

I would like to know what consultations were carried out by the minister before he arrived at this decision. I would also like to know why the Conservatives do not all agree on whether it was the minister's decision or whether the decision was the result of many requests from constituents.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question and tell him that this kind of decision is certainly taken in consultation with many Canadians.

We must remember that it is important to support the government's investment, because it ensures that Canadians from all across the country will have an opportunity to learn more about history and about their own history, Canada's history. The new museum will sign agreements with museums all across Canada, in order to be able to travel throughout Canada, to give smaller museums an opportunity to display the collections, and to provide all Canadians with an opportunity to see and admire these collections to learn more about our history.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments on the Canadian Museum of History.

It was a good idea to reinforce the message that it involves not only a name change for the museum, but also programs that will be travelling to other museums.

He talked about Canada history week, for instance, and the Canada history fund. It is therefore \$25 million for the change to the museum, but it is \$12 million per year for all these programs.

Could he tell us more about how these programs will go hand in hand with the changes to the museum, so that our history can be told all across the country?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important and insightful question.

I would like to remind him that in terms of increasing Canadians' knowledge about our history, only four provinces, namely Ontario, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Quebec, require students to take a history course to graduate, and that over 80% of Canadians failed the Historica-Dominion Institute's basic history quiz. Fully 78% of Canadians believe that learning more about the history of Canada would be a significant factor in strengthening their attachment to Canada. A survey supported this finding.

I think we are on the right track. If we want to know where we are going, in our country, we have to know where we come from.

• (1950)

[*English*]

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many in this House know that I am passionate about Canadian history, so I am pleased to rise to speak about Bill C-49, a bill to create a new Canadian museum of history.

[*Translation*]

The government believes in our national museums, and we recognize the tremendous value they hold for all Canadians.

[*English*]

However, while our national institutions do magnificent work as guardians of our heritage, not one is dedicated to telling the full story of our country.

[*Translation*]

That is why we are making a one-time investment of \$25 million to establish the Canadian Museum of History. This funding is not new money, but rather comes from the existing budget for Canadian Heritage. This new national museum will provide an opportunity for us to learn more about our rich Canadian history.

[*English*]

The Canadian museum of history will grow out of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. The government is refreshing the mandate and the orientation of the museum. Just as schools modernize the curriculum in accordance with new events and discoveries, the new Canadian museum of history will present a comprehensive story of this country, the best country in the world.

Change is not new to this institution. The history of the Canadian Museum of Civilization began as far back as 1856, with the establishment of a museum by the Geological Survey of Canada. With roots stretching back 157 years, the Museum of Civilization is one of North America's oldest cultural institutions.

As staff of the survey fanned out across the country, they gathered cultural information and artifacts as well as carrying out their main task in geology and science.

[*Translation*]

Ever since its beginnings from a modest collection the museum has been evolving. Indeed, its ability to adapt and evolve is what has made it so successful.

[*English*]

Just think, in 1862, the Geological Survey of Canada mounted its first ethnological exhibit, a single display case containing first people's stone implements, stone pipes and a few fragments of pottery. Today the Canadian Museum of Civilization welcomes over 1.6 million visitors, on average, each year. It houses permanent galleries that explore 20,000 years of human history. Its program of special exhibitions expands on Canadian themes and explores other cultures and civilizations, past and present.

The museum is also a major research institution, with staff who are leading experts in Canadian history, archeology, ethnology and culture.

Government Orders

[Translation]

In 1968, and with a new mandate, the National Museum of Man was established as part of a group known as the National Museums of Canada. Almost 20 years later, in 1986, it was renamed the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and it subsequently moved to Gatineau, into the fabulous building designed by the illustrious architect, Douglas Cardinal. The building itself illustrates the history of the museum, with a structure that suggests fluidity and flexibility.

The transformation of the Canadian Museum of Civilization will take place over the next five years, and will provide a number of opportunities to celebrate Canada's history in the lead-up to 2017.

[English]

At present, the museum has four permanent exhibition galleries: the Grand Hall, the First Peoples Hall, the Canada Hall and Face to Face, the Canadian Personalities Hall. The new permanent gallery would replace both the Canada Hall and the Canadian Personalities Hall.

More than 4,000 square metres, or 43,000 square feet, of exhibition space would be renovated to create a permanent exhibition space presenting a national historical narrative. This space would feature the largest and most comprehensive exhibition on Canadian history ever developed. It would be the place where Canadians could go to retrace their national journey and find national treasures. It would be where Canadians could learn about the people, events and themes that have shaped our country's development and have defined the Canadian experience, including key events and episodes from our past. It would tell some of the greatest Canadian stories.

● (1955)

[Translation]

The museum has carried out a series of consultations, online and in person, to solicit the views of Canadians on the stories, people, themes and events that they want to see in the new museum. More than 20,000 Canadians contributed, expressing what they expect of the museum in general, and particularly in the new Canadian history hall. Here are some highlights:

[English]

Canadians want our museums to be comprehensive, frank and fair about our presentation of their history.

[Translation]

They want us to examine both the good and the bad from our past.

[English]

They want the museum to foster a sense of national pride, without ignoring our failings, mistakes and controversies.

[Translation]

They want to see various viewpoints and voices, recognizing that people and events can be interpreted in different ways through different eyes.

I am delighted that the new exhibit space will feature national treasures such as explorer Samuel de Champlain's astrolabe, my

hero, the "last spike" from the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Maurice Richard's number nine Habs jersey.

[English]

At the same time, the president and CEO of the museum has said that the new exhibitions will deal with Canada's history "warts and all". That is an important point. Many episodes in our history are critically important, such as the internment of Japanese Canadians and the situation of our aboriginal people in residential schools. Canadians can learn so much from our history.

At present, there is no mention in the Canada Hall of the flag debate or the Constitution, the wartime internment of Ukrainian or Japanese Canadians or Terry Fox and his Marathon of Hope. There is no meaningful reference to the Great Depression and the conscription crisis. Most important, the Canada Hall does not begin with first peoples but with the arrival of Europeans in the 11th century. Clearly, this needs to change.

[Translation]

The Museum of Civilization tells the story of human history and identity in Canada. The new Canadian museum of history will be the next phase of that story, helping define us as citizens of Canada and the world.

Why does our government feel that it is so important to focus the interest on Canada's collective history?

[English]

In 2017, the best country in the world will celebrate its sesquicentennial, which is 150 years. In the lead up to that celebration, it is important that Canadians know about, appreciate and celebrate our history.

[Translation]

A new national museum devoted to our history will highlight our achievements as a nation and help Canadians learn more about our rich and diverse history.

[English]

I hope that as many Canadians as possible will celebrate the sesquicentennial in the freshly renovated exhibition halls of the new Canadian museum of history.

[Translation]

I hope all of my colleagues in the House will lend their support to Bill C-49.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your kind attention, and I assure you that I will entertain my colleagues' questions with the same respect.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week I was quite fortunate to take part in the debate on Bill C-49.

We can criticize how much money was spent on changing the name of the museum, a change that no one asked for except the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Government Orders

We can also talk about the changes to the museum's mandate, but I think this is also part of the Conservative trend. I am quite concerned about this trend because it seeks to promote a history of the military that is based on military events, and of the Queen and the monarchy, without any real regard for other aspects of Canada's history.

Last week, my colleague from Hamilton Mountain asked why we would not promote the history of women in Canada. The parliamentary secretary said, "I have never heard such nonsense".

You can read it in *Hansard*. He said it was garbage. I was quite shocked.

Does the Conservative member opposite believe it is important to promote the history of women?

• (2000)

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the hon. member's question.

In listening to the debate this afternoon and this evening, I see that a number of opposition members are wondering whether Canadians were consulted on this. In the presentation I just gave, I pointed out that we consulted more than 20,000 Canadians. As far as all the aspects of history are concerned, hon. members can rest assured that the Canadian museum of history will incorporate each aspect, including aspects that some in the past might have wanted to keep hidden away.

Now, I want to challenge the hon. member because she says we are only interested in military history. In my presentation I did not utter a single word about the role of the military. Nonetheless, I do hope this will be part of history, the good and bad alike.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our national museums are of critical importance, which Canadians will acknowledge. Winnipeg, in fact, is going to be getting its first national museum, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. We are anticipating that this wonderful world-class museum will be coming to Winnipeg relatively soon, in the next year or maybe a year and a bit. It goes back to Paul Martin, Reg Alcock and others, and in particular, the Asper family, who played a critical role in ensuring that the rest of Canada could benefit by having strong national museums outside of the national capital.

I realize that this is a bit off topic, but it is important to recognize how important national museums are to all Canadians. I wonder if the member would like to comment on what will be our newest museum, which will be located in Winnipeg. It is something about which many Manitobans have a high sense of pride in terms of those who made it happen and in terms of being the city that will host this world-class national museum.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that my friend from across the way had such a thoughtful question. It might have been interesting, as he added to the list of Liberal icons, if he had acknowledged that, in fact, the people he named, especially those who sat on the Liberal benches, did not get it done. That is another thing they did not get done.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights, which is going to open imminently in Winnipeg, was actually put on the boards by this

government, which dedicated several hundred million dollars to get it done.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the themes that has emerged from opposition members has been this notion that somehow perhaps the minister will be writing the storyboards at the new Canadian history museum. Could the hon. member, who gave a great presentation today in the House, comment on that and set the record straight?

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, the House and all four, or now five, of our viewers watching television tonight will realize that there is no political interference in the way that history is presented across the country in all our national museums, and that will not change. There will be a greater focus on Canadian history. There will be a greater investment in Canadian history. Canadians, who are thirsty for their story from coast to coast to coast, will bond together and get it done.

• (2005)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-49, the purpose of which is to change the name and mandate of the Canadian Museum of Civilization in order to establish the Canadian museum of history.

In order to express our strong opposition to this bill, I would like to begin by reminding the House that this initiative is part of the Conservatives' broader plan to promote certain symbols that they cherish: the monarchy, military values, excessive celebrations of long-ago wars, and so on.

It is also important to note that their version of Canadian history does not include the important history of women, first nations and other histories that are also part of our national history.

Indeed, what we are seeing is a deliberate attempt to rewrite the Canadian identity. In that regard, I fully agree with the Canadian Association of University Teachers, whose position is as follows:

...[this initiative] fits into a pattern of politically motivated heritage policy...[it] reflects a new use of history to support the government's political agenda—that is, the evocation of particular features of our past as worthy of official endorsement and promotion. This is a highly inappropriate use of our national cultural institutions, which should stand apart from any particular government agenda and should be run instead according to sound professional standards. Our past should not be a political plaything.

George MacDonald, the first director of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, has expressed strong opposition to changing the museum's name and mandate. He sees this as part of an attempt to impose the Conservative brand. According to him, no one in the museum community wanted a museum of history rather than a museum of civilization.

Similarly, another former director and CEO of the museum, Victor Rabinovitch, lamented the loss of the name Canadian Museum of Civilization. He described it as the most successful brand in the Canadian museums sector. He said it was a well-known brand that was respected by everyone. I would add that abandoning the name Canadian Museum of Civilization is as absurd as abandoning the brand Radio-Canada.

Government Orders

In addition to changing the name of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Bill C-49 contains a number of disturbing amendments to the organization's mission. For example, the international mandate of the museum will be a thing of the past. Rather than focusing on Canada and the rest of the world as a whole, the museum will concentrate solely on Canadians, thereby stripping the museum of its mandate to share our history with the world.

In fact, this example truly captures the essence of the Conservative brand. Since the Conservatives came into power, Canada has been on a downward spiral in terms of its influence on the world stage: Canada is no longer seeking a seat on the UN Security Council, the international mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada has been gutted and Canada no longer has a shred of credibility when it comes to combating climate change. The list goes on.

Unfortunately, with the Conservative Party at the helm, Canada has become the laughing stock of the international community and is neglecting the important role that culture plays in Canadian diplomacy.

Moreover, Bill C-49 proposes to reorganize the tasks of establishing and maintaining a collection of artifacts for research and posterity. From now on, rather than being based on the work and priorities of museum professionals, research and collections will take a backseat to exhibition planning.

However, the most serious problem with C-49 is that it prescribes a minimalist approach to the museum based on events, experiences, people and objects. This is a decision that would normally be left in the hands of museum professionals and subject to a debate among historians and the academic community.

I find it worrisome and appalling that the Minister of Canadian Heritage is riding roughshod over the choices of museum professionals. To begin with, politics has no business in museums and, secondly, before thinking about lecturing Quebeckers on history, the Conservatives should start by familiarizing themselves with the history of Quebec.

I am thinking particularly of the Minister of Canadian Heritage who, when he appeared on *Tout le monde en parle*, was unable to identify Guy Laliberté, Félix Leclerc and Robert Lepage.

I think it is a shame that exhibitions on different cultures and civilizations will take a backseat in the future. The museum used to focus heavily on transmitting an understanding of various cultures and civilizations. The museum had exhibitions that varied from Haitian voodoo to ancient Egypt. Many exhibitions traveled and gave the Canadian Museum of Civilization its international reputation. Moreover, these exhibitions attracted a great many visitors.

● (2010)

By refocusing the museum's mandate on Canada, the number of visitors could drop and we are definitely losing a cultural asset.

As Dr. Lorn Holyoak, president of the Canadian Anthropology Society said:

You're taking a Rolls-Royce, and you're chopping off the roof and tearing out the backseats so you can turn it into a pick-up truck. Canadians deserve an excellent Canadian history museum, and the Canadian Anthropology Society supports the creation of a museum of Canadian history, but we do not support the gutting of, as

has already been said, the crown jewel in our collection of museums. It would be a terrible mistake with long-term consequences.

I note with some concern that the government has announced that there will be activities to solicit support from the private sector. I have nothing against the private sector. However, I am simply concerned that it will dictate the content of exhibits.

In recent years, some things have gotten out of hand in federal museums. I am referring mainly to the Canadian Museum of Nature, where almost all the exhibit halls were sponsored by oil companies after a former executive with Talisman Energy was appointed to the museum's board of directors. It is rather ridiculous. Members will also recall that the Canada Science and Technology Museum changed an exhibit as a result of pressure from a mining company that sponsored it.

In the case of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the historical and archival documentation plays an important role in determining economic rights, particularly of first nations, and it must not be subject to pressure based on commercial interests.

To sum up, private funding can help museum development, but I have difficulty understanding how we can ensure that private sponsors will not influence the content.

While the Conservatives are busy remodelling the Canadian Museum of Civilization so they can spread their propaganda, I lament the fact that they are attacking other important institutions that are guardians of our collective memory. I am thinking in particular of the cuts to Library and Archives Canada, where more than 50% of digitization staff have been laid off. I am also thinking of reductions to document preservation and conservation staff and cuts to inter-library loans, which enabled all Canadians to access their national library's collections.

We could also talk about the \$29 million that was cut from Parks Canada in 2012. Parks Canada is an important vehicle for our historical consciousness. That organization manages 167 national historic sites in Canada. More than 80% of Parks Canada's archaeologists and curators have lost their jobs as a result of cuts in recent years.

My colleague from Québec eloquently demonstrated the impact of those cuts on Quebec and its regions when we learned that most of the activities of the Quebec City service centre would be consolidated in Ottawa. Laurence Ferland, former president of Université Laval's archaeology students' association, said that, in addition to harming university research in Quebec City, the cuts would undermine the preservation of monuments and the transmission of history.

When I see these cuts hitting institutions responsible for showcasing our heritage, I find it hard to believe the minister when he says he is changing the Canadian Museum of Civilization to improve the dissemination of Canadian history.

To summarize, we are strongly opposed to this bill, which seeks to completely alter the Canadian Museum of Civilization for partisan purposes. We demand that the museum's current mandate be maintained. Canadian history must have a showcase and be promoted, but that is what the Canadian Museum of Civilization already does. We do not need to change the act or the museum's purpose to do it.

We also believe that the task of determining the content of the Canadian Museum of Civilization must be left to museology professionals, not politicians.

Lastly, the government must stop making cuts to the source of our historical knowledge, particularly archival research and the protection of historic sites.

Instead of spending large amounts of money to reshape the museum's mandate, the government would have done better to invest in a Canada-wide project to preserve Canadian history, archives and historic sites and support small museum institutions, particularly with a view to Canada's 150th anniversary.

● (2015)

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder what purpose continuing debate would be, since the NDP members still, after months and months, have not read the bill.

The member said it has no international mandate. I will read just the tail end of the mandate. It says: "...shaped Canada's history and identity, and also to enhance their awareness of world history and cultures".

Further down, it talks about research. Proposed paragraph 9(1)(f) talks about research. Proposed paragraph 9(1)(h) talks about international exhibits.

The member talked further about leaving it up to the researchers and professionals. This is a quote from the president of the museum. He said:

The content for this new exhibition is being developed by a multidisciplinary team of experts at the museum, led by Dr. David Morrison. This team is made up of researchers, curators, and museologists working in close collaboration with advisory committees composed of historians and experts from across Canada.

Dr. Morrison has a Ph.D. in archaeology from the University of Toronto. He is very well written. He has over 20 years of experience in doing this, so clearly either the New Democrats have not read the bill or they just do not care about the things that are actually going on and are happy to just continue to tell Canadians mistruths about what is happening.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, I am very familiar with this bill, in fact. I wonder if the parliamentary secretary has read the bill he is defending.

I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary if he has actually consulted Canadians and the following groups: historians, first nations, stakeholders in the Outaouais region and the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage within the context of its study on Canada's 150th anniversary.

Privilege

I would like to hear the parliamentary secretary name a single historian or a single first nations group that he consulted before this bill was drafted.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one thing the government does not seem to understand is the lack of confidence this side of the House has in the government's decisions, such as those proposed in Bill C-49. All of the Conservatives' decisions are aimed at redefining Canadian culture and symbols. We see rebranding the Canadian Museum of Civilization as the Canadian Museum of History as another step in that direction.

People have spoken about the lack of consultation. Our heritage critic put his finger on the problem when he spoke about the consultations, which were practically non-existent or done simply to get them out of the way. The consultations were done quickly.

Does my colleague feel that our opposition here stems from our lack of confidence in this bill and in the decisions the Conservatives are making about Canadian history and culture, over and above the changes to the mandate and the other options the Conservatives could have chosen for promoting Canadian history?

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, my colleague just raised a very important point. Bill C-49 has been surrounded by a lack of transparency and consultation throughout this entire process.

I know that my NDP colleagues worked very hard in committee to listen to the witnesses and consult Canadians, but this Conservative government did not accept any of the amendments the NDP suggested in committee.

The Conservative government is lacking transparency and refuses to be accountable to Canadians, which undermines the parliamentary process and the work we are doing here in the House of Commons.

* * *

● (2020)

[English]

PRIVILEGE

DATA USED BY GOVERNMENT WITH RESPECT TO BILL C-54

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rose last Wednesday to raise a question of privilege in relation to a report central to the deliberations of the House on Bill C-54, the not criminally responsible reform act. I have since had the benefit of reading the interventions of the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley and the hon. Minister of Justice and I wish to respond this evening.

Briefly, for the benefit of members listening who are unfamiliar with the issue, the government commissioned a report on persons found not criminally responsible last year. This report was received last November.

When researchers discovered in March an error involving the transposition of data labels, they diligently worked to provide the department with a corrected version. However, after the corrections were provided to the government, the minister continued to cite from the old report in debates, an old report that the government, even after being apprised of the error, tabled in the House.

Privilege

When first rising on this point, I thought it very important that the House be provided with the correct numbers in a timely manner. Indeed, the basis of my intervention was that as a scientist MP in particular, I am impeded in my work when evidence in the form of quantitative information is withheld or concealed. Moreover, I feel that the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights was unable to properly study Bill C-54 with incorrect data before it.

I rise today to respond to the intervention on this matter from the Minister of Justice. At the outset, let me state that I appreciate his prompt attention to the matter, and I also appreciate that he decided to not repeat in the House the comments of the spokesperson for his office as reported in the press, comments that criticized both the researchers and their work and could have unfairly damaged their careers and reputations.

Mr. Speaker, it is my intent in my intervention today to argue two things.

One is that the government lacked a necessary sense of responsibility, urgency and rigour in correcting factual errors germane to the debate on Bill C-54, and that this neglect had significant consequences for the work of the House.

Second, I would like to propose, if you find that my privilege has been breached, that a commensurate and positive remedy would be one that formally led to a systematic way for ministers and members to correct any significant factual errors presented to the House. I believe that would improve the work of the House for the benefit of all members and for the good of Canada.

At the end of his intervention last week and in response to the request in my initial intervention, the Minister of Justice tabled a report in this place. I thank the Minister of Justice for that. However, and regrettably, that document gives rise to what is potentially a new point of order that I can only raise now, having seen the document for the first time on Friday.

As the Journals for last Thursday note at page 3406, the Minister of Justice

...laid upon the Table,—Document entitled “Description and Processing of Individuals Found not Criminally Responsible on Account of Mental Disorder Accused of “Serious Violent Offences”” (English text only).

This note is followed by the annotation “Sessional Paper No. 8525-411-60”.

I wish to raise two issues here. First, as O'Brien and Bosc note on page 433:

All documents tabled in the House by a Minister or, as the case may be, by a Parliamentary Secretary, whether during a sitting or deposited with the Clerk, are required to be presented in both official languages.

The citation therein is to Standing Order 32(4):

Any document distributed in the House or laid before the House pursuant to sections (1) or (2) of this Standing Order shall be in both official languages”

I do not wish to belabour this point at length, but I note that the minister sought unanimous consent to table the document, something which he is not required to do by virtue of his being a minister. That said, he did not specify to the House that the document was only in one language. I believe the minister will agree that all documents tabled in this place ought to be tabled in both official

languages of this country, and I must say I found it curious that he sought consent without informing the House of why it was needed. Had he specified he wanted to consent to table it unilingually, it is quite possible that some hon. members would not have agreed.

•(2025)

Second, and this is the bigger issue, the document tabled was not actually the final March report as we know it now to be. Instead, what was laid upon the table was a work product version replete with “track changes” intact. “Track changes” is a feature used to manage multiple versions of Microsoft Word documents. While I trust that some members will now appreciate having the opportunity to study a version of the report with correct data, it is regrettable that the minister did not table the clean and finalized copy, with which I am now aware his office was provided on the same day as this version.

Additionally, the minister did not table a copy in French. Surely the final report in both languages would best suit members studying the matter and perhaps re-evaluating their position vis-à-vis Bill C-54.

In his comments in this place, the Minister of Justice stated that the corrected report had been available online for some time, providing reference to the website for the national trajectory project.

I would first begin by noting that the version on this website is clean and not the one that the minister tabled in the House.

[*Translation*]

In addition, I visited the website over the weekend. The minister is correct in saying that the report is available, but it is only available in English. There is no French version.

[*English*]

Since there is no French version on that website, strictly speaking, I would have to object to the minister's assertion that “the amended version in fact has been available online for everyone to see”. Indeed, as I verified with the researchers, no French copy of the corrected version existed anywhere in the public domain and, to my knowledge, it still does not.

The manner in which the minister tabled the revised research report last week is an illustration of the government's lack of rigour. It is his responsibility as minister to ensure that the members of the House have the information required to make informed legislative decisions. Rather than tabling the final report, the minister tabled a unilingual draft version. In failing to provide these updated statistics in a transparent way by tabling a draft report rather than a final report, and then only in response to my intervention, I believe that the minister has failed in his responsibilities to the House. Because the minister has shirked his responsibilities, he has violated my privileges as a member.

There is a critical contention that is not refuted by the Minister of Justice's comments on the matter of privilege. In his submission of last Thursday, he stated, “We gave notice that the report had been significantly amended”. This notice was only given in an order paper response. The problem, as you can appreciate, Mr. Speaker, is that saying there is an amended report and actually providing the amended report are two separate things.

Privilege

Beyond that, on May 27, the Minister of Justice said to the House "I referred to some of the statistics in the final report", knowing full well that he had, in fact, referred to statistics that were no longer in the corrected report because researchers had diligently reviewed their findings, discovered significant errors and transmitted them to him as soon as possible. Over two months after receiving the "significantly amended" report, the minister was referring to erroneous data in what he called a "final report" from November, 2012. This to me suggests an intent to mislead the House.

I understand that the Speaker does not generally delve into the minutiae of order paper responses; however, I must note with frustration that the government's response to a question asking for current statistics, as part of Question No. 1169 on the order paper, a response that simply pointed to the old report given in annex 1, would indeed mislead the House and provide members with the impression that the report in annex 1 was the significantly amended one, when it was in fact the old one.

In responding to questions posed in Question No. 1169 on the order paper, such as "Which people found NCR and released have been convicted of a subsequent offence?" and "What was the nature of the subsequent offence", the government had the option to use information it knew to be correct. Instead, it chose to respond with information it knew to be incorrect.

Mr. Speaker, I am told you have no role in adjudicating the sufficiency of answers to order paper questions. However, I believe you cannot deny that the government did not use that opportunity to take responsibility and correct important factual errors.

● (2030)

I will now focus on one aspect of the privilege question more precisely, the central issue of incorrect data cited in this House.

I rose in this place last Wednesday, June 12, after routine proceedings. This was my first opportunity since the June 11 Global News story about recent citations of incorrect statistics by a minister and a government member.

Yet that same afternoon, June 12, after the Global News report and after my question was raised, a witness before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights testifying about Bill C-54, Mike McCormack, president of the Toronto Police Association stated the following, as reported by the blues. I will quote his citation of the Minister of Justice.

The Hon. Rob Nicholson provided some interesting facts in the House of Commons debate on March 1, 2013, about persons found not criminally responsible, when he stated that:

A little over 27% of individuals found not criminally responsible have had a past finding of not criminally responsible; 38% of those found not criminally responsible and accused of a sex offence had at least one prior NCR finding; 27% of those accused of attempted murder had at least one NCR finding; and, 19% of those accused of murder or homicide had at least one prior finding of not criminally responsible.

This underscores the problem. Ministers' words carry significant weight by virtue of the resources they command and the respect given to their office. However, all of these statistics quoted by the aforementioned witness are incorrect. I know it, the minister knows it, and now, as of this report being tabled, all English-reading parliamentarians know it.

The problem, as I believe you will see, Mr. Speaker, is that the minister's act of informing Parliament did not correct the *Hansard* record of March 1. His assertion that the corrected report could have been found on a website is unconvincing, as that source did not inform certain witnesses or even government members, such as the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, who cited old numbers at committee during its study on this bill.

I should be clear that I do not fault the witnesses for their use of the facts as they were provided. I do not believe any of them had any intention to mislead Parliament. I do, however, take issue with the minister only tabling the correct numbers after the committee had reported the bill back to the House, and the use of old statistics by other government members.

In particular, regarding the citation of old statistics by the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Justice explained that, "...the Minister of Natural Resources was provided, as were many government members, with supporting documentation that in error included the statistics...."

He then added, with respect to the Minister of Natural Resources, "This was nothing more, quite frankly, than an honest mistake, not of his own doing, and I hope this addresses entirely the matter pertaining to the hon. minister."

While I greatly appreciate the Minister of Justice acknowledging that a mistake had been made, I must disagree with the conclusion he draws as to the matter being closed.

Indeed, if the Minister of Justice's proposition, that all members should have gone online and consulted the corrected report, is followed through to its logical conclusion, this obligation would equally extend and apply to the Minister of Natural Resources and all government members. The Minister of Justice was quick to suggest that I should do "a simple Internet search". Surely his fellow minister and other government members ought to have done the same Internet search. If even the Minister of Natural Resources and his office were misled, how could regular members of Parliament to be expected to discover the true facts?

Given that, as of Friday, June 14, the report from Dr. Crocker's research group had not yet been translated, and therefore had not been tabled in the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, do we even know if all of the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights knew the correct facts when they adopted report 25 on Bill C-54 on June 12, 2013?

Returning to the elements of privilege as outlined in my initial submission, the minister failed to address another point. As I noted, the minister referred to the November report as "final" despite having received the corrected report. He again, in his intervention on my question of privilege, used the word "final" in relation to the November 2012 report.

● (2035)

I do believe this misleads the House. The November report is not final if there is a corrected March report. Similarly, the report tabled is not final if it is not the final version submitted, which it, the one submitted containing Microsoft Word's track changes, is not.

Privilege

Moreover, while the Minister of Justice has indicated a mistake in what was provided to the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Natural Resources has yet to recognize his error before this body. I believe he ought to do so and, more importantly, tell the House whether knowing the actual facts has changed his mind about Bill C-54.

Speaker Milliken often ruled in the past, which I will cite from Monday, October 4, 2010, as follows, “it is also a long-standing practice in this House for the Chair to accept the word of hon. members and indeed their apologies”. I agree, but we have not yet heard from the Minister of Natural Resources personally, one way or the other.

In my initial submission, I stated that I would even consider abandoning this privilege claim if the government were to table the new report in the House and explain why it did not choose to do so when it was first made aware of the correction. While the government did provide a document, not the final report, it did not explain why it had yet to table it and, indeed, basically sought to say it had done everything it ought to have done. I disagree.

I would like to move now to discuss what I think would be an appropriate and commensurate remedy for any breach of privilege. It is not because I wish to presume to know your decision, Mr. Speaker, but it is because I believe this matter can result in a positive legacy for Canadians and I wish to explain how.

My colleague for Skeena—Bulkley Valley helpfully pointed out the following to the House in support of my question of privilege:

—the 22nd edition of Erskine May, which states the following on page 63: “[I]t is of paramount importance that ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament, correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity”.

Had the ministers, in fact, corrected in an obvious and accessible way the errors that were preserved on the record, witnesses would have not quoted them after my intervention as evidence in committee. Had the record been corrected, witnesses and parliamentarians would have had accurate information upon which to formulate their positions on this gravely important issue.

Moving forward, the question becomes whether this matter should go to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, an issue on which we should have guidance from you, Mr. Speaker. Regardless of how you rule on privilege merits, it is the obligation of members to correct themselves on important matters and the means by which this might be done. I believe all members would agree that it is important to, as much as we can, ensure that erroneous so-called facts are not repeated in the public square. I believe all members would agree that the repetition of untruths in the public square can seriously impede members in the exercise of their democratic function as legislators and I expect that the hon. members of the House would never stand by and allow that to happen. Therefore, I believe that if there were a clearly defined process for members to correct any errors they had unwillingly stated on record, they would eagerly seize that opportunity.

Like the Minister of Justice's statements on March 1, which I acknowledge were made before the new report was provided, the Minister of Natural Resources's comments after the correction also remain on the record.

So far, the approach of the House and Chair appears to be that members can, if they so choose, rise on a point of order or rise on a question of personal privilege to correct themselves. It seems there is no formal requirement to do so. The problem is that in the case of erroneous empirical facts, they may remain on the record, which is permanent, even after perhaps new research has corrected them. Permanent corrections are possible, however, through the process of seeking a corrigendum. Regrettably, there is little guidance on this point and, indeed, I only find a handful of references to corrigenda in speaker's rulings since 2001. As the parliamentary glossary explains, this is a term used in journals, *Debates*, committee meetings of proceedings and committee evidence to indicate that a substantive correction has been made to a previous issue.

Beyond clerical corrections to bills and the order paper, there are examples of where a speaker has ordered that a “corrigendum be issued to rectify the error”. I will concede that these have arisen, it seems, primarily in cases where the transcript does not reflect what a member said. However, I assert that there ought to be clarity on whether a member could rise to seek such a correction where new research, for example, has shown that the empirical facts have changed.

● (2040)

As such, it might be appropriate for the procedure and House affairs committee to consider whether or not another mechanism should exist for an *ex post* correction of *Hansard* by a member who intervened, limited to empirical findings perhaps, to ensure that those who rely on *Hansard* are not misled. In other words, I accept that the minister did not know of the corrected data when he first spoke. When he was informed later in the month, it would have been ideal for him to rise on a clarifying point of order or to seek a corrigendum. The premise that I am operating under, of course, is that if the minister had the corrected data, he would have indeed cited it at the time. This is not something he has yet said, and so I realize it is not an entirely safe assumption.

In closing, I believe that this matter is not best resolved by belabouring who exactly said what, or placing the Chair in the position of interpreting the intended meaning of words, something you recently reminded the House was beyond the Chair's purview. Thus, while other members may seek to extend this matter, I believe we are best served by ministers involved reporting the correct numbers to the House as a point of order or seeking to correct themselves through a corrigendum if such is indeed permissible.

The words of ministers of the Crown carry significant weight by virtue of the resources they command and the respect given to their office. That is why I believe they have a special obligation to correct themselves. Moreover, each member of this place surely has an obligation to inform himself or herself of the facts before speaking and to correct himself or herself if erroneous information is presented. If that were not our habit, the force and import of debate in this House would be diminished and the dignity and purpose of this House would be diminished.

Government Orders

From you, Mr. Speaker, I would thus seek some guidance whenever you choose to report back to the House as to what is required when a minister realizes that an error has been made. I would also ask you to consider whether it is possible for members to seek correction of their own interventions in *Hansard* when it is not merely an error of transcription but rather a correction to an empirical quantity, perhaps with a notation that an amendment has occurred, such as would be appropriate in the cases I cited in my interventions on this matter.

I believe that your guidance on such requirements may be a positive legacy of this matter of privilege.

I thank you and I thank all members for their attention to this matter.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kingston and the Islands for his very interesting speech and I congratulate him.

I think that what came up the other day in the House and what they added today is very relevant. What is relevant is the idea that a minister who is accountable to the House of Commons appears to have misled MPs. He tabled a document in the House when he knew that the document was only available in English. He then asked the House for unanimous consent without revealing that the document was not written in both languages. That is hard to accept and is very worrisome.

Our rules are there for good reason. They are there to protect Canada's democracy. Misleading the House of Commons could have very serious consequences. I am very worried for our democracy. The minister is accountable to the House of Commons, but he does not seem to understand how important it is not to mislead the House.

I respect my colleague and we will continue to support all of the other points he raised. The Speaker will report back with his ruling.

[*English*]

It is clear that the idea of misleading the House is a very serious breach of Canadian tradition and rules that govern this place. The rules are there to protect Canadian democracy and Canadians. To run roughshod over those rights and obligations is of great concern to us.

We continue to support the member in his undertakings and beseech you, Mr. Speaker, to present us with a ruling in all due haste.

● (2045)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank both members for their interventions this evening. The Chair has taken them into account.

I am sorry, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as is referenced by the opposition deputy whip, the minister sought and received unanimous consent to table these documents. However, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands also raised some other points. I wonder if you might allow us the opportunity to do a little more research and get back to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no question that if the Minister of Justice or any other member from the government side wants to intervene in response to the interventions this evening, he or she would be given the opportunity to do so.

The interventions we have had from the two members of the opposition will be taken into account and the decision will be rendered as soon as is practicable.

* * *

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HISTORY ACT

The House resumed consideration of 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, as reported without amendment from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to speak in support of Bill C-49, which would amend the Museums Act to create the Canadian museum of history.

I would like to focus my remarks on one of the issues that came up during consideration of the bill by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. The issue was the reference in clause 9(1)(c) of the bill to the authority of the new museum to dispose of items in its collection. The bill lists a number of ways in which the museum could dispose of an item in its collection. It would be able to sell an item, exchange it, give it away, destroy it, or otherwise dispose of it.

During deliberations by the committee, concerns were raised about the inclusion of the word "destroy". In this section of the bill, I would like to take a closer look at this and see if I can allay any outstanding concerns that anyone might have about why it is desirable, even necessary, for the new museum to have that authority over its collection.

The first thing I must point out is that this clause does not represent any change to the powers all other national museums have, and have always had, under the Museums Act. As it currently stands, all of the institutions covered by the Museums Act have the power to sell, exchange, give away, destroy or otherwise dispose of items in their collections. Therefore, Bill C-49 would seem to give the new Canadian museum of history the same power over its collection that all of the existing national museums, including the Canadian Museum of Civilization, already have. This would be nothing new.

I would like to reassure the House that this power is not only common for any professional museum, but also absolutely necessary, for a number of reasons. As I have indicated, destruction is only one of a number of ways in which a museum may dispose of something in its collection. I should point out that it is actually fairly uncommon for a museum to dispose of anything in its collection through any means. The fact that museums collect and preserve artifacts on behalf of the public is a duty that museum professionals take very seriously. The dedicated professional staff of Canada's national museums take that duty very seriously. However, the authority to dispose of something in their collections, even if seldom used, is a very important option to have.

Government Orders

A museum might determine that an object may no longer be relevant to its mandate. This is most often the case in some museums that were formed many years ago. As the museum evolves, it may be determined that another museum might be a more appropriate place for a particular artifact. In these cases, the object might be given to another institution in the form of an exchange or gift.

As museum collections grow, it falls to museums to ensure that their financial resources are spent wisely. Therefore, in some cases where a museum has duplicates, it only makes sense not to utilize precious resources to maintain a duplicate object. However, duplicates must always be dealt with in an ethical way. That is why the Museums Act always specifies that any revenue that results from disposal must be used to further the museum's collection.

I would also like to address concerns expressed by some members over the authority of the museums to destroy an object in their collections. I would like to cite the code of ethics of the International Council of Museums. The code of ethics states the following:

Each museum should have a policy defining authorised methods for permanently removing an object from the collections through donation, transfer, exchange, sale, repatriation, or destruction...

Therefore, the International Council of Museums acknowledges that a museum may ethically resort to the destruction of an item in its collection.

This same idea is reflected in the ethical guidelines of the Canadian Museums Association. This guide states:

Occasionally, museums may reasonably plan to destroy or alter objects or parts thereof for research or other purposes; however, the museum's overriding responsibility is for the wise use of the collection material, with the greatest long-term benefit.

● (2050)

Let me stress that any decision to dispose of an item in the museum's collection and the most appropriate means for their disposal, is made on a case-by-case basis by highly professional museum staff. They have the responsibility to manage their collections in a professional, ethical manner. That is what the national museums already do and that is what the new Canadian museum of history would continue to do. The Museum Act does not depart from professional museum practice. It replaces existing professional museum practice. It gives the national museums the authority to act in the same ethical manner as other professional museums.

We may ask ourselves what would lead a museum to destroy something in its collection. Well, it is unusual, but circumstances do arise.

For example, museum professionals refer to something they call "inherent vice". Sometimes something about an object or the material it is made from makes it self-destruct or renders it unusually difficult to maintain. An artifact can be made from a combination of materials that over time react against each other, such as combinations of leather and metal, or improperly combined mixtures of pigment and other chemicals in a painting.

On that same issue, from time to time a museum, despite its best efforts, may discover that one of its artifacts has been attacked by destructive pests such as moths. In some unfortunate cases, to ensure

the safety of other items, the affected artifact, which has often significantly deteriorated, must be destroyed.

Other objects contain dangers to those working in museums. Until the 1970s, many biologically-based artifacts were doused with arsenic, lead, mercury and some organic pesticides, such as DDT, to keep insects and microbes at bay. Arsenic is particularly prevalent in ethnographic collections.

Finally, sometimes in the interests of science and research, a decision may be made to subject an artifact to something called "destructive analysis". This is done in instances where the information or knowledge to be gained through this type of analysis is greater than simply keeping the object intact. While destructive analysis can often just affect part of an object, it occasionally results in total loss.

Therefore, there are absolutely reasonable circumstances where a museum can, and should, have the authority to destroy something in its collection. However, in no case is this done lightly and decisions are made by professionals who are in the best position to make such choices, professionals such as those employed in our national museums.

Bill C-49 would allow the new Canadian museum of history to operate in the same professional and ethical manner as our other national museums and other professional museums worldwide.

Canadians deserve a national museum that tells our stories and presents our country's treasures to the world. The Canadian museum of history would provide the public with the opportunity to appreciate how Canada's identity has been shaped over the course of our history.

● (2055)

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member's presentation was informative, but it might be misleading in some cases.

I am fascinated with the Conservative Party's fascination with renaming everything from the Progressive Conservative Party to the Conservative Party, from the Reform Party—

An hon. member: There was a CCRAP too.

Mr. Philip Toone: Yes, there was the CCRA party, and we go on with name changes constantly.

When is the government going to stop with the ribbon-cutting and the appearance of doing work and actually ask the people who are able to make—

Mr. Claude Gravelle: I see some CCRAP across the way.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would hope the member from Sudbury would withdraw his remarks calling members across the way crap. I do not think that adds anything to the debate and the over million Canadians who put us in government not once, twice, but three times. I hope you would ask him to withdraw those comments.

The Deputy Speaker: That of course was not what the member from Nickel Belt was doing.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Could the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine finish his comments?

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, we must indeed be careful to call things by their proper names. I will therefore start again.

[English]

We were at the CCRA party and now we move on now to the new Conservative Party.

The ribbon-cutting, the grandiose shows, do not replace in any way what really needs to be done on the ground. The member spoke to it. It is important that we speak to the professionals to get guidance on how to run a museum properly, yet the government has cut 80% of some of the staff in those very museums. Millions of dollars have been cut to Parks Canada. How exactly are we to run museums without any professional staff to whom we can ask these questions?

I would like his opinion on what we will do now that we have very few people actually doing the work on the ground.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Speaker, I want to mention why I am delighted we will have the Canadian museum of history.

I mention one of the exceptional Canadians who I am passionate about and whose memory is connected with a small museum in Woodstock. The Canadian museum of history would be better known to all Canadians. One reason I am here is because of this exceptional Canadian.

Colonel Joseph Whiteside Boyle was born in 1867, when our confederation was born, in Toronto, Ontario, and was buried in Woodstock, Ontario. He made his fortune in the Klondike.

During World War I, Boyle organized a machine gun company, giving the soldiers insignia made of gold to fight in Europe. He undertook a mission in Russia on behalf of the American Committee of Engineers in London to reorganize the country's railway system.

He successfully petitioned the new Bolshevik government of Russia to return archives and paper currency from the Kremlin to Romania. He served as the principle intermediary on behalf of the Romanian government in effecting a ceasefire in 1918 with revolutionary forces in the present Moldova, then part of Romania.

He rescued over 50 high-ranking Romanians held in Odessa—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, we are almost out of time. I will allow one more question. The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie, a short question please.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not always agree with what the government puts out in terms of bills, but I make it a duty of mine to talk with my residents in my riding and ask them what they think of them.

I have to say in all honesty, bringing up the bill and telling people what the bill is accomplishing has resulted in nothing but consternation within my riding. I am in a big city riding with museums, just like a lot of other places in Canada. People there do go to museums, science centres and other things, but they do not understand what this is all about.

One of the people I spoke to said that this was a solution in search of a problem, a problem that did not exist. Why is the government obsessed? There may be 165 people in the country, and they are all sitting over there, who feel they have to rename this museum and change everything when it is not necessary.

• (2100)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the Canadian museum of history. It is representing a country's tradition.

Two great nations founded the country. I should be proud, not ashamed, that we will have this Canadian museum of history.

[Translation]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-49 provides for changing the mandate and name of the Canadian Museum of Civilization in order to create the Canadian Museum of History. The Canadian Museum of Civilization is the most popular museum in Canada. Its temporary exhibits on the cultures of the world have made it a tourist attraction that has economic benefits and creates jobs for the Ottawa-Gatineau region. I will also take this opportunity to note that it is the only museum in the federal capital region that is on the Quebec side.

The museum has a long history. It dates back to 1856, the year when the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada passed a law authorizing the Geological Survey of Canada to establish a geological museum. In 1907, anthropology studies were added to the museum's mission, and in 1927 it became the National Museum of Canada. The Canadian War Museum, which is affiliated with the Canadian Museum of Civilization, has been part of the National Museum of Canada since 1958. In 1968, a corporation known as National Museums of Canada was established and it was made up of four museums: the National Museum of Man, the National Museum of Natural Sciences, the National Gallery of Canada and the National Museum of Science and Technology.

It is the mission of the National Museums of Canada to demonstrate the products of nature and the works of man, with special but not exclusive reference to Canada, so as to promote interest therein throughout Canada and to disseminate knowledge thereof. In 1986, the National Museum of Man was renamed the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and in 1990 it became a separate crown corporation. Now, the museum is to become the Canadian Museum of History.

Bill C-49 introduces major amendments to the museum's mission. The current mission talks about establishing, maintaining and developing for research and posterity a collection of objects of historical or cultural interest; that sentence is completely omitted in the new mission. At present, the museum's mission talks about working throughout Canada and internationally, while the proposed new mission refers only to Canadian history and identity.

However, it is important to understand that Canada has been influenced in the past by the rest of the world. I do not think that this new, narrow vision does justice to that fact.

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With the amendments in Bill C-49, the museum's approach would be limited to understanding and appreciating just dates, events, historical figures and objects. This approach, which is completely outdated in the social sciences, leaves out a number of important aspects of a society's development. A study of historical heroes often leaves out women, children, aboriginal peoples and minority groups, not because they did not have an impact on our history or make cultural contributions, but because unfortunately this impact is too often left out in the Conservatives' approach.

All kinds of moments and processes in our country's history could be lost because of this approach.

● (2105)

For example, there is the poor treatment of Polish settlers in the west who, left to their own devices, had to build dugouts to survive the winter; the fact that slavery existed in New France; the evolution of women's rights; and the evolution of the rights of the workers who built our economy. I am not going to be reassured just because the latest news headlines announce the cancellation of an exhibit about underwear.

Bill C-49 proposes eliminating research and collections from the museum's mission, which is the first paragraph of its mandate. The Canadian Museum of Civilization is a museum and a research location with an international reputation, and it deals with more than 20,000 years of Canadian history.

The Conservatives have to stop interfering in our history. No government must exploit federal institutions or history for political gain. Defining the mandate and the content of the museum must be left up to museologists and their interlocutors, with stakeholders such as the first nations.

The decision has been criticized by a number of groups and individuals. My colleague from Hull—Aylmer has already told the House about opposition from the constituents in her riding, where the museum is located. The founding director of the Museum of Civilization, George F. MacDonald, believes that changing the museum's name and mandate is part of a plan to impose the Conservative brand. The former president and CEO of the museum, Victor Rabinovitch, condemned the fact that the name "Canadian Museum of Civilization" was being abandoned. He said in his evidence that, in his view, it is the most successful brand name in Canada's museum sector, a brand that is known and respected throughout the world.

Even though they say they are interested in history, the Conservatives have already decimated knowledge and research throughout the government and the country. They have muzzled and fired archaeologists, archivists and librarians and destroyed national historic sites, national parks and Library and Archives Canada.

The Conservatives have already laid off 80% of Parks Canada's archaeologists. The deputy head of Library and Archives Canada, who was appointed by the Conservatives, resigned because of spending scandals and mismanagement. I repeat: mismanagement. If the Conservatives are really interested in history, these cuts and this interference must stop. Researchers' independence and funding must be restored, and the federal institutions that preserve our history must be protected.

The Conservatives do not care about museums. Just last week, there was an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* that described the financial problems of the Canada Science and Technology Museum, which is located in Eastern Ottawa and requires critical structural repairs of \$3.4 million. The article described, in detail, the space problem at the museum, which is already at 130% capacity, with no room for any new acquisitions.

The museum requires \$2.5 million dollars in roof repairs and \$845,000 in upgrades to the ventilation system. However, the crown corporation responsible for managing the Canada Science and Technology Museum, as well as the Canada Aviation and Space Museum and the Canada Agricultural Museum, has only \$800,000 available to it to repair and update the facilities at the three museums. The National Gallery of Canada had to wait a long time before it received funding to repair its leaking roof.

I hope that the Conservatives will not let our museums deteriorate to that point.

● (2110)

I am opposed to the bill because I believe that maintaining the museum's current mandate is important. I also fear that the Canadian Museum of Civilization, which is internationally acclaimed, will be manipulated by the Conservatives as they attempt to impose upon us their politicized version of our nation's history.

Museum professionals, including historians, anthropologists, archivists and librarians, must be responsible for determining the contents of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, not politicians.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will keep asking the same question. Perhaps by the end of the night one of the NDP members might actually answer it.

The member talked about a number of things. She talked about the reduced mandate of the museum. We see, of course, in clause 8 of the bill that it not only talks about Canadian identity and history, but it also talks about the awareness of world history and cultures. Paragraph 9(1)(e) talks about international exhibits. Paragraph 9(1)(f) talks about sponsor research related to its purpose or to museology and communicating results. Paragraph 9(1)(h) talks about promoting knowledge and dissemination of information related to its purpose throughout Canada and internationally.

The member talked about leaving it to the experts. This quote is from the museum president himself. He said:

The content for this new exhibition is being developed by a multidisciplinary team of experts at the museum, led by Dr. David Morrison. This team is made up of researchers, curators, and museologists working in close collaboration with advisory committees composed of historians and experts from across Canada.

I am wondering if any of that gives the member any hope that she might get a museum of which she could one day be proud.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Mr. Speaker, to begin with, I would like to thank my colleague for his relevant question. In response to his question, I will say that I am proud of the existing museum and its mission.

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For a long time, the New Democrats have fought for the recognition of the many facets of our country's history, and for the inclusion of the history of the first nations and the sometimes acrimonious relationship between anglophones and francophones and their descendants. We want to include the story of Chinese labourers who helped us build our national railway, and the stories of other immigrants who continue to bring their own histories and cultures with them.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, which was very passionate, as usual.

I tried to get an answer from the government but unfortunately did not get one. I will ask my colleague. Perhaps she could give me her opinion. Who does she think should make decisions about a museum's mission and mandate?

As she pointed out today, a minister is the one who came up with this idea. That is fine, in theory. However, he is using his own idea as the basis for a bill that redefines the name and mandate of a museum. Even now, we still do not know who was consulted before Bill C-49 was drafted.

Could my colleague tell us who she thinks should be consulted when a museum's mandate is written?

• (2115)

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

She did already ask this question, but unfortunately we never get any answers to our questions. I feel as though it has been déjà vu since I became a member of Parliament.

What we know is that the hon. minister came up with this idea. It may be relevant to him, but it is not relevant to democracy. We were elected by the public and we must consult the people who are affected before we do anything.

However, the government, which may be blinded by its own ideology, does not see anything around it. It lives in its bubble.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to Bill C-49, a bill to create the Canadian museum of history.

The government believes in national museums, and we recognize the tremendous value they hold for all Canadians. However, while our national institutions do magnificent work as guardians of our heritage, not one is dedicated to telling the full story of our country. That is why we are making a one-time investment of \$25 million to establish the Canadian museum of history. This funding is not new money, but rather comes from the existing budget for Canadian Heritage. This new national museum will provide an opportunity for us to learn more about our rich Canadian history.

The Canadian museum of history will grow out of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. The government is refreshing the mandate and orientation of the museum. Just as schools modernize curriculum in accordance with new events and discoveries, the new Canadian museum of history will present a comprehensive story of this country.

Change is not new to this institution. The Canadian Museum of Civilization began in 1856 with the establishment of a museum by the Geological Survey of Canada. With roots stretching back far into the past, the Canadian Museum of Civilization is one of North America's oldest cultural institutions. As staff of the survey fanned out across the country, they gathered cultural information and artifacts, as well as carried out their main tasks in geology and science.

Ever since its beginnings from a modest collection the museum has been evolving. Indeed, its ability to adapt and evolve is what has made it so successful. Just think, in 1862, the Geological Survey of Canada mounted its first ethnological exhibit, a single display case containing first peoples stone implements, clay pipes and a few fragments of pottery.

Today, the Canadian Museum of Civilization welcomes over 1.6 million visitors on average each year. It houses permanent galleries that explore 20,000 years of human history. Its program of special exhibitions expands on Canadian themes and explores other cultures and civilizations, past and present.

The museum is also a major research institution with staff who are leading experts in Canadian history, archeology, ethnology and culture.

In 1968, and with a new mandate, the National Museum of Man was established as part of a group known as the National Museums of Canada. Nearly 20 years later, in 1986, it was renamed the Canadian Museum of Civilization. It subsequently moved to Gatineau, into the fabulous building designed by Douglas Cardinal. The building itself illustrates the museum's history, with a structure that suggests fluidity and flexibility.

The transformation of the Canadian Museum of Civilization will take place over the next five years and will provide a number of opportunities to celebrate Canada's history in the lead-up to 2017.

At present, the museum has four permanent exhibition galleries: the Grand Hall, the First Peoples Hall, the Canada Hall and Face to Face: The Canadian Personalities Hall. The new permanent gallery will replace both the Canada Hall and the Canadian Personalities Hall.

More than 4,000 m² of exhibition space will be renovated to create permanent exhibition space presenting a national historical narrative. This space will feature the largest and most comprehensive exhibition on Canadian history ever developed.

It will be the place where Canadians can go to retrace their national journey and find national treasures. It will be where they can learn about the people, events and themes that have shaped our country's development and defined the Canadian experience. Including key events and episodes from our past, it will tell some of the greatest Canadian stories.

The museum has carried out a series of consultations, online and in person, to solicit the views of Canadians on the stories, people, themes and events that they want to see in the new museum. More than 20,000 Canadians contributed, expressing what they expect of the museum in general, and particularly in the new Canadian history hall.

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Here are some highlights. Canadians want our museums to be comprehensive, frank and fair in our presentation of their history. They want us to examine both the good and the bad from our past.

● (2120)

They also want the museum to foster a sense of national pride without ignoring our failings, mistakes and controversies.

They want to see various viewpoints and voices, recognizing that people and events can be interpreted in different ways through different eyes.

I am delighted that the new exhibit space will feature national treasures such as explorer Samuel de Champlain's astrolabe, the last spike from the Canadian Pacific Railway and Maurice Richard's number 9 Habs jersey.

At the same time, the museum's president and CEO has said that the new exhibitions will deal with Canada's history, warts and all. That is an important point. Many episodes in our history are critically important, like the internment of Japanese Canadians or the situation of aboriginal people in residential schools. Canadians can learn so much from our history.

At present, there is no mention in the Canada Hall of the flag debate or the Constitution, the wartime internment of Ukrainian or Japanese Canadians or Terry Fox and his Marathon of Hope. There is no meaningful reference to the Great Depression or the conscription crisis. Most important, the Canada Hall does not begin with first peoples but with the arrival of Europeans in the 11th century. Clearly, this needs to change.

The Museum of Civilization tells the story of human history and identity in Canada. The new Canadian museum of history will be the next phase of that story, helping define us as citizens of Canada and the world.

Why does our government feel that it is so important to focus the interest on Canada's collective history?

In 2017, this country will celebrate its 150th birthday. In the lead-up to that celebration, it is important that Canadians know about, appreciate and celebrate our history.

A new national museum devoted to our history will highlight our achievements as a nation and will help Canadians learn more about their rich and diverse history.

I hope that many Canadians will celebrate the 150th anniversary of our country in the newly renovated halls of the Canadian museum of history.

I hope that all my colleagues in the House will support Bill C-49.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, in the Toronto area, for his speech. There were interesting points in it, of course. The fact that he believes in Canadian museums is inspiring, and I congratulate him.

On the other hand, it worries me that almost 80% of the archaeologists in Canada have been laid off. I do not see how the government can be respectful of the mandate of Canada's museums if there are no employees to do the work.

I have already asked the question and I still do not have an answer. How can they justify laying off 80% of the archaeologists when, at the same time, they are saying that the Conservative government believes in the mandate of Canada's museums? I would like him to discuss this point.

● (2125)

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Mr. Speaker, of the funds that will be devoted to the Canadian Museum of History, \$25 million will be used for to carry out renovations and develop the museum's new mandate. There will also be new funds to celebrate Canada's history. New projects will be launched, such as the Canada history week and the Canada history fund, to provide more tools for the educators who teach the subject. There will also be funds to truly spark students' interest in history.

There is a whole program to discover and celebrate history. There is so much going on in addition to the museum. In fact, there is a host of other programs that will be implemented as part of this new vision that we must celebrate. We have to tell Canadian stories.

[*English*]

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are just five years away from our 150th birthday. As a country, what a great opportunity we have to celebrate the great things of Canada.

More than the name and the mandate of the Museum of Civilization would change. I wonder if my colleague would tell this House how the Canadian museum of history would bring Canadians together from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for Don Valley West for all his fine work in the House, on Parliament Hill and in his own riding.

When we talk about bringing Canadians together, it is one thing to have a museum in the national capital region, but it is important that these artifacts and stories be celebrated throughout the country. It is a vast country. There are 2,500 local and regional museums in Canada. Already the Canadian museum of history is setting up partnerships with regional museums around the country. Just recently it announced partnership agreements with the Manitoba Museum and the Royal B.C. Museum.

We need to get these artifacts out of storage. I do not know if the House is aware, but over 90% of the artifacts are actually in storage. Sharing with other museums would allow people to put on exhibitions and collectively share. It would require the museum of history to act as the focal point and the coordinator across the country. That is why it is important to have this mandate.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will quote James Turk, executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, because I think his comments clearly show the gap between the Conservatives' current methods and what most people and experts in the area think.

If the government really wants to highlight Canada's history, it should restore funding for Library and Archives Canada and the administration of historic sites in Canada. Once it has done so, it can then envision creating a new museum with a mandate to ensure that the history it presents is untainted by political ideology.

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I would like to know how my hon. colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore would respond to Mr. Turk's comments.

Mr. Bernard Trotter: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

There is always a debate, and that is why we have this Parliament—to discuss the issues together.

Those who support the new mandate of the Canadian Museum of History include many historians, such as Richard Gwyn, Jack Granatstein, Charlotte Gray, Réal Bélanger and Yves Frenette. The Canadian Museums Association is also a very vocal supporter of this initiative.

I should also mention certain organizations that are heavily involved in history education and training, such as the Historical-Dominion Institute. These organizations are aware that it is very important to have a new museum with a clear national mandate to share these stories everywhere in Canada, from coast to coast.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak about Bill C-49 tonight. Bill C-49 would create the new Canadian museum of history.

The new Canadian museum of history would undoubtedly support our rich national heritage. As Canadians know, our government has supported and will continue to support the preservation of important artistic, historical and scientific objects in Canada.

Our government believes in our national museums, and we recognize the tremendous value they hold for all Canadians. Before I get to the main thrust of my speech this evening, allow me just to briefly summarize some of the important aspects of, and some of the rationale for, the creation of this legislation.

The legislation would build on the work that we, as a government, have already been doing and on our reputation here in Canada of having some of the best national and local museums in the entire world. In fact, since 2006, our government has invested an additional \$142 million in our national museums. We have also created two new national museums, the museum at Pier 21 in Halifax and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg.

As we approach Canada's 150th birthday, the creation of the new Canadian museum of history would be an unprecedented opportunity to celebrate our history and those achievements that define who we are as Canadians.

The Canadian museum of history would provide the public with the opportunity to appreciate how Canada's identity has been shaped over the course of our history. One of the aspects I most appreciate is the fact that one of the ways we would be doing this is by enabling content to be shared with and by local museums all across this country.

Certainly the aspect I find to be most important is the fact that there is so much of our history in the collection at the museum now that obviously is not on regular display. There would be an opportunity for some of the other museums in the country to share that content and those displays.

I think of some of the fine museums back in my riding of Wild Rose. There is the Nose Creek Valley Museum in Airdrie. There are some fine museums in the towns of Olds and Didsbury. Banff has a number of fine museums as well, and of course, Canmore has the Museum and Geoscience Centre.

There are a number of those types of museums all across the country that could participate in these kinds of programs to have content shared with their museums, and vice versa. They could share some of the content they may not have on display with the museum here in the national capital region as well. That is one of the key aspects that I had a chance to speak to in more length in the House previously.

I would like to get into some more specifics tonight. I would like to take the opportunity to discuss a very important act, which would benefit the new museum of Canadian history. Since its adoption in 1977, the Cultural Property Export and Import Act has served to encourage and ensure the preservation of Canadian heritage.

This act accomplishes this objective through a number of provisions. First, there is the designation of cultural institutions that have demonstrated the capacity to preserve cultural objects and make them available to the public through things like tax incentives that encourage Canadians to donate or to sell significant objects to designated institutions; and through grants to assist those designated institutions with the purchase of heritage objects; and through export control.

The act controls the export of significant cultural objects and creates the opportunity for our museums, art galleries, libraries and archives to acquire and preserve cultural content for future generations.

The act also contains tax incentives, which encourage Canadians to support our cultural institutions by donating or selling important objects to these organizations. Archeological objects, first nations objects, works of art, military medals, vintage vehicles and even rare fossils and minerals are examples of the types of objects that have been preserved in Canada because of this act.

Objects that are refused export permits can be delayed for up to six months to allow institutions to raise funds and apply for a grant to help purchase them.

● (2130)

Moveable cultural property grants can help museums and other cultural institutions to buy these important cultural and heritage objects. In 2006-07, The Rooms in Newfoundland received a grant to acquire two rare painted caribou skin coats made by the Innu. One was made in the late 18th century and the other in the mid-19th century. Both coats were about to be exported from Canada.

In 2010 the program supported the purchase of the world's largest sample of the Springwater pallasite, which is a rare type of meteorite that crashed to the earth near Biggar, Saskatchewan, in 1931. The Royal Ontario Museum purchased the pallasite with a grant before it too was exported from Canada.

These important objects, and many more, will remain in our heritage institutions as a result of the export controls and the movable cultural property grants program established under this act.

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Funds are also available to repatriate important heritage objects to Canada. These objects may have been removed from Canada many years ago but are important to our history. For example, in 2007, the Museum of Northern British Columbia received a grant to repatriate objects from the Dundas collection. This is a significant collection of 19th century ceremonial objects, decorative works and everyday items used by some of the first inhabitants of British Columbia's northwest coast. The collection went to Scotland in 1863 and remained there until it was sold in 2006. Several Canadian museums went to great effort to purchase the collection and return it to Canada.

Another grant was awarded to the University of Alberta library in 2008 to repatriate the Sir Samuel Steele collection. Sir Samuel Steele was one of the most famous members of what is now the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. His papers, which documented the Red River expedition, the early history of the RCMP, the Klondike gold rush and his participation in the First World War are now accessible to all.

Speaking of World War I, in 2009, an important grant assisted McMaster University with the purchase of a map collection of the western front of World War I between 1914 and 1917. These maps were used by Canadian troops on the Western Front and were critical in the Battle of Vimy Ridge and in subsequent victories at Passchendaele. The significance of this collection continues to grow as we approach the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War.

All of these important objects and collections now have a permanent home in public collections in Canada, where all Canadians have the opportunity to learn from them.

The act also encourages Canadians to donate or sell important cultural objects to Canadian institutions through a special tax incentive. About 260 institutions and public authorities across Canada have been designated under the act and are eligible to offer this incentive. These institutions include not only our national museums and major provincial establishments but also smaller regional organizations that preserve our important heritage and make it available to all Canadians. From the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts to the Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife, these organizations have the capacity to preserve cultural objects for the long term and make them available to Canadians through exhibitions, research access, loans to other institutions or on their websites.

Objects that are certified as being of outstanding significance and national importance to Canada by the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board receive the tax benefit. The review board is an independent tribunal of experts created under the act. It determines the importance of the cultural object and its value. Since 1977, thousands of objects have been certified. In 2012-13 alone, 1,360 objects valued at \$72 million were donated or sold to Canadian institutions through this incentive program. As a result, museums, galleries, archives and libraries have enhanced their collections and Canadians have had the opportunity to see, study and learn about objects and works of art that otherwise might have remained out of sight and behind closed doors.

In conclusion, the Cultural Property Export and Import Act has enabled museums, galleries, libraries and archives all across Canada to acquire important objects that tell Canada's story to Canadians and to the world. The act continues to protect important cultural objects in Canada and allows for the return of significant heritage objects to Canada. Its provisions have enhanced our public collections with objects that are of outstanding significance and national importance to Canada.

● (2135)

The Canadian museum of history would provide the public with the opportunity to appreciate how Canada's identity has been shaped over the course of our history. Canadians deserve a national museum that tells our stories and presents our country's treasures to the world. Therefore, I am pleased to support Bill C-49, which would create the museum of Canadian history.

● (2140)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my government colleague's speech and was interested in two points, on which I have some questions.

He mentioned, for example, some artifacts and documents that in fact constitute our military history. We already have the Canadian War Museum, which was designed to give Canadians and foreign tourists access to that part of history.

I would therefore like to understand the relevance of talking about the museum of history as proposed in Bill C-49 because several aspects noted by the government member are already covered by a number of other museums. When we talk about history, there are several museums for that in various municipalities and cities. In Montreal, for example, the McCord is a very good museum specializing not only in the history of Montreal and Quebec, but also in that of Canada.

I would like to understand the relevance of replacing the Canadian Museum of Civilization with a Canadian history museum, when a number of aspects of our history are already covered by other museums.

The second point, which he discussed to a lesser extent in his speech, but on which I would like to have his opinion, is Canadians' supposed desire to have a museum of Canadian history. I did not receive a single request in that regard before Bill C-49 was introduced. Our members have never received a single request on the subject either. Furthermore, I suspect there was no demand either, except that created by the government's program. I would like to hear his comments on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, the member referred to some examples that I used in my speech, and there were a number of examples of great pieces of Canadian history, certainly including some pieces I referred to that were part of the important and proud history of our efforts in world wars. However, there are many other aspects of our Canadian history that are very important.

He referenced the partner museum to this one. The Canadian War Museum has many artifacts and it is a very valuable museum that many Canadians enjoy. There is so much more to our history over the 150 years of history in this country, and even before, to be shared with all Canadians through this great new museum of history.

The member also asked about the support among Canadians. There is no question that the museum carried out a series of cross-country consultations and gave Canadians all across Canada the opportunity to give their opinions on the personalities, events and milestones that tell the Canadian story. There are many of them. In fact, in total, more than 20,000 Canadians were consulted on the change to the name and the mandate of the museum. They contributed their ideas to the website, panel discussions and round tables all across Canada and shared with us what they would like to see in this new museum of history.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as members will know, I am planning to support this bill, but I have concerns. One of them is that initially I thought \$25 million was a good amount for distributing and sharing exhibits with more of our regional museums across the country. I recently met with some folks who knew what it really costs to put together an exhibit. The First Peoples Hall had initially cost \$20 million, so \$25 million begins to sound as if it would not be sufficient to get the exhibits and share them with museums.

Does the hon. member for Wild Rose have any idea if there is thought to augmenting the budget to ensure that pieces of our history, including women's history, first nations history and the complex dimensions of our history, are actually sufficiently funded to meet all the demands of smaller regional museums across Canada?

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member raised this issue, because it is one that I believe is a very key part of this new mandate for the museum, including the sharing of our key national treasures with other museums across the country, and vice versa. They will have the opportunity to share theirs with the museums in the capital region. I appreciate her giving me the opportunity to highlight that one more time, because I believe it will be a huge benefit to museums all across Canada and to Canadians, by extension, whether it be at local museums or key national museums here in the capital region, to have greater access to some of the key artifacts and treasures of so many great aspects of our Canadian history.

• (2145)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was perhaps nine months ago when we talked about museums and the mandates of the national museums here in Ottawa. One of the things that struck me as a concern to a lot of people was that many of the national museums do not really involve themselves with the rest of the museums across the country. Certainly there is a yearning to do a lot more of that. There has been a great degree of co-operation, no doubt, but there should be a greater degree of co-operation in the fulfillment of the mandates of each and every museum across the country.

I say this because I want to follow up on a comment from the hon. member for Wild Rose. He talked about how this is a key part of the bill, and I wholeheartedly agree with him. It is a key element of taking this institution and sharing it with the country, especially now

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that we are just a few years away from celebrating our sesquicentennial anniversary. I practised saying that word for 20 minutes.

This is a model that is going to present itself to other museums across this country, those national scope, certainly, but also as local as they go, such as the Manitoba Museum, which was announced just a few days ago, and The Rooms in St. John's, Newfoundland, which is a good example in my province.

I thought that this was a key point of the proposed legislation. However, as the hon. member, the leader of the Green Party, pointed out, \$25 million really is not going to cut it. The capacity that can be created with just \$25 million is just not going to be sufficient. If the bill is going to create a model by which smaller museums could take advantage of it down the road, then that is fine, but it would certainly take a larger investment than \$25 million.

I will go back to the issue of why we are doing this, which has to do with branding, a name change, tweaking the mandate and that sort of thing. A lot of the fundamentals from the Museum of Civilization would remain, as the government has said, but then we have to ask ourselves what was wrong with the original plan for the Museum of Civilization going out the next five to 10 years. What was so wrong with it that it needed a name change?

The question then becomes how much greater we can make this institution in the lead-up to 2017, the 150th anniversary of Canada, by changing its name. How much greater would this institution present itself to the entire nation and even to the world?

Let us go back to its base degrees for a moment.

We do not have an equivalent, as has been said, to what is happening with the national museum in the United States and in nations like Germany and other nations. They have their own museums based on their own history, but there is one specific museum. Now we have this.

Let us just leave the Museum of Civilization out of this for just a moment. Let us say that we do not have a Canadian museum of history, but a museum of Canadian history. This is something that actually makes a little more sense if we want to celebrate things like the institutions we have in Maurice Richard's hockey sweater, Jacques Villeneuve's racing suit or the first microphone ever held by Céline Dion. I am just making this up, but members get the idea.

These are icons of this country, like the first hockey stick of Wayne Gretzky. It is not that I am important, but maybe it could be my first school jacket or something like that. Someone just yelled out a very good example. I am a huge fan of Bonhomme Carnaval. Why can we not have his story brought to the country? To do that, we would create a museum of Canadian history.

There were a couple of renditions of this idea when some people talked about converting the conference centre to a museum of Canadian history. However, if we have that, and all the Conservatives are talking about these sweaters and jerseys and this artifact and that, then eventually that museum would probably look more like the West Edmonton Mall than anything else.

Government Orders

That is fine if that is what we want, but we should not fuse that element into what is a fantastic national and international institution like the Museum of Civilization.

• (2150)

At committee Victor Rabinovitch, the former president of the Museum of Civilization, was very concerned about the level of research that was going to be missed out on under this new mandate because some things have been changed and some of the language has been tweaked. For instance, there was talk about an understanding of a Canadian artifact and all things Canadian when it comes to representing our history, but the government omitted the word “critical”. It is no longer a “critical” understanding.

One might think what the difference is with that; well, there is a difference when one is involved in any museum as a curator or an archivist, because for those people to have their work exposed to the general public and get a critical understanding, it has to be opened up to the experts to say what history meant. The interpretation of history will change over time, because people have different interpretations. We have to accept that.

This past weekend I was listening to two historians talking on a CBC radio program. One historian feared that we are now launching into a study of history already knowing the answers, whereas we should be looking at history to change what the understanding was prior to today. Maybe we should use a more critical lens in how we view our history; then we would get a common understanding.

All these nations, all these places that have great national museums go through this process, but the language of the bill dictates that we are slowly getting away from that. Some of the buzzwords like “research” and “independence of the curators” are there, but some of it is missing. The fear is that we are turning this into just a display of artifacts, and that is it.

A museum is a living, breathing mechanism through which we understand ourselves, but that can only be useful to us in the future if it is willing to change, if it is able to look at things and say that this is no longer a static display, this is something that we have to look at again, whether technology dictates it or whether it is some other type of information elsewhere that tells us to go back and revisit how we used to look at history.

When Mr. Rabinovitch talked about this, he was wondering why the government would do this, given the fact that the Museum of Civilization carries with it a tremendous international name. European countries and Asian countries marvel at what the Museum of Civilization has done. It is pretty good for a country with fewer than 40 million people. We have punched above our weight, as the saying goes, when it comes to museums, especially this museum.

He proposed what I thought was a reasonable way of looking at this. He proposed to call it the Canadian museum of history and civilization. It is a good compromise. It recognizes the fact that we have a rich history, as young a country as we are compared to other countries in the world, but it also recognizes the great work that we have done. The name says that we are willing to keep that tradition of having the Museum of Civilization, but enshrined within a context of what it is to be Canadian: the Canadian museum of history and civilization.

To a great extent I understand why we would want to have something that is labelled as Canadian. It shows who we are. It gives a critical understanding of who we are, and that way it attracts more people.

Some people said they came to Ottawa when they were younger and did not know what civilization was, but they realized that it was more about Canadian history. That is a valid point. As far as the marketing goes, we can attract more people that way.

Already some of our national museums find themselves in a financial bind. The Science and Technology Museum needs \$3.4 million to handle major structural repairs. The 50-year-old building on St. Laurent Boulevard needs work. Every museum has to find ways of generating more revenue, and this could be one of them. Could a name change do that? To a certain degree it could. It is not the ultimate solution for getting more revenue, but it probably could go in that direction.

I wish we had kept to the theme of putting more Canadian culture within the context of the Museum of Civilization, as opposed to changing some of the language in this legislation and ultimately the corporation. I think that does a disservice to the people who keep updating our artifacts and turning this museum into the international icon that it is.

• (2155)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I keep going back to the bill on this. I think I already know what the answer is going to be from the member opposite, but I will keep asking.

The president of the museum, in his opening remarks, said this about research:

Finally, we will continue building our national collection, and undertaking scholarly and other types of research, despite claims from some to the contrary. In fact, our national collection fund now totals \$9 million and in consultation with academics across the country, the corporation has developed a research strategy, the first in the museum's history. This strategy will guide the work of the museum in its research activities over the next 10 years.

To go back to the actual bill, it says:

undertake or sponsor any research related to its purpose or to museology, and communicate the results of that research

Further on it says:

promote knowledge and disseminate information related to its purpose, throughout Canada and internationally, by any appropriate means of education and communication

Finally, he went on to talk about Dr. Morrison, who has a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto in archeology. He said he would be working with a team of researchers, curators and museologists in collaboration with advisory committees composed of historians and experts from across Canada in helping develop the new displays at the museum.

Clearly it states throughout the bill that research would continue. Clearly there is a team of experts who have been with the museum and will continue to be with the museum who are undertaking the new displays, so I am not entirely certain what the members fear. Do they not have faith in the staff there to put together something that all Canadians would continue to be proud of?

Government Orders

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope that the parliamentary secretary is right in all of what he is saying about how this would affect where we find ourselves in 10 years with this particular museum.

What I fear is that if it is as good as, or even better than, what it is currently or would be 10 years down the road, why did the government fundamentally change some of the language surrounding what the government wants the museum to do? I do not understand where the genesis of this change comes from. Why would the Conservatives disagree with the fact that some of the greatest aspects of the Museum of Civilization will disappear?

I am not quite sure that everyone buys into this idea. To go back to what the professor at York University said this weekend, he said that it is almost as though we are delving into history knowing what the answers are already.

I am not going to say I totally disagree with him. I am just going to say that I hope 10 years down the road, he can prove me wrong.
[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find the point my colleague raised very interesting. Museums change over the decades and Canadian history is important.

However, does he know whether anyone—a museum professional, a present or past director of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, historians or university professors—was consulted when Bill C-49 was developed?

The Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages said this was his idea. Does my colleague know whether anyone was consulted when the bill was developed? If not, what does he think is the ideal process for redefining the mandate of a museum as important as the Canadian Museum of Civilization?

• (2200)

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, the funny thing is that there are several versions of how this consultation took place. We have the government's version and we have other people's versions. It seems that the genesis was a backroom discussion of some sort. It led itself to the minister's office. The proposal was there. It was out as a discussion, but it seemed as though before all of that happened, the legislation was in place. Again, it is almost as though the answer was there before the question was asked, which seems to be somewhat of a pattern here.

Let me put that aside for a moment and say that I hope that in the future the government will consult more broadly. I wish the bill had had the review process that we proposed at committee, but it does not. Nonetheless, I hope that the museum will act as a model to other museums, at least in the vision by which it shares itself across our nation.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. The hon. member for Durham.

I would caution that we only have seven minutes left in the time allocation motion to hear this debate.

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to stand in this House today to not only pledge my support for Bill C-49 but also to tell my personal story in relation to my passion for history and why I totally agree with the vision and applaud our minister and his able parliamentary secretary for bringing the bill before this House for debate tonight.

The bill is known best as the bill that would establish the Canadian museum of history. Really, this would not re-create or re-establish an important national museum. In many ways, it would actually reassert its important mandate as a national institution in Canada. It would also extend that national mandate to all the small towns, villages, and cities across this great nation. History does not just belong in the nation's capital. Indeed, it belongs across the country.

In many ways, the bill is about one of the last crown jewels in the collection of important national museums our government has supported across Canada, going back to our support in 2008 for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, being established in Winnipeg, and, in 2010, to our government's reassertion of the importance of Pier 21 as Canada's national Museum of Immigration, in Halifax.

I had the good fortune to visit Pier 21 in its early years, thanks to the vision of the Goldblooms in Halifax, who brought that important institution to our country.

The day after my wedding, in Halifax, my wife and I, dreary-eyed as we might have been, with my parents, took my grandmother, Madge Hall, to Pier 21, where she first stepped into Canada with her husband and infant daughter, Molly, my mother, after World War II. Not only did we experience that museum but we looked up the manifest of the *Lusitania*, which they boarded to come to Canada and a tremendous new life. I only wish one of those three people was still here to see their grandson sitting in Canada's Parliament.

In many ways, the bill would refocus our national history museum. I will speak to why I think the national network this museum would create is even more important than the rebranding and refocusing of the institution in Ottawa.

It is indeed a travesty that 90% of our historic artifacts and treasures are in storage. It is time to free these important artifacts from the shackles of indifference and dust and to share them with the small towns across Canada, or indeed, the large museums, such as the ROM or the Royal British Columbia Museum, so that they too can feel an attachment to these important artifacts.

However, the converse is perhaps even more important than getting this national artifact network established. It is also important for museums such as Scugog Shores in Port Perry or the Clarington Archives or the Clarke Museum in Clarington or the Lucy Maud Montgomery museum in Uxbridge to share some of their local artifacts with our national institution in Ottawa.

Government Orders

Thanks to the vision behind Bill C-49, and our Minister of Canadian Heritage, we would have visitors to Canada exploring the Canadian museum of history and seeing the artifacts and the history of the small towns and villages in Durham at our national institution in Ottawa. That would be truly remarkable and important. There would be a dedicated permanent space for exhibits from over 2500 museums across this country.

It is also an honour for me to tell a bit of my personal story tonight, and in my first year, to utter only my second Winston Churchill quote. Churchill said, "Study history, study history. In history lie all the secrets of statecraft".

My friends on this side of the House should really read more history to learn those secrets to try to take our side of the House. The very fact that they have not leaves me resting assured that we are going to maintain this side of the House, because we have followed the edict of one of the world's greatest parliamentarians.

My love of history started when I was an 18-year-old officer cadet crossing the parade square at Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario. We had a mandate, as young gentlemen and lady cadets of the college, to learn the history of that historic site.

• (2205)

We gazed at the RMC flag, which was designed by the dean of arts, George Stanley, who shared his vision for the nation's flag in 1964 with John Matheson, a distinguished gunner from the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery and later the MP for Leeds. John Matheson is still alive and, at 95, is really one of our living veterans who truly tells the history of this great country.

George Stanley at RMC taught generations of historians who are with us today as leading voices. At RMC he taught Desmond Morton and Jack Granatstein.

In many ways, this debate on why Canada needs a national museum of history was started by one of George Stanley's students, Dr. Jack Granatstein, who, in 1998, wrote *Who Killed Canadian History?* In many ways, in the years since then, Canadian history has been given a new life. In many ways, this bill would give our national history museum a network of history and a life across the country.

It is my pleasure to rise today in full support of Bill C-49. Indeed, it is our government's answer to the question, "Who killed Canadian history?" We may not be able to answer that, but we certainly know who is breathing new life into the subject.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 10:07 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 to 15.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, May 22, 2013, the recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, June 18, 2013, tomorrow, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

* * *

NOT CRIMINALLY RESPONSIBLE REFORM ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-54, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (mental disorder), be read a third time and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When we last debated this issue, the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie had 13 minutes remaining.

The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me more time to speak to Bill C-54, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act.

This bill talks about mental disorders. As I was saying earlier, this is a very emotional topic. We are talking about both crime and mental illness.

In committee, when we were studying the bill, we heard testimony from a number of victims who came to talk about their situations. I think I can say on behalf of all members here, from the NDP and the other parties, that we were deeply moved by the experiences people shared with us. We also acknowledged the courage of the victims who came to talk about their experiences and educate us a bit by giving us more information on what happens when victims have to live with the consequences and the results of the justice system.

These people have often said that there are problems in terms of information. In one case, the victim told us that family members were quite surprised to run into the accused after he was released. Imagine their shock.

As I was saying earlier, whether we were talking to experts, the Canadian Bar Association, the Barreau du Québec, or mental illness experts, every witness agreed that the victims need to be informed. That is why we are supporting this bill.

Government Orders

As I said, we went even further. We proposed an amendment. To our pleasant and great surprise, the government accepted the amendment. This amendment would specifically ensure that the accused person's intended place of residence, his residence once he is released, is given to the victim at the victim's request. Almost every victim we asked questions to requested this. Even those we did not ask questions to shared this concern with us.

We are acknowledging that, for once, the government accepted an opposition amendment, one from the NDP in particular. We appreciate it and we believe that this advances the bill and makes it better.

However, the NDP and the other opposition parties proposed many amendments with regard to the language created in this bill.

There are two elements, as I mentioned earlier: the bill creates a high-risk designation; it also refers to brutal nature. We have been attempting to define the brutal nature of the high-risk accused. One of the many problems identified was indeed the definition of brutal nature.

Contrary to what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice said, the Supreme Court has not really defined this concept. There is no definition in the Criminal Code that applies in particular to this case.

When I asked the Minister of Justice that question, he was unable to provide a specific answer about the definition.

Some legal issues were raised by the experts. There were concerns about the lack of a definition. When a new concept is created, we do not really know how it will be used.

Unfortunately, as I explained earlier, experts were not consulted. There was no consultation of medical associations, mental health professionals, psychiatrists or psychologists. New terms were created without conducting a thorough analysis of what the impact would be. That is one of the problems we pointed out.

We asked that more well-known terms, such as those in the Criminal Code, be used.

• (2210)

Unfortunately, once again, the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights rejected the proposed amendments. That is a problem.

Initially, we asked that the criterion of the brutal nature of the act committed be removed. One of the problems with the use of the term brutal nature is that a person will be judged based on the act committed rather than on what the accused could do in the future. The act will be judged, but the Conservatives are forgetting that this act was committed by a person with a mental illness, given that we are talking about cases where the accused are not criminally responsible. An act was committed and its brutal nature may not necessarily indicate what will happen in the future. In that respect, I believe that the government has gone in the wrong direction.

We would have liked the Conservatives to accept our amendment, which in fact made it more understandable. We would have liked them to give more thought to what the Supreme Court has said. We would have liked them to give more thought to the judgments that

have been handed down. Unfortunately, all of that was rejected. One of the things that will have to be considered was in fact raised by the Canadian Bar Association, among others. There would certainly be constitutional challenges. Nobody has specifically said that it is contrary to the charter, but we need to ask ourselves some questions.

We can also question the removal of the requirement that the decision be the least onerous and least restrictive to the individual. We asked that this idea be put back, but the amendment was rejected. That is unfortunate, because what was already in place—the decisions of the Supreme Court and the lower courts—provided us with a better balance. Unfortunately, it was rejected, because that is the intention of the government; that is the intent of the bill. In fact, it has been openly criticized by legal experts. Unfortunately, that is the bill.

Although I am noting all the concerns about how the government is doing this and about the legal issue, one of the things we can like about the bill is the fact that it will ultimately be a judge who will be able to make a decision. The judge will have the decision-making power.

In this case, the government has left the judge a degree of latitude. We agree with that view, because it refers to possible reviews of the assessments of the individuals themselves by experts in the field, and when it comes to finding an individual to be high-risk or a high-risk accused, that decision is to be made by the court. It is therefore up to the court to decide whether the individual falls into that group. If so, the accused can be removed from that category, that label can be removed, at a later date.

We would have liked the government to allow the decision-making power for reviews to be transferred, but once again, unfortunately, the government rejected one of our proposed amendments.

A lot of questions arise in relation to the way the courts are going to be interpreted. Are they going to use this new category of high-risk individuals?

I asked the Minister of Justice a question to find out whether this category would apply in the Guy Turcotte case, a case we have heard about everywhere in Canada and Quebec.

• (2215)

The question that I asked the minister was relatively clear. It dealt with the fact that the Conservatives have politicized this issue. They have made it a reason for funding, saying that this would resolve many problems.

In the case of Guy Turcotte, the question was posed, not only to the minister, but also to the Justice Department experts who were present. We were told that Bill C-54 would certainly not apply in the case of Guy Turcotte, because he would not necessarily be considered a high-risk accused.

When the victim, Ms. Gaston, came to give evidence, I asked her the question, too, and she was aware of the problem. Despite the promises by the Conservative government, she knew that it was very likely the bill would not apply in her case. There would certainly be a problem there.

Government Orders

As I said earlier, we deplore the fact that the Conservatives have politicized the issue. They have even helped stigmatize people with mental illness by using certain terms. The Minister of Justice had in hand certain figures on rates of recidivism among people found not criminally responsible and he overstated those statistics.

Figures already existed. Certain cases were discussed. Of course, the witnesses confirmed that people found not criminally responsible had a much lower rate of recidivism than criminals, in the case of serious crimes. The language used, not only by the Conservatives, but also by the minister, gave us the impression that it was a more serious problem. Once again I deplore the fact that the Conservative government has politicized this issue so much that it has alienated, swept aside and stigmatized people suffering from a mental illness. The government's attitude toward this issue is really appalling.

Nonetheless, we managed to do one thing: adopt an amendment that we thought was really important. The opposition can be really proud of this. This amendment, when the bill becomes law, will require the government to review the act after five years.

According to the government and the experts who came to testify, experts, specifically mental health experts, were not consulted. Legal experts were not consulted either. We managed to get an amendment passed that forces the government to review the act and its effects in five years.

For example, will this go to court because some provisions violate the charter and are therefore unconstitutional? We will also have to see whether the bill has had the desired effects on public safety. We cannot forget that this is of utmost importance to us.

Some witnesses, including victims, told us that this was not in the best interests of public safety. This raised some questions. We would have liked to see the government consult people before, but we were happy that it finally agreed to our amendment to have the bill reviewed in five years. One thing is for sure: when we are in power, in five years, we will be able to review this bill and ensure that it is appropriate.

• (2220)

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member participates on the committee, and I thank him for the efforts he puts forward. I have a speech in a few minutes that will highlight the work we did together as a committee.

I do not want to say I take exception exactly, but I disagree a bit the the wording that says we were stigmatizing those with mental health issues, and there was an issue with statistics; for repeat offenders, it was a question of whether it was 7% or 40%.

This bill focuses on a very narrow group of individuals who are potentially dangerous through no fault of their own, but due to mental issues that they are facing. It is a very small group. Whether 7% or 40%, does the member not agree that the victims of these individuals still require the protection that this bill would offer?

• (2225)

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his work on the justice committee. As Chair, I can say that so far he has been very fair.

With respect to his question, I would like to read a letter from the Conservative Party to members. I will read it French. It states:

[*Translation*]

You probably remember the story of Vince Li—a man who, five years ago, beheaded and cannibalized a fellow passenger on a Greyhound bus.

He was found to be not criminally responsible for his actions—and was even granted escorted leave...

This is an insult to his victim—and this is not what Canadians expect from their justice system.

[*English*]

I was saying that this was used as a fundraiser and the letter goes on to ask for donations. The victims were used as a means to raise funds. My issue was with the fact that we were raising the partisan issue.

In terms of defending victims, New Democrats agree and that is why our amendment goes further than what the bill was suggesting. I agree that victims need to be informed and that is why we supported that part of the bill. That is also why we put forward an amendment, so victims would know where the residences of accused persons were, and the Conservatives have agreed with our position.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): First, Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised that the Conservative Party would stoop that low and use that as a fundraiser. That should not surprise anybody.

[*Translation*]

First, it is the victims that we want to protect. I will read a few lines and I would like my colleague to say a few words about this.

We must make public safety our top priority, while respecting the rule of law and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We support the changes, but it is critically important that we make sure that the cases of defendants with mental disorders are managed effectively and that their mental disorders are treated. For that, we must ensure that the provinces have enough money because they are the ones who manage the situation at the end of the day.

We are used to hearing and seeing the Conservatives pass legislation that the provinces are forced to deal with. It does not cost the Conservatives anything.

I would like my colleague to talk about what happens in the provincial prisons to convicted offenders who are battling mental illness.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Nickel Belt for his question. He just raised a point that I unfortunately did not have time to cover in my speech.

With Bill C-10 we saw the Conservative government's tendency to introduce bills without consulting the provinces or considering whether they agreed or not. Bill C-10 has a direct impact on the provinces' administrative costs.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, in this bill, there is no mention of how the government is going to help the provinces. There is no mention of any funding that might be allocated. We are pretty sure there will be none. When we looked at the budget, there was no increase in funding to help the provinces deal with this problem.

Again, we are operating in a vacuum. The government is introducing bills without consulting the provinces or experts. What is more, the government is not allocating any resources for the provinces to cope with these problems.

I thank my colleague for the question because it allowed me to address a point that I did not have time to raise in my speech.

• (2230)

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I was able to participate in some of the justice committee meetings and I thank the Chair for allowing me to speak in those sessions. One of the things that struck me were the witnesses on behalf of victims. No one could be untouched by the devastating and harrowing personal stories of people who have been affected by crimes committed by people with mental health issues, but they really were not relevant to the empirical question of whether people within the not criminally responsible system are returning in what was referred to as some sort of revolving door.

By the way, I would like to single out my hon. colleague for having tried to put forward more amendments brought forward from victims' groups, particularly those of Sue O'Sullivan, the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime. There was an attempt by this New Democratic Party member to put her testimony into amendments to give victims more notice and more information, but they were not accepted by the Conservative members on the committee. I would have supported these if I had been allowed to vote, by the way.

My question is this. When we look at the evidence of misleading statistics, there is a new report on the correction to data, which the member referred to in his speech, from key experts. They notified the Minister of Justice back in March, and it appears that we are still using the wrong numbers. For instance, the original report said that 38.1% of sex offenders found not criminally responsible and accused of sex offences had at least one prior NCR finding, but the accurate number is almost a quarter of that, 9.5%. How is it we are still talking about this issue and using the wrong numbers?

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, as the member mentioned, we tried to bring forward amendments with respect to victims giving more information. One of the problems we had was that the Conservatives said that amendments were needed before we actually heard some of the witnesses. Those were the deadlines and procedures.

With respect to her question about why the government was still using the wrong numbers, I raised the fact that the Conservatives were using this as a partisan issue and making it worse than it was. It came to me that they were stigmatizing people with mental illness, and we heard this from witnesses. The Conservatives came out with numbers. They were talking 38%, 39% with the real numbers being 7% or 9%.

The worse thing is that this came from the Minister of Justice. He knew with the reports that those numbers were the wrong numbers. We are talking about people who are non-NCR. A minister should know all the facts. A minister should not use numbers to make it sound worse and do a bit of fundraising. That is not how we should work in Parliament.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, whether it is 7%, 9% or 30%, does the public not deserve protection from that 7%, 9% or 30%, whatever the percentage is? Do we just forget about these people? These are high-risk individuals. There will be very few designations under this new category. Do those 7% of victims not deserve this government's protection?

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of not helping victims. The reason we put forward amendments was to help victims and the reason we supported that part of the bill was because we wanted to support victims.

Expert witnesses told us that the government did not have evidence-based numbers. The chair of the committee is saying that numbers do not matter, that there is no difference between 9% and 39%. We have to come up with facts. We have to make laws that are based on facts. Victims are important, so that is why we support it.

We went to committee with even better amendments to better protect victims and the government accepted them. What we are saying is when we make decisions and when we go out in public, we need to be truthful and we need to talk about facts, not just make up numbers as the Conservatives are doing.

• (2235)

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to address Bill C-54, the not criminally responsible reform act.

Over the last two weeks, the justice committee has heard a great deal of compelling testimony from mental health experts, legal professionals, law enforcement and victims who courageously shared their heart-rending experiences of pain, of loss, of anger and frustration and of their efforts to grieve and overcome. One of those experiences was shared by the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. I want to thank him and all the witnesses who provided personal accounts that were often heart-rending, but all the more important for it.

On the whole, the testimony we heard confirmed our reasons for opposing this legislation. I want to note that my belief is grounded in statistical analysis and in expert opinion that Bill C-54 would prove counterproductive by complicating treatment for the mentally ill and, as a result, increasing the danger to the public.

The testimony at committee also demonstrated something else: that the government's approach to this bill has had the effect of pitting mental health and legal experts against victims of violence, and it does not have to be this way.

I offer as evidence some quotations from committee testimony, as follows:

Government Orders

[Translation]

It is not about putting them in prison, it is about getting them the help they need.

[English]

One witness said, “I believe strongly in increased supports to help those with mental illness in our communities”.

Another witness said:

[Translation]

I am in favour of rehabilitation and I understand the suffering caused by a mental illness.

[English]

It may surprise members that those words came to the justice committee from victims and victims advocates. They were saying this.

The following quotation that I will read are from the testimony of mental health and legal professionals who are opposed to the bill.

[Translation]

...the association supports an approach that fully addresses victims' needs...it also recognizes that there are major flaws in the support services and financial aid offered to victims...

[English]

Another witness said, “we wholeheartedly support changes that create greater involvement for victims in the process. Without a doubt we want all victims affected by crime to be part of the process”.

Those words came from people who supported victims, but opposed the legislation.

Common ground exists between victims and the mental health and legal communities, irrespective of their views on this bill. The victims who spoke were not simply out for revenge. They recognized the importance of effective treatment for the mentally ill, including accused found not criminally responsible, or NCR.

At the same time, those opposing this bill have demonstrated genuine compassion for victims. It is disappointing therefore that the government did not endeavour to find this common ground before it prepared the legislation.

To be clear, opponents of the bill do not oppose victims, as has been callously and hyperbolically suggested. Indeed, we and other experts support measures to increase the notification of victims and the provision for no contact orders between victims and NCR accused.

It would have been, and, indeed, it still is quite possible, given good faith and openness to the perspectives of all concerned, to draft a bill that first, simultaneously protects the safety of the public; second, respects the interest and wishes of victims; and third, facilitates both preventative and rehabilitative treatment for the mentally ill. Those three things could have existed simultaneously in the bill.

Not only would such a bill have received more widespread support, it would have been less susceptible to constitutional challenges and it would have been far more effective.

I regret, however, that this was not the government's approach. Stakeholder after stakeholder and expert after expert came before the justice committee and stated that the government had not sought their input. Shockingly, while preparing a bill that deals specifically with mentally ill individuals, the government apparently had a grand total of one preliminary meeting with a mental health group before the bill was tabled.

It never consulted, for instance, with Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, which is Canada's largest mental health and addiction treatment facility, or the Schizophrenia Society of Canada or the Canadian Psychiatric Association, among many others.

The Canadian Mental Health Association was granted one meeting, and that was after second reading.

• (2240)

On the legal side, the government ignored no less an authority than the Canadian Bar Association. It consulted with crown attorneys whose input is important, but not with attorneys who represent the mentally ill, whose input is equally important.

The government's choice not to consult with so many of the relevant experts is yet another manifestation of a trend to which we are now regrettably accustomed to in the House, particularly with respect to justice legislation. The government does not base its policies on facts. Indeed, one of the principal reasons the Liberals oppose this bill is that, despite flaws in Canada's overall approach to issues of mental health and justice, the evidence demonstrates that the not criminally responsible regime works well in its current form. Undoubtedly, there are shortcomings with respect to the notification and involvement of victims. There are shortcomings which the Liberal Party has sought to address through amendments. There are also major improvements needed in terms of preventative treatment so people with severe mental health problems can get an early diagnosis and be treated before they commit serious violence.

Moreover, as was recently argued in a feature in *L'actualité* magazine about Isabelle Gaston, whose children were killed by Guy Turcotte, we might also consider re-examining the way our courts approach expert testimony at trial.

However, the crux of the bill before us does not address most of these problems. Rather, Bill C-54 is focused on changing the way our system deals with mentally ill individuals after they have been found not criminally responsible, yet this is the aspect of Canada's approach to mental health and justice that already works very well. We know it works because several studies have been done on the subject, the most recent of which was finally tabled by the minister last Thursday in its corrected form.

Before continuing, I want to acknowledge and thank the minister for doing so, even if I still do not understand why he tabled the incorrect report in March, one week after being provided with a revised draft, or why the government continued to cite the incorrect figures for months.

Government Orders

While I am on the subject, I must also express my dismay at public statements made by the minister's office and by his parliamentary secretary, questioning the credibility and competence of the researchers they commissioned. In fact, the researchers behaved in exactly the manner top level scientists and academics should. Instead of saying, as the minister did on Thursday, that "mistakes were made", as though mistakes can make themselves, the researchers did the right thing by immediately acknowledging their error and correcting it. The minister should also do the right thing and apologize to them for tarnishing their reputations.

As we now know, according to the corrected version of that research, only 6.1% of individuals found not criminally responsible in a serious violent offence had a prior NCR finding. The recidivism rate for NCR accused released by review boards was 7% for serious violence. I said that in the House when I made my very first speech. It came from reputable people, from forensic experts to people who worked in the criminal justice system to mental health authorities. In other words, it is demonstrably exceptionally rare for an NCR accused person to be found not criminally responsible of a second violent act upon release. Naturally, the rarity of the occurrence is of no comfort to those who have been victims. It is certainly worthwhile to seek to improve the system further.

However, if we are to make significant changes to a largely successful system, such as creating an entirely new category of NCR accused deemed "high risk" on the basis of medically suspect criteria, we must take great care to ensure the changes we make do not have unintended negative consequences. Regrettably, witnesses at committee warned of that potential, that this bill would have several troubling unintended consequences, complicating treatment for the mentally ill and therefore increasing the dangers to the public.

Here are some of the reasons. By keeping the NCR accused institutionalized for longer periods of time, this legislation would risk overburdening treatment facilities. As Dr. Sandy Simpson, co-chair of the Canadian Forensic Mental Health Network, testified:

Most forensic services nationally are at or near capacity. If you look at Ontario, most of us are running over capacity. Clearly, if one gets overcrowding within secure mental health facilities, your risk of violent behaviour, both patient to patient and patient to staff, rises, and those environments become more dangerous and less therapeutic.

● (2245)

Repeated questions about whether the government considered this potential effect of Bill C-54 have been met with evasive and even dismissive responses.

Second, the bill may result in more mentally ill offenders going to prisons instead of hospitals. Dr. Simpson warned that this could happen as a result of overcrowding, since patients are often detained in prison while waiting for a forensic bed to become available in an institution.

Moreover, as Paul Burstein of the Criminal Lawyers Association argued, the punitive restrictions placed on NCR accused deemed high risk could cause certain defendants, who would otherwise be found NCR, to plead not guilty instead. If these individuals were acquitted, they would be discharged without receiving treatment of any kind, and if they were convicted, they would likely receive either inadequate treatment or none at all. When they rejoined society after

their sentence, they would be at least as dangerous as they were before.

At committee, some Conservative members were skeptical about whether this would actually be the case, claiming that defence attorneys have a fiduciary responsibility to advise their clients to plead NCR if such a finding is appropriate. However, if the consequence of such a finding is likely to be inappropriate in its result and its sentencing—for instance, overly punitive restrictions or a longer detention than necessary—it would be entirely correct for a defence attorney to advise against an NCR plea, especially given that many NCR accused are already detained for longer periods of time than if they had remained in the prison system.

Third, and perhaps most critical of all, the bill contributes to the stigmatization that makes many who suffer from mental illness reluctant to seek treatment in the first place.

The rarity of violent acts caused by mental illness in no way diminishes the pain of victims. I want to stress that. However, by using rare occurrences as justification for significant reform, and by designing those reforms so as to limit the role of medical expertise, the government overstates the problem of violence by the mentally ill and understates the potential effectiveness of treatment.

Yet fear of the mentally ill is often a self-fulfilling prophecy. We find mentally ill individuals are largely dangerous; that is the idea we are giving here. We discourage them from acknowledging their illness and they go back into hiding, to being underground, not wanting anybody to know they are ill. A person whose severe mental illness goes undetected is far more dangerous than an NCR accused who has been treated and released by a review board.

Consequently, it is incumbent upon the government to temper its rhetoric and base its policy on facts instead of headlines, thereby reducing stigma and encouraging early diagnosis and intervention.

My colleague, the justice critic from Mount Royal offered numerous amendments at committee in an attempt to address these concerns. Some of his amendments would have introduced or reintroduced principles established by the Supreme Court with respect to NCR accused, such as that NCR accused are not to be punished or left to languish in custody.

The Conservatives explain their opposition by saying that there is no need to codify prevailing jurisprudence, and yet by specifying that public safety is to be the paramount condition of review boards, Bill C-54 would do precisely that. Indeed, two review board chairs testified at committee, and they were already bound by jurisprudence to make public safety their primary concern.

Government Orders

My colleague also proffered amendments to deal with the problematic aspects of the bill, according to which the “brutal nature” of a past act committed by an NCR accused would be an important factor in determining whether the accused posed a future risk, which is a medically dubious causal link. I can assure members of that.

However, Conservative members rejected his efforts in this regard, even going so far as to reject his proposals to define the term “brutal” using existing case law. They preferred the ambiguity that the Canadian Bar Association testified might very well contravene the charter.

The government also refused to include the supports and resources available to the accused upon release as criteria for courts to consider when determining risk, despite expert opinions that such support can be a significant factor in lowering risk of recidivism. Perhaps most egregiously, the Conservatives rejected repeated attempts to ensure that the decision of courts and review boards would be based on medical expertise.

• (2250)

Thus we have before us a bill with little evidentiary basis. It is rife with the potential for unintended consequences. Due to the breadth and vagueness of some of its provisions and the possibility that it will subject NCR accused to unduly punitive restrictions, the bill is likely to raise a whole host of charter concerns. Moreover, because the bill does not even attempt to address primary prevention, it misses the nub of the nature of mental illness altogether. As one of the victims said at committee:

[*Translation*]

Primary prevention completely failed us.

[*English*]

The member for Kootenay—Columbia, a former RCMP officer, echoed this sentiment by pointing out that when police officers approach individuals who have mental illnesses to try to apprehend them, they are often powerless to ensure that these individuals receive sustained, appropriate treatment. In an effort to address the problem, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto recently instituted a program to screen inmates for potentially dangerous mental health issues as soon as they come in contact with the system.

With federal government support, this kind of program, rather than Bill C-54, would do much to protect the public. Indeed, to address this and other problems related to mental illness, health and justice, members of Parliament must work together and with mental health and legal professionals to develop an effective, evidence-based approach that would support Canadians with mental illnesses and their families and protect the public.

For that reason, I am very pleased that Senator Cowan has introduced a bill that would establish a Canadian commission on mental health and justice. This commission would collect data on the ways mental health and justice intersect, highlight areas that require improvement and facilitate co-operation and the sharing of best practices across jurisdictions. I am hopeful that his Bill S-219 will receive broad-based support so that future policies with respect to

mental health and the law would be ground in comprehensive, reliable research and expertise.

In 2005, when he was minister of justice, the member for Mount Royal introduced the most recent reforms to the NCR system. Members of all parties supported both the content of that legislation and the collaborative process through which it was developed. At the time, the current Minister of Public Safety said, “I am pleased to add my support to this bill”.

The Conservative member for Yorkton—Melville said, “The entire debate of the bill in the House and in committee should serve as an example of how Parliament should work”.

I wish I could say the same about Bill C-54, but the legislation we are debating today is regrettably a step backward for the NCR regime, for public safety and for the cause of collaborative evidence-based policy. To keep Canadians truly safe, we must rely on the facts to determine which aspects of our mental health and justice systems are working well and which are in need of improvement. The facts clearly demonstrate that the new high-risk accused category is a solution in search of a problem. As such, Liberals have sought to remove that section from the bill. I support the efforts of my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands to also do that.

At the same time, there is much that can be done in the way of mental health and justice policy to support victims of violence by the mentally ill and to reduce the occurrence of such violence in the first place. These are goals that all Canadians support. It could have been possible, through an evidence-based consultative process, to develop effective legislation with similarly broad appeal.

I hope that in the future, mental health and legal experts will not be pitted against victims but will be consulted and included alongside them to better enact effective policies and keep Canadians safe.

BILL C-54—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must advise that an agreement has not been reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) concerning the proceedings at third reading of Bill C-54, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (mental disorder).

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

• (2255)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I am sure the House appreciates the notice by the hon. government House leader.

THIRD READING

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-54, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (mental disorder), be read the third time and passed.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the speech from my colleague for Vancouver Centre on this justice legislation.

Government Orders

As the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, this is a bill about which I have tremendous passion, and I am very pleased that this Parliament is moving forward with it. I have to say that I am very pleased that we have been able to move forward in a multi-partisan way to make this legislation work for Canadians.

This legislation, contrary to what the member for Vancouver Centre has said, has the unanimous support of every single provincial Attorney General in this country—Liberal, New Democrat and Conservative. From across this country, they have asked this government to put forward this legislation based on their recommendations. We are working with the provincial level of government, which has the obligation of enforcing the laws the Parliament of Canada puts in place.

I would say to the member that we have worked across the aisle. The NDP, the official opposition, is now supporting this bill. NDP members supported it at second reading. We entertained amendment at the committee stage. We have tightened up the legislation. It is going to go forward. It will be enacted, because it is what Canadians want us to do.

I understand the member's point that extreme cases make bad law. I agree with her in that regard. However, there are times, as well, when specific cases, high-profile cases, point out the failings of the status quo in the justice system. That is what has happened with the Allan Schoenborn case. That is what has happened with the Vincent Li case in Winnipeg. They have pointed out that victims have been left behind by the current justice system.

One specific policy the member mentioned, which I would like her to comment on, is the idea of the three-year review process, or up to three years, rather than a review every single year, and having the high-risk offender designation. Those two reforms are critical.

Contrary to what the member has alleged the government is doing, having a high-risk offender designation would not stigmatize those who are struggling with mental illness or who have engaged in behaviour as a consequence of mental illness. It would allow for genuine mental health professionals to be drawn into the system to provide their expertise, give their proper assessment and make it known that those who are high risk ought to be treated differently than those who are not high risk. It would be evidence-based, as she described.

The bill would de-stigmatize, not stigmatize, those with mental health issues who are trapped within our justice system. That is the goal of this legislation. That is why we have support from Liberal, Conservative and NDP governments from across the country. They are unanimously calling for this legislation to be adopted by this place.

The bill will pass. I hope the member for Vancouver Centre will understand that this is the intent of the bill. This would be the outcome of this bill, so she is wrong to suggest that our government is trying to stigmatize the mentally ill. This is about de-stigmatizing them and making sure that victims are treated appropriately by our justice system, which they currently are not as a consequence of our failed approach to dealing with mental health in the penal system.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, sometimes listening and hearing are two different things.

No one has suggested that the government is setting out to stigmatize the mentally ill. What we are talking about are the unintended, negative consequences of a piece of legislation. Indeed, the government consulted all the crown attorneys across the country, but it did not consult the Canadian Bar Association or attorneys who actually have a specialty in mental illness and NCR. One cannot talk to just one group and not the others.

If this is a good bill, as the member is trying to suggest, and would not have those negative, unintended consequences, why did the government not consult the professions that are actually in charge of people who are mentally ill? They all oppose the bill. They all say that the unintended consequence would be to stigmatize people and send them back into the corners, where they will not be diagnosed.

Bill C-54 would deal with people after the fact, after they have committed violent crimes. We are suggesting that the bill should look at getting people an early diagnoses, before they get there, so that we can pick them up and prevent those kinds of crimes from occurring. We should find ways of working closely with mental health communities, with all of the legal professions and with victims to create a good and balanced piece of legislation

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague's very pertinent speech.

She raised some points that deserve further attention. The bill clearly has flaws, and it can be improved.

She mentioned a number of times that the existing resources for victims are insufficient. In its day, the Liberal government made massive cuts to social services.

Does she feel that there is a lot of catching up to do because of those Liberal Party cuts to social services? It is quite obvious that the Conservative government bought into the Liberal Party's ideas and has simply cut, cut, cut. Now we are left with good intentions but very few resources to implement them.

Does she feel that the Liberal Party made a serious mistake in the 1990s by cutting as much as it did?

● (2300)

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that even with something as very serious and as heart-rending as this bill is trying to address, the hon. member from the New Democratic Party would try to score cheap political points on the backs of people's pain. That is unacceptable.

The bottom line is that the past system was working quite well, with a need for certain changes. In fact, if members were to read *The Globe and Mail*, they would read that the Rt. Hon. Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin said that she thought the system was working quite well with regard to this problem.

What we were talking about was looking at the needs that we could now address. The former minister of justice, my colleague from Mount Royal, brought forward a bill that everybody in the House supported because it was broadly based, it had consulted and it was not a partisan bill. It was a bill that sought to get the right things done in the House.

Government Orders

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member particularly in the way she was able to tie her passion tonight with her first speech in the House for a while.

As a lawyer, I am disappointed by her remarks and by the Canadian Bar Association's position on this because there really are a number of people clouding the issue here. This is not about moral blameworthiness. These people are not criminally responsible for a reason.

The bill would specifically address the re-release or the review of these people who were deemed to be in this high risk class and would really rebalance the equilibrium. Our justice system is built on pillars, whether it is sentencing or throughout rehabilitation and deterrents, punishment in some cases, but in rehabilitation and public safety. The very courts that will accept an offender as not criminally responsible are certainly equipped to then reassess, and that is what this bill would do.

Why does the member not trust the same courts that will allow somebody to avoid some of the criminal sanctions due to mental illness and, at the same time, not recognize those same courts in the process for parole?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member speaks of his expertise as a lawyer. I am not a lawyer, but I will speak of my expertise as a physician.

This bill will harm people who are mentally ill. I have had many mentally ill patients. As an MP, I deal with people in my community who are mentally ill, and they are terrified that anybody would know they are because of the prejudices of various systems against people who are mentally ill.

If we can have early diagnosis before people commit violent crimes, when they become mentally ill and they have the NCR, we are suggesting that the bill is not putting that in place. There is a lot of work being done in Dalhousie and across the country on the effects of early diagnosis.

We are talking about of legislation can put into place good public policy. Legislation is not just a piece of paper.

The important thing to remember is that the recidivism rate is low. If we keep people in an institution for longer than they need, we run the huge risk of creating violence and problems within that system. We heard from Dr. Simpson on this issue.

Why do we not want to listen to the physicians and the mental health advocates who are speaking to this issue and only wanting to look at it through one small, narrow lens? I do not understand it at all.

• (2305)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour this evening to speak to Bill C-54. It is also my honour to be the chair of the justice committee, which has recently dealt with the discussion on this piece of legislation.

I want to thank the committee for its work. We had extended hours. We invited a number of witnesses from all sides of the debate on this particular issue. The committee worked very well together and very hard at hearing everyone out. We had a number of

interruptions with bells and a number of other votes that happened within, but we were able to get through the presentations in a very respectful way as a committee. We heard from all sides, whether they were victims, victims' family members, those representing the mental health side of the equation, such as associations, legal opinion and health care workers in the mental health area. It was a very good discussion.

I also want to thank our clerk, Jean-François Pagé, who did a fabulous job on very short notice, making arrangements for very balanced panels for us to see. Also, the analysts and the legislative clerks helped us.

I also want to thank the leader of the Green Party who joined us at committee with a number of amendments. It does not happen that often. It is some sort of a new process for committees to have independents sit at the table with us when we go through legislation and contribute to the discussion on amendments that they bring forward. I appreciate that.

I do appreciate the professionalism of the committee in dealing with a number of amendments. I believe there were 52 or 54 amendments in front of us. We did accept amendments. One came from the government side, one from the New Democratic side and one from a Liberal member. They were accepted and in fact there was some crossover between the two opposition parties.

Let me take just a few minutes to review exactly what Bill C-54 actually would do. There is lots of rhetoric about what the bill would do; we heard some of it this evening. I want to be as factual, as clear and as precise as possible on the changes to the NCR regime that now exists. These would be amendments to an existing not criminally responsible regime, which we think are needed to make our system better. It is not to change, to stigmatize, as we have heard from others tonight. It is actually to improve the justice system.

There is nothing wrong with improvements to the justice system. There is nothing wrong with improvements to any system. That is why we are here as legislators. We look at what is happening. We see what is actually happening on the ground after we make laws. Sometimes we do not get it completely right. Sometimes, over time, things change and we need to make changes. That is all we would be doing. We would be making some amendments to this to deal with a few high-risk accused situations.

Bill C-54 would create a new application process to obtain a finding from a court that an NCR accused is a high-risk accused. The high-risk accused finding would result in the disposition requiring detention of the accused in a hospital until the court revokes the findings.

Let us be clear about this. There is an NCR regime at present. A court can find someone not criminally responsible at present, or NCR. They do not go to jail. That is what NCR is about. They need help. They have a mental issue through no fault of their own. Based on the evidence that is provided, a court can make a judgment that this individual is not criminally responsible for the actions he or she has taken. Some of them can be very horrific, some at a different level, but it is still their mental capacity that has been the issue.

Government Orders

Do they go to jail? What the previous speaker said, that the system would send them back to sort of rot in jail longer, is not the case. In the present regime, someone who is designated NCR gets help. He or she gets hospitalized, basically.

● (2310)

At present, there is a review board to see how they have done. It is an annual review. The victims would have to come and listen to the progress the individual has made, and a review board would decide whether the individual needs to continue treatment. It is not punishment, it is treatment.

All we are doing is, first, saying that in some very specific situations, some NCR-designated individuals are of high risk, both to themselves and to the public. We are defining a different and added category in this piece of legislation. Would it apply to everyone who is designated NCR? Absolutely not. That is not what it is designed for. That is not how we expect it to be used. There was some discussion about a burden on the courts system. That would not be a result. There would be very few cases in Canada annually. In fact, I hope it would never be used, to be honest. It would be great if the high-risk designation in NCR were never required. However, it may be required and we need to have the legislation in place to provide that designation for a court to determine.

The application would have been made by the prosecutor before an absolute discharge could be ordered. That means that the government prosecution would have to decide whether someone really is high risk, so there is a burden of proof in terms of whether the individual is high risk before a prosecutor could bring it forward.

The high-risk accused finding would only be available in cases involving serious personal injury offences that resulted in a verdict of NCR. Therefore, they need to know that the person has been found NCR already. As well, it is what we call an "incident", not a crime that leads to jail, because these people need hospitalization. The incident would have to be an offence that involved serious personal injury and the accused would be 18 years of age or more. Therefore, it would not be used for children or young offenders, it would be for adults. We need to ensure that everybody understands that.

To determine a finding of high-risk accused, the court would have to be satisfied that there is a substantial likelihood that the accused would use violence that could endanger the life or safety of the public. The safety of the public would become paramount in this high-risk category. I would suggest that also safety of oneself would also have some consideration. At committee, we did hear it stated that, based upon actual court cases in the past, public safety is a priority. All this legislation would do is codify that and put it in the legislation, not just by jurisprudence of what has happened in different court cases.

The court could also make the high-risk accused finding if it were of the opinion that the acts that constitute the offence were of such a brutal nature they would indicate a grave risk of harm to another person. Therefore, an individual is found NCR and based on the evidence the court has determined that the individual needs hospitalization and needs help with the mental illness that has caused this serious offence. It is not just any serious offence, but one of a brutal nature that would cause the court to look at whether the

high-risk category should apply. The court would consider all relevant evidence, including the nature and the circumstances of the offence, any relevant pattern of repetitive behaviour, the accused's current mental condition, the past and expected course of treatment and the accused's willingness to follow treatment, as well as expert opinions.

● (2315)

We heard in the last speech about the committee not accepting the amendment on medical experts. Based upon the input we got on that amendment, we had a full discussion on that amendment. Experts from the ministry of justice were there. They indicated that by putting medical experts as an amendment it may limit who we could ask on this and that not everyone who may have expertise on determining some of these criteria would be a licensed medical individual. There could be others involved, from a social services point of view, from other areas, who would be able to help in determining some of these circumstances and the nature of the offence, the pattern or premise, who may not have a medical designation. That is why we wanted to leave it open, so that all expert opinions could be sought. They would still have to be experts. We would not just be asking anyone.

If the court makes the high-risk accused finding, a disposition requiring detention of the accused in a hospital must be made. I think that is an important thing to indicate.

We are not talking about removing the hospitalization aspects and sending people to jail because they are high risk. It is determining that they go to a hospital that would handle their NCR issue if the offence were brutal in nature and that there were a high risk it may reoccur or that they could hurt themselves, so it is still a hospitalization. This does not remove that aspect of NCR and send them to jail but give them help.

No conditions permitting absences from the hospital would be authorized unless a structured plan was prepared to address the risk to the public, and only with an authorized escort.

If we were to go down my street in Burlington, Tuck Drive, and told people that, at present, somebody who has committed a brutal offence and has been found NCR, within the year, without a structured plan, would be able to go on an unescorted release, I would say the people on my street would be shocked that is what the law is at present.

All this is saying is that for those who are found NCR and then high risk, there would be a structured plan to address the public aspects and authorized escorted release. That is not saying they would not get to go out in public. We would try to help them with their plan to be reintegrated, but not on their own at that particular time as a high-risk NCR individual. They would have to be escorted so we could review what they were doing.

I think that is common sense. I do not think the public would be upset that those escorted absences were only a decision-making process and could impose a non-communication, non-attendance condition in order to ensure their own safety.

Government Orders

It just makes sense to me that we would have that ability, that condition in this bill, and it is surprising that it does not exist at present.

I want to talk briefly about what the bill does not do. Bill C-54 does not seek to punish individuals who have been found by the courts to be not criminally responsible on account of their mental disorder. It is not jail time. We want to make sure that is there.

I can tell members the witnesses we heard from were all excellent witnesses. They all brought an expertise to the table, whether a victim or an individual representing the legal field or the mental health field. However, when questioned on the specifics of the wording of the bill, of the different clauses, it was interesting to see that this is what they thought could happen but it was not actually the wording of the bill.

● (2320)

Nothing in Bill C-54 would affect the access of mentally disordered accused persons to mental health treatment. There is no prohibition to their getting help. With this bill, accused persons would still be NCR. They would get a high-risk designation and they would still be hospitalized. The government would be there to help them overcome the mental illness that caused the serious and brutal actions to take place. The government wants them to get better and to be integrated back into society. We have a responsibility as a government to make sure that high-risk individuals get the treatment they need.

Bill C-54 does not seek to stigmatize the mentally ill. The bill does not suggest that mentally ill people commit crimes or are dangerous. The bill does not say that. People came to see me in my office. I agree that the messaging from all of us here is that the support in this bill does not suggest that we are stigmatizing mental illness.

We know people need help. We know that happens. As a government, we put together the mental health strategy, and the high-risk category does not apply to everyone who has a mental illness. It would apply to very few individuals. The new high-risk NCR accused finding does not create the presumption of dangerousness. Rather, it focuses on a relatively small group of NCR accused persons who qualify for the high-risk finding.

The other item that is important to understand is twofold. One, the review board still exists and the review board is still required to provide information on how individuals are progressing through their treatment. The review board change is simple. Right now it is every year that victims attend to hear how the perpetrators are doing. They are re-victimized over and over again. The bill would make it up to every three years. We are adding two years. The review board could make a decision of up to three years.

The only other major change, which was highlighted by a question from my colleague in the Conservatives, is that a judge would determine whether a person is high risk. I have faith in the court system, and if that happens, a judge would decide, based on the evidence, including the review board evidence, whether individuals have accomplished what they needed to do in that high-risk designation, at which point the NCR designation can be removed and people can be reintegrated into society.

Those are two of the changes. If a judge determines that someone is high risk and NCR, that judge has the ability, the authority and the responsibility to determine when those designations will be removed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his speech.

I agree with many of the things he has said tonight, but I would like to ask him a question about costs.

How much does he think this bill will cost, more or less? I am talking about costs that will be passed on to the provinces, for example.

If he thinks there will be some cost to this, how high will it be, approximately? What resources does he intend to make available to those who will be paying for it?

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to be at the committee that she chairs. She does an excellent job as chair. I wanted to point that out.

I am guessing that there will be some costs. If it is a provincial court, the provincial court will bear those costs. If it is Federal Court, we will bear those costs. For the small number of people who I think will be designated high-risk NCR, I think the Canadian public would be more than willing to spend a few of their hard-earned tax dollars to make sure that the public is safe. There is a sense of safety in designating someone as high-risk NCR.

This is not about dollars and cents. This is about the security of mentally ill individuals, the public and the community, and rightly so. I did not even get to this part of the bill, but there is a section on protecting victims from being re-victimized. I do not think it is a tax issue. It is something that we need to do, something that this bill would do, and it is long overdue.

● (2325)

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was not a bad speech for such a late hour. The member spoke on the bill and the justification for the bill, which was commendable.

One of the areas the member started to speak about is what the bill does not do. Some of the mental health experts who came before the committee said that prevention is the key and that if we could diagnose people who suffer from mental illness at an early stage, it would help.

Would investing more money in trying to prevent these crimes perhaps be the best way to protect victims, by stopping the crime from ever happening?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I agree 100%.

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If we could legislate away mental illness, I would do it tonight. I would probably get unanimous consent to do it, and we would do it.

However, it is not possible, and we do have to have a balanced approach on all topics, including mental health, crime and other health issues. If I could legislate away cancer, I would do that also by unanimous consent. I cannot do it. It does not happen. It will not work.

We have to have a balanced approach. Part of the balance in our view is, through Bill C-54, to make sure we have appropriate mental health help for those who have committed serious personal and brutal offences. In Bill C-54, we need to find a balance to help victims with the issues they are now going to face as victims of these mental health offences.

It is a balancing act. This is not the complete answer. I do understand that there are two sides to it. We have been investing in prevention as a government and we will continue to invest, but we also have to help those who have already committed those offences.

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in July 2008, just outside of Portage la Prairie, Tim McLean was brutally murdered on a bus by Vince Li, who was later deemed not criminally responsible.

As members can imagine, this is something that is very important in my riding of Portage—Lisgar and in the province of Manitoba, as well as for Canadians across the country.

I want to ask my hon. colleague if he could talk a little about what this bill would do for victims and for their families. I am thinking of Tim's mom, Carol de Delley, who I have talked to many times. She has worked tirelessly. She is not only dealing with her horrendous grief, which never ends, for what her son had to endure and how her son died, but is also going through all of the fallout from it, with Vince Li going through different appeal processes and now being given passes.

I wonder if my colleague could talk very specifically about victims, and how this bill can help support them while not assigning blame to somebody who has been deemed not criminally responsible.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things in this legislation for victims, including one of the amendments that was brought forward by the New Democratic Party, which we unanimously accepted.

The amendment included a notification, if a victim asked to be notified, of where someone with a high-risk NCR designation would be living afterwards.

There is notification of when that discharge would happen. There are non-communication changes so that victims do not have to run into or have communication with someone who has a high-risk designation. We are ensuring the safety of victims.

One area I heard mentioned over and over again as I was chairing the justice committee was the review board. Every year victims go and listen to the review board's recommendations. They listen to the discussion and the evidence. They have to relive their victimization. They have to relive the serious offence that happened to them or their family.

This legislation allows for a longer-term period of healing for those victimized families.

• (2330)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chance to rise to thank the hon. member for Burlington again for the very collegial way in which he navigated the committee hearings on the bill, and also for the fact that, rather unusually, two opposition amendments were accepted. Again, I thank the member for allowing me to speak at the committee.

I still, as members may imagine, have grave concerns about the direction of this bill, and I would like to ask the hon. member for Burlington a question.

Does he have any theories as to why it was that a bill of this importance, dealing with the not criminally responsible regime, was brought to the floor of the House and developed by the Department of Justice without any consultation at all with the not criminally responsible review boards?

Mr. Schneider, who testified last week to this issue, said that the review boards were not consulted at all. I think this may be a case of the Conservative administration thinking that if something is not broken, it is going to fix it until it is.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for attending those meetings and for bringing forward amendments. I also thank her for her professionalism at committee.

The fact is that the minister came to committee and talked about consultation. There was consultation across this country with every provincial government of every stripe, and the discussion was that we needed to move forward on this high-risk designation.

We as a Conservative government like to take action. We like to move forward. We like to make decisions on what we should be doing and address whatever problem comes to our attention. In this case, there have been a number of issues across this country with respect to those who have been found NCR committing brutal, serious, personal criminal offences. We consulted with the provinces and with those in the business of prosecuting those offences. We asked what solutions they would like to see come forward in terms of changes to the legislation. Consultation was done, as the minister put forward, and that is why this bill is here today. We heard over and over again from victims at committee that we should pass this legislation as soon as possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise before the House for the second time this evening, this time, to speak to Bill C-54.

Bill C-54 is important. It is the latest bill on the Conservative government's crime agenda. Based on the controversial example of Dr. Guy Turcotte in Quebec, the government thinks it is better to impose its ideological measures.

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The profound, collective feeling of injustice triggered by the murder of his two children was a completely normal, healthy reaction. Indeed, he made us question the essence of justice and the future of our society and prompted us to ask other important questions of that sort. As parliamentarians, it is our duty to ask whether such a case, which fortunately, is very unusual, requires us to question where the justice system is going.

I would like to quote a senator who was talking about one of her bills dealing with this issue. I think this quotation is quite relevant:

Even though there may be the odd case that concerns us all, Canada has recognized mental health experts and a proven judicial system. Anger and pain should not dictate our courts. Nor should they dictate our laws. It is a mistake to go down this path because instead of building a peaceful society we would create an unstable, harder, less tolerant one. We would fall into a vicious cycle of repression and violence, precisely into which the [Prime Minister's] Conservatives—and Senator Boisvenu—seek to lead us.... We are talking about sick people. Punishment will not cure them. Prison does not cure.

That was Senator Hervieux-Payette, and those were her words regarding her own Bill S-214. I am quite certain that she will not mind if I draw a parallel with the current situation.

Is the government outraged that I would dare claim that it is playing politics at the expense of victims? The government is constantly accusing the opposition of siding with pedophiles, murderers and other criminals of that ilk, so I would simply like to try a little experiment.

The government has made several public statements on this bill, as did Senator Boisvenu and the mother of the two murdered children, Isabelle Gaston, whose state of mind I cannot even begin to imagine. The following is an excerpt of the statements of Senator Boisvenu and the Minister of Canadian Heritage at the announcement of Guy Turcotte's release on parole:

We believe that Isabelle Gaston doesn't deserve to live in fear of her children's killer, and neither do other victims...

Such decision is clearly undermining Canadians' confidence in our justice system.

That's why our Government will shortly introduce legislation to address Canadians' concerns about high-risk accused persons found Not Criminally Responsible on account of mental disorder who may pose a threat to public safety if released.

Well, if the government is not engaging in petty politics, and if the bill does not apply in any way to Dr. Turcotte's case, why are the Conservatives promoting the bill by using an emotionally charged and high-profile case involving children?

It smacks of demagoguery and is very dangerous when the government plays with Canadians' feelings and keeps them in the dark. The Conservatives know full well that this legislation will give the government an opportunity to capitalize on Canadians' empathy for Ms. Gaston, while at the same time never clearly publicly admitting that the legislation cannot, and will never, apply to Ms. Gaston even if Mr. Turcotte were to face a second trial. Moreover, when Ms. Gaston was questioned on a Quebec public affairs television program, she admitted to being unaware whether the legislation would even apply in her situation. To quote Ms. Gaston "As far as I am concerned, I do not know, it is perhaps too early to get a sense of whether it will have an impact on my situation—the process is ongoing."

This proves that all Ms. Gaston really wants is for things to change, and for her children not to have died in vain, which is entirely admirable. However, I seriously doubt that a more rigid position and the criminalization of mental illness will resolve the problem.

I use the word criminalization because, in truth, government members do not really believe in rehabilitation—we realized this when Bill C-10 was adopted. After listening to Senator Boisvenu, the jury is out as to whether he even believes that people genuinely suffer from psychological distress or severe mental illness.

In fact, the senator even wants the government to review the definitions of a number of mental illnesses whereby individuals may be found not criminally responsible.

● (2335)

Why? Simply because Mr. Boisvenu does not think that the incidence of mental illness could have increased so significantly over the past 10 or 15 years.

Why did the number of people found not criminally responsible increase twenty times? I do not think that the incidence of mental illness has increased at such a rate over the past 10 or 15 years. We must find out why there has been such a drastic increase in the number of these cases.

My colleague, the member for Gatineau, our justice critic, explained this during her opening speech. She said:

It is true that the percentage has risen over the years. However, and this is what it does not say, before 1991, if I recall correctly, when the amendment was made to the Criminal Code, the term was changed from "not guilty by reason of insanity" to "not criminally responsible by reason of mental disorder". At that point, summary conviction offences were also added, and this resulted in a lot of cases that had not been covered previously. Obviously that had an impact on the statistics. According to the government's responses, we are talking about a tiny percentage of cases where the individuals were found to be not criminally responsible.

To what point are mentally ill offenders dangerous?

This question was at the heart of an extensive study the Canadian government's Department of Public Safety conducted at the end of the 1990s. It recorded and analyzed more than 60 studies on this subject to properly identify the problems.

These studies looked at more than 15,000 offenders who had been released from prison or specialized hospitals and who were followed in their communities for a period of four to five-and-a-half years, on average. What were the findings?

When compared to offenders who do not have major psychological or psychiatric disorders, mentally disordered offenders are less likely to recidivate violently.

Second, mentally disordered offenders are not always actively psychotic. They may be in remission or their symptoms are being managed by medication.

The study also evaluated the relative importance of different risk factors. Many mental health professionals place considerable emphasis on "clinical" variables. Examples are length of hospitalization and type of mental disorder (e.g., schizophrenia, manic-depression). The meta-analysis found that these variables demonstrate very weak associations with violent re-offending. Much more potent predictors of violent recidivism are the factors typically found to predict violence among non-disordered offenders. Examples of these risk factors are criminal history, unemployment and family problems.

When the Minister of Justice said in his opening speech on second reading that the objective of the proposed reforms was not to impose criminal penalties on individuals found by a court to be not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder, that was only half true, in fact.

In reality, Bill C-54 will divide the clientele into two types of cases: those who meet the criteria in Bill C-54 and those who do not meet those criteria, even though they have all been found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder. This means that accused persons whose cases meet the criteria and who are found to be high-risk accused could be held in custody with no possibility of release by the review board as long as the court has not revoked the finding.

Why place people who are not criminally responsible outside the jurisdiction of the review boards that deal with mental disorders, quasi-judicial tribunals that are composed of psychiatrists, not judges? Only a court could find an accused to be “high-risk” and then revoke that finding, at present. Before revoking it, the court would seek the recommendation of the mental disorder review board, but the final decision would no longer be the board’s.

In Quebec, the mental disorder review board makes decisions concerning individuals who have been found unfit to stand trial or not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder.

As long as the accused is not discharged unconditionally or found fit to stand trial, a review must be held each year. With Bill C-54, that time will be extended to three years, and this could cause a number of problems, according to the experts with the Canadian Forensic Mental Health Network. It would prompt defence counsel to stop pleading not criminally responsible and opt for custodial prison sentences in the traditional prison system. In addition, individuals found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder would not receive proper care, but they would still present a danger when they were released.

• (2340)

The study I referred to earlier also found that the similarities between risk factors for offenders with mental disorders and other offenders suggest that there is a point at which health care services and the criminal justice system could integrate their approaches in order to effectively manage offenders with mental disorders.

There are two specific areas where co-operation between the two systems is possible: risk assessment and rehabilitation of offenders. I am not citing that study to embarrass anyone, but simply to try to make the government members understand the consequences of deinstitutionalization, poverty and the criminalization of mental health problems. Prison does not cure people.

This bill, like so many others, was drafted without much thought to the consequences and without consultation, in order to make the public, and particularly the Conservative base, believe that this government is tough on crime. In reality, this bill would probably not apply to the case of Guy Turcotte.

Clause 12 of Bill C-54 adds a new section to the Criminal Code, section 672.64, which lists the conditions that must be met in order for a person to be considered high-risk:

672.64 (1) On application made by the prosecutor before any disposition to discharge an accused absolutely, the court may, at the conclusion of a hearing, find the accused to be a high-risk accused if the accused has been found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder for a serious personal injury offence, as defined in subsection 672.81(1.3), the accused was 18 years of age or more at the time of the commission of the offence and

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(a) the court is satisfied that there is a substantial likelihood that the accused will use violence that could endanger the life or safety of another person; or

(b) the court is of the opinion that the acts that constitute the offence were of such a brutal nature as to indicate a risk of grave physical or psychological harm to another person.

For Guy Turcotte to be declared an assumed high-risk accused, the judge has to be convinced, beyond a doubt, that he would likely seriously harm another person or could endanger the life of another person. Everyone agrees that the murders were both brutal and grotesque. I, too, have children. However, that is not what justice must decide. Rather, it should focus on whether or not there is a chance the accused will reoffend.

Given the decision made, the experts were obviously able to convince the judge that this was not the case. I am going to outline the five criteria that the judge must take into consideration—and he must take all of them into consideration—when determining whether the individual is a high-risk accused.

He must consider the nature and circumstances of the offence, any pattern of repetitive behaviour of which the offence forms a part, the accused’s current mental condition, the past and expected course of the accused’s treatment, including the accused’s willingness to follow treatment, and the opinions of experts who have examined the accused. If one must take into consideration all these criteria, the Turcotte case does not at all fit, given the experts’ opinions, his mental condition and the treatments and therapies that he is following.

The nature of the offence is the only criterion that might lead a judge to consider him dangerous. However, given his mental condition at the time, and based on what the judge took into consideration, the risk of reoffending is very low. According to the Conservatives’ bill, Guy Turcotte would not be a high-risk accused.

The one thing I agree on is that victims should be at the centre of the process. The problem is that the bill says very little on this aspect.

In closing, I want to reiterate that the government must realize the importance of providing real support to victims of crime, including by following up on more than one recommendation of the report by the ombudsman for victims of crime. It must also understand the whole psychosocial structure surrounding prevention, the study of risk factors, research, health care and rehabilitation.

It is difficult because each case is unique, but experts have tools to try to have everyone make progress. Some are probably beyond redemption, but just like with the concept of high-risk accused or mental disorder, it is certainly not up to politicians, or even the legal profession to establish the foundations. It is up to psychiatrists and doctors.

While referring to the former cardiologist’s case, the Minister of Canadian Heritage said that such decision obviously undermines Canadians’ confidence in our justice system. However, the minister was not able to say how this desire to put victims at the centre of the process would translate into concrete measures.

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• (2345)

That is another contradiction in the Conservatives' logic, and it is the reason why we presented a number of amendments in committee. In fact, one of those amendments was accepted, and it is one of the few that the Conservative government has accepted in any committee.

The amendment would inform victims, at their request, of the address of a person already found to be not criminally responsible for a crime so that the victim can avoid the area for his or her own well-being. It is one of the examples that showed that we do care about the victims. We want to improve this bill so that it reflects this concern.

One of the reasons why we will be supporting this bill is that we were able to have the Conservatives accept a second amendment that would require the government—no matter which party is in power in five years, that is in 2018—to have a committee study and re-examine the situation.

There are still many concerns about this bill, and I have pointed out a few of them. I think it is worthwhile examining them. There are other concerns that I did not have the time to address in my speech. They were brought up by experts, or in committee, and had to do with the possibility that this bill may be unconstitutional.

The validity of such measures is obviously based on the victims' rights, but also the rights of those deemed to be not criminally responsible for the acts committed. These laws must also be protected. In that sense, a contradiction could easily lead to interpretation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The committee was informed of concerns by the media. That is why, five years after the bill becomes law, such a study would be pertinent.

In my speech, I made sure that I talked about the danger of politicizing cases like the Guy Turcotte case. I am certain that other members could cite similar cases that have occurred in their riding or region. These cases are very delicate and they affect us.

I already mentioned that I have children. Anyone who has young children will be emotional about a situation like that. It is the reason why such a delicate and sensitive situation must be handled by parliamentarians in the same manner, that is in a delicate and sensitive manner. These types of cases must not be used to promote a political agenda.

The reference made by the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Senator Boisvenu to what I just mentioned was the second speech made on the same bill. It was announced twice. The government must be very careful, because this kind of issue is very volatile. Again, the politicization of these cases has muddied the waters for the collective debate we should be holding on this issue. This makes it much more difficult to find our way.

In the future, for law and order bills on crime, I would like the government to be much more sensitive to the reactions it causes and the way they interfere with the debate when similar bills are introduced.

On this side of the House, we showed we were willing to work with the government. We will do so by voting for this bill, among

other things. In addition, we demonstrated our co-operation by proposing and expediting the passage of Bill C-2, which allows for the group prosecution of biker gangs.

We will continue to work on this issue, but we need the government's co-operation in order to have a healthy and useful debate for Canadians.

• (2350)

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I found one of my hon. colleague's comments interesting. Maybe the member is not aware, so I would like to bring his to attention this. It was the discussion about medical experts and having them comment. The review panels at present are composed of three members, and one of them is a judge and not a medical expert. There was an amendment put forward that the committee did not accept because it would have limited the panel to medical experts only. However, the review panels already have judicial expertise on them.

Based on the presentation tonight, is the member recommending that those voices not be heard and that, for example, there would be changes to the review panels so they would consist of all medical experts and no longer have judicial representation on them?

• (2355)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if it is a question of interpretation, but that is not exactly what I said.

Everyone needs to be able to understand their role. Psychiatrists or doctors who specialize in the underlying issues need to be involved in the process. Judges and lawyers who understand the legal issues must also be involved.

It is not a question of excluding anyone. I think that each person needs to understand their role, and the legislation needs to provide a framework for each person's role so that those roles complement one another.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his speech, and I would like to assure the constituents in the riding of Rimouski that they are being well served by their MP here in the House.

The member has often mentioned the case of Guy Turcotte. I would like to quote his ex-wife, Isabelle Gaston, and then I would like to hear the member's comments:

Even if I devote my time to changing the justice system, if ministers, deputy ministers, the Barreau and the Collège des médecins do not change their ways, then injustices like this one will continue.

Can the member comment on that?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, indeed, that statement came from someone who suffered a terrible tragedy.

Quite frankly, it is very difficult for me to imagine what she went through, even though I have two young children. I think she is right in the sense that victims of a crime like this one feel extremely disadvantaged and helpless when the offence is committed by someone who is found not criminally responsible. They feel as though the justice system has let them down.

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That is why it is never a bad idea to examine these elements of the justice system. In this case, Bill C-54 deals with the issue of individuals found not criminally responsible. If victims feel as though the system ignored their needs and their situation, we need to be able to comfort those victims through possible changes to the system, but again, from a perspective that does not violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, for instance, or use the issue for political gain.

These debates are extremely important and very sensitive, and this matter must be dealt with accordingly.

[*English*]

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member ended by talking about this issue being clouded in fog. I am trying to pierce through that fog to really see the position of the NDP on this issue. He talked a lot about victims and why some of the measures in this legislation were important.

I attended the justice committee and I attended Dr. Isabelle Gaston's session. I found her to be one of the most compelling witnesses I have heard in my time in Parliament. She was not just speaking as a victim, but also as a physician and somebody who was advocating on this issue. She asked critics to stop saying that she lacked empathy because she supported the legislation.

We have heard a lot about stigma tonight. Certainly that horrendous case in Quebec caused stigma.

Would it not reduce that stigma if victims and victims' families were to feel that the law addressed their concerns for public safety going forward?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, ideally, I would agree with the member for Durham. However, I am not convinced that the bill addresses the issue specifically.

I believe that we can see how the bill will be implemented and how the changes will benefit the victims and families of victims of criminal acts committed by someone deemed to be not criminally responsible.

That is the reason why I am pleased that there will be a review after the bill has been adopted, hence after the legislation goes into effect. We will be able to study how the lives of victims and the people affected by the crime have been enhanced. We shall see whether or not that is the case. I hope so. If not, the review will allow us to revisit the law.

Ms. Gaston's testimony was very emotional. I do not believe that she lacks empathy, quite the opposite. Her circumstances are extremely difficult and she sees how her own experience can help improve the judicial system, not just for herself, but also for other people who are experiencing the same thing.

• (2400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques will have three and a half minutes for questions and comments when the House resumes debate on the motion.

[*English*]

It being midnight, pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, May 22, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at midnight.)

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