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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, November 4, 2013**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 4, 2013

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

### DISABILITY TAX CREDIT PROMOTERS RESTRICTIONS ACT

The House resumed from October 24 consideration of the motion that Bill C-462, An Act restricting the fees charged by promoters of the disability tax credit and making consequential amendments to the Tax Court of Canada Act, be read the third time and passed.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to stand in the House of Commons to speak on legislation and other matters. The bill on the disability tax credit, which I thank the member opposite for introducing, is a vivid reminder of how important our work is.

Persons with disabilities face many barriers or challenges to live full lives. We have real opportunities, as lawmakers, to make a difference in their participation in communities. There are obvious physical barriers to address for this sector. However, today we address equally important barriers, namely financial barriers. We have an opportunity in our tax laws to ensure fairness, justice and equality for persons with disabilities, who lose significant income that others might be able to earn more easily.

Before speaking directly on this legislation, let me recognize the good work done by our current critic for persons with disabilities, the member for Montcalm, and critic for the Canada Revenue Agency, the member for Victoria. They have been outstanding new members of our caucus and serve their constituencies and critic areas well.

I also have to pay tribute to the extraordinary work done on the disability tax credit by a former NDP critic, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster. He has been legendary, both in our caucus and in the persons with disabilities networks, for crossing the country to facilitate workshops on the disability tax credit. He has been holding disability tax credit workshops for nine years now in his own riding.

I recently read a comment from a person named George, acknowledging how informative these sessions were. George was grateful that he was able, with the retroactive feature, to secure a tax

credit of over \$13,000. There are thousands of Canadians who have benefited from these seminars.

My own riding staff in Nickel Belt have also done outstanding work, to inform people and then help them navigate the bureaucratic channels to receive their money. My office wants to make sure that every eligible Nickel Belt resident knows how to access this legitimate entitlement under the Income Tax Act.

As we know, many persons with disabilities struggle from cheque to cheque or find themselves below poverty levels. The disability tax credit can amount to up to \$1,380 per year and can be claimed retroactively for up to 10 years. It is transferrable to spouses and other family members if the income of the relative with a disability or infirmity is too low. I will talk about some of these cases in a minute.

Our party has made it clear that we support this legislation at the third reading and report stage. We have noted, though, that a study is needed to improve recommendations about the consultants and other equally important issues.

Certainly it is necessary to establish limits on maximum fees charged by promoters. However, the biggest issues related to the disability tax credit are not addressed in this bill. The application process for the tax credit is not transparent and persons with disabilities have trouble obtaining it.

As a northern Ontario member of Parliament, in a vast riding, I know the cuts by the Conservative government to the Canada Revenue Agency have had a real impact on services offered to Canadians. Closures of Canada Revenue Agency offices across Canada discriminate against persons with disabilities who often need to meet with an adviser.

These issues have become clear when I have talked to people in my riding for whom my staff and I have tried to help secure a disability tax credit.

*Private Members' Business*

These people have a right to this money, but they are at a supreme disadvantage. My constituents tell me that without knowing how much money they will get, they have to sign an “authorization of representation” form to authorize consultants, such as National Benefit Authority, to represent them. They have all signed the “authorization or cancelling a representative” Canada Revenue Agency form, T1013, which gives permission to the NBA to access their Canada Revenue Agency account. They have to agree to pay a fee of as much as 30% of the money that the firm gets for the constituent.

The amount of the credit and the refund is complicated by whether the constituent has taxable income or might be transferred to a spouse.

When helped by my staff, people have shared how upset they were when they realized they could have come to my office in the first place, received the assistance and not had to pay the consultancy fees. In one case a woman was eligible for DTC in the amount of \$4,800, but the firm took \$1,600 which left her with \$3,200. If she had not gone with the firm, she would have received the entire amount.

Some of these firms advertise in local newspapers, asking people with disabilities to go to them for help. People go, not knowing that they are being charged for their services. If they had only gone to the MP's office, they would have received all of these services for free.

Another constituent who had been getting the DTC was disqualified without any real explanation and could not talk to a person at CRA. This is not right for anyone, but especially for the elderly or disabled. They want to talk to a person.

Many Canadians try to contact the CRA, but it is increasingly more difficult. They get a message on the telephone asking them to press one, press two, or “Sorry, you pressed the wrong number, so you have to call back”. This is as equally frustrating for people with disabilities as for seniors. This has become a real problem for so many folks trying to access help from the Canada Revenue Agency.

In the north, we have seen cuts to offices that now have fewer people, and since the decision in 2012 to have no direct dealing with people, there have been more and more frustrated constituents. The 1-800 and Internet services can be extremely frustrating, particularly for people who already face enough barriers in their lives.

Sometimes government offices advise people to visit my MP office for assistance. Imagine going to a government office and because of all of the cutbacks to Service Canada that the Conservative government has made, the people who work there will advise that they would get better and faster service at their MP's office.

The Government of Canada is missing in action. Imagine the Government of Canada not being in the business of serving Canadians, but downloading and off-loading to the offices of MPs. The government is missing in action in northern Ontario. Missing persons posters for the Government of Canada could be put up in post offices with what the Conservatives have done to government services.

Another problem is when a doctor refuses to complete the application. We have had three cases where people have been told by their doctor that they do not qualify and who would not complete the form. In one case the person had the DTC previously, but the doctor refused to complete the form. The person did not then feel comfortable going to another doctor.

Let me elaborate on the circumstances of this person. He had been collecting DTC for many years, but had to reapply and get the doctor to re-sign the forms. This gentleman, whom I know quite well, is obviously disabled. He has one arm shorter than the other and is blind in one eye, yet the doctor figured he could get a job.

This is something that has to be done. I do not know why some doctors act this way. I think it should be up to the CRA, especially when a disabled person is already collecting DTC.

In 90% of the cases regarding DTC and CRA, people had to go back to their doctors for more information or clarification. Quite a few of the DTC cases went to the review level to provide additional information. This process can take up to one year before they receive any information.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Carmela Hutchison, president of the DisAbled Women's Network of Canada, the Council of Canadians with Disabilities and the DisAbled Women's Network of Canada support the objectives of Bill C-462 and agree that persons with disabilities are fully entitled to protection from the unreasonable fees being charged by financial promoters.

We want real support for this program and better protection against financial abuse and therefore we want to impose restrictions on the fees charged by promoters to people with disabilities.

[*English*]

Let us get this right. Let us fix the problem with DTC. Let us simplify the application process to make it more accessible for persons with disabilities. Let us reverse cuts to the CRA and provide it with necessary resources to provide information sessions on the—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill C-462, and I want to thank my colleague, the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who is a fellow member of the class of 2000. I know many in the House, my colleagues from Brant and Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, have remarked on a number of occasions that the class of 2000 was probably one of the strongest and most capable collection of members of Parliament to come to the House in generations. I thank them for that.

The member's bill is certainly well-intentioned. I want to congratulate her on it. The bill seeks to restrict the fees that consultants can charge disabled Canadians who need help with applying for the disability tax credit.

It seems that since 2005, a cottage industry of consultants has sprung up to help Canadians apply for the disability tax credit. Although many of these businesses are legitimate and provide a useful service, there are some that are charging outrageous fees to help guide people through the application process.

I agree with my colleague that it is important to protect persons with disabilities from being taken advantage of like this. Therefore, as with many of my colleagues from all parties, I will be supporting this bill, as I hope my Liberal caucus colleagues will as well.

However, I want to spend some time speaking about some of the shortcomings of the bill. It has some flaws that give me concern, and I believe they should be corrected. I would also like to talk about the reason the bill is needed in the first place and how additional steps are needed to fix the problems. Finally, I would like to talk about a note of caution. The disability tax credit is essential to many support programs for people with disabilities, so we need to ensure these changes would not make it more difficult to get help when they need to apply for this credit.

My first area of concern is that the bill may be too vague. The bill does not make it clear who exactly would be affected by the new regulations on charging fees. Right now, there may be a risk that legitimate accountants, tax filers, or doctors could accidentally be hurt by the bill.

In the submission of the Canadian Medical Association, for example, it noted that:

as currently written, Bill C-462 proposes to apply the same requirements to physicians as to third-party companies if physicians apply a fee for form completion, a typical practice for uninsured physician services.

As the CMA points out, there are already guidelines for these types of physician fees in provincial and territorial medical regulations.

The member says her proposal is targeted at third-party promoters other than normal tax preparers and accountants. In order to ensure the legislation would only affect the right people, it needs to be made more clear.

On a similar note, although the bill seeks to put a cap on how much consultants can charge to help file for the credit, the bill does not make it clear how high that cap would be. The finance committee has heard that the CRA would be in charge of setting the level for the

fee cap, but CRA staff were unable to give the committee any idea of how high or low that level might be.

I understand the member wished to avoid including specifics so that the CRA could consult with stakeholders before setting an appropriate cap. While I understand and appreciate her concern on this point, it is nonetheless difficult for tax filing professionals to plan ahead if they do not know whether, or by how much, their fees would have to change. In order to ensure that legitimate businesses are not hurt by the bill, the text must be more clear about unfair fee levels.

My second concern is that the bill would not tackle the root of the problem and may reduce the ability of persons with disabilities to access programs designed to support them.

●(1115)

Although I believe the member has proposed this bill with the very best of intentions, we must be sure that it would not have the unwanted effect of reducing the amount of disability tax credits that Canadians claim. As we know, the cost of this tax credit to the treasury has grown quite a lot in the past few years. Some consultants may be abusing the system, but we must keep in mind that others are clearly successful at ensuring that Canadians with disabilities get access to the money they need and deserve. It makes sense to restrict the fees consultants can charge to help with the tax credit; no one should be taking advantage of people who live with disabilities. However, we must ensure that by restricting these fees we do not also restrict disabled Canadians' access to this tax credit.

The fact that these consultants exist in the first place suggests that it is hard to file for this tax credit. The Canadian Medical Association noted in its submission that it was:

...concerned that one of the reasons individuals may be engaging the services of third-party companies is a lack of awareness of the purpose and benefits of the Disability Tax Credit. Additional efforts are required to ensure that the Disability Tax Credit form be more informative and user-friendly for patients.

Therefore, I want to call on the member to address this issue. The process to apply for this tax credit should be made simpler and the cuts to CRA staff should be reversed so that people struggling with the application process can get the help they need without having to pay through the nose for it.

This brings me to my third point. It is important to make the disability tax credit easy to access because applicants have to be eligible for the tax credit in order to qualify for a number of other support programs. Representatives of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities said in their submissions:

The Disability Tax Credit was initially designed as a tax fairness measure recognizing that people with disabilities have additional disability-related expenses. Disability Tax Credit eligibility is now the determinant for accessing other benefits and programs....

Some of these other programs include the registered disabilities savings plan, the disability tax credit benefit, the working income tax benefit for persons with disabilities, and the disability accommodation benefit. As we know, it also spills into a number of provincial programs; certainly it does in Nova Scotia.

*Private Members' Business*

Because of a number of benefits and the fact that individuals can back-file for up to 10 years, there is a huge amount of money available to people who qualify for this credit. The disability tax credit really is a gatekeeper for disability benefits, and qualifying for the credit can mean tens of thousands of dollars in relief for a disabled person. We need to ensure that whatever changes we make do not prevent people who need help from filing for the tax credit and getting that help. We do not want to set out to help persons with disabilities only to end up hurting them in the end.

The bill seeks to prevent some consultants from taking advantage of persons with disabilities, but there is a risk that this legislation, if not applied properly, could also prevent legitimate consultants from doing their job. That would be like throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

In conclusion, it is important to me that we make sure that disabilities do not get in the way of people living a full and happy life. Disabilities impose extra costs on those involved. Because of this, Canada has a number of programs designed specifically around the disability tax credit. However, it is not helpful to set up a program to help people that makes it so difficult that people cannot access it or that requires them to pay ridiculous fees to consultants to help them through the application.

The bill has good intentions. It may not be perfect, but it is a step in the right direction. I recommend that some parts of the bill be updated so that it would be sure to target problem areas and not negatively affect people. I also recommend that the government look more generally at simplifying the application process for the tax credit. Those are my comments.

• (1120)

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before I start my comments, I should clarify something. I think the member for Cape Breton—Canso was a little confused. I know that the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound said that the class of 2000 was rather impressive. However, he also said, and this is where the misunderstanding comes in, that the class of 2004 was far superior. I want to get on the record that the class of 2004 was, in fact, the better of the two.

I am thankful for the chance to outline both the need for and the benefits of this legislation. I really relish the opportunity to demonstrate how our government is working to make a real difference in the lives of Canadians with disabilities by providing them with increased opportunities to participate fully in society. There is no better example of this than the disability tax credit promoters restriction act before us today.

In a nutshell, this legislation is about ensuring the fair and equitable treatment of people with disabilities when it comes to applying for the disability tax credit program. Bill C-462, as it is entitled, does so by making sure that a tax credit intended solely for people facing serious health challenges goes to those individuals and family members who care for them. It would restrict the fees charged by private sector promoters who would profit from their circumstances.

The act's objective is comparable to that of the Tax Rebate Discounting Act, which protects all Canadians filing tax returns from unscrupulous business operators. It places limits on how much a

discounter can charge for a discounted income tax refund. However, Bill C-462 focuses specifically on the needs and interests of people with disabilities and their supporting family members who rely on this tax credit. It recognizes the impact of disability-related costs on an individual's ability to pay tax and it would lessen the tax burden. Its intent is to curb the practice of charging outrageously high fees for services offered by promoters who help such individuals to fill out a small part of the application form, which is just a very small part of the process.

Let me explain just how grave this problem is and why we must act.

The Canada Revenue Agency, the CRA, receives an average of about 200,000 applications for tax credits each year. Of this total, it is estimated that as many as 9,000 of these requests received from taxpayers use the service of disability tax credit promoters. One needs to appreciate that the Income Tax Act allows someone with a disability who meets the criteria to request a reassessment dating back 10 years when applying for the disability tax credit program. This means, of course, that if the individual claim is successful, someone with a disability could get an income tax refund as high as \$10,000 or \$15,000, or even higher. I have seen them higher than that.

While this is good news for people who need the financial support to help defray the cost of therapies, medications, and other supports for the basic activities of daily living, not all of this money necessarily ends up in the pockets of the people who have the disabilities. That is because some promoters charge contingency fees as high as 30% and 40% of the tax refund. Even a 30% fee means that a refund going back a decade could yield a promoter a cheque between \$3,000 and \$4,500 just for filling out a few lines on an application form. That money is intended for Canadians with disabilities and the family members who care for them, not tax promoters who fill out a simple form that requires little or no effort.

As several speakers have already noted, CRA provides a wide array of information and assistance related to the application and adjustment process for the disability tax credit program. CRA telephone agents can help to demystify the process and explain how the form needs to be filled out. As mentioned, many members of Parliaments' offices are also helpful.

Instead, people are often told by promoters that they have insider knowledge. Ironically, these promoters also suggest that only they can ensure that people who may be eligible for tax credits will receive all the money to which they are entitled. That is quite a claim, given that the promoters expect to receive such a high percentage of the eventual refund.

*Private Members' Business*

•(1125)

At the moment, there are no provisions in federal legislation to prevent or restrict such practices. That is why we need Bill C-462: it would put an end to these ethically questionable business practices. At the same time, it would support a functioning marketplace for those with disabilities who choose to use the services of a disability tax credit promoter.

Certainly there are many legitimate businesses that provide a valuable service to the people who want help in applying for tax credits. We do not have a problem with that, but that is not what we are addressing here with this bill. We are not out to stop anyone from providing services as long as the fees are reasonable.

The provisions in this proposed legislation are designed to make sure that people with disabilities will not be charged excessive rates. We want to protect them from anyone who tries to capitalize on their tax credit by shortchanging them.

Equally important, the bill would assist caregivers by reducing the cost of applying for the tax credit so that they can redirect that money into helping the people in their care.

This proposed legislation is a clear demonstration of our government's pledge to ensure the sound use of public finances, as it would put an end to the days of paying out millions to tax promoters instead of providing funds to people with disabilities who really need the help.

The provisions in Bill C-462 would also serve as a deterrent, since any firm that tries to skirt the new rules would face harsh penalties in the future. These amendments would restrict the fees that could be charged or accepted by promoters for preparing a disability tax credit application on behalf of someone with a disability.

A maximum fee would be established under the disability tax credit promoters restriction act, and anyone who failed to respect the fee would face penalties. A minimum penalty of \$1,000 would apply when the maximum fee is exceeded.

Exactly what the maximum rate should be would only be determined following public consultations. The discounter and tax preparation industry would definitely be a part of the consultations when the maximum fee is established through the regulatory process.

Another important feature of the bill is that it would require promoters to notify the CRA when more than the maximum fee has been charged. Failure to inform the agency when an excess fee is charged would be an offence and result in a \$1,000 to \$25,000 fine.

There is no shortage of sound reasons to back the disability tax credit promoters restrictions act, and there are countless good reasons to give it all-party support. None is more important than the fact that we will be looking out for the hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities who apply for the disability tax credit each year, ensuring that their needs and best interests are met.

Bill C-462 would ensure the fair and equitable treatment of Canadians with disabilities, providing them with the same protections other Canadians enjoy thanks to the Tax Rebate Discounting Act.

The legislation would provide assurance to qualifying Canadians with disabilities that they will receive the full amount of financial support to which they are entitled. How could any parliamentarian not agree with that?

In my riding, one of my staff, Sue Dingwall, has been devoted to helping people with the disability tax credit program. In the last four years, this staff member has helped people with disabilities receive over \$8 million. Close to 2,000 people in my riding have received \$8 million as a result of Sue Dingwall's efforts; if these fly-by-night operators were preparing those tax returns, disabled people would have lost maybe \$2.4 million of that \$8 million. This money belongs in the pockets of those poor people on disability and the people who care for them.

•(1130)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-462, An Act restricting the fees charged by promoters of the disability tax credit and making consequential amendments to the Tax Court of Canada Act. This is an important issue for me. I think that a significant part of the work I do as a member of Parliament is to ensure that my constituents receive at the very least the government services they are entitled to.

I would like to provide a brief background as to why we have reached this point. The non-refundable tax credit allocated to persons with disabilities can go up to \$1,380 per year. It is given to people with a severe and prolonged impairment of physical or mental functions. This amount includes a supplement for persons under 18 years of age. To be eligible, persons with disabilities must have a form filled out by a health care professional such as a doctor, optometrist, audiologist, occupational therapist, psychologist or speech therapist. This form may be submitted at any time.

In 2005, the government changed the eligibility criteria for the disability tax credit by allowing the tax credit to be claimed retroactively. At that time, promoters started offering services to taxpayers in order to help them maximize their tax credit and refund. It later became clear that some unscrupulous promoters were abusing the system by making false entries in order to maximize the fees they could charge their clients. In addition to false entries, there are cases where promoters charged their clients fees equal to up to 30% of the refund. It is despicable that these people are profiting from the misery of the most vulnerable in this way.

*Private Members' Business*

Basically, there are two problems: the misleading entries and the high fees charged by promoters to fill out the disability tax credit request. Bill C-462 addresses the first problem by prohibiting promoters from charging more than an established maximum fee, which will be established by the Governor in Council. The bill also addresses the problem of fraud by establishing that any promoter who makes false or deceptive entries will be subject to fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$25,000. These are offences under the Criminal Code and can lead to a criminal record.

Although I support this bill, which seeks to crack down on fraud and set fee ceilings for those who help people with disabilities claim these tax credits, I would like to point out the irony of this situation. The question we should be asking ourselves is this: why do vulnerable people have to call upon this type of specialist to receive a tax credit?

I think that the disability tax credit application process is simply too complex. It is not right that taxpayers, particularly those living below the poverty line, have to turn to tax experts, accountants, tax preparers or other third parties in order to have access to the money that the government owes them.

In committee, Dr. Karen Cohen, the chief executive officer of the Canadian Psychological Association, criticized the complexity of the process for claiming the tax credit. She said:

The Canadian Psychological Association supports this bill...However, it is important to address what might be the underlying cause driving the use of promoters. If it is indeed the lack of clarity for taxpayers and health practitioners, then the criterion certificates themselves should be revised to enhance the fairness of assessments.

Gail Beck, a member of the board of directors of the Canadian Medical Association, proposed amending the form. She said:

We suggest the disability tax credit form be revised to be more informative and user-friendly for patients. Form 2201 should explain more clearly to patients the reason behind the tax credit and explicitly indicate that there is no need to use third-party companies to submit the claim to CRA.

● (1135)

Carmela Hutchison of the DisAbled Women's Network of Canada reminded the committee that the Canadian government needs to do a broader review of tax measures for people with disabilities in order to create greater access and fairness. She proposed the following, and I quote:

Streamlined process and strategy should allow people to have greater access to programs, clear policies, and forms available online to create savings that can be directed to increased benefits and programs for disabled people.

She added:

Make the Canada pension plan disability program, disability tax credit, and other federal government forms ones you can save as you work through them.

Review the "other qualified professionals" list of who can sign a disability tax credit application. Prohibit billing above a set amount for forms for any provincial, federal, or municipal government program by either professionals or for-profit companies. Protect people from exploitation and outright financial abuse by ensuring some standards for industry promoters and financial advisors of people with disabilities.

That is quite the list of suggestions, but she is right. Instead of tinkering with legal measures that apply to promoters of the disability tax credit, the government should be conducting a more comprehensive review of the taxation of persons with disabilities.

The red tape people have to cut through to access to the disability tax credit reminds me of the guaranteed income supplement. When I arrived at the House of Commons I was quite shocked to learn that 160,000 seniors who were eligible for the GIS were not receiving any benefits because the Liberals and Conservatives had bothered to contact them.

The problem was identified in 2001, but the government insisted on maintaining its red tape. It is estimated that, for the whole of Canada, this helped the government generate savings of \$300 million on the backs of its poorest seniors.

In March 2012, I proposed amendments to the Old Age Security Act to provide for automatic enrolment for the GIS. My bill forced the federal government to take the necessary steps to reach recipients. A few weeks after I introduced my bill, the government finally picked it up and proposed a proactive mechanism to contact eligible seniors.

I am pleased to see that this problem is finally being resolved. If I was part of the solution, then so much the better. Similarly, I think it is time to address the problem of the disability tax credit. It is time to make the application process easier. We could also change the criteria for accessing the program because we hear many horror stories about people with disabilities being victims of dubious administrative decisions.

In October, my colleagues from Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel and Burnaby—New Westminster and I organized two information sessions about this. There was a turnout of about 60 people who wanted to learn more about this tax credit. They all complained about how complicated and unclear the process for getting the credit is.

I do not see why people cannot get proper assistance from officials. We see that, more and more, the Conservative government's cuts to the Canada Revenue Agency and other parts of the public service are having a real impact on the services provided to Canadians and those provided in my riding.

Cuts to the public service have two consequences. First, they are felt on the front lines. Eliminating CRA regional program adviser positions jeopardizes information sessions on the disability tax credit. Those information sessions are normally given by public servants. Now NDP members of Parliament are having to take on that job. This sort of thing should not be happening.

● (1140)

Closing Canada Revenue Agency counters throughout the country also penalizes people with disabilities because they often need to meet with an adviser. It is high time the government reviewed its budget cuts and stopped saving money at the expense of the disabled and those most in need.



*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and deliver the final NDP speech on Bill C-462.

This is an important bill. I would like to thank the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for introducing it. The Standing Committee on Finance reviewed it and asked the appropriate and relevant questions about the bill's scope. Accordingly, it is helpful to be able to conclude the debate with some observations about what happened and some testimony that we heard in the Standing Committee on Finance.

It is important that people know that this bill will limit a consultant's ability to charge fees to help people with disabilities claim a non-refundable tax credit that they are entitled to when they file their taxes. These consultants can play a significant role in helping people with disabilities. A witness from the National Benefit Authority appeared before the committee and made that very relevant point.

However—and I believe that this was acknowledged by witnesses and also members of the Standing Committee on Finance—there are people who are not as well-intentioned who might take advantage of vulnerable people with disabilities to put their hands on a larger share of the refund.

In fact, even in the case of legitimate organizations, commissions of up to 30% of the refundable amount are often charged. That is a problem. I could say that the bill, which I support and encourage my colleagues to support, addresses one symptom of the problem, but not necessarily the cause of the problem.

In fact, there are two reasons for involving consultants in the process. The first, and the one I am most concerned about, has to do with tax simplification. In this case, the tax credit system is complex. People who are eligible for this tax credit are not contacted and informed that they are eligible. They have to find out about it themselves. The form is complex, and that is a problem. This was mentioned many times by different witnesses, including the Canadian Medical Association. When it appeared before the committee, the association asked this question:

...why do vulnerable people need to go to these promoters [or consultants] in the first place? We [the Canadian Medical Association] suggest the disability tax credit form be revised to be more informative and user-friendly for patients. Form 2201 [the form in question] should explain more clearly to patients the reason behind the tax credit and explicitly indicate that there is no need to use third-party companies to submit the claim to CRA.

This is a complex situation. There are several tax credits for which people do not feel the need to use consultants or promoters. They can claim these credits themselves, whether it is a refundable or non-refundable tax credit.

If there are lots of people who are not aware that this tax credit exists, that means there is a problem. This is the second problem. The second problem with this tax credit that will also have to be fixed is the lack of information being made available. A number of my colleagues mentioned the excellent work done by my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster, who visited various ridings to inform people and let them know that they are entitled to this tax credit. In most cases, we held information sessions for some 50, 100

or even 150 people who learned that they were entitled to this tax credit.

I think everyone agrees that it should be up to the Canada Revenue Agency to inform people, especially in cases where there is insufficient information. However, the Canada Revenue Agency struggles to be able to provide adequate information to the general public. There are several reasons for that, including the Conservative government's decisions dating at least as far back as 2011. The government eliminated a number of regional program adviser positions, which jeopardized the information sessions on various topics, including those on the disability tax credit. It also closed Canada Revenue Agency counters. A counter in Rimouski was closed down. I do not think there are any left in Canada, or at least there will not be any left soon. These are the places where people could go for information directly, or they would employ people who would travel to give different information sessions.

● (1145)

That option no longer exists. The Canada Revenue Agency's ability to provide this information has been significantly reduced. Also, the numbers associated with the budget cuts have already been mentioned a few times. These cuts amount to a quarter of a billion dollars for the Canada Revenue Agency alone, or \$250 million. Three thousand people work for the Canada Revenue Agency. The agency's information mandate is therefore at risk, and taxpayers, or the persons with disabilities in this case, are paying the price.

Therefore, there is much to do in terms of information as well as tax simplification. Indeed, regarding the information issue, we received a comment from the representative of the National Benefit Authority, an agency of promoters and consultants focusing on tax credits. He mentioned that his organization spent over \$1 million last year to raise public awareness.

As things now stand, private promoters are obviously providing a completely legal and legitimate service. The fact remains that this organization has spent \$1 million to advertise its services to the public and receives commissions that could reach up to 30% of the tax credit that the persons with disabilities would get after applying. These persons would have received nothing without this information. In this sense, this government initiative that aims to help people with disabilities struggling with higher costs is a bit problematic.

Once again I would like to acknowledge the member for Montcalm's great work on the issue of persons with disabilities, which raises all these problems, including the lack of accessibility and higher costs for Canadians with disabilities.

*Private Members' Business*

We are facing a situation where the government, by failing to do its work to provide information or to simplify taxation, is effectively delegating authority to promoters and consultants. There is some abuse, although this is not generally the case. However, the bottom line is that people who learn about this credit and wish to claim it, but who feel vulnerable and not necessarily equipped to deal with bureaucratic challenges, have to forego up to 30% of the sum they are entitled to.

In that sense, it is very problematic. This form represents a process that lacks transparency. We condemn that. At the Standing Committee on Finance, and here in the House too, we really hope that tax simplification will one day be the subject of a comprehensive study. Someone mentioned a certain form, but this applies to the entire tax system.

The Income Tax Act, which was only about 10 pages long when it was created in 1917, is now over 3,000 pages long. It is really hard to navigate. That is why some lawyers and financial experts work exclusively on tax issues, since they have to be able to sort through all the complexities and the labyrinth created by the Income Tax Act.

I applaud the hon. member's initiative. I will be voting in favour of this bill, and I encourage all members of the official opposition to do the same. However, as I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, the bill deals with only the symptoms of the problem. There are two issues causing this problem: the lack of information available to Canadian taxpayers and the complexity of the tax system, and in particular the form needed for this tax credit.

I urge the government to look very closely at both of these problems, and then to propose alternatives in order to ensure that people receive the money they are entitled to in the form of a tax refund so they can have better lives despite the situation they are in.

• (1150)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, it is my pleasure to rise today and conclude the debate on my private member's bill, Bill C-462, an act restricting the fees charged by promoters of the disability tax credit and making consequential amendments to the Tax Court of Canada Act.

My bill seeks to balance the needs of Canadians with disabilities and promoters alike by also contributing to a fair, functioning marketplace for those who do wish to use the services of a disability tax credit promoter.

Bill C-462 is necessary because changes that were made in 2005 placed benefits receivable on a retroactive basis. This change created a new incentive for those claiming to be consultants to work with Canadians on their applications, as the dollar amounts on a 10-year retroactive tax refund can be significant and can reach \$10,000 to \$15,000.

Let me be clear: this is not an attempt to crack down on those who are legitimately claiming the credit or to deny claims; rather, it is an attempt to make sure that those who do qualify and those who require the tax credit are able to receive it without paying unfair charges.

The disability tax credit promoters' industry is currently totally unregulated and has produced a system that is increasingly ripe for abuse. In the past, government has determined it appropriate to regulate the tax preparation marketplace. The hon. members for Kings—Hants, Jeanne-Le Ber, and Cape Breton—Canso are concerned that the legislation does not specify what the maximum fees would be or how they would be set. I chose not to set a maximum fee in the legislation because I want to allow for consultations with disability groups, medical professionals, and legitimate tax professionals to help inform this decision. I want to ensure that those disabled Canadians who need help with their applications can get it. We are not imposing unnecessary red tape on doctors or legitimate tax preparers.

I would be pleased to receive direction from tax professionals with respect to the fee level, and I agree with the member for Kings—Hants that the maximum fee should reflect the complexity of the case in hand. We will ensure that the maximum fee structure will be set in an open and transparent process, involving a broad range of stakeholders.

Members of the public and tax credit promoters will also be given a chance to share their views once the regulations are drafted. They will be given plenty of notice so that they can adapt to the new regulations when they come into effect. I know that the hon. members from Montcalm and Abitibi—Témiscamingue also raised concerns about this issue in second reading debate.

As the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, which includes CFB Petawawa, I am acutely aware of the effect that disabilities can have on the livelihoods of Canadians. The soldiers of my community are at greater risk for a number of disabilities because of the unique challenges of their duties. My decision to introduce this legislation is a direct result of the aggressive tactics employed by some promoters, who objected to my decision to issue consumer alerts. I started issuing consumer alerts in my riding last year when I found out that some individuals were being charged 20%, 30%, or as much as 40% of the tax credit. Based on the unanimous vote that Bill C-462 received to be referred to committee, I know that other members agree with my concerns.

These kinds of charges are unfair, especially when we consider that the purpose of the disability tax credit is to support Canadians living with disabilities.

• (1155)

I want my constituents and indeed all Canadians to know that they can access their federal member of Parliament for assistance regarding any federal tax credit without being charged a percentage of the credit.

In conclusion, I wish to thank all members for their support of Bill C-462.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The time provided for debate has expired. Accordingly, the question is on the motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1200)

[English]

### RESPECT FOR COMMUNITIES ACT

The House resumed from October 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose Bill C-2. What the Conservatives are trying to do with the bill is quite clear, despite their pretending to do something quite the opposite. The consequences of the bill will prove to be very dire for the most vulnerable in our society and very costly for our health care system.

While the bill pretends to address public health and safety concerns about safe injection sites, in fact it has three other completely different goals. I believe the bill aims to shut down InSite, the supervised injection site in east Vancouver, and to prevent any other supervised sites from operating. I believe it aims to nullify the 2011 Supreme Court of Canada ruling in favour safe injection sites, and I believe it constitutes a further attack on the principle of harm reduction.

The question of why the government would pretend to facilitate safe injection sites is in some respects easy to answer. Conservatives know the bill flies in the face of informed public opinion, so it is necessary to create false distractions by manufacturing concern over safe injection sites as threats to public health and safety, when in fact the evidence shows directly the opposite to be true. The bill raises the spectre of neighbourhood opposition to safe injection sites when surveys show that 80% of those living and working in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside support InSite, the existing safe injection site.

Bill C-2 pretends to implement the 2011 unanimous Supreme Court of Canada ruling in the case of *Canada v. PHS Community Services Society*, the decision upholding the right of InSite to operate and upholding the charter rights of those who are addicted to receive health care services.

Yet in its “principles”, Bill C-2 makes no reference to public health and no reference to any of the principles on which the Supreme Court of Canada decision was based. This indeed is a bill that will result in litigation, as its intent seems to be an end run around the Supreme Court decision on safe injection sites. Cynics might even say the government might welcome endless litigation, which would not only delay new safe injection sites but also consume the scarce resources of organizations that have a different view from the government on how best to address the addiction crisis in our communities.

The Conservatives also know that the false concerns about public health and safety that Bill C-2 raises will appeal to their narrow base who believe with a near religious fervour and a clear disdain for

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evidence that being tough on crime will somehow solve addiction problems.

Let me talk a little about each of these three not-so-hidden aims of Bill C-2: shutting down safe injection sites, getting around the Supreme Court ruling and destroying harm reduction programs. Bill C-2 pretends to facilitate the licensing of safe consumption sites, while instead creating a long list of criteria for licensing and setting up a system without any requirement for the timely disposition of those applications. The bill lists 26 criteria on which applications will be judged, literally A to Z in that section. It establishes long timelines for public consultation on an application, but imposes no timelines on the minister for actually making decisions.

Perhaps my greatest concern about the bill is the ultimate discretion granted to the minister. In the bill, the minister “may” grant a permit for a safe injection site that has met all the criteria, when in fact what I believe the bill should read is that the minister “must” grant a permit if the criteria are met.

As I said, Bill C-2 purports to implement the 2011 unanimous Supreme Court of Canada ruling in favour of safe injection sites. In this decision, the Supreme Court of Canada clearly found that safe injection sites save lives. The court ruled that the existing site should remain open with a section 56 exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

The court ruled that InSite users have a charter right to access the service and that similar services elsewhere should be allowed to operate with an exemption. The court did not say we need a new bill and a new process.

Finally, Bill C-2 pretends to be about public health and safety, when it actually aims to dismantle an important harm reduction program. It ignores the very evidence that exists on the positive impacts of InSite. More than 300 peer-reviewed scientific studies have demonstrated that safe injection sites effectively reduce the risk of contracting and spreading blood-borne diseases, such as HIV and hepatitis C, as well as reducing deaths to zero from overdoses. In a study conducted over a one-year period, there were 273 overdoses at InSite. None of these resulted in fatality.

• (1205)

Bill C-2 also ignores the real savings to both health care and public safety budgets that come from safe injection sites. They ignore the real savings in terms of reduced demand on first responders and emergency rooms with the reduction in overdoses, and they ignore the increased number of clients who actually get into treatment programs as a result of visiting safe injection sites.

My colleague from Vancouver East pointed out in her speech on Bill C-2 last week:

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Dr. Evan Wood, a renowned scientist who works for the B.C. Centre of Excellence in HIV/AIDS, points out that one of the important aspects of a safe injection site is that, given that each HIV infection costs on average approximately \$500,000 in medical costs, [InSite] has contributed to a 90% reduction in new HIV cases caused by intravenous drug use in British Columbia, which is why the B.C. government has been such a strong supporter of the program.

When the evidence is clear, how can we proceed with a bill such as this, which intends to frustrate the creation of new safe injection sites? Unfortunately, I believe Bill C-2 is part of the Conservative agenda to eliminate harm reduction programs. We saw this agenda begin in 2007, when the government removed the term “harm reduction” from the list of goals of Canada's national drug strategy.

I am standing here today because there is a need for action to address the crisis in overdoses in my own community that the provincial health authority, social service agencies and local police are trying to address. The most recent B.C. Coroner's Report from October 2012 found that there were 44 deaths from illicit drug use on Vancouver Island in 2011, with 16 of those occurring in greater Victoria. This makes Vancouver Island the region with the highest rate of deaths related to illicit drug use in British Columbia at 7.88 per 100,000 residents.

According to the Centre for Addictions Research at the University of Victoria, this makes the local per capita death rate nearly 30% higher than that in the Lower Mainland. If people need evidence of the positive impact of InSite versus a community such as mine, which does not have access to a safe injection site, they should keep that figure in mind. There is a 30% higher death rate from overdoses on Vancouver Island than where a safe injection site exists in the Lower Mainland. The need for action in my community is very clear, yet Bill C-2 would take away the best tool for responding to this health crisis. It would take a safe injection site off the table for my community.

I have one last question. Why the rush? It was surprising to see Bill C-2 as the first bill the Conservative government brought forward for debate in the second session of the 41st Parliament. Yes, it would help re-establish its tough-on-crime credentials, but more importantly I suspect the Conservatives are in a rush to bring in this new law to head off the opening of new safe injection sites, as there are some applications for section 56 exemptions that are quite advanced. What they want to do is change the law and send the applicants back to the drawing board under this new legislation with its long delays and near impossible criteria.

The real threat to public health and safety in my community turns out to be the narrow ideological agenda of the Conservative government, which ignores the evidence of the real contribution that safe injection sites make to public health and safety. It has already sent a fundraising letter to its base talking about donating to the Conservatives to help them keep drugs out of our backyards. Ironically, of course, that is exactly what safe injection sites do. They move drug use off the streets and out of our backyards into a safer setting for both those who are injection drug users and our communities as a whole.

New Democrats are opposing the bill at second reading and sending the bill to the Standing Committee on Public Safety. I would say this is another piece of Conservative propaganda around safe injection sites. Why is the bill not going to the health committee

where it belongs? This, as the Supreme Court of Canada pointed out, is clearly a health issue and not a public safety issue. The NDP will be calling witnesses in committee to bring the evidence, once again, to the attention of Conservatives of the very positive role that safe injection sites play in both public health and safety. The very fact that the Conservatives have chosen to send the bill to the public safety committee illustrates to me their intention to distract the public by characterizing safe injection sites as a threat to public safety rather than an important health measure that would save both lives and money.

• (1210)

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with pretty well everything the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca has said. I spent some time at the injection site in Downtown Eastside Hastings a number of years ago. They are there for health and for making progress in getting peoples' lives relatively back in order. These are people who are on drugs for whatever reason. We certainly do not want to see people on drugs. Injection sites do not encourage the use of drugs. They are recognizing the reality of the world and trying to find a reasonable solution to drug addiction. The member makes a number of good points.

Especially when the British Columbia government is on side, what is the reason, from his perspective, for the government going this way? Is it just that it believes in punishment or in ideology? These drug injection sites make sense from a health perspective, and I also believe they made sense from a crime perspective by reducing crime and trying to prevent peoples' lives from being destroyed.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Mr. Speaker, I really do suspect the government's motives with Bill C-2. I really believe it is trying to get around the Supreme Court of Canada decision, which found there was a charter right to access health services that save lives. Therefore, my hope is that when we get to committee with the bill and present the government once again with the evidence of the very positive role that safe injection sites play in communities—the very opposite of what it is alleging here, that they are somehow a threat to public safety and a threat to public health by encouraging drug use—that it will reconsider.

We know what the record is at InSite. We get far more injection drug users into treatment when there is a safe injection site where they can establish relationships with health care workers and counsellors, and establish the confidence to get the help they need to do something about their drug addiction. When we leave people on the street, it causes all the various public disorder problems that are associated with injection drug use.

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**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca has given a very excellent overview of not only how InSite operates but why it is needed in his own community.

I am very curious. I believe that if we canvassed residents in B.C., generally, we would be hard pressed to find people who oppose InSite. They see it as part of the solution, not part of the problem. The members of Parliament from metro Vancouver here in the House, whether West Vancouver or the North Shore or wherever it might be, I bet their own constituents also understand and support InSite. That makes it all the more perplexing and distressing that the government has taken such a rigid hard line, such a politically motivated line where it is basically politics over medicine.

I would like to ask the member what he thinks about local representatives on Vancouver Island. I know in Vancouver one would be hard pressed to find any elected representative who would oppose what InSite has done.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vancouver East for her question and I want to applaud her for her constant advocacy for safe injection sites in the Downtown Eastside.

I am a former city councillor. We had these discussions when I was on council. The council that I sat on said it was much better for us to zone for public health care services, such as injection sites, and have public hearings and get the public out to express where they would like to see these services located. My council felt it had a responsibility to take its share of those public health services and address these problems, rather than trying to leave them to the police to address or leave them to neighbourhoods where they became a problem with things such as needles in parks and school playgrounds.

Therefore, we would have been hard pressed to find people in my community who were opposed to this reasonable approach to dealing with injection drug use.

• (1215)

**Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale.

Mr. Speaker, as Canadians, we are blessed with safe streets and communities in which to live our lives and raise our children. Indeed, Canadian families expect and deserve safe and healthy communities in which to live and work. That is why our government has consistently delivered the tools needed for all parties to contribute to keeping our streets and communities safe. These include legislation passed during this Parliament, such as the Safe Streets and Communities Act. Other acts, such as the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act are important tools for ensuring that our communities remain safe. This act provides the legal framework for the control of dangerous and addictive drugs that can tear families apart, lead to criminal behaviour, and destroy lives.

What is important to appreciate in framing this whole debate on the bill before us and the NDP's amendment is that the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act applies to both substances that can be obtained legally and those that cannot, both licit and illicit substances.

All controlled substances have the potential to be abused. That is why they are called controlled substances. However, the risks are increased when those substances are unregulated and untested and are bought on the street, as illegal drugs often are.

For this reason, our government is recommending amendments to the act, through the bill currently before the House, that would strengthen the legislation and better protect Canadian families and communities.

Before I get to the substance of my speech, I would just like to mention how disappointed I am with the NDP. I find it completely irresponsible that the NDP, through the member for Vancouver East, has chosen to try to prevent Canadian parents, through the amendment tabled just recently, from having a say before drug injection sites open in their communities.

Now, as highlighted by my colleagues earlier, under our current laws, activities involving controlled substances are strictly prohibited. These include possession, import, export, production, and distribution. However, there is a caveat to the prohibition, which is the minister's ability to issue an exemption under section 56 of the act. This section allows the Minister of Health to grant exemptions from the application of the act or its regulations for activities that, in the opinion of the minister, are necessary for a medical or scientific purpose or are otherwise in the public interest.

Today we are proposing changes to this section to ensure that Canadian families and communities are shown the respect they deserve in the process. Through the respect for communities act, those who are seeking an exemption to use controlled substances obtained from legal, or licit, sources would follow the same process set out in section 56 today.

Most of the exemption requests received by Health Canada are for routine activities, such as clinical trials and university research. These trials involve controlled substances obtained through licensed pharmaceuticals, pharmacists, and hospitals. What is being proposed in our bill is a new approach to dealing with exemption applications for activities involving dangerous and addictive drugs sold on our streets.

Currently, exemption requests for illicit substances are assessed in the same manner as licit ones are. The respect for communities act would include a new regime to assess applications for activities involving these illicit substances. It would include a section specific to supervised injection sites that would outline rigorous criteria derived from the 2011 decision of the Supreme Court of Canada.

These drugs are inherently dangerous. They are illegal for a reason. We know that the proceeds from the sale of these substances contribute to organized crime and make our streets and communities less safe.

*Government Orders*

●(1220)

In the 2011 Supreme Court decision, five factors were identified that must be considered by the Minister of Health when assessing any further exemption applications for supervised injection sites. The factors that must be considered include evidence, if any, on the impact of such a site on crime rates; local conditions indicating a need for such a site; the regulatory structure in place to support the site; resources available to support its maintenance; and expressions of community support and opposition. These criteria need to be addressed by an applicant seeking an exemption to undertake activities involving illicit substances at a supervised injection site before the Minister of Health can properly consider the application.

Ensuring that families and communities are kept safe has been an important consideration when assessing an application. For example, the applicant has to provide detailed information on how public safety risks will be mitigated. They have to provide information on security measures, criminal record checks, record-keeping, and procedures for the safe disposal of any controlled substances, and anything that facilitates their consumption, left on-site.

I find that when using catch-all word phrases, such as “substances”, “consumption”, and “facilitation”, it is easy to lose sight of what we are talking about. I can tell members, from personal experience in my former career as a police officer, that heroin is, without a doubt, one of the most addictive drugs known. It is physically and psychologically addictive. It is one of the worst, if not the worst, drugs to come off of. Think about the worst days and times anyone in this place has had, and multiply it by 100. People addicted to this drug will do anything for their next fix, including, but not limited to, shoplifting, robbery, break and enter, assault, and many other Criminal Code offences.

That is why the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that the Minister of Health needs to hear from those who put their lives on the line every day to protect communities from harm. They include local police and social workers as well as other key stakeholders in the area where the proposed site would be located. The applicant has to respond to the concerns outlined by local police. Information about crime, public nuisance, public use of illicit drugs, or inappropriately discarded drug-related paraphernalia, such as needles, also has to be provided in the application.

I have highlighted some of the criteria in the new regime that address matters related to public safety. The respect for communities act considers the issue from multiple perspectives and requests that information be provided on a wide range of relevant topics so that potential threats are identified and addressed.

One of Health Canada's related responsibilities under the current Controlled Drug Substances Act is to monitor the distribution of controlled substances and to inspect facilities, as needed, to verify compliance with the act and the terms and conditions of the exemption. This is done to minimize the risk of diversion and any negative impacts on public safety.

Through the respect for communities act, we would make changes to extend these inspection authorities to validate information on any exemption application related to supervised injection sites. These amendments would authorize inspectors to enter any

supervised injection site for which an exemption was granted to verify compliance with current laws.

Our government also believes that the public should have a voice in the process. Every community is different, and public consultations provide a unique window into understanding the public health and safety impacts on that community. Valuable input and local perspectives would be sought from provincial ministers responsible for health and public safety, the head of local police, the lead public health professional in the province, and the licensing bodies for physicians and nurses in that province. All of this information would need to be collected as part of the consultation required under this bill.

I urge all members of this House to stand and support the respect for communities act and help give Canadian families safe and healthy communities in which to raise their children.

●(1225)

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's comments. If there is support in the local community, whether it is Montreal, Ottawa, Edmonton, Toronto, or Victoria, where we know there has been a lot of consideration given to setting up safer injection facilities, would the member be supporting those applications?

I know that the Minister of Health has that decision to make. However, if it were in the member's local community, and he could see that it had local support, if he could see the statistics from East Vancouver, where the rate of overdose deaths has dropped by 35% since InSite opened, would he then be supporting such a facility in his own community?

**Mr. David Wilks:** Mr. Speaker, I personally would not support any safe injection site anywhere in Canada.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that was the essence of the question I was going to ask, and I appreciate the boldness of the answer.

I am a little surprised, given the many stakeholders who have a caring, compassionate attitude and want to deal with the social issues surrounding substance abuse, which destroys lives and families. It is a cancer within the community. A fairly significant group of people believe that safe injection sites will not resolve all the issues but that they are a step in the right direction. Some communities want to see this happen.

I now know what the member's position is. Can he indicate whether his position is the same as the government's position?

**Mr. David Wilks:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for the Minister of Health or any other member of Parliament in this place, but I do know, from personal experience, as a police officer for 20 years as well as three years in drug enforcement, that heroin is, if not the worst drug, one of the worst drugs people can inject or ingest. It is a dangerous drug. As far as I am concerned, it has no useful purpose in society.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. We served together on the Standing Committee on Health.

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In an article on the Conservatives' website, the government is asking for our help in keeping heroin out of our backyards. How does it propose to do that, when this bill will send injection drug users back onto our streets and into our neighbourhoods?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Wilks:** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that heroin is illegal, and whether we have safe injection sites or not, it is still purchased illegally and taken to that safe injection site illegally, because it is an illegal substance. We are not going to stop anything with safe injection sites.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative member may have worked with youth, but he is not the only one. I, too, have done work with youth shelters and street outreach workers, who often meet people involved in the drug scene to try and get them to leave it.

There is broad consensus in Quebec: the best way to do that is to offer people places where they can meet with someone who is there to help them get out of that hell.

If they do not have an appropriate spot, there will still be the parks, the barns, and all of those other places where we do not want to see those people. That is my comment. I find the member's attitude appalling.

● (1230)

[*English*]

**Mr. David Wilks:** Mr. Speaker, I think there is a difference between providing a place to go for recovery and providing an area where people can safely inject an illegal substance.

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand here today and address Bill C-2. Canadian families expect safe and healthy communities in which to raise their children. That is why our Conservative government is moving forward with the respect for communities act to ensure that parents have a say before any drug injection sites open in their communities and the most rigorous criteria apply.

Why is this necessary? It stems from the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in 2011, which rendered that any application for a supervised injection site must, among other factors, be considered with an understanding of the circumstances in the community that had led to the need for a site, as well as the opinions of the community in which it would operate.

However, the court was also clear in its ruling that it was not "an invitation for anyone who so chooses to open a facility for drug use under the banner of a "safe injection facility". That is why the government is acting on this Supreme Court ruling. Given the inherent risks in using dangerous and addictive drugs obtained on the street, exemptions to use them at a supervised injection site should be granted only in exceptional circumstances, once rigorous criteria have been addressed by an applicant.

Specifically, the bill would amend the existing Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the federal statute that restricts the usage of dangerous and addictive drugs. Under this act, activities involving

controlled substances, including possession, import, export, production and distribution, are prohibited, except as authorized through an exemption obtained through section 56.

As I just said, we believe that exemptions should be granted only in exceptional circumstances and subject to rigorous criteria. That is why this bill, the respect for communities act, would divide section 56 into two distinct categories. Street drugs, or illicit substances, would have a section specific to supervised injection sites. Applications to use illicit substances at such a site would need to address rigorous criteria before such an application would even be considered by the Minister of Health.

One of the criteria an applicant would have to address would relate to the treatments for the proposed site's users. The applicants would have to provide letters from their provincial minister responsible for health, describing their opinion on the proposed activities, how the activities would be integrated in the provincial health care system and any treatment services that would be available in the province for individuals who would use the site. An application would not be considered by the Minister of Health without this information. In addition, an applicant would have to provide a description of the drug treatment services available at the site, if any, for persons who would use this site and the information that would be made available to them in relation to drug treatment services available elsewhere.

These criteria demonstrate that our Conservative government takes the harm caused by dangerous and addictive drugs very seriously. We need to support those in need with treatment and recovery programs. Drug treatment and recovery programs must be focused on ending drug use.

That said, I would like to take this opportunity to inform the House of other actions the Government of Canada is taking to address dangerous and addictive drug use.

In 2007, we launched the national anti-drug strategy. The strategy's goal is to contribute to safer and healthier communities by reducing and eliminating illicit drug use in Canada. Like the bill before us today, the national anti-drug strategy is designed to protect public health and maintain public safety. That is why its three pillars are prevention, treatment and enforcement.

Today, I would like to focus specifically on the treatment aspect of the national anti-drug strategy and outline some of the services that are part of it. The strategy supports innovative approaches to treating and rehabilitating those with illicit drug addiction who pose a risk to themselves and the community. Health Canada also works to increase access to and improve the quality and effectiveness of addiction services for first nations and Inuit youth and their families. Specifically, it aims to enhance treatment and support for first nations and Inuit people, support treatment programs for young offenders with drug-related problem, enable the RCMP to refer youth with drug-related problems to treatment programs and support research on new treatment models.

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While responsibility for the delivery of most treatment and rehabilitation services remains with provincial and territorial governments, the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of continued investments in drug treatment programming and works closely with the provincial and territorial governments and other key stakeholders. Our end goal is always to help treat and end the scourge of drug addiction that plagues communities and families. The drug treatment funding program is one such example of this multilateral approach. This program supports provincial and territorial governments, as well as other stakeholders, in making strategic investments in three key areas.

● (1235)

The first area is through the implementation of evidence-informed practice. Health Canada supports the uptake of best practices such as continuous knowledge development and information sharing to improve service delivery.

The second is in strengthening the evaluation and performance measurement capacity and activities. While all jurisdictions collect performance information pertaining to their treatment, services and programs, the type and nature of the data collected as well as the approach to data collection and analysis vary considerably. With the funding in this area, projects are in place to identify and standardize best practices, evaluation and performance measurements.

Third, the program supports linkages and exchange among the funded projects. This is an essential element of the work undertaken in the first two investment areas and includes enhancing knowledge sharing and disseminating lessons learned. For example, in some of these projects, work is under way to implement knowledge-exchange mechanisms for concurrent mental health and substance use best practices. Other tools are also being developed to improve linkages between the specialized addiction sector and other health and community service providers.

Since 2007, this program has provided over \$100 million in funding to provinces, territories and key stakeholders.

To highlight one particular project in Alberta, community agencies that serve youth were supported by providing a manual and curriculum to improve staff skills around basic addiction counselling, and screening practices as well as mental health knowledge. The result of this project demonstrated that community service providers improved their skills and confidence in evidence-based addiction practices. In addition, at-risk youth had greater access to addiction information and basic services through the community agencies that they frequented.

Another approach has been taken by Saskatchewan, a project enabled services directed at youth by building upon a strong pre-existing framework. Through these services, individual assessment plans are developed followed by brief interventions and referral to more formal services. Through community partnerships, the project is tracking the impact of its services and moving youth into recovery programs. The program provides between 30 to 50 brief interventions every month with between 200 to 335 participants.

Additionally, as part of the national anti-drug strategy, our government provides almost \$10 million annually to improve access to quality addiction treatment services for aboriginals. These

investments are targeted in four key areas: improving the quality of services by increasing access to certified training and supporting treatment centres to become accredited; increasing the effectiveness and relevancy of services by supporting these centres to re-profile or strengthen services in response to recognized service gaps; improving access to services by piloting community-based multi-disciplinary teams to provide comprehensive additions and mental health services to aboriginal communities; and a comprehensive review renewal process for first nation addiction services carried out in partnership with first nation communities and leadership.

Our government remains committed to addressing dangerous and addictive drug use through the national anti-drug strategy and will continue to invest in prevention and treatment. The respect for communities act is consistent with this strategy and, once more, it takes action in the wake of the Supreme Court decision ensuring that parents have a say before drug injection sites open in their communities.

To me, this is an important point in the bill. It gives local law enforcement, municipal leaders and local residents a voice before a permit is granted for supervised drug consumption sites. Communities must have a say.

All told, the bill would provide the Minister of Health with the information necessary to balance public health and public safety considerations, including how the proposed site would fit within a province's overall approach to treatment services.

Why the NDP, through the motion of the member for Vancouver East, is seeking to kill this bill is beyond me. What NDP members are saying through their motion is that they are against giving parents a say before drug injection sites open in their communities, that they are against the Supreme Court's ruling on this matter and that they are against ensuring that addicts are provided the treatment and support they need at these sites.

I urge all members of the House to vote in favour of the respect for communities act and give the Minister of Health the tools she needs to do her job.

● (1240)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. H  l  ne LeBlanc (LaSalle—  mard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my Conservative colleague a question.

In writing a bill, we always look to achieve some kind of balance. In this case, it is a balance between public safety and health. However, it seems to me that the Conservatives are shifting the balance in favour of public safety, away from health. Places such as InSite, which are found around the world, are safe and give due consideration to the importance of health.



*Government Orders*

I would like to ask my colleague to talk some more about the importance of health in this type of project.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, the member referenced the bill. I have the bill in my hand and I am on page 8. I am trying to figure out what criteria the member feels is too onerous.

Here is how the bill begins, as far as the criteria is concerned. Scientific evidence is one of them. I wonder if the opposition is okay with our obtaining scientific evidence. The provincial minister is one of them. Is the opposition okay with the provincial minister weighing in on a safe injection site? Local government, municipal governments and, I am certain, my councillors would want to have a say in what goes on as far as supervised injection sites. The police force is one. I am certain my police chief wants to have a say.

The list goes on. I am reading directly from the bill. What criteria do the opposition members want to remove? Frankly, there was virtually no framework at all for these sites before. If we were to go to average people, certainly my neighbours in the community, and say that there was no framework for this, no legislative criteria to be met, they would be appalled.

Finally, we are getting the job done, as the Supreme Court asked us to do.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague opposite who said that the NDP does not support this bill as it pertains to regulating drug use.

The NDP finds that Bill C-2 flies in the face of the 2011 Supreme Court ruling. The NDP believes that harm reduction programs, including supervised injection sites, must be based on evidence that they will improve public health and save lives, not on ideology.

We are talking about supervised sites, sites that will prevent the spread of infectious diseases such as hepatitis A, B and C, HIV-AIDS, and others. How can we reach injection drug users in the future without these supervised sites?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, people who go to these sites commit an illegal act of purchasing the drug first. Then they go to the site to inject it and they leave the site jacked up on drugs.

In the past I was attacked by a person, who was jacked up on drugs, with a razor knife. It was not a fun proposition. That is what we have to deal with along with all the other issues within communities.

The member says that the bill somehow does not meet the criteria of the Supreme Court. The fact is the Supreme Court specifically said that we had to address things like the impact on crime rates, wherever it was going to be sited; local conditions indicating a need for such a site; the regulatory structure in place to support such a site, and I already mentioned that this is finally putting some structure there; resources available to support its maintenance; and expressions of community support or opposition.

If we look at the bill, it does all of that.

● (1245)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éleine Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, before I start my presentation, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from LaSalle—Émard.

I am very proud to rise in the House today to oppose Bill C-2 and to support the very important amendment presented by my colleague from Vancouver East. I would like to thank and congratulate her, first for presenting this amendment, and also for the work she does in representing her constituents in the riding of Vancouver East. We have seen in this chamber that she cares about all her constituents, whether they are the most vulnerable or from different walks of life. My colleague knows very well what is at stake with Bill C-2 because, in her riding, there is a major problem when it comes to people living with addictions. Unlike the health minister of this and former governments, she has visited InSite. She does a good job, and I would like to congratulate her.

To be frank, I am disappointed to have to speak to Bill C-2 today. We should not have to deal with such a bill, particularly given the very clear decision rendered by the Supreme Court in 2011. Supervised injection sites, such as InSite in Vancouver, are an important way to guarantee better public health and safety, and the closure of such sites would be detrimental to those who benefit from these services.

Unfortunately, we are dealing with a new and fairly underhanded attempt by the Conservative government to violate the Supreme Court's 2011 decision. The government is trying to meet its objective of closing InSite in Vancouver, and to make it impossible to open any new sites.

Before I became an MP, I earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Université Laval. During my studies, I spent some time learning about addictions, including alcohol and drug addictions. Today, the harm reduction approach is scientifically recognized, and many of that approach's techniques are currently being used by the scientific and medical community. They produce proven results.

InSite in Vancouver is a very practical and effective application of the harm reduction approach, which was unfortunately rejected by the Conservatives in 2007 when they reviewed the national drug strategy. They decided to simply do away with the harm reduction approach, despite scientific evidence and conclusive data showing how effective it is. As someone with a degree in psychology and expertise in that area, I am extremely disappointed to see the Conservatives ignoring proven scientific studies that show the importance and the effectiveness of supervised injection sites such as InSite.

*Government Orders*

If the bill is passed as it exists today, there will be a long and tedious list of criteria that new supervised injection sites will have to meet in order for the minister to grant them an exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. These criteria will make it extremely difficult to open new supervised injection sites, even though there is a demand for them. Other municipalities in the country are considering setting up such sites to help people with addictions—people who deserve our support and compassion—and to give them access to the resources they need to overcome their addictions. These resources are offered at InSite when people make use of those services.

In fact, more than 30 studies, some of which were reviewed by peers in the scientific community, were published in renowned, highly esteemed journals. I am talking about *The New England Journal of Medicine* and the *British Medical Journal*. We should not disregard these authoritative sources, which have described at length the benefits of supervised injection sites, more specifically, the benefits of InSite in Vancouver, the only supervised injection site in Canada at this time.

Studies have also looked at the more than 70 similar supervised injection sites in Europe and Australia. Those studies show similar results. They were able to prove that the supervised injections sites are a major breakthrough in terms of public health, that they provide important benefits and must continue to exist in order to provide their services under appropriate supervision.

• (1250)

The most ironic thing I have heard so far in the Conservatives' comments is that to them, closing supervised injection centres, which help people with addictions and give addicts a safe place to use the substances they need, is a way of protecting children and families. The Conservatives are suggesting closing these sites and sending addicts back into the streets instead of giving them an enclosed space that would be out of sight from children and mothers who are going shopping or running errands.

We will end up in the same situation Vancouver was in at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s. At the time, between 1987 and 1993, the number of deaths by heroin overdose went from 16 a year to 200 a year. However, with the arrival of InSite, the overdose death rate was reduced by 35%. That is significant because they also managed to reduce the waste that comes from drug use, including the problem of used needles. In addition to reducing waste, they also managed to reduce the spread of disease among those who inject drugs. Having fewer people share needles means fewer cases of hepatitis A, B and C and of HIV-AIDS.

To put this in economic terms the Conservatives will understand, this is a way to significantly lower our health care costs. However, last week I heard one of the parliamentary secretaries tell us that our emergency rooms offered the best care available to treat these people.

I had the opportunity to attend meetings of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security for a few weeks last session. We were looking at how to reduce demand for police and health care services in order to save money on public safety, while still maintaining the most effective public services possible.

One thing we heard from many police chiefs from across the country was that police forces, social services and health care services should work together to avoid revolving door situations, in which people end up on the street, then back in the ER, then back on the street, and so on. That is a huge burden on our health care system and costs taxpayers a lot of money, considering that health care is available in the community and can truly help people living with addictions.

I think it is completely ridiculous that the Conservatives are once again trying to circumvent a Supreme Court decision to guarantee public safety and security for Canadians, not only those living with addictions, but also the Canadian families who may have to deal with problems involving addicts.

One way to improve the quality of life in our communities is to offer appropriate services to people living with addictions, and that is what centres like InSite do.

Mere hours after introducing the bill, the Conservatives launched a fundraising campaign among party members, encouraging them to keep heroin out of their backyards. That is misleading.

Members joined this campaign and perhaps even donated to the Conservatives thinking, somewhat naively, that this bill was intended to enhance public safety. However, the Conservatives failed to tell them that, as a result, people living with addictions would have to go back out on the street to inject themselves rather than using the InSite services. When people use these services, they are often referred to detox centres and manage to finally attain the lifestyle of abstinence that the Conservatives would like them to have. However, the Conservatives are now closing the door in their faces and asking them to fend for themselves and to go back out on the streets in full view of the children, families and mothers doing their grocery shopping.

This bill makes no sense at all. This is indisputable evidence of the backward nature of the Conservatives' anti-drug program. They are willing to completely discard an evidence-based approach that has been proven to reduce harm, for the sole purpose of pleasing their base. I find this really disappointing.

• (1255)

I again thank my colleague for the amendment she proposed. A bill like this should never go to second reading.

[English]

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if we look closely, the real objective of the bill is to give the health minister the basic information he or she needs to make an informed decision on protecting the public.

*Government Orders*

My colleague also commented in her speech that there are many communities that want to open these sites. The bill allows for those communities to have hearings, to have a say. It allows parents to have input into those communications.

My question to the member is this. Why would she not agree to at least allow parents to have a say into whether or not an injection site opens down the street from them? Why would she deny parents that right?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Élane Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, to answer my colleague's question, no one in the NDP is trying to limit consultation with our communities. I find it particularly ironic to hear this from a Conservative government that routinely abuses in camera meetings and omnibus bills and tries to limit consultation opportunities in the development of new pipelines and natural resource projects. He is telling us that we are trying to restrict consultations with Canadians? How shocking.

Furthermore, what this government is not telling us is that even if the organizations wishing to open new supervised injection sites meet all the criteria, something they already find hard to do, the minister of health may still refuse their application, even if it is supported by the provincial or territorial health ministers. That is the problem.

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier gave a very nice speech on what the Conservatives are trying to hide from us. She talked about the Conservatives' economy. We know the Conservatives' economy is only on paper. We are not talking about an economy that would bring in any money.

Earlier, a Conservative MP told us that he had been attacked by someone who was on drugs. In all likelihood, if this person had been in a centre, he would not have attacked him. I therefore think that the proposed legislation is contrary to public safety. Could my colleague discuss this in a little more detail?

**Ms. Élane Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

What I described in my speech is the probability—because it is in fact rather more than a possibility—that people living with addiction problems, which sometimes entail mental health issues or homelessness, could have access to resources and assistance from health care professionals, social workers and other health practitioners. They even had access to a drug treatment centre, Onsite, which is located right above InSite. All this could go up in smoke. Those people are going to find themselves out on the street again.

On the street, people living with addiction problems can get into difficult situations and perhaps even cause harm to other people or to themselves. It is to prevent such situations, among other things, that supervised injection facilities like InSite are set up. There are some communities in Canada, including Montreal and Quebec City, that were considering opening supervised injection facilities and received no opposition from the provincial health minister. This is a sign that there is a community will to open such a facility, and it could be hindered by the ideological and dogmatic vision of this government, which is prepared to deprive the most vulnerable Canadians of

services simply to please its base of support and establish its ideology in the country. I find this utterly deplorable.

• (1300)

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to surprise you: Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, is not in the interests of public safety.

Despite the assertions of the hon. Minister of Health, if we take a close look at this bill, we can see that it aims to prevent supervised injection facilities from functioning. The health minister wants to tighten the criteria for injection facilities in Canada.

However, according to the new rules, those who wish to open an injection facility must first give consideration to the opinions of local community groups and police services and obtain support from municipal and provincial authorities.

With their so-called democratic consultations, the Conservatives say they are worried about the welfare of their fellow Canadians, without giving any consideration to opinions expressed by the people most directly involved. The people who are addicted to drugs and other substances belong to Canadian society just as much as anyone else. We are not only talking about places where drug addicts are going to inject heroin and use other illegal drugs, but safe and hygienic places where they can do so under medical supervision.

That is what InSite in Vancouver has been trying to do for the past 10 years. It is a safe, health-focused place where people inject drugs and connect to health care services to treat disease and infection. They also have access to addiction counselling and treatment, as well as housing and community supports.

Under the leadership of the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, InSite is striving to decrease the adverse health, social and economic consequences of illicit drug use. With Bill C-2, the government is limiting the beneficial actions of such supervised injection sites, which work to integrate people with addictions into society.

Let us recall once again that this debate went as far as the Supreme Court, which decided that InSite was a very important health facility. I would like to quote a key excerpt from the Supreme Court's decision, since the bill that is before us today is supposedly based on that decision. Here is what the Supreme Court of Canada had to say:

Where, as here, a supervised injection site will decrease the risk of death and disease, and there is little or no evidence that it will have a negative impact on public safety, the Minister should generally grant an exemption.

*Government Orders*

The court therefore ruled that InSite should remain open under the exemption set out in section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. It is important that all new legislation pertaining to these sites take into account the Supreme Court of Canada's decisions. These findings indicate that supervised injection sites reduce the harm associated with the use of illicit drugs. They must therefore be subject to exemptions. Given this solid evidence, why are the Conservatives still refusing to take into account the facts that have been presented? The bill reduces the possibility that such sites will be set up by requiring the submission of a great deal of evidence and many documents related to the financial viability of the site, the need for it in the community and its potential impact on public safety.

Bill C-2 jeopardizes the public safety it claims to defend. Supervised injection sites reduce the presence of used needles in public places and reduce the spread of disease simply because they are medical facilities supervised by trained personnel.

• (1305)

The argument made by the Minister of Health is therefore invalid and once again constitutes a false pretence to hide the real motive: to strengthen a Conservative ideology by ostracizing a certain segment of the population.

[*English*]

I would like to strengthen this argument. The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition, and Pivot Legal Society criticize the bill's negative impacts. A statement published in June when the government tabled Bill C-65 mentioned that this is "a bill that aims to make it even more difficult for health authorities and community agencies to offer supervised drug consumption services, such as Vancouver's InSite, to Canadians who are among those most at risk of HIV infection and fatal overdose".

The official opposition considers the government's initiative a deeply flawed bill based on an anti-drug ideology and false fears for public safety. This is another attempt to rally the Conservative base, as evidenced by the "Keep heroin out of our backyards" fundraising drive that started hours after Bill C-2 was introduced in Parliament, but by endangering supervised sites, this bill will actually put heroin back in our neighbourhoods. This is why this bill has been described by the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition as "...an irresponsible initiative that ignores both the extensive evidence that such health services are needed and effective, and the human rights of Canadians with addictions".

The evidence has demonstrated that safe injection sites effectively reduce the risk of contracting and spreading blood-borne diseases, such as HIV and hepatitis C, and death from overdose. It has also been shown that they do not undermine public safety and in some instances have proven to promote it by reducing public drug-injecting, reducing violence associated to it, and reducing drug-related litter.

Safe injection sites, therefore, strike the balance between public health and public safety. The government and all members of the House have a public responsibility to see Canadians with drug addiction problems as citizens in need of medical treatment, not as criminals. We have the responsibility to offer them assistance, primary health services, and addiction treatment.

There is evidence that allows us to say that supervised injection sites have promoted entry into treatment for drug dependence. One study published in 2006 mentioned that those who use InSite services at least once a week were 1.7 times more likely to enrol in a detox program than those who visited infrequently, and in 2010, 5,268 people were referred by InSite to other social and health services. The vast majority of them were for detox and drug dependence treatment.

As the Canadian Medical Association stated:

Supervised injection programs are an important harm reduction strategy. Harm reduction is a central pillar in a comprehensive public health approach to disease prevention and health promotion.

[*Translation*]

Lastly, supervised injection sites could cause problems for some people because along with these sites come people with substance abuse problems and drug addictions. However, seeing the issue from only that one angle would be misinformation, pure and simple.

I presented a number of points that the government needs to take into account before amending any legislation dealing with supervised injection sites. For all of the reasons I mentioned, the official opposition opposes Bill C-2, which is designed to put an end to centres that not only help a certain segment of the population both medically and socially, but also protect communities.

• (1310)

[*English*]

**Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the member's speech. She mentioned in part that heroin is already in our neighbourhoods. With the InSite program it would go back into the neighbourhoods. May I remind the member that heroin is illegal and is bought on the streets? It is not bought at InSite. Users buy it on the street, bring it to InSite, and inject.

If we are looking at the issue from the perspective of heroin as an illegal drug and InSite as a place where heroin can be injected, and not injected legally but injected in a safe place, would the member agree with me that InSite, from the perspective of heroin use, is a safe haven for users to inject, as opposed to a place where we could try to get treatment for these people and get them off the drug? Some of these people have no intention of leaving the heroin drug trade.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question. I would like to clarify one point.

In fact, places like InSite are safe places that also offer other services, such as detox services. I mentioned that, but I wanted to reiterate it. As I said in my conclusion, people who are unfortunately addicted to hard drugs and visit a supervised injection site on a regular basis are more likely to use services that will get them on a path of treatment and rehabilitation, so that they can contribute to society. I would like to reiterate that these places provide a number of services.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on a point that I referred to earlier, which is that injection sites can be of great benefit for communities where there are serious issues dealing with crime and safety as a direct result of illegal drugs. Sites of this nature can have a positive impact on many of our communities.

My comment for the member is in regard to that aspect of making our communities safer places. If done right, safe injection sites can actually complement a community, in that fewer needles are found and there are fewer environments where individuals are injecting around kids and so forth. There are many social benefits to having a safe facility, let alone being able to assist individuals to possibly get off drugs in the first place.

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my hon. colleague, who once again mentioned some of the positive impacts that supervised injection sites can have. I would like to add some more.

These sites reach out to the most vulnerable groups. They help improve the health of people who use them, and as I mentioned, those who visit such sites regularly are more likely to use other services, such as detox services. These sites also help reduce the incidence of diseases often associated with this kind of drug use.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first I want to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the exuberant, energetic member for Newton—North Delta.

This issue affects us all, but perhaps more particularly those of us who are lucky enough to be parents. I live in a fairly densely populated urban area, where our children ride around on their bikes and play with their friends in the sandboxes in the park or with neighbours in the lane behind our house. One of our fears as parents is that they might get their hands on drugs or on needles, which could prick them and give them very serious diseases.

As a community and as a government, how can we act to ensure that our streets, lanes and parks are safe for us all and for our children, who are not always very well informed about these kinds of dangers?

A place like InSite in Vancouver is a good example of how we can work together to enhance public safety while improving public health. The two are not mutually exclusive. They go together.

I much prefer to have someone inject drugs in a safe place rather than an unsafe place where there is a risk of violence and a risk that objects may be left behind that can potentially harm our children.

### Government Orders

One might think the idea of a centre where people can get help in injecting drugs is counterintuitive. Why help someone who injects an illegal drug that endangers his or her health? It is counterintuitive if the question is put that way.

However, sometimes in life, after in-depth studies and scientific tests are conducted, or after the facts are checked, what seems counterintuitive just may work. There are some fairly simple examples of that. A metal boat, for example, is counterintuitive because metal sinks, and yet it works. Another completely counterintuitive notion is that the earth is round, because everyone might initially think it is flat. However, that is not true; it is round.

The most important thing when it comes to public health is that we rely on facts, studies and evidence. That is also true of supervised injection sites, like InSite in Vancouver, which other municipalities would like to set up to combat substance abuse and addiction and enhance public safety.

Over 30 studies published in major scientific journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *The Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*, describe the benefits of a centre like InSite in Vancouver. Furthermore, other studies show the positive impact of more than 70 supervised injection facilities across Europe and Australia.

Why not look at the positive experiences, such as the fact that these sites really help people, that they reduce the number of needles on the streets, that they decrease violence and that they reduce the number of deaths from drug overdose?

This is an important debate because people's lives are at stake. In Vancouver, before InSite was set up, there was a 12-fold increase in the number of people who died from a drug overdose between 1987 and 1993. Twelve! Dozens of people died because of their drug addiction. Since InSite opened, the number of people who died from a drug overdose has dropped by 35%. The facts are clear. Injection facilities can save lives.

Unfortunately, in order to satisfy their electoral base, with a purely ideological perspective based on fear and prejudice, the Conservatives are trying to lock these successful experiments up so tightly that no other municipality in Canada will be able to set up this type of proven facility.

● (1315)

We have clearly seen the lengths they will go to to please some of their electorate. Just a few hours after introducing Bill C-2, the Conservative Party launched a campaign called "Keep heroin out of our backyards", which made people believe that stopping the establishment of a supervised injection facility would improve public safety, while in fact the exact opposite is true.

*Government Orders*

It is a shame that they are trying to score points in the polls by using an issue that affects public health and people's lives. Furthermore, the Conservatives' position in Bill C-2 goes against a 2011 Supreme Court ruling. This is not exactly insignificant. The Supreme Court ordered the minister to consider granting exemptions for supervised injection facilities in order to strike a balance between public health and public safety. In our view, the Conservatives should respect the spirit of this ruling and move in the direction shown by the Supreme Court.

I would like to quote from a few documents. In 2011, the Supreme Court ruled that the minister's decision to shut down InSite was a violation of its clients' charter rights, that the decision was arbitrary and that it undermined the purpose of the law, which includes public health and safety.

The Supreme Court based its decision on section 7 of the charter, which says that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice. The Supreme Court said the following:

The infringement at stake is serious; it threatens the health, indeed the lives, of the claimants and others like them. The grave consequences that might result from a lapse in the current constitutional exemption for Insite cannot be ignored. These claimants would be cast back into the application process they have tried and failed at, and made to await the Minister's decision based on a reconsideration of the same facts.

We need to protect those who suffer from addiction and direct them to programs that can help them get off drugs. There are undeniable facts, and I want to mention some of them because it is important to rely on facts, not fear.

In one year, InSite referred 2,171 hard drug users to addiction counselling and other support services. That is more than 2,000 people who were referred through a process to help them escape their situation and their misery.

People who use InSite's services at least once a week are almost twice as likely to enter a detox program as those who visit the centre rarely or not at all. Visiting the centre therefore encourages people to seek the help of health care professionals in resolving their situation.

Just one year after InSite opened in Vancouver, there was also a substantial decline in the quantity of needles and drug-related waste discarded by people injecting drugs on the street.

Why would anyone want to prevent other municipalities in Quebec and Canada from adopting this tool, which has proven itself here in Canada and in Europe and Australia? Why indeed, except in an unfortunate attempt to please a certain Conservative electorate that, in wanting to do the right thing, is preventing us from moving forward?

We are all opposed to the use of hard drugs, but it is important to understand that we must support and help these people, not adopt a solely repressive vision. That vision will not help us improve public health or make our streets and laneways safer.

I would emphasize that the NDP is not the only group that has adopted this view. Most nurses' and physicians' associations support our position: here we have something that has proven itself, something that saves lives and improves public health and safety.

I therefore call on the Conservative Party to take off its blinkers, look at the facts, read the studies and amend Bill C-2 so that we can live in safer communities.

● (1320)

[*English*]

**Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned in his speech that, in a form, this is reducing public safety. However, the reality is, that drug is bought on the street from a dealer, then taken to the safe injection site to be injected illegally, and then the person goes back onto the street. I would like to understand his definition of public safety and how he thinks it has reduced anything. It has not done anything.

● (1325)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my Conservative colleague for his question.

My impression, unfortunately, is that he listened to my speech rather distractedly. The essential aim of what I am proposing is to ensure that people do not inject drugs in parks or laneways where children go to play soccer with their neighbours. That is precisely why we need this tool, which the community and the medical profession are calling for. It is a tool that works. To ensure our children's safety and to increase public safety, we need resources such as these, which help the poor people who are struggling with drug addiction.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Kootenay—Columbia has addressed this issue on numerous occasions, but the bottom line is that the Conservative Party does not want to be confused by the facts. Conservatives do not want to listen to what the professionals or the many stakeholders have to say about why safe injection sites could prove to be a very valuable asset in terms of fighting crime or assisting abusers. This is something that is a real need and can be substantiated.

All that being said, no matter what sort of factual information is provided to the Conservatives, they say, "It is not good enough. It does not matter. We will have it our way, and our way means no injection sites".

Would the member comment on how frustrating it can be when Conservatives do not want to listen to scientific facts and put blinders on and feel they have to go this—

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Since obtaining its majority mandate, this government has proven to be blind and driven by ideology. Furthermore, it has difficulty dealing with something as basic as reality. When reality is not aligned with its ideology, this government ignores facts, studies and science because it wants to go in a particular direction.

The government should make decisions based on scientific evidence and facts in order to improve society. Unfortunately, that does not happen with the Conservatives. I would like to remind them that *The Flintstones* is not a documentary.

[English]

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment my colleague for bringing in the very important element of public health. This debate is about protecting public health and the health of the community.

It is quite astounding that we have heard from one Conservative, the member for Kootenay—Columbia, that even if there were support in his local community he would still say no. This is very illuminating. It tells us that the Conservative government does not want to look at the evidence, at public health. In fact, public health is one of the principles that the minister has to consider when she is looking at applications.

If the member's community supported it, would he expect the elected representatives to then agree that a facility should go ahead?

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her very simple question.

In a democracy, should elected representatives listen to the people? Quite simply, I believe they should. Unfortunately, the government is not listening to the people or the scientists. The government likes to muzzle scientists at every turn.

In my opinion, it is important to quote from the following statement issued by the Pivot Legal Society, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition:

The bill is an irresponsible initiative that ignores both the extensive evidence that such health services are needed and effective, and the human rights of Canadians with addictions....It is unethical, unconstitutional and damaging to both public health and the public purse to block access to supervised consumption services which save lives and prevent the spread of infections.

Will the Conservatives listen one day?

● (1330)

[English]

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work done by my hon. colleague from Vancouver East. When it comes to this file, working on public health and representing her community, we could have no better role model for the service she provides. Case in point, she spoke on this issue today. Even the question she asked was about looking at what was best for our communities and public health.

The government just wants to start throwing darts and arrows if we take a position that is contrary to what it says. I want to make it perfectly clear that as a mother, a grandmother and a lifelong teacher, I do not support people going out and doing drugs, in whatever form they are.

As a teacher and a counsellor, I have seen first-hand the impacts of drug addiction on our youth and their families. As a teacher, mother and grandmother, I want our communities to be safe.

However, our communities will not be safe if we just turn the other way. To take on the drug issue in our communities, drug

### *Government Orders*

addiction, drug abuse, we need comprehensive policies. We need a comprehensive approach that takes science evidence and opinions of the professionals into account when we make policy or legislative decisions.

Ideology is fine, but ideology does not fix things that are broken. Drug abuse is a serious problem in parts of the community I come from. Parents, grandparents, community members are very concerned. I also know it is not an issue that is going to be dealt with by denying oversight and a comprehensive approach.

InSite, specifically, has a proven track record. First, 80% of the people in east Vancouver support the InSite operations. Let me assure members that 80% of the people in east Vancouver do not go to InSite to inject themselves with heroin. However, what they have seen with the operation of this centre over the last number of years is the huge impact it has made on public health and public safety in that area. They have seen people go in, get counselling and rehabilitation. They get put into rehab programs and drug treatment programs. It also takes the needles off our streets, not 100% but at least from those who go into that centre.

Not only do we have evidence that it works in east Vancouver, but safe injection sites operated in over 70 cities in six European countries and Australia in 2004, and there are far more now. A study was done in 2004 that showed that supervised injection sites reached out to vulnerable groups and were accepted by communities; helped improve the health status of users and reduced high-risk behaviour; reduced overdose deaths; and reduced drug use in open spaces.

At the InSite centre in east Vancouver, which I have visited a number of times, long before I became an MP, when I was a teacher and a high school counsellor, there are very strict guidelines in place. The centre opens for a lengthy number of hours and it has absolutely outstanding counselling and support services.

● (1335)

As I look at this whole issue and, I am sure the parents in the House will appreciate this, sometimes when things go wrong and our children do something, we say, "I told you not to do it". If telling people not to do things that are not good for them would stop them, we would not have some of the issues around drug abuse and drug addiction, but it does not work like that.

Once again, I am led to the same conclusion over and over again that we have a government whose members are ideologues and are not listening to science or evidence. Nor do they pay attention to the professionals who work on this first-hand.

There are not too many people in the House who will have spent all night travelling through some of the safe houses around Vancouver or who have spent a couple of evenings in east Vancouver. I did as a counsellor. One thing I learned was that we needed to provide every bit of support we could for the public health and public safety of not only those who used and abused drugs, but also for the communities around them.

The Canadian Nurses Association criticizes the government. Remember the nurses are the first-hand service providers, and this is what they said:

### *Government Orders*

Evidence demonstrates that supervised injection sites and other harm reduction programs bring critical health and social services to vulnerable populations—especially those experiencing poverty, mental illness and homelessness...A government truly committed to public health and safety would work to enhance access to prevention and treatment services—instead of building more barriers.

The Canadian Medical Association also had the following to say, “Supervised injection programs are an important harm reduction strategy”. That is what we are talking about. We are talking about harm reduction. Nobody is saying this is the total answer to taking on the issues of drug addiction and drug abuse. The Canadian Medical Association then goes on to say, “Harm reduction is a central pillar in a comprehensive public health approach to disease prevention and health promotion”.

We have the Canadian Medical Association, nurses, research and endless sound evidence from the only operating site in Canada right now in east Vancouver, InSite. All of that evidence is there and everybody admits that it is not a simple answer to this whole issue, yet the government is determined to proceed with legislation that would prevent people from getting the supervised health care they need.

Once again, it shows that the government has some kind of an allergy; it is allergic to facts and evidence-based decision making. I do not know why that is so. I also find it hard to believe, maybe not, that the government would try to use fear to push forward an agenda that would make communities more unsafe. The Conservatives say that this is about public safety and public health, but they are taking us in the wrong direction.

We also have a Supreme Court decision. For a government that is all about law and order and our court systems, once the Supreme Court makes a ruling, the Conservatives do not like that ruling. They do not like science. They do not like evidence. They do not like what the front-line evidence providers are saying. What they will do now is try to circumvent a decision made by the Supreme Court. Once again, it is a government that is not willing to listen.

I plead with my colleagues on both sides of the House to address this issue in a comprehensive way and let us not have blinders on and allow ideology to lead to greater public unsafety.

● (1340)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing we can all agree on in the House, is that addiction and drug usage is something we should all be paying attention to as legislators and figure out ways to deal with this major problem. It affects not only the people who are in the situation, but it affects their families and employers. It is an issue of great sensitivity.

My colleague talked about our government not being willing to listen. She also mentioned the Supreme Court ruling.

The Supreme Court ruling stated that the federal health minister could block a safe injection site after considering:

—the impact of such a facility on crime rates, the local conditions indicating a need for such a supervised injection site, the regulatory structure in place to support the facility, the resources available to support its maintenance, and expressions of community support or opposition.

When the member talks about listening and evidence-based decisions, does she not think that, given the Supreme Court ruling in

this matter, it is appropriate that we consult with the community on an important issue like this, which is at the heart of what this bill is about?

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, whenever my colleague stands, I always enjoy listening to her lead-up to the question, because up to the lead-up there is very little I disagree with, until she asks the question, which I will respond to now.

The Supreme Court ruling did indicate a number of factors that had to be taken into consideration. However, the bill is a deliberate attempt to circumvent that ruling.

I agree that we need a multifaceted approach, but we do not need more and more power in the hands of the ministers.

We have proven evidence that InSite, and operations like that, work. However, where communities are willing, and community safety has to be taken into consideration, we have had MPs from the other side saying that, even if their constituents want this, they would oppose it. Let us hear what they really want.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member makes reference to what we need. What we really need is a Conservative government with an open mind on the issue.

It is very clear from one of the speakers from the Conservative Party that even if the evidence was there, and we know that it is there, it just did not matter. There are those within the Reform/Conservative government who just do not support the concept of having safe injection sites. What is needed is an open mind in recognition of the issues surrounding addiction and drug use.

Could my colleague add to the importance of approaching things with an open mind and listening to what the stakeholders and professionals are in fact saying? Science does make sense.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, when we look at the bill, it is contrary to what scientific evidence tells us. It also presumes and tries to impose the government's ideology. It does not look at the scientific and medical support that is required to deal with addiction.

Addictions are very serious. When we deal with heroin addictions, the cost to society is very high, yet here we have a way to look at harm reduction and a transition to rehabilitation and treatment centres. We would not be doing the right thing for the Canadian taxpayers if we were to turn our backs on this kind of an option.

● (1345)

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will say from the start that there is no argument. We are unequivocally opposed to Bill C-2 as there is no reason for the bill. What the bill seeks to do is deny a high-risk group of patients access to proven life-saving health care services. That is what it will do. That alone is unconscionable.



*Government Orders*

We are looking at a bill that is trying to refute all of the evidence that has been gathered with regard to safe consumption sites, which is what InSite in Vancouver is. It is the only one in Canada.

However, I would like the House to know that there are 90 safe consumption sites around the world, in Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Luxembourg, Norway, Denmark and Australia. Switzerland introduced safe injection sites in 1986 as a public health harm reduction model. Since 1986, the evidence has been mounting and clearly shows that safe injection sites achieve exactly what they are meant to achieve. They reduce patient harm and decrease the number of patient deaths. They decrease the number of new cases of diseases such as HIV-AIDS, hepatitis C, as well as many other diseases transmitted through needles. Therefore, health and the reduction of morbidity were two things.

Switzerland, since 1986, and the other countries in Europe that have done this also show a reduction in public harm. There is order as well as less criminal activity. For example, the number of break-ins to get money to buy drugs was reduced. This has been proven since 1986. It is not something that someone just dragged up last year and decided this was what they wanted to do because they thought it was a good idea. This has been proven. It is because of that kind of evidence, in 90 sites around the world, that we in British Columbia decided to have a clinical trial. We did not just look at it and say we would do it. It was done by way of a clinical trial.

I want members to know that I was there when this began. I want to give credit to Philip Owen, the mayor of Vancouver, who was sick and tired of what was happening in his city with the number of deaths and the increase in break-ins, petty crimes and muggings that went on just to feed a habit. He decided to go to Europe to see what was going on there. We used to have something called a city caucus at the time wherein government and non-government members of Parliament, the provincial legislature and city councils came together to discuss problems that were common to the city of Vancouver. When this topic came up he said, "We have to work together".

I was designated the minister responsible for the Downtown Eastside at the time by Mr. Chrétien. We had the NDP minister for communities who was designated to be in charge of that file, and we had the mayor. Together, the three levels of government did extensive public consultation with community groups, the police, the RCMP and businesses in that area in order to form the Vancouver agreement in 2000. One part of the Vancouver agreement dealt with this particular public nuisance at the time, in terms of crime and public health problems.

We are not talking about criminal activity alone. Rather, we are talking about addiction. An addiction is a chronic and relapsing health condition best served and treated by evidence-based public health care. That is what this is all about. Since 1986, 90 safe injection sites in many countries around the world had given us the evidence that prompted us to suggest in the 2000 Vancouver agreement that this is what would happen.

I came back to the federal government and brought this forward. There was a great deal of agreement around the table. The evidence was compelling. Then there was an election. When we came back in 2003, the federal government, through section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, agreed to a pilot project run by the

University of British Columbia and clinicians in the area, who were experts from the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS.

• (1350)

As I said, evidence was at the heart of what we were doing. We did not want to translate things from Australia and Europe into Canada. We did not know if that was going to work, so we said "let us do our own pilot project". It was funded and put together, and the pilot project proved without a doubt that InSite not only saved lives, but reduced mortality and reduced the spread of HIV-AIDS and hepatitis C. InSite also increased people's desire and ability to get help. They were a very high-risk group of users, people who never went to doctors and did not want to go to nurses or any kind of institution. It was found that these people sought detox. It was found that they wanted to be helped.

We replicated everything that was shown in Europe and Australia. In other words, we found that it worked in British Columbia, without a doubt. It is not only that. It is not just the British Columbia study that we are talking about. What happened was that peer scientific groups around the world checked the evidence from InSite. They looked at it, they analyzed it and they all agreed that it was authentic.

I just want to give the House a little background about the reality of this problem. In 1988, there were 39 deaths due to overdose from intravenous drug use in Canada. In 1993, there were 357. I know that some people may decide that those 357 deaths were okay because they happened to be drug users, people who were the most vulnerable because they lived on the streets, or because they committed petty crime. That must have been okay in some people's minds. It was not okay in the minds of the federal government of the day, the provincial government of the day in British Columbia, the municipal government of the day in British Columbia or the Vancouver Police.

It is interesting to note that of those overdose deaths, 50% of them occurred in Vancouver. British Columbia actually only carried about 14% of the population, yet 50% of those deaths were in British Columbia, most notably in Vancouver. In 1997, as a result of the escalating death rate and escalating disease, the chief public health officer of Vancouver, John Blatherwick, decided to call a public health emergency in the city of Vancouver.

I just wanted to talk about HIV for a second. I wanted to paint a picture of what was then and why people felt it was essential to move forward on this issue. In 1989, there were 120 new cases out of 100,000 in Canada. After InSite, in Vancouver alone, this had dropped to 31. In the rest of Canada, the number of new cases remained the same.

*Government Orders*

That is evidence, folks. We do not have to be a scientist to figure out that this is evidence, when we look at the number of deaths that were brought down and when we look at the number of diseases such as HIV-AIDS that were actually prevented in this area.

I am talking about what we saw and what happened as a result of InSite. InSite was so successful that within a year a half, the people who were running InSite formed a facility above it, called OnSite, where 25 beds were there for immediate detox. If anyone here knows about addictions, they know that when someone wants to quit or they feel moved to quit, if they do not get in somewhere then and there, they go right back to drugs in two days' time. This is the truth about people who are addicted. OnSite was there so we could say "right on, up you go". That is what has been shown with this.

If anyone in the House can stand up and say that this is not an important piece of evidence in terms of deaths, morbidity and the spread of HIV-AIDS, and if anyone thinks it is funny and hilarious that people should die and that no one should care, and that this was not an absolutely essential thing to do, given that the chief public health officer felt that it was an emergency, then that person is callous. I am hearing laughter on the opposite side of the House. I do not think that this is funny at all. I had many patients who were addicts. Their lives were ruined. I have seen those people begin to have hope and begin to live new lives again.

•(1355)

This is evidence. This is what a government is supposed to do: care about all of its citizens, not just the ones it likes.

This is not something I stand to say because I happen to have been the minister for the Downtown Eastside and the minister for the Vancouver agreement. What I am saying is that across the country we know that many municipalities want to have safe injection sites because they have the problem. They have seen the evidence. The evidence was agreed upon by international peers. Scientific communities around the world agreed upon this. This is going on. There are 90 safe injection sites around the world.

I am repeating this because this is not some little pitch that the government is trying to stop. It is denying people the right to life. All of those 395 people who died of a drug overdose in that year. I think most of us believe that their lives were worth saving and the lives of subsequent people are worth saving. When the number of drug overdose deaths went down so dramatically after InSite, this is something that the government should be considering.

The government fought InSite on moral grounds, on ideological grounds, but certainly not on evidence because it did not have a leg to stand on if it looked at the evidence. The evidence was compelling, but the government did not look at it. It had an idea that this was morally wrong, all these people were shooting up heroin and we were letting them shoot up, and all this kind of judgmental attitude toward citizens of Canada who are vulnerable. They are vulnerable. They are in need of help by the government. They are in need of a good, solid public health response to addiction.

I want to say this is our public health, yet the bill brought in by the Minister of Health is going to be sent to the public safety committee, not the health committee. We see that the whole issue of public safety was served, not only here but in the 90 safe injection sites in

countries of the world. This showed the most important thing, which was that law order and order prevailed. The number of petty crimes went down. The number of people shooting up in the streets went down. The number of people who were begging and being a public nuisance went down. Law and order was served. This is an important piece, as well, if all the government thinks about is law and order and not about people and not about compassion and not about public health.

The government spent millions of dollars taking this case through the courts. When the British Columbia courts agreed that this should happen, that this is evidence-based and the evidence is compelling, and when the Supreme Court of British Columbia agreed that the evidence was compelling, the government took it straight to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court of Canada said the evidence that it listened to was compelling and said that while the federal government had it in its power to deny access, in fact, it was something that it should not do because ethically this would deny section 7 of the charter, which is the right to life, liberty and security of the person. If a person going to die and something would help him or her, that is security of the person. That is life. This is a government that likes to talk about caring about life, but it does not care about certain lives. Some lives are not worth it, as far as the government is concerned.

Now, the government is building a case beyond what the Supreme Court asked. The Supreme Court said, yes, we should consult. This is not consultation; this is legislation. Consultation is to go around and talk. When we started InSite in Vancouver, the city, the province, the federal government, the police and the communities all agreed to do so. Sixty-five per cent of people, at the time, supported InSite in Vancouver because they saw the harm that was being done.

Finally, before I finish, my colleague in the NDP brought forward a motion that the bill be not brought to second reading. I want to say that I support that motion because the bill is not in the best interests of public health and it is not in the best interests of the most vulnerable Canadians.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I hope the member for Vancouver Centre did not misunderstand. She still has five minutes remaining. However, the time for government orders has expired. Therefore, she will have five minutes remaining and questions and comments, following question period.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

•(1400)

[English]

### UKRAINE

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Ukrainians who live in my riding of Don Valley East, I acknowledge that Ukrainians have made a huge contribution in the establishment and development of Canada. During the past 100 years, successors to the first wave of Ukrainian immigrants have made contributions at different levels of Canada's industries, from building and creating new cities and advancing agricultural endeavours to working at all levels of government.

Today it is time to make hard decisions for many states, including Ukraine. I stand here to request the support of Canada in nudging Ukraine toward the EU. The Ukrainian diaspora supports it. Canada has the second-largest diaspora, which feels responsible for the destiny of Ukraine.

For the last two months, I have had the pleasure of hosting in my office one of the Ukrainian interns. He has worked very hard and gained much knowledge, which he will take back to Ukraine.

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### WASTE REDUCTION WEEK

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, October 21 to 27 marked Waste Reduction Week in Canada, which is when I hosted my fourth annual Litterless Lunch Challenge. Every year, more and more schools across my riding join the challenge to do their part to reduce waste by packing litter-free lunches.

This year's winning class went 90% litter-free. If I could get a drum roll, the winning class is Mr. Berry's grade 2 and 3 class from Harbour View Elementary School. Congratulations to those students. They are this year's litterless lunch champions. Way to go.

I would like to acknowledge the special efforts of the entire school for going litter free, not just during Waste Reduction Week, but all year around. Thanks go to Madame Thibodeau and the zero-waste initiative team for coordinating Harbour View's efforts, and to all students, teachers, and parents who made this year's Litterless Lunch Challenge another success. They did a great job. I encourage them to continue building healthy, sustainable communities.

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[Translation]

### MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN QUEBEC

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday municipal elections were held in Quebec, and I would like to congratulate all of the mayors in Quebec, as well as all the new councillors, and particularly those in my riding, with whom I will have the privilege of working.

The people of Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière have vision, and they show a lot of talent and leadership. Our municipal officials are the ones who will realize the aspirations and carry out the

### Statements by Members

constructive and unifying projects that are important to our constituents.

Municipal officials play a very important role. They are involved in various key sectors, including infrastructure, the economy, community, and culture.

I believe that the key to progress is for the federal, provincial, and municipal governments to work together to build strong communities in Quebec within a united Canada.

\* \* \*

[English]

### DIWALI

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians across our country started their celebration of Diwali this weekend, and on behalf of the Liberal caucus, I would like to extend best wishes for peace and enlightenment to all.

Yesterday the Liberal leader visited Gursikh Sabha in Scarborough and Vishnu Mandir in Richmond Hill. As our leader pointed out then, Diwali is an important celebration, not only for those of Hindu, Sikh, and Jain religions, but indeed for all Canadians.

At its core, Diwali marks the triumph of good over evil and represents the power of love, light, and knowledge to dispel ignorance. As legislators working to make Canada a better place and working to promote literacy, peace, prosperity, and social justice, the sentiments underscoring Diwali are worth our emulation.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I wish all those celebrating Diwali a happy festival of lights.

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### CANADA-UKRAINE PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATES

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize 34 youthful delegates representing the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary program, who have visited with us for the past seven weeks. They are here in members' offices to gain valuable perspectives of Canada's most important democratic institution, the Parliament of Canada.

Last week, I met with these young people, the future leaders of Ukraine, who embody the highest ideals of achievement and community service. These are young people like Andrii Sorokhan from my office. We had an intriguing discussion on the role of religion in the political life of Ukraine.

Ukraine holds a special place in the hearts of Canadians. Fully one in 30 Canadians is of Ukrainian descent, including my wife, daughters, and granddaughters. Canada was the first country in the western world to accord diplomatic recognition, in 1991, to an independent Ukraine.

As the young emissaries depart, we wish them well and say to them, *Mnohaya Lita*.

*Statements by Members*

●(1405)

**BURNS BOG CONSERVATION SOCIETY**

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 25th anniversary of the beloved Burns Bog Conservation Society in my riding of Newton—North Delta. Locals call Burns Bog the lungs of the Lower Mainland because the society does much to maintain air quality throughout our region. Burns Bog is home to many species at risk, including the sandhill crane and the Pacific water shrew. It is a key rearing ground for Fraser River salmon, including sockeye, pink, and chum.

Without the bog, my riding and the Lower Mainland would be a very different place. Therefore, I want to take the opportunity in the House of Commons to thank Eliza Olson and the entire Burns Bog team for their activism, hard work, and dedication.

In closing, after a weekend of celebrating with my constituents, I would be remiss not to wish all members of the House, fellow Canadians, and all who mark the occasion around the world, a very happy Diwali.

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**THE HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD REGIMENT**

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to recognize the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment as it celebrates 150 years of service to king, queen and country. On October 26, I had the honour to join serving and retired members of the famed Hasty Ps at their special anniversary event.

The Prince Edward regiment was authorized on February 6, 1863. The regiment won an unprecedented 32 battle honours in World War II, making it the most decorated Canadian regiment of the entire Second World War. Since then, Hasty Ps have served in harm's way in Bosnia and Afghanistan, to name but a few. The spirit of the regiment, made in a toast from a regimental officer, summed it up to me when he said, "I love my country and I serve it in the Regiment. Duty, honour and discipline give life meaning, and there is no greater honour I'd rather have than to be called a Hasty P."

As a former cadet with the regiment, I say congratulations to the Hasty Ps. As they approach Remembrance Day, let us all be eternally thankful. Lest we forget.

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**FITNESS OF CANADIANS**

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today we Conservatives returned from Alberta where we had our best convention ever. We addressed topics that matter to Canadians, including fiscal accountability and the topic of my address today, which is health.

It is no secret that our country is facing a health crisis. Over half of Canadians aged 18 to 79 are either overweight or obese. At the core of this problem, less than 15% of our young people achieve even the minimum guidelines for physical activity each week. Each year, treating obesity-related cardiovascular illness and diabetes costs \$7 billion.

Conservatives are committed to sound fiscal management and improving the health of Canadians. Once again, last Saturday our party walked the talk. Conservative delegates and MPs, including the members for Burlington and Kitchener—Conestoga, followed the lead of our Minister of Health on a five-kilometre walk to put fitness front and centre in Calgary.

[*Translation*]

I invite the members of the other parties to do the same at their own conventions in the future,

[*English*]

We must join together to make Canada the fittest nation on earth.

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**VETERANS**

**Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, with Remembrance Day just around the corner, I would like to take this opportunity to honour all Canadians who have served our country over the years. These brave men and women have given up so much, with many of them paying the ultimate price of their life for peace and freedom.

Special thanks to the veterans of our community and to their families for their contribution. We must ensure they are always taken care of, in service and in retirement.

[*Translation*]

I particularly want to commend the members of Branch 46 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Bury, which recently celebrated its 80th anniversary. The men and women of Bury had the highest participation rate per capita in the two world wars.

I also want to mention Lennoxville Unit 318 of the Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada, one of the last of its kind in Quebec, which celebrated its 60th anniversary.

I was honoured to participate in their celebrations, as they continue to work on helping veterans of recent battles, as well as their communities.

[*English*]

Long live Branch 46. Long live Hut 318. Lest we forget.

*N'oublions jamais.*

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●(1410)

**SPORTS INJURIES**

**Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as members of Parliament, we are often focusing on the issues that divide us, so it is nice to be reminded of some of the issues that unite us as Canadians. As someone who grew up in hockey rinks, I can think of no better example than the good old hockey game. However, like many sports, hockey comes with its own risks, even when both sides are going head to head honourably. That is why I was pleased to see our Minister of Health today deliver on our government's commitment to reduce injuries, with a specific commitment to focus on concussions in youth.

Sports like hockey are a great way to spend an afternoon and make new friends, but injuries that can result are no laughing matter. Concussions and head injuries are serious matters, which parents and families rightly dread when we are watching our kids play our favourite game.

I congratulate the Minister of Health for her announcement today to work with partners to support the recovery and long-term health of Canadians who suffer from these serious injuries.

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[Translation]

#### REMEMBRANCE DAY

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, during this week leading up to Remembrance Day, let us remember the thousands of men and women who answered the call to defend our nation's values, freedoms, and democracy.

It is impossible to imagine what these men and women must have felt during their deployment—the sadness of leaving their loved ones, the fear of future battles, and the worries about possible injuries or even death. We salute their courage in the face of adversity.

Canadians have always been ready and willing to support our troops. Our support for our troops is unwavering. When, for example, we learn of untimely deaths, we come together to pay a final heartfelt tribute to our heroes. Each and every one of us is proud of the outstanding job that the members of our Canadian Forces do to protect us.

On November 11, as we gather around memorials across the country, let us remember the sacrifices they made for us all. Let us remember those who were injured and those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Lest we forget.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### DELEGATION FROM ITALY

**Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is proud to welcome five distinguished representatives from Italy. These dignitaries, who are visiting Ottawa, include Ms. Debora Serracchiani, president of the Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia; Mr. Primo Di Luca, Honourary Canadian Consul to the Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia; Mr. Alberto De Toni, president of the University of Udine; Mr. Giovanni Da Pozzo, president of the Chamber of Commerce of Udine; and Mr. Matteo Tonon, president, Confindustria Udine of Italy.

On behalf of the Minister of Veterans Affairs and, indeed, all parliamentarians, *benvenuti a tutti* and welcome to Canada.

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[Translation]

#### MONTREAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations to those who participated in municipal

#### Statements by Members

elections across Quebec yesterday. Montrealers have a new mayor, the hon. Denis Coderre. Coderre's team fought tooth and nail against a valiant opposition, particularly in the Saint-Jacques district, if I may say so.

[English]

Each and every candidate deserves our gratitude and congratulations. Their commitment to democracy bodes well for a prosperous and ethical future for Quebec's metropolis.

[Translation]

Montreal has some serious social, environmental, economic and financial challenges ahead of it. Most importantly, Montreal needs to be given the honest and transparent administration it deserves.

Here in the House, we know the determination of the former member for Bourassa, his work ethic, his ability to stir things up, his sense of purpose and his outspokenness. The Government of Canada needs to work with the new administration. It can start by committing to building an excellent Champlain Bridge worthy of the city loved by all Canadians and by visitors from around the world.

Good luck, Denis.

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[English]

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, special interest anti-free trade groups with ties to the NDP are today spreading the same falsehoods they were spreading during the NAFTA negotiations. These groups say that free trade is bad for Canada. They were wrong then and they are wrong now.

The Canada-Europe trade agreement will make Canada the only major developed country to have preferential access to the world's two largest markets: the European Union and the United States. This deal will add \$12 billion to our economy annually. That is the equivalent of 80,000 new Canadian jobs.

Sadly, the NDP remains beholden, both financially and organizationally, to the big union bosses and these special interest anti-trade activist groups. The NDP's position on denouncing free trade is well known, given their record of voting against almost every single trade deal put forward by our government. Its shameful position on opposing the Canada-Europe trade deal is not very surprising.

*Oral Questions*

●(1415)

**THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Conservatives showed us this weekend that they are more right-wing than ever. Conservatives voted for a less progressive tax system. They voted to attack collective bargaining and reduce public pensions. They rejected any form of any gun control. They even want to reopen the abortion debate by restricting a woman's right to choose. The same proposal was rejected by the House. However, while Conservatives were showing Canadians how right-wing they are, missing from the convention was anyone taking any responsibility for any part of the Senate expense scandal.

When the Prime Minister is losing the credibility war to Mike Duffy and the contrition war to Mayor Rob Ford, we know he has serious problems. Fortunately, in 2015, Canadians will have a real choice: to elect an NDP government to finally clean up Conservative and Liberal corruption once and for all.

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**CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY**

**Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is committed to keeping our streets and communities safe.

Recently the Canada Border Services Agency apprehended the 48th individual on the “wanted by the CBSA” list and removed the 40th. Our government was proud to create this tool for ordinary Canadians to provide assistance to law enforcement. Canada will not be a safe haven for foreign criminals. Our government has zero tolerance for those who disregard Canadian law and abuse our generous immigration system. Under the leadership of our Conservative government, we have removed over 115,000 illegal immigrants since 2006.

I would like to congratulate the Canada Border Services Agency for the great work it does every day keeping Canadians safe.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[English]

**ETHICS**

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, Conservatives, like Irving Gerstein, were making up new versions of events around the Senate expense scandal and the PMO cover-up.

Nigel Wright's attorney said that Mr. Wright has “no comment at this time to this latest characterization of events”.

For Monday, November 4, what is the Prime Minister's official version of the events surrounding his cash-for-cover-up scheme hatched in his office?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on February 13, Senator Duffy approached the Prime Minister with respect to his inappropriate expenses. The Prime Minister told him that he had to repay those inappropriate expenses. Senator Duffy

then went on television to tell all Canadians that he had actually repaid those by taking out a loan at the Royal Bank.

We subsequently learned that that was not true, that Nigel Wright had actually paid for that. That was inappropriate. Mr. Wright has also acknowledged that that was inappropriate and is prepared to accept the consequences.

At the same time, the Senate has a motion in front of it that will suspend these senators without pay, and we think that is the right course of action for taxpayers.

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what we would like to see from that side of the House is some sense of contrition, some sign that they understand that they made mistakes with these senators, some signal that the Prime Minister understands the serious problems with his office. What we did see was Senator Gerstein producing yet another version of events.

Can the parliamentary secretary tell us: when was the first time that the Prime Minister spoke with Senator Gerstein about the Senate expense controversy?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, on February 13, the Prime Minister spoke to the entire caucus, both the Senate and the members of the House of Commons, and explained to them that if they had any inappropriate expenses, they should repay those inappropriate expenses.

At the same time, that was when Senator Duffy came and tried to justify his inappropriate expenses. He was told that he needed to repay those expenses.

The Prime Minister learned on May 15, when it was reported, that, in fact, Senator Duffy had not paid that back; Nigel Wright did. The Prime Minister was also very clear that had he known that such a plan existed, he would have in no way allowed it to go forward.

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Nigel Wright told the RCMP that the Conservative Party initially offered to repay the expenses of Mike Duffy. This weekend, Irving Gerstein claimed that this was not the case.

Which version of the story does the Prime Minister believe? Which version of the story does the parliamentary secretary believe: Wright's story or Gerstein's story? Which is it?

●(1420)

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that the Conservative Party did not pay the expenses of Senator Duffy. Mr. Wright himself has said that he paid those expenses. He understands and knows that that was not appropriate. He is prepared to be accountable for that decision.

*Oral Questions*

That is the version that I believe, and that is the version that Canadians also understand. At the same time, there is a motion in front of the Senate, which would suspend these senators without pay. That is also something Canadians want. I am hoping that the Senate will get to it and suspend these three senators as soon as possible.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, Senator Irving Gerstein confirmed that he was aware not only of the \$90,000 Mike Duffy was supposed to pay back, but also of the request to the Conservative Party of Canada fund to pay back Mr. Duffy's suspicious claims.

When was the Prime Minister made aware of this request?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, the party did not pay the expenses of Senator Duffy. Nigel Wright repaid those expenses. The Prime Minister learned of that along with most of us, on May 15. That was inappropriate that Nigel Wright would repay those expenses. The Prime Minister has also been very clear that had he known, he would have in no way endorsed such a scheme. Nigel Wright is prepared to accept responsibility for his inappropriate actions.

Right now there is a motion in front of the Senate that would suspend these three senators without pay, and that is the accountability that the Canadian taxpayers are waiting for. We hope that the Senate will get back to that as soon as possible.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, enough is enough. In the House, 75% of our questions are asked in French, but the answers are in English. We know that the parliamentary secretary can speak French. He should either answer in French or find someone else who will.

If Senator Gerstein is admitting that he was aware of the scheme to pay back Mr. Duffy's expenses and he did not inform the Prime Minister, then why is he too not being considered for sanctions in the Senate?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me just say this. I know how much people do not like to hear stories, but my parents came to this country in the late fifties. Until they both died, they were both extraordinarily nervous about speaking English. Although they could speak it very well, they spoke it with an accent. They were always nervous about that, right to the end.

On this side of the House, me included, I am learning French. I am doing the best I can, but at the same time, when we are being asked important questions, it is very important that we remain consistent and that the translation does not get mixed up or that members do not get a wrong answer because I am responding incorrectly.

I do not apologize for the fact that I am trying my best to learn French, but for all those people who are trying to learn another language—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Wascana.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Senator Gerstein has confirmed publicly that he knew there was a conspiracy in the Prime Minister's Office to pay, wrongfully, more than \$90,000 to Mike Duffy. Senator Gerstein meets regularly with the Prime Minister.

With full knowledge that a cover-up was being implemented by the PMO, for three full months, including hush money of \$90,000, did Senator Gerstein fail to alert the Prime Minister, and is Senator Gerstein therefore an integral part of the deception organized by Nigel Wright?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think Nigel Wright has been very clear in affidavits that have been filed before the court who he brought into his confidence with respect to this scheme. The Prime Minister has said that had he known, it would have in no way been allowed to happen.

At the same time, there is a motion in front of the Senate right now. It is a motion that would suspend these three senators without pay. That is what Canadians want us to do. They want the Senate to get on with it to suspend these three senators who accepted funds they were not entitled to. The Senate needs to get on with this. Senate Liberals need to get out of the way, and we need to suspend these three senators without pay.

• (1425)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that he could not care less, but Canadians care. This is an issue that goes to the heart of government administration, directly touching the PMO.

Nigel Wright told police the Conservative Party was going to pay Duffy's expenses, but only up to about \$30,000; \$90,000 was far too much. However, Senator Gerstein claims the party was never going to pay anything, period.

Which is it for the government, a question of principle, or a question of cost, and who is lying, Gerstein or Wright?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what it is, as always, on this side of the House, is a question of principle. When it comes to Canadian taxpayers, we always, on this side of the House, put the taxpayer first. It is only the Liberals who get in the way of that and are fighting so hard to protect the status quo in the Senate.

There is a motion in front of the Senate right now that we suspend these three senators without pay. That is what Canadians want us to do. It is only the Liberals in the House and in the Senate who are standing in the way of that level of accountability. They are fighting so hard for the status quo. If only they would fight as hard for the taxpayers as we are, then these three senators would be out, they would not be paid, and Canadian taxpayers could have that accountability.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, here is just part of the list: Duffy, Wright, Gerstein, Perrin, Hamilton, Woodcock, Byrne, Rogers, Novak, van Hemmen, LeBreton, Tkachuk, Stewart Olsen, and on it goes: the Prime Minister's most senior entourage, all of them installed by him and accountable only to him, and all of them involved in the Duffy cover-up.

Is it the Prime Minister's testimony that none of these people told him about the corruption unfolding in the PMO, or is that because they knew he could not care less?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that it is only the Liberals in the House and in the Senate, and of course, the NDP, who want to make victims out of these three senators and former disgraced Liberal senator Mac Harb, the senator for Ottawa, who pretended he lived 102 kilometres away so he could collect the subsidy. They are the only ones standing up for these people.

We are standing up for the taxpayer. When the Prime Minister says he could not care less, he could not care less that they are going to stand in the way. He is going to make sure that taxpayers get the accountability they want, whether they are in the way or not.

That is the same with every member of this caucus. We stand up for the taxpayers now and tomorrow and always will.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week, the Prime Minister tried to avoid answering straightforward questions—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay has the floor.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, whether he answers in English or French, I wish the hon. member would tell the truth.

[*English*]

Last week the Prime Minister told us to read the RCMP documents, which highlight the role of Senator Gerstein, but on Saturday Senator Gerstein essentially said that the RCMP witness testimony of Nigel Wright was a lie, so someone is not telling the truth here.

Whom does the Prime Minister believe this week: Nigel Wright or Senator Gerstein?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we believe on this side of the House is that when somebody puts in an expense claim that they are not entitled to, they need to pay it back. That is very clear. These three senators, along with disgraced Liberal Senator Mac Harb, took money they were not entitled to. They need to pay that money back.

At the same time, there is a motion in front of the Senate that would bring this level of accountability for the Canadian taxpayers right now. That is what we need to have passed. It is the Liberals in the Senate and the NDP and Liberals in this House who are making victims out of these senators.

I say that they should stand up for the taxpayers and bring accountability.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, even Rob Ford understands the importance of a little bit of contrition.

The problem is that the Conservatives cannot get their story straight. When the Prime Minister found out about Nigel Wright's deal, he said that he had done an honourable thing; then, last week, he threw him under the bus, saying that it was a deceitful scheme; then, on the weekend, his ministers were actually trying to pull Nigel out from under the bus.

Given the amount of trouble that Nigel Wright has caused his caucus, when was the last time anyone in the Prime Minister's Office or the cabinet spoke to Nigel Wright, how long was it after Nigel jumped ship, and what was it about?

• (1430)

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, honestly, we have Canadians across this country who are looking for work still. We have an economy that, despite the fact that it has grown by 2%, is still struggling. We are trying to make a lot of gains in a lot of different areas. The Minister of Employment and Social Development is seeking to bring in a new job grant program, yet the NDP member wants to know the last time a few people talked on the telephone.

We should forget about European free trade, forget about our troops in the field, forget about the equipment they need, but when was the last time we talked on the phone with someone? Is this the best they have? Between—

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one thing is certain: Quebeckers and Canadians want to know the truth because they deserve the truth from their Prime Minister.

The Minister of Justice, who is well-placed to speak to the actions of the key players in the Senate scandal, said, "I've known Nigel a long time, he's a very principled individual, he's somebody who is honest".

Do the Prime Minister or his parliamentary secretary approve of this statement?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said on Thursday, there are MPs in this House who are proud to be Canadian and proud to be Quebeckers. They always work to build a stronger Quebec and Canada. It is a shame that this hon. member does not have that same pride.



*Oral Questions**[English]*

If he had the same pride, he would help us build a bigger, better, stronger Canada, community by community. What does that look like? It looks like the member for Brant, whose hockey night in Brantford raised over \$100,000 for a local charity. The member for Yukon ran and raised \$100,000 for juvenile diabetes. That is what building a—

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is so tough on Mike Duffy that he asks Conservative members to pay for his lawyers. That is not right.

*[Translation]*

Is the Prime Minister aware of other cheques that people from his office or from the Conservative Party wrote and sent to Nigel Wright? Are there other cheques? Does he know or not?

*[English]*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member talks about writing cheques. How about the fact that his leader not only accepted repayment for over \$100,000 for his legal fees, but also accepted repayment of a judgment against him for libel?

It goes even further. The member's leader is so tough that he forgot about 17 years' worth of bribes that he was offered. Imagine what the people of Quebec could have avoided had he only opened his mouth 17 years ago? The great prosecutor forgot to mention that 17 years ago.

While I am on my feet, let us talk about the member for Beauce, who raised over \$100,000 for his local charity—

*[Translation]*

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am fascinated by the incredible ridiculousness of the answers we are hearing from the Conservative Party.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister confirm that all—and I mean all—of Senator Carolyn Stewart Olsen's expenses were legitimate, justified and appropriate, yes or no?

*[English]*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is ridiculous is that the member was elected as a federalist and at the same time he is making donations to a party that wants to remove Quebec from Canada. That is what is really ridiculous. While I agree with nothing the Bloc members say, at least they are honest in the fact that they go in front of people and are honest.

What is clearly ridiculous is that the member thinks it is funny to donate to a party that wants to break up Canada. There is nothing funny about that. We will work to a bigger, better, stronger, more prosperous Canada, even with him in the House.

● (1435)

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it was Conservatives who appointed the senators and Conservatives who tried to cover it up afterwards.

In his statement to the Senate, Mike Duffy claimed that he received direction and coaching from the Prime Minister's Office about his RBC loan. Did Chris Woodcock tell Mike Duffy to use a fake story about a bank loan when he spoke to the media?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that Senator Duffy went in front of Canadians and said that he had repaid the money for inappropriate expenses. We know that he did not do that.

As I said the other day, Senator Duffy is a guy who calls himself the “Duffinator”. Somehow the kids in short pants terrified the Duffinator. Had I known that kids in short pants terrified the Press Gallery so much, I would be walking like this all the time, because apparently kids in short pants are to Mike Duffy like garlic to a vampire. He cannot take it. Give me a break.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let us review. The Conservatives show no contrition, take no responsibility, and everything bad that happened is someone else's fault. The Prime Minister once believed in Senate reform, but now even Preston Manning says the Conservatives have become an embarrassment.

Why does the Prime Minister now say it is simply a case of the Senate reforming itself?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, here they go again, trying to defend these three senators and disgraced Liberal Senator Mac Harb.

They are not the victims here. These senators are not the victims. It is the Canadian taxpayers who are the victims. There is a motion in front of the Senate that would suspend these three senators, yet those members come in the House day after day and try to defend these three senators.

When it comes to reform of the Senate, we want to reform the Senate. We have motions in front of the Supreme Court of Canada that will give us a road map to do that. We want a reformed Senate and we are going to fight for a reformed Senate, because that—

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

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works, but in her capacity as the Receiver General for Canada.

Can she tell the House today if the repayment of Mike Duffy's expenses in the amount of \$90,172 was received by the Office of the Receiver General, and if so, when specifically did that repayment arrive?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on February 13 the Prime Minister was very clear to everyone, including Senator Duffy, that if they had inappropriate expenses, they should repay those inappropriate expenses.

*Oral Questions*

Senator Duffy then went on TV and said he took out a loan at the Royal Bank. We know that was not true. We learned that Nigel Wright actually paid that back. Nigel Wright has said that it was inappropriate to do so; at the same time, the Prime Minister said that had he known anything about this, he would in no way have endorsed such a scheme.

Nigel Wright is accepting accountability for what he has done. He knows that what he has done is wrong. There is a motion in front of the Senate that would suspend the three senators and bring accountability to taxpayers. We hope that senators will support us in that, and that the Senate will actually pass—

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

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Public Works is fully capable of answering such a simple question in her capacity as the Receiver General for Canada.

The Receiver General is responsible for accepting all payments to the government. The Prime Minister said on May 9, “Senator Duffy some months ago repaid the money”. That means a cheque went through her office.

Would the Minister of Public Works table in the House today a true copy of the cancelled cheque that the Prime Minister claims he received before May 9? The Prime Minister's credibility stands on the line, based on her answers.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have a bill that would open up the accountability of our unions when it comes to the payments that they make. Now we learn about this member here, and I guess that is the problem here. If it was the unions making this repayment, NDP members would probably have no problem with it, because we know how excited they are about accepting illegal union donations on that side of the House.

At the same time, what we said is this: if anyone has inappropriate expenses, they have to repay them. There is a motion in front of the Senate right now that would suspend these three senators. We want the Senate to deal with it.

On this side of the House, we are fighting for the taxpayers and we are going to continue to do that.

• (1440)

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the latest PMO story is that the \$13,000 of legal fees that the Conservatives gave to Mike Duffy was because of the audit and not the secret deal. It should be easy to say exactly what the fees were for, because the PMO has the invoice. Senator Gerstein says the fees were paid because Nigel Wright requested it in his role as chief of staff.

Did Nigel Wright also ask the party to pay Wallin and Brazeau's legal fees, or was the payoff only for those covering up PMO fraud? Will the government release the invoice, or do we have to wait for Senator Duffy to do it?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as we said last week in the House, the party—and we are not unusual in this—does offer members of its caucus who are in good standing

legal assistance if it is required. On the same token, we learned on May 15 that Senator Duffy did not actually pay back those expenses and that it was done by Nigel Wright. That was inappropriate. Mr. Wright has accepted the consequences of that decision. At the same time, there is a motion in the Senate that would suspend these three senators without pay.

That is the level of accountability that we want. The Liberals in the Senate need to get out of the way and let Canadians have that level of accountability.

[Translation]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure our colleague that he is indeed being consistent in his answers, which are equally pathetic in both French and English. Let me try one more time.

On June 5, the Prime Minister wrongly told the House that only Nigel Wright was aware of the \$90,000 cheque he gave to Mike Duffy. However, Senator Gerstein, the Conservative Party's bagman, admitted this weekend that he knew, which contradicts the Prime Minister's story.

Did he inform the Prime Minister of this last spring? If not, why not? The question is simple in French.

[English]

It is easy in English. Can we have an answer?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, forgive me if I will not take any lessons in being a successful politician from the member who just asked that question.

This is what the debate has come down to in this House. They know that they are not on the side of Canadians. They know that they are not on the side of Canadians who want these senators suspended without pay, so now they are going to start insulting me. If it makes them feel better to insult me because I do not speak great French, oh well, they can go ahead.

In the final analysis, what we want is accountability. They need to get out of the way in the Senate so that the Senate can pass this motion. If I could say it as well in French, I would, but I cannot; however, soon I will be able to, because I am taking lessons.

[Translation]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member that no one is damaging his reputation more than he is himself.

Who is telling the truth: the Conservative Party's bagman, Senator Gerstein, who said he told Nigel Wright that the party would never pay Mike Duffy's expenses, or Nigel Wright, who told the RCMP that the Conservative Party was prepared to pay if the expenses were under \$32,000?

These two sides of the story contradict one another. Which version is right? Who is lying: Gerstein or Wright? Is my colleague going to avoid answering the question yet again?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, to quote the Prime Minister, I could care less what that gentleman thinks about how I answer questions in the House because I will always answer the questions that are put to me in the way that protects the Canadian taxpayer, unlike the Liberals and that particular former leader who is surrounded by individuals who have illegal campaign debts. He is not so worried about that, is he? Perhaps he would have that same level of aggression with those people who have those illegal debts.

On this side of the House, we are going to stand up for the taxpayer. Over there, the Liberals are going to try to protect the status quo. They have an option: protect the taxpayer, pass the motion in the House. That is what they—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Welland.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been hoping to see some sense of contrition from Conservatives, some sense they understand. These were Conservative senators who ripped off the taxpayer and Conservatives who hatched this cover-up, but instead we see no sign.

Does the Prime Minister realize that when he changes his story from one day to the next, people have questions?

I ask a simple question. Did Nigel Wright resign or did he quit?

•(1445)

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, this is coming from a member who stands behind a leader who, for 17 years, did not say a word about the fact that he was offered a bribe, and we know what the consequences to the people of Quebec were for that decision over 17 years. This is coming from a party that accepted illegal union donations. All 103 of them are responsible for that decision.

Here is the reality. Nigel Wright did something that was wrong. He is prepared to accept the consequences of those actions. It does not matter what party one is in, do not accept payments that one is not entitled to. It is pretty simple.

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Thunder Bay—Rainy River are asking questions about an expense scandal and attempted cover-up. They wonder why the Prime Minister has not shown any contrition. He will not even acknowledge his story has changed. He will not acknowledge it was not just one person in his office. It was not even a few. It was many.

Would Conservatives tell us how many people, in addition to those mentioned in RCMP documents, were aware of the cover-up scheme between Mike Duffy and Nigel Wright?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, this coming from a party whose leader waited 17 years. He was offered a bribe 17 years ago and then when he had the option all of those years, and it is not 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10 or 15 years, he could have remembered. Maybe he did. I am not sure. Then he remembered 17

years later. “Oh, yes, I was offered a bribe from the mayor of Laval. No big deal, though. No big deal”.

I think the people of Quebec would disagree with his assertion that it was not a big deal. Imagine what the people of Quebec could have accomplished had only he come clean 17 years ago. They could have accomplished a lot.

We have a motion in front of the Senate right now to bring accountability—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing.

*[Translation]*

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, here is a good one for you.

While people in northern Ontario are having difficulty accessing health care and a family doctor, the Conservatives want to ensure that Mike Duffy does not lose his Senate health benefits. That is their priority. It is unbelievable.

On June 5, the Prime Minister said that only Nigel Wright knew about the \$90,000 payment to Mr. Duffy.

Is that true or false? Yes or no?

*[English]*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, part of that question was actually right. The people of the north actually care about health care. They care about the economy. They care about free trade with the European Union.

However, when is the last time that member asked the Minister of Health a question? When is the last time that member asked the Minister of Finance a question? When is the last time any of those members asked a question on the economy, on community safety, on jobs, on trade, on natural resources, on the environment, on defence? They do not because they know that we are on the right track and they are afraid to ask those questions.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, until the Prime Minister gets up in the House and says the truth to all Canadians, we will continue to raise those questions.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I have urged colleagues, over the past couple weeks, to avoid using phrases or words that have implications that a member or a minister might not have been telling the truth.

I will ask the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst to keep that in mind as he finishes his question.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I just hope the Prime Minister has only one story.

*[Translation]*

People in my riding want access to employment insurance when they need it. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's Office is writing cheques for thousands of dollars to buy senators' silence and cover up the scheme.

### Oral Questions

Is it too much to ask that the money be used to improve Canadians' quality of life rather than to cover up the Prime Minister's pact with his senators? It is simple and easy.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** The people in his riding want employment, but yet the NDP does not ask any questions about that, Mr. Speaker. The economy grew by 2% annually. We heard that last week, but the New Democrats are ignoring that. They do not want to talk about the fact that jobs and job creation is on the rise.

I was in Calgary this weekend and I had the opportunity to meet with delegates from Nova Scotia, who talked about Canada's national shipbuilding strategy and the incredible benefits that would give to people in that region of the country. Who is against it? The New Democrats are against it. If you want jobs for the people in your community, then vote for the things that will give them jobs.

• (1450)

**The Speaker:** I would remind the hon. parliamentary secretary to address his comments to the Chair and not directly at other members.

\* \* \*

### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our Canadian Armed Forces are contributing to international peace and security by breaking up major drug operations. In October, HMCS *Toronto* discovered and destroyed 154 bags of heroin, weighing more than 180 kilograms. Now we are learning that our armed forces have made another significant contribution by working with our allies in Operation Caribbe.

Could the Minister of National Defence update the House on the important work being done by our men and women in uniform during this recent mission?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to working with our allies to combat crime at home and abroad and to enhancing international security.

HMCS *Edmonton*, along with the Royal Canadian Air Force Aurora, was involved with the seizure of more than one tonne of cocaine over two days in the eastern Pacific Ocean. Just like the work done by HMCS *Toronto*, this is a great example of the Canadian Armed Forces demonstrating leadership abroad and ensuring our security at home by keeping illicit drugs from entering our country.

I am sure all hon. members will join me in extending a Bravo Zulu to our men and women in uniform.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Remembrance Day is approaching. It is important to take the time in the next few days to honour those who have served and continue to serve our country. In order to honour these men and

women, I am duty bound to ask for an explanation from the minister as to why some injured soldiers are released from the military before they are ready to leave and why assistance with funeral expenses is so limited that less than 30% of the funds have been disbursed?

[English]

**Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Budget Officer for highlighting how our government doubled the financial limits of the funeral and burial program.

We will continue to work with veterans groups to ensure the Canadian funeral and burial program remains one of the most generous of our allies, even though the party opposite has chosen to not support us in these particular enhancements for our veterans.

\* \* \*

### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** That is just not good enough, Mr. Speaker.

Months ago the Minister of National Defence stood in a Legion in my riding and promised Legion members that injured soldiers would no longer be cut loose, but the practice continues. Two injured soldiers in my riding, Corporal David Hawkins and Corporal Andrew Knisley, are being pressured to leave the military just before qualifying for their pensions. This is callous. It is disgraceful.

Will the minister put an immediate halt to this practice and stand up for those soldiers?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** That is absolutely not the practice, Mr. Speaker. We stand behind those men and women who serve us in uniform. We ensure they get the physical, mental and occupational therapy services that they need for their eventual transition to civilian life. Members are not released until they are prepared.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is more weak excuses, but still no apologies for the treatment of these soldiers.

The Canadian Forces ombudsman has revealed huge problems with the joint personnel support units, the people who are supposed to help wounded soldiers. He has found that they are understaffed, lack experience, and cannot properly assist soldiers.

Conservatives are asking our soldiers to come home from fighting for their country, only to have to fight with their own government to get the support they need.

What is the minister doing to immediately rectify this disgraceful situation?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there would not be a joint personnel support unit without the support of this government. This was opposed all the way through by the NDP.

• (1455)

**Mr. Jack Harris:** No it wasn't.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Rob Nicholson:** Yes it was, Mr. Speaker. If the NDP members are so interested in supporting veterans and supporting the men and women in uniform, why do they not get on board with all the efforts made on this side of the House? That is not what they are doing now, or when they supported the Liberals who did nothing for the men and women in uniform. He should explain that.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are all talk and no action. They are basically abandoning Canadian soldiers who were injured in the line of duty.

The joint personnel support unit is the government's main program to help injured members of the Canadian Forces, but the ombudsman noted serious issues with the program, including a lack of staff and training. Our soldiers deserve better.

Will the minister immediately act on the ombudsman's recommendations to ensure that injured soldiers receive all the help they need?

[*English*]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the joint personnel support unit did not even exist before this government took office. We have made it a priority.

That is something very different from when the Liberals were in office, cheered on and supported by the NDP. I am very proud of the fact that we have made this a priority and we will continue to do so.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Conservatives could not care less about our injured veterans just before they are to be released from the armed forces and qualify for their pension.

Last week we asked the minister about Corporal David Hawkins. He could not care less. Today, Corporal Hawkins wants to know, "What are the minister's intentions in term of retaining injured soldiers to allow them to get their ten year pension?" The minister should answer the corporal.

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we thank Corporal Hawkins for his service and sacrifice to our country. Before being released, members of the Canadian Armed Forces work with the military on a transition plan.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Answer him.

**Hon. Rob Nicholson:** I wish he would answer the question. If he is so interested in the affairs of the men and women in uniform, why did he not speak up all those years, during the decade of darkness, when the Liberals did nothing to help these people? Why? Let him get on his feet and answer that.

\* \* \*

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, only \$18.4 million of the \$65 million in the last budget for the Last Post Fund will ever actually be spent to help veterans with their funeral costs, while the vast majority of veterans do not qualify for help because of the Conservatives.

What is the real reason for putting a fake number in the budget for veterans' funerals? Is it to free up funds for the propaganda budget within the PMO, or is that the Prime Minister could not care less about honouring veterans?

**Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is utter rubbish, indeed.

Assuming that the member actually read the budget officer's report, I invite him to take a read of his quote: "In addition to the increased reimbursement for Canadian veterans' families for funeral expenses under the new program rules, additional expenses like ceremonial services and transportation costs are now eligible".

Truth be known, we have one of the best programs available to veterans and their families. That member and his party have consistently not supported us.

\* \* \*

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Fisheries Act is to protect fish habitat from destruction. However, after the Conservatives gutted the act, the only species covered are the ones humans eat. Eighty per cent of freshwater fish species are no longer protected.

Why are the Conservatives ignoring Canadians' concerns? Why are they putting our environment at risk for future generations?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, despite opposition members' claims, our changes to the Fisheries Act actually strengthen protection for fish. We are focusing more of our time and resources on projects that could have an impact on commercial, recreational or aboriginal fisheries, which are so important to so many of our rural communities. Our changes also make penalties tougher, by punishing those people who actually break the law by causing serious harm to fisheries.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, talk about bad faith.

With the new Fisheries Act, the Conservatives are proving that they have no interest in protecting marine life. The only protected fish are the ones humans eat; the Conservatives do not care about the rest. I have some news for them: that is not how we safeguard an ecosystem.

Will the Conservatives restore this legislation so that all species of fish will once again be protected?

*Oral Questions*

● (1500)

*[English]*

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, these changes are another step in our government's commitment to cut red tape and to protect Canadian fisheries. Our changes make penalties tougher for those who break the law. We will focus our time and resources on those projects that could have an impact on the fisheries that are important to the rural areas of Canada and those people whose livelihoods depend upon them.

\* \* \*

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with Remembrance Day only a week away, I am sure we have all reflected on those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to Canada. From the War of 1812 to the present day in Afghanistan, men and women in uniform have stood up to defend the values that, as Canadians, we continue to hold so very dear. I just wish that hon. member agreed.

Would the Minister of Veterans Affairs please update the House on any activities he has planned to remember those who gave their lives so that we may live ours in peace and security?

**Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member not only for his service to Canada but also for being an honourable veteran.

This Remembrance Day, I stand shoulder to shoulder with every member of this place to pay tribute and to remember those who gave their lives in the service of Canada. All members are invited to a parliamentary remembrance ceremony tomorrow morning at 11 a.m. at the National War Memorial, and I hope many of those here will attend.

Canadians know one thing for sure. Canadian veterans helped shape our great country, and those who lost their lives deserve our absolute respect and must always be remembered.

Lest we forget.

\* \* \*

**CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA**

**Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the weekend, the Prime Minister said he could not care less what Canadians think of him or his government. Unfortunately, this also applies to Canadian—

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

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

**Ms. Yvonne Jones:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately this also applies to Canadian correctional officers, who are also being ignored by the Prime Minister, even though the number of violent episodes in our prisons has increased by 33% since 2010, putting the lives of our correctional officers in danger.

Why could the Prime Minister not care less about protecting our correctional officers in this country?

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, to begin, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the remarkable work being done by our correctional officers. Their work is important. They keep criminals, people who are a threat to society, behind bars. We will continue to support them.

\* \* \*

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the current infrastructure investment fund expires at the end of the year. Although the government announced the creation of a new fund in the last budget seven months ago, details on the terms have still not been provided.

When will the minister finalize the framework agreement so that the application process can finally begin?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the latest budget we were proud to announce the longest and most significant infrastructure program in the history of Canada.

The parameters remain to be set, but we know that the program will include the gas tax rebate and a transfer to the provinces. We have met with all the provincial and territorial representatives, and in the coming weeks or months we will have the pleasure of working with them to see this plan through.

\* \* \*

*[English]***HEALTH**

**Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over the past few years head injuries have dominated sports headlines. Concussions suffered by a young athlete or a child's accident while playing hockey can take an emotional toll on families and communities. As a hockey dad to a son named Kobey, who plays goal, I know first-hand that safety is a priority for our children when playing sports.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health please inform the House what our government is doing to prevent and treat these serious injuries for children and youth?

● (1505)

**Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hard-working dad and member of Parliament for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River for that important question.

As a mom to a young and active boy who has suffered a serious concussion, I know that head injuries are something that many parents are concerned about. That is why I am pleased to report that today our government announced \$4.3 million for 19 new research projects across Canada. These projects will focus on preventing, diagnosing, and treating concussions. Also, these research projects will focus on kids.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Gasperek family, which is well integrated into the Montreal community, has received a deportation order from Canada effective today.

The Gaspereks' son is gravely ill, and according to their doctor, boarding a plane is out of the question. The boy's life is at risk. Even more appalling is the fact that no doctor at Citizenship and Immigration examined the child before the deportation order was issued.

Has the minister read the file and will he immediately reverse this life-threatening decision?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure the hon. member.

There are professionals in place to ensure that the immigration system is working properly. That is why we welcome more than 250,000 new immigrants to Canada every year. Obviously, people who come here must obey our laws. No one is above the law. I can assure my colleague that professionals make sure that the people who come here are treated well. Nonetheless, if they do not obey the law, they will be returned to their country of origin.

\* \* \*

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner of Official Languages has been clear: the closing of the library at the Maurice Lamontagne marine research institute, the only French-language library of its kind in Canada, violates the government's official languages obligations.

Nevertheless, the minister has still not bothered to respond to the written demands for her to confirm that she will abide by the law.

I am asking her here today whether she will respect the Commissioner of Official Languages' decision, put a stop to the moving process, and guarantee that the library at the Maurice Lamontagne marine research institute in Mont-Joli will remain open.

[English]

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, library users were asking for digital information, so we are accommodating that demand by expanding our digital access and reducing paper where possible.

Our libraries will continue to deliver services in both official languages. The commissioner has recognized that the model for DFO's scientific libraries will not affect the service to the public, nor the language of work for staff. The commissioner himself says that the new organizational chart proposed by DFO shows that three of the four positions at the BIO library will be bilingual. The national team's four positions will continue to be bilingual.

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I urge the minister to re-read the decision made by the Commissioner of Official Languages.

The Conservatives are once again using employment insurance for partisan purposes. They are helping themselves to billions of dollars from the fund to lower corporate taxes and fund their battle against the deficit, but they are doing nothing to help workers and employers across the regions of Quebec.

In the last mammoth bill, the Conservatives even set out a way to legalize their scheme. They got rid of the Employment Insurance Financing Board, an agency that was responsible for ensuring that EI contributions were being used for the EI program.

When will the government stop siphoning money from workers and employers?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I heard a question. If the member wants to reformulate his question and ask something a little more coherent, I will be able to respond.

\* \* \*

[English]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, a week from today, the 19th Conference of the Parties on climate will open in Warsaw. Two months ago I wrote the Minister of the Environment to inquire if she intended to return to the traditional practice of having our delegation represent Canada and not just the Conservative Party. This close to the opening day, I assume the answer to that question is no. Therefore, I want to ask her this. Will Canada remain committed to the targets the Prime Minister adopted in 2009 in Copenhagen? Will we still remain committed to 607 megatonnes by 2020, and financing for mitigation and adaptation to developing countries?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to working with our international partners to address climate change. We have contributed \$1.2 billion to developing countries so that they can reduce emissions and adapt to changes. We are also a founding member of an international coalition taking action to reduce pollutants like black carbon.

I look forward to meeting with my international counterparts to continue to take action in addressing climate change.

\* \* \*

● (1510)

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** That concludes question period for today.

*Routine Proceedings*

I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Mr. Yukiya Amano, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### PETITIONS

#### SEX SELECTION

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition from my constituents in beautiful Langley. They highlight that the CBC revealed that ultrasounds are being used in Canada to tell the sex of an unborn child so that if it is a girl, the pregnancy will end.

Ninety-two percent of Canadians believe that sex-selective pregnancy termination should be made illegal. The petitioners are calling on all members of Parliament to condemn this practice. They have also highlighted that the Conservative Party's policy is that this be condemned. They encourage the members opposite to also condemn this practice.

#### THE SENATE

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, like Canadians from coast to coast to coast, my constituents on Hamilton Mountain are profoundly worried about the Senate expense scandal. They are also worried about the fact that there is no place for an unelected, unaccountable Senate in our democracy. They believe that the \$92.5 million per year it costs to run this archaic institution would be better spent elsewhere and that appointed senators, especially those who abuse their privileges, do not represent the interests or values of Canadians.

As a result, this petition, signed by hundreds of people in my riding, calls on the Government of Canada to abolish the unelected, unaccountable Senate once and for all.

#### MIGRANT WORKERS

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table three petitions from constituents in Guelph and other concerned Canadians on the ratification of the UN migrant workers convention. The petitions recognize the important role thousands of temporary foreign and seasonal labourers play every year in Canada's workforce performing necessary work, consuming local goods and services, and paying taxes.

The petitioners are concerned that the workers are vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and unsafe or substandard working conditions. They state that the United Nations developed the migrant workers convention entitled the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families to address these vulnerabilities and that it entered into force on July 1, 2003.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All

Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, which it has failed to do for the last ten years.

#### LYME DISEASE

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of people from across this country who are concerned about Lyme disease in Canada. They are concerned about a number of things, one of which is that numerous peer-reviewed scientific studies have warned that a warming climate will expand the geographic range of Lyme disease, carrying ticks further into Canada. They include a 2012 paper by Leighton et al., which states that over 80% of the population in eastern and central Canada could be living in areas at risk of Lyme disease by the year 2020.

The petitioners are asking the government to convene a national conference with provincial and territorial health ministers, representatives of the medical community, and patients' groups for the purpose of developing a national strategy that works toward ensuring the recognition, timely diagnosis, and effective treatment of Lyme disease in Canada.

#### SHARK FINNING

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by thousands of Canadians regarding the practice of shark finning and the results. It was an estimated 73 million but in fact is now upwards of 100 million sharks a year being killed for their fins alone. Over one-third of all shark species are threatened with extinction as a result of shark finning.

The petitioners say that measures must be taken to stop the global practice of shark finning and to ensure the responsible conservation management of all sharks. They call on the Government of Canada to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fins into Canada.

●(1515)

#### GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. One is from constituents in Kingston and the Islands, who are concerned about the risk posed by genetically modified alfalfa. They call upon Parliament to impose a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa to allow a proper review of the impact on farmers in Canada.

#### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from constituents in Kingston and the Islands, who call upon the Government of Canada to refrain from all further tax-supported advertising by the federal government that goes beyond providing factual information for compliance or access to government programs and to reduce the expenditure on communications to the level it was when the government took over in 2006. Finally, they call upon the government to redirect all the extra money being put toward communications toward front-line service for Canadians, which has been cut.



## HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Etobicoke Centre and the Ukrainian diaspora Canada-wide who are grateful to the Government of Canada for recognizing the Holodomor, which was a great famine in the world and a crime against the Ukrainian people and a crime against humanity; for recognizing the internment operations against the Ukrainian community during the First World War; and for our funding for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to support having the Holodomor and the first internment operations prominently displayed at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

## RAILWAY NOISE AND VIBRATION

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, every Canadian has the right to a good night's sleep. Unfortunately, many communities in Canada have railway operations, with shunting, coupling, decoupling, and idling at high speeds. Accordingly, in many places in this country, residents are unable to get a good night's sleep. That is the case in the Westminster Quay area of New Westminster.

I am tabling a petition today from nearly 100 residents of Westminster Quay and New Westminster calling upon the government to bring amendments to ensure that railways cannot operate with any operations they want at two o'clock and three o'clock in the morning, particularly in railway yards that are in areas of high urban density.

The petitioners from New Westminster, B.C. call upon the Government of Canada to support the NDP private member's bill, Bill C-393, the railway noise and vibration control act, which would prohibit railway companies from engaging in extremely noisy rail yard activities in high-density residential areas between the hours of 10 p.m. and 8 a.m., Monday to Friday, and on weekends.

We hope that the government will support these residents and all Canadians who want a good night's sleep.

[*Translation*]

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions.

The first concerns the pipelines and more specifically the Enbridge proposal.

[*English*]

The petition is signed primarily by residents of Nelson and Parksville. They call upon the current government to cease and desist from promoting the project and to allow for a full investigation.

## CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition relates to issues of the criminal justice system. It is primarily signed by residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands, namely Saanichton, Saturna Island, and Mayne Island. The petitioners point out that they are lacking facilities they critically need. For instance, on Vancouver Island, there is no remand or correctional facility for

*Routine Proceedings*

women while they wait for trials. This puts a huge burden on families. Therefore, the petitioners are asking the current government for special attention to ensure that correctional facilities are reviewed right across Canada, particularly in light of the additional burden created by mandatory minimum sentences.

## URBAN WORKERS

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to present two petitions. The first petition pertains to support for a national urban workers strategy. This petition, in particular, is signed by many university students who are concerned about graduating into a job market where jobs that come with a pension, benefits, and job security are scarce for young people. In fact, many young people are working for free for much too long.

The petition urges the government to support my national urban workers strategy.

● (1520)

## CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition flows from our initiative to get the government to weigh in and stop the extra fees customers are charged when they get a paper bill in the mail. We were pleased to hear in the throne speech that the government would end pay-to-pay fees. This petition demands that this happen, and we look forward to hearing when that happens.

## GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from petitioners calling on Parliament to impose a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa.

## DOMINION ATROPHYSICAL OBSERVATORY

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table two of the many petitions circulating in my riding, which have approximately 1,800 signatures, that call upon the government to reopen the Centre of the Universe at the astrophysical observatory in Saanich. The petitioners cite the many years the Centre of the Universe has provided students, families, and amateur astronomers with opportunities to explore space and the role the facility and staff have played in inspiring the next generation of Vancouver Island scientists.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada, through the National Research Council, to restore the funding for the operations of the Centre of the Universe interpretative centre, which closed in August after 100% of its funding was cut.

### *Government Orders*

Residents in my riding of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca know that if the Centre of the Universe remains closed, public education, space science, and astrophysical research will be impacted profoundly. They are awaiting a response from the government to this petition.

[*Translation*]

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have here dozens, if not hundreds, of petitions calling on the federal government to play its role, within its powers, concerning shale gas and hydraulic fracturing.

For example, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development indicated that mandatory disclosure of chemicals and chemicals management are clearly the responsibility of the federal government. At this time, the federal government has commissioned a number of studies, but they are still slow in coming and nothing is being done in terms of mandatory disclosure, although the companies themselves are prepared to do it. Therefore, it is time that the federal government play its proper role in regard to subsoil fracturing.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

#### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

#### SAFEGUARDING CANADA'S SEAS AND SKIES ACT

The House resumed from October 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to finish off my comments on Bill C-3, an act to enact the aviation industry indemnity act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

To put the debate in context, the last time I spoke to this bill, I talked about the fact that while the Marine Liability Act amendments are important, they are really not what we are looking for from the government in terms of the protection of marine areas. Liability implies problems; it implies accidents.

We are looking for regulations, enforcement, and investments in Coast Guards around this country to prevent and alleviate accidents

before they happen. We want to ensure that what we are doing in our marine areas is the very safest for Canadians and for the protection of the environment, people, and property. Those are things that come first. Liability is important, but it simply does not give the protections we are looking for.

In its past budgets, the government has cut Coast Guard stations, including the Coast Guard station in my riding, in Inuvik. The station that was in place for many years has now been removed. We do not have a Coast Guard response capability in Inuvik.

There are companies looking at investing hundreds of millions of dollars in offshore oil and gas drilling in this region. The same thing is occurring in the Alaska region. We have no capacity for oil spill remediation. That does not exist for the Arctic to any degree. In fact, the ability of anyone to extract oil from ice-covered waters has not yet been proven to the satisfaction of those who look into these matters. We are making the area more hazardous through less investment in infrastructure in that region, and that is a problem, moving forward.

The Conservatives have said over and over again that they are interested in exploiting the resources of the Arctic. They want to move ahead with economic development in the Arctic. They want to see the wealth of the Arctic being exploited.

Let us start with taking care of the Arctic by making sure that the regulations for shipping are in place and that we are conducting ourselves by investing in infrastructure that can deal with the issues that come forward in the future. Surely as we increase the risk for companies working in an area, we should respond with the kind of protection that can reduce the liability from people who may suffer from accidents, because we would have some way of dealing with the accidents. That is not the case now.

There are cruise ships moving through the Arctic. If we have a problem in the Arctic with a cruise ship, we have no way to deal with it. We have increased traffic through the Northwest Passage, a passage that has never been charted properly. We do not know where the rocks are, and we are putting ships through there now. When will the accidents happen? It will be soon enough. What will liability do to protect the environment? What will liability mean to the people of the Arctic?

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech and his intervention here in the House. Clearly, he really knows what he is talking about—he knows it inside and out.

Ultimately, he reminded us that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. He clearly pointed out how important it is, in light of the changes currently under way in the Canadian north, that Canada always in place substantial accident prevention measures, instead of always discussing events after they occur. I would like the member to clarify his position on this.

## Government Orders

[English]

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, in the Arctic today there is pressure for development; there is no doubt about that. This development has been encouraged by the current Conservative government through the granting of offshore leases over very large areas of the Beaufort Sea. Drilling and exploration have taken place in other areas of the Arctic as well. We can look off the coast of Greenland. Our neighbours in Greenland are also permitting drilling in very hazardous waters.

What we need, across the whole circumpolar Arctic, are agreements on how to proceed with this type of work. This is so that ahead of time we have agreements in place and international arrangements.

Through the Scandinavians working on the Arctic Council, we have moved forward with emergency measures coordination. We also need to coordinate on regulation that can deal with how we develop offshore resources, if we are going to go in that direction, and the current government seems bent on making that happen.

We have a situation where the government is pushing ahead with development, but it is not taking proper care of the intrinsic nature of protection of the environment that is required to make the development safe.

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the point that the member for Western Arctic was making. The government should be investing its time and energy to make sure it does a proper job of protecting the environment, the coastline in the north, the oceans, lakes and so on.

While I was visiting the member over the summer, we learned from some of the co-management boards that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, as a result of changes to the Fisheries Act, is no longer involved in vetting development applications. It is now the proponents that do the science and provide the evidence as to whether a particular development would have an adverse effect. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans is no longer there.

The government is tying its hands behind its back with these changes in terms of its ability to protect the environment. I wonder if the member could speak to his concerns about this.

• (1530)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that question because it gets to the nub of it.

We cannot simply use liability as a way to deal with companies working in these conditions offshore, or in the marine conditions around Canada, for that matter. We need to provide a network of regulation, infrastructure and policy that would ensure that what is happening in our marine waters is happening in the best possible fashion. That would also require international co-operation. We need to put that together. In the Arctic, we now have the opportunity with the Arctic Council to do that.

I certainly hope the minister who is sitting as chair of the Arctic Council will push forward with safe shipping practices for the Arctic.

[Translation]

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share my time with the member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord.

Today, we are debating Bill C-3, Safeguarding Canada's Seas and Skies Act, which would amend five acts: the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001.

My speech will focus on the maritime and marine aspects. I will start with the title of the bill: the Safeguarding Canada's Seas and Skies Act. The purpose of the bill is to safeguard our seas and skies, but frankly, it really missed the target here. We have a problem with this bill, which is why, on our side of the House, we are willing to pass it at second reading, but only so that there can be a good debate when it goes to committee.

We had proposed that this bill be debated at a special committee before it go to second reading. We really wanted a bill that would truly protect Canada's coastal communities and marine habitats. Unfortunately, the bill as written contains a great many flaws.

I would like to mention one that is very worrisome to the people of the Gulf of St. Lawrence: under the legislation, oil carriers will not be liable unless there is a spill of 10,000 tonnes of oil or more. People may be wondering how much 10,000 tonnes really is. We usually talk about barrels or use other ways to measure oil if there is ever a spill. However, in this bill, the figure is 10,000 tonnes. For anyone who is interested, 10,000 tonnes of oil is equal to 75,000 barrels. That is a mere fraction of how much oil a tanker transports.

Tankers in the Gulf of St. Lawrence currently transport 150,000 tonnes of oil, not 10,000. A spill of 150,000 tonnes would be devastating for the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Therefore, 10,000 tonnes is not enough. This bill does not go far enough to properly protect either Canada's marine areas or the coastal communities that depend on the marine areas.

Take, for example, the *Irving Whale* oil tanker, which sank off the coast of the Magdalen Islands in 1970. The *Irving Whale* was carrying 800 tonnes of oil, compared to tankers today that carry 150,000 tonnes, yet, 800 tonnes was all it took for oil to continue washing up on the beaches of the Magdalen Islands today, 43 years later. Every year, oil from the *Irving Whale* washes ashore and we are still cleaning it up, even though there were only 800 tonnes.

Furthermore, the *Exxon Valdez* was carrying 40,000 tonnes of oil and the spill is still not completely cleaned up. In 1989, that was a huge amount. Today, oil tankers are not held responsible unless there is a spill of 10,000 tonnes or more. I repeat that we still have not finished cleaning up after the *Exxon Valdez* spill. That number—10,000 tonnes—is simply not enough.

I would like to talk more about some aspects of the bill. An oil company will not be held responsible unless the spilled oil amounts to 10,000 tonnes. Only then will the company be responsible for cleaning up the mess or for paying into the compensation fund set up to deal with spills.

*Government Orders*

I would like to point out something about the ship-source oil pollution fund.

● (1535)

In March 2013, the fund was at \$400 million. After the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, the cleanup cost \$40 billion, but the fund is at \$400 million today.

The legislation leads oil companies to believe that, if the spill is more than 10,000 tonnes and they pay the required money into the compensation fund, they have nothing to worry about because someone else will clean up the mess.

That is all well and good, but the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development indicated that the Coast Guard does not have the capacity to clean up after a spill. That is what the commissioner said in his last report, before his position was eliminated by the Conservatives, in their rush to eliminate environmental protection in Canada.

As my colleague recently wrote, we do not have the capacity to deal with these oil spills. According to the report by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, on the west coast our capacity is limited and on the east coast it is inadequate. On the north coast, the east coast and to some extent in the west, winter is inescapable. I do not think there is any technology that makes it possible to clean up an oil spill in icy ocean waters. I think that the Conservatives will probably propose a method during the debate in committee and perhaps even before then. I would be very interested in learning more about it, but right now we do not have the capacity to clean up such an oil spill.

In his latest report, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development warned us that we are unable to clean up a major oil spill. He emphasized that marine oil exploration and development is bound to increase in Canada, and it is coming soon. We must ask ourselves the following questions. Do we have the technology to do it? Can we do it successfully? We cannot jeopardize the industries that are already there.

Because of the tourism industry and the fishery, which has suffered enormously since the 1990s, we cannot afford an oil spill in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. We would not be able to clean it up.

Even if a company is able to compensate the compensation fund, the question remains: What should be done with the oil in the ocean? Spills have to be cleaned up.

The bill proposes that if the Coast Guard is not able to clean up the oil spill, response organizations should be invited to do so. Subcontracts would be awarded to non-governmental organizations. Which non-governmental organizations are those? Who has this capacity? Throwing money at a problem is not enough; action has to be taken and the spill has to be cleaned up, but no one has the capacity to do it. Someone has to take the time to conduct a realistic assessment of action to be taken in the worst-case scenario, what to do if a spill occurs. It is completely predictable: there will certainly be another oil spill. It is not just a theoretical issue, because oil spills are highly predictable. Unfortunately, we are not able to clean them up.

I would like to invite all members of Parliament to think about the following. What will the coastal communities that depend on Canada's environment and marine areas do if their beaches are soiled with oil? What about fish habitats, and what will they generate if they are also covered with oil? We have often seen pictures of birds caught in oil spills; cleaning them up is not possible. This bill will not make that any more possible.

I hope all the members in this House will give this serious consideration. Do coastal communities and coastal areas in Canada deserve the government's protection? I hope that the answer is yes and I hope that it means this bill will be greatly improved.

● (1540)

[*English*]

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for going through some of the history and the large liability issues. This bill, which is being referred to as “safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act”, was referred to the media as having a new tanker regime. It has none of those things. Part 4 is the only part that actually deals with anything operational. It merely brings into legal effect the International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea, 2010. In other words, the current administration signed a treaty, and it has waited until almost four years later to make the statutory changes that make the treaty work.

I agree with the member that there is much more that can be done, but this has to be one of the most overblown titles for any act. The “skies” part is not about pollution; it is about technical changes to the Aeronautics Act. I would ask my colleague for his comments.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Philip Toone:** Mr. Speaker, I entirely agree with my colleague.

This government definitely has enormous trouble complying with international agreements. At least we can congratulate it for complying with the agreement it signed four years ago. It took way too long to put it into the form of a bill, but I congratulate it for having done so. That is a start.

However, it contains a lot of deficiencies, and I entirely agree with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands on that. The bill can definitely be vastly improved. However, this government does not appear to be concerned about environmental protection.

Its concern seems to be how we can transport hydrocarbons as efficiently as possible without being troubled by environmental regulations. Bill C-38 reduces them to a very large degree.

We no longer protect more than 90% of Canada's rivers and lakes. We no longer protect fish habitat. Now it appears we may be content merely to establish a compensation fund to provide protection in the event of an oil spill, but we do not yet have the capacity to clean it up. In short, there are a lot of deficiencies, and I thank the member for emphasizing that point.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine for his presentation.

*Government Orders*

Like him, I have an enormous constituency that includes a lot of coastline along James Bay, Hudson Bay and Ungava Bay. Therefore, I understand the importance of the environmental concerns expressed by my fellow citizens. He stated them as well.

There are also social concerns here. What may be even more important is the survival of several coastal communities. There are economic concerns because those communities may be affected by a major spill in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, as my colleague mentioned.

Does he think the measures proposed in this bill do not go far enough? I would like him to elaborate further on the economic issues affecting the coastal communities.

● (1545)

**Mr. Philip Toone:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I know he also works very hard in his constituency, and he has no doubt heard the same comments as I, that the coastal communities are very troubled and concerned about marine safety, the environment and protection for marine habitat. This bill provides us with no reassurances in those fields.

The tourism industry is definitely very important in my constituency. It relies to a very large degree on the shared wealth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The beauty of the gulf and the Appalachian Mountains in the Gaspésie region are assets that we risk compromising every time we talk about increasing the amount of oil transport and traffic.

Oil tankers do exist, and we cannot prevent them from doing so, but they must absolutely be better regulated and our coastal communities better protected. The coastal communities that have already contacted my office have clearly told me they want improved protection.

Unfortunately, the Conservative government is still moving in the other direction, withdrawing from environmental protection for marine areas. We must absolutely head in another direction. I think people expect that.

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether I understood correctly or not, but I think my colleague is saying that the Conservative government is concerned about the cost to businesses of certain regulations, but not about environmental, social or other safety related costs, including the safety of francophones, of the land, Fisheries and Oceans, the Coast Guard and all that. It is a little disconcerting to hear this discourse.

I am also here to speak to Bill C-3, An Act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. Admittedly the proposed legislation provides for modest improvements to marine safety. During the first session of this Parliament, the NDP suggested that the government broaden the scope of this bill. Our party is prepared to make real changes with a view to protecting our coastlines. The Conservatives, however, rejected our suggestion. That is unfortunate, but it seems the opposition's opinion matters little to the Conservatives.

Sadly the only legislators who are responsible and concerned about the safety of Canadians are sitting on this side of the House. They are not seated on the government benches, and if there are any such individuals, they are generally muzzled, and by whom? By the Conservative Party financiers.

I want to focus primarily on Part 5 of the bill which has five main components. Part 5 amends the Canada Shipping Act, 2001. It enacts new requirements respecting oil handling facilities, including the requirement on the part of the operator of such a facility to notify and submit plans of the proposed operations to the minister.

The NDP is committed to putting an end to oil spills along our coastlines. We are prepared to make that commitment, unlike the Conservatives who fail to enforce the necessary regulations to prevent spills of this nature. Judging from the Conservatives' record, it is becoming increasingly difficult to believe that they take Canadians' concerns seriously. They have no credibility whatsoever when it comes to marine and aviation safety. Furthermore, their policies are contradictory.

On the one hand, they are shutting down the Coast Guard station in Kitsilano and cutting environmental emergency response programs, while on the other hand, they are demanding more of the marine transportation system. It is all well and good for them to expand requirements, but they also need to assume their responsibilities.

I would like to remind this House that the Conservatives closed the St. John's maritime centre and they still want to shut down the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre, the one and only bilingual centre in all of Canada. We must not forget the closing of the maritime radio stations across the country. I am thinking of the maritime radio station in Rivière-au-Renard, which is an excellent example.

Bill C-3 is a barely concealed attempt to offset past inaction and the Conservatives' cuts to maritime safety. The measures set out in Bill C-3 to improve safety are relatively feeble considering the risks that exist because of all these closures. With all its tributaries, the St. Lawrence estuary is one of the most dangerous in the world and furthermore much of the marine traffic is French-speaking. Right now, traffic on the St. Lawrence is increasing, but services are decreasing. Before now, a number of different call centres knew the territory, and they are gradually being closed down. The government is even threatening to close the Quebec City centre. If that ever happened, there would certainly be deaths. The government that made that decision would be accountable.

The U.S. Coast Guard is studying the effects of the higher number of oil tankers on the west coast and their larger size, given the fact that the increased traffic increases the risk of an oil spill. The United States is taking these risks seriously, while the Minister of Natural Resources is taking the opposite tack, saying that everything is safe, despite the expected increases in oil tanker traffic.

● (1550)

"A supertanker oil spill near our shores would threaten [the] coastal economy and thousands of jobs," said U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell.

*Government Orders*

The NDP members hope that Bill C-3 would really increase safety in oil tanker traffic. The Conservative government should have taken the opportunity to cancel the cuts in the most recent budgets—we remember them—as well as the marine security program closures.

Some of the measures that the NDP wants to see in a bill that aims at protecting Canada's waters include the following.

First, the government must cancel the closures and cuts to Coast Guard services, including the Kitsilano Coast Guard station.

Second, the government must cancel the cuts to marine communications and traffic services, including the maritime traffic control communications terminals in Vancouver and St. John's.

Third, the government must cancel the closure of the British Columbia regional office for oil spill emergencies.

Fourth, the government must cancel the cuts to the Centre for Offshore Oil, Gas and Energy Research.

Fifth, the government must cancel cuts to the principal environmental emergency programs, including in the event of oil spills in Newfoundland and British Columbia.

Sixth, we must strengthen the capacity—which is currently non-existent—of petroleum boards to deal with oil spills, as recommended by the Commissioner of the Environment. The Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board needs to acquire the internal expertise to manage a major spill with an independent safety regulator.

Seventh, the Canadian Coast Guard must be required to work with its American counterparts. Studies have already been conducted in the United States. We could work with the Americans to see what must be done, what regulations are required and how to make the structure of our supertankers as secure as possible. The Coast Guard therefore needs to conduct a parallel study with its American counterparts to examine the risks associated with additional oil tanker traffic through Canadian waters.

Rather than implementing half measures when it comes to responding to and monitoring oil spills as proposed in this bill, an assessment must be done of the national ship-source oil pollution fund, which has not been used in a long time.

For 40 years, oil tankers were prohibited from travelling along the coast of British Columbia. This moratorium was imposed as a result of a verbal agreement with British Columbia. Nothing was put in writing. The NDP's call for a ban on oil tanker traffic through this corridor has the support of first nations communities; local and regional elected officials; the tourism, leisure and fishing industries; other industries that may be affected; and over 75% of British Columbians.

I would like to add one thing about all of our demands. The first nations are concerned about all this deregulation and the cuts to Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Coast Guard. Tourism industries, particularly Quebec's Gaspé and North Shore regions and all of the maritime provinces that make a living from this industry, are concerned about the impact that an oil spill in the St. Lawrence gulf and estuary would have. Given all the currents and

the unique nature of this gulf and estuary, an oil spill would be a major catastrophe. It would quickly spread to all the gulf's ecosystems, which would harm the fishing and tourism industries, as well as the entire economy of these regions.

It is therefore important to carefully think this through. Before going down this road, the Conservatives should think about what could happen in order to prevent deaths and a great deal of environmental damage in my region.

• (1555)

**Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first I would like to give a nod to my Conservative colleagues and tell the people listening to us today that the Conservatives are asking no questions and refuse to debate the bill their own government has tabled in the House. This is how the Conservative government conducts itself in the House of Commons. They refuse to debate their own bill with us. This is what we have to deal with in the House of Commons nearly every day. Now I would like to ask my colleague question.

Following the destruction of the environmental regulations, the lack of consultation, the closure of the Quebec City search and rescue Centre and the setting aside of Coast Guard funding for port facilities, I would like my colleague to tell us what people are telling him in his riding in Quebec about the Conservative government's approach.

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, the riding of Montmorncy—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord runs along the estuary of the St. Lawrence over a distance of 350 km. This measure therefore concerns and affects a large percentage of the people in my constituency.

I am thinking of the people of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, which, at the time, was one way for the government to reduce the cost of the Coast Guard for Fisheries and Oceans. The government transferred that role to a Coast Guard auxiliary in the various regions.

This is a good idea because it ensures that there are people all over Quebec, and no doubt in the rest of Canada, who can respond to emergency calls. However, there are some particular issues. There are places where they can go only at high tide because they have no docks providing deep sea access at low tide.

There are needs everywhere. People tell me about them and about their concerns. There are a lot of pleasure boats, and several particularly turbulent rivers flow into the St. Lawrence. Consequently, a lot of calls may come from tourists visiting Quebec who are unfamiliar with the region. They need someone who knows the area and who speaks French well because every second counts in an emergency.

• (1600)

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

*Government Orders*

I know his constituency quite well. As he mentioned, it runs along the St. Lawrence River. It is a very beautiful region of Quebec. It may not be as beautiful as the LaSalle—Émard region, the constituency I represent, but it is nevertheless a very beautiful region.

I would like him to talk about the importance of the St. Lawrence River in his constituency, not only about the magnificent beauty of that waterway, but also about its importance to the regional economy. I would like him to say more about it and to establish the connection with the bill now before us.

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the St. Lawrence is part of our heritage. It was at the heart of our communities' development. People settled all along the St. Lawrence and the rivers.

Even today, the St. Lawrence is a large part of the economy of the various counties along it. Back home, fishing is an important industry, but there is also the tourist attraction of mountain landscapes, the river's estuary and its tributaries. Tourists come to see the whales in Tadoussac and the internationally renowned Les Escoumins region. It is a huge tourist draw.

This tourist industry would crumble if an oil spill occurred. An oil spill would also have a significant impact on the environment. The mouth of the Saguenay River and the St. Lawrence River is the larder for large marine mammals. The flora there is exceptional. If an oil spill occurred in the St. Lawrence gulf or estuary, every region would be affected. Therefore, we really need good regulations to protect both this economy and the land.

[*English*]

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand and speak for a few moments on Bill C-3.

I want to commend my colleague, the member for Shefford, for his comments. He and I have worked together on fisheries and oceans. I know he is deeply concerned about these issues as they impact his constituents. He has worked very hard and continues to work very hard in their interests.

The title of Bill C-3 is interesting. It is the “safeguarding Canada's seas and skies” bill. Once again the Conservatives are all talk and very little action. While members have indicated that we will be supporting this bill and moving it through second reading, it is only because it makes very modest improvements. In the time I have, I want to speak about the need for us to do a better job of protecting our oceans.

Jacques-Yves Cousteau once said, “For most of history, man has had to fight nature to survive; in this century he is beginning to realize that, in order to survive, he must protect it.”

Today that means protecting our oceans from ourselves.

Before I go any further, I want to indicate that I will be sharing my time with the member from Quebec.

Canada is the steward of more than 7.1 million square kilometres of ocean and the world's longest coastline, stretching over 244,000 kilometres across three oceans, yet we remain grossly unprepared for

disasters off our shores. The bill, as I said, contains only modest improvements in marine security at best, and it does very little to respond to Canada's lack of preparedness for oil or chemical spills.

My NDP colleagues and I take the protection of our oceans very seriously, and that is why we proposed to broaden the scope of this bill to make real, comprehensive changes to protect our coast. Not surprisingly, the members opposite, the Conservative government, rejected our proposal.

It is fair to say that Canada, in many ways, has been lucky to date, in that we have not had a significant spill off our coast, because over 20 years of reports have told us that we are simply not ready.

In 1990, following the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* disaster, the Brander-Smith report came out regarding tanker safety and marine spills response capabilities. This report had three major findings: first, Canada did not have the capability to respond effectively to a spill, regardless of where in the country it was; second, based on tanker traffic, Canada could expect over 100 spills of various degrees every year, with a significant spill once every 15 years.

In reality, this number was greatly underestimated. Between 2007 and 2009 alone, a total of 4,160 spills of oil, chemicals, and other pollutants were reported.

The third major finding was that the risk of spills was highest in eastern Canada.

These findings are nearly the same as those identified in the 2010 report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. In this report, the commissioner found that while Transport Canada and DFO have carried out risk assessments related to oil spills, they can provide no assurance that the federal government is ready to respond effectively to a spill.

He also identified that eastern Canada remains most vulnerable for a spill. The *Deepwater Horizon* incident in 2010 resulted in an estimated 4.9 million barrels of oil being spilled into the Gulf of Mexico. It is estimated to cost \$40 billion to clean up this spill over an unknown number of years.

This disaster needs to remind us of how quickly an oil disaster can occur and how costly the cleanup can be.

● (1605)

In Canada, we currently have a liability cap of only \$40 million. While the Conservatives committed back in June to increasing this cap to \$1 billion, we have yet to see any action on that commitment, and we can appreciate the fact that if we had a spill like the one in the Gulf of Mexico, \$1 billion would be only a fraction of the money needed to deal with the disaster.

*Government Orders*

We need real action to protect our oceans, and we need it now. Canada should be a world leader when it comes to oil spill preparedness, not a reluctant follower of international requirements. We have too much at stake—surely we all recognize that—and too much to lose when it comes to protecting our oceans and their resources. Many of our coastal communities depend on a healthy ocean for their livelihoods, and we understand clearly that Canada's economy benefits from clean coastal resources.

I am the member of Parliament for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour in Nova Scotia, where a couple of big companies are moving to develop resources off our coast. Billions of dollars have already been put on the table by Shell and BP just for the right to begin to dig; that is how confident they are of what they are going to find. The Province of Nova Scotia has extended the moratorium on Georges Banks against exploration and development, but the federal government has failed to respond. All of these things are indications that the government is failing to act quickly enough.

Earlier today in question period, I talked about the changes the government has made to the Fisheries Act. The gutting of the Fisheries Act is putting the development of natural resources above the protection of our oceans and marine life. Members opposite know this only too well. It is going to take a disaster of the kind I am talking about to bring it to their attention once and for all.

When we consider the reports that have been written and the science that has already been presented that indicate to us very clearly the dangers that lie on our three coasts, do members opposite not agree that now is the time to move forward? Let us not wait for another report. Let us not wait for a disaster to bring to our attention the fact that we had the opportunity but did not move quickly enough.

Let us not do that. Let us be a leader. As we move this bill forward, let us take the opportunity at committee to bring in expert advice and make the kinds of changes that we advocated for previously when this bill was before the House, to give it teeth, to give it a real commitment, to recognize that we have to do so much more to protect our coastlines if we are going to be developing our natural resources.

Let us not wait for another disaster. Let us not wait for another example of why we need to act, whether it is in the north, as the member for Western Arctic talked about, or in the St. Lawrence, as my colleague from Shefford talked about. Let us move now. I urge the government opposite that when this bill goes forward, passes at second reading, and goes to committee, let us make sure we make efforts to expand it to make it more encompassing so that we can truly protect our oceans once and for all.

•(1610)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to sincerely thank the hon. member from Nova Scotia for his remarks. He really demonstrated how important the coastlines and oceans are for Canada. In fact, our motto is “From coast to coast to coast”. As he so aptly said, we need to be the guardians of our coastlines and our oceans.

I would like him to elaborate on the economic importance of Nova Scotia's coasts. In fact, the province is surrounded by coastlines and the ocean. I would also like him to explain how environmental protection will not hinder economic development or the responsible development of our natural resources.

[*English*]

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. It is not an either/or situation in terms of our coastline and of our environment versus natural resources. However, we have to recognize the impact that developing our natural resources can have on our oceans and ecosystem. If we damage our ecosystem, it will take hundreds of years to get it back. We know that.

That is the concern I have raised before about the changes the Conservatives are making to the Fisheries Act and its ability to protect fish habitat.

Fish habitat is such an important part of the ecosystem. If we have a major spill on either one of our coasts, it would be devastating. Unfortunately, the government is taking away the tools it has at its disposal by the changes it has made to the Fisheries Act. The government is not taking an opportunity to beef up the tools it has through bills like Bill C-3 to ensure we can protect our coastlines, our environment, our ecosystem and our fish habitat that sustained so many thousands of communities from one end of the country to the other on all three coasts.

•(1615)

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the record is very clear that under this government, Canada's environmental indicators, when we look at the math compared to the hyperbole from the other side, show that Canada's environment is getting better under this government's watch.

I was talking to an Ontario farmer recently and he was telling me a story that prior to the changes to our Fisheries Act a neighbour of his was trying to clean out a drainage ditch. Of course the DFO people in the area got wind of this and 12 uniformed officers with flak jackets and firearms showed up in this poor farmer's field. That member and his party want to bring this back, wasting money and staff on non-existent problems when staff and DFO resources should be directed to areas and fisheries about which people actually care. The fish that people use recreationally and commercially and by our aboriginal community is what is important and that is what the new Fisheries Act is focused on.

We know the NDP members opposite want to see all natural resources development stop. Their plan is to increase process so much that natural resources development will be stopped. Does the member not care about his constituents who depend on natural resources development in our country? If he does not care, why not?

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Mr. Speaker, that is an indication of why our ecosystem and environment are in trouble at the hands of the Conservative government. That drainage ditch is part of the ecosystem. It is part of a watershed that feeds nutrients and that is very much a part of keeping our environment alive.



What is most important are the changes the Conservatives have made to the Fisheries Act, for example, that focus on fish we eat or play with. It means that 80% of freshwater fish species in our country are no longer protected. How can that member stand up with any kind of confidence and say that he and his government are doing a better job protecting fish, the environment and the ecosystem in our country?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after my colleague's speech, there is not a great deal more for me to say. He clearly outlined what we want to know about Bill C-3, An Act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

There is a great deal of confusion at the present time over Bill C-3 and Bill C-57. We all know that is because the Conservatives prorogued Parliament. Today we find ourselves debating legislation that was outstanding when the last session of Parliament ended. Bills were brought back before the House and given new numbers. That explains the confusion. I just wanted to mention that in case anyone following these proceedings might be confused.

That being said, I do want to point out that the NDP is supporting this bill at second reading because it provides for modest improvements to marine safety. Obviously it is difficult to be opposed to something positive. Because it provides for modest improvements, we are prepared to move forward. However, the bill clearly falls short of what we had hoped and expected legislators to do, and obviously of what needs to be done.

Before voting in favour of Bill C-3 at second reading, the NDP had called for it to be referred, prior to second reading, to a committee where consideration could be given to incorporating more comprehensive measures to protect Canada's coastlines and to neutralize or reverse to some degree the impact of Conservative cutbacks and closures affecting marine safety and environmental protection.

The issue of marine safety is obviously one that is very close to my heart, as the member for Québec. In fact, I have been calling on the Conservative government since 2011 to reverse its decision to shut down the Marine Search and Rescue Centre in Québec City. More importantly, it is the only officially bilingual centre in Canada and in North America.

I also have to say that the centre in Québec City, which was established more than 35 years ago, was put there specifically to accommodate staff with intimate knowledge of the geography of the St. Lawrence River, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and all its nooks and crannies. The expertise developed there was substantial. I realize that for the Conservatives, expertise represents a cost that you have to slash to achieve a zero deficit.

Yet expertise is a value that contributes much more than that. That is why in this case, too, I am concerned when I see cuts made with no thought given to the investment required to protect our fellow citizens on land and at sea.

### *Government Orders*

When the Québec City maritime search and rescue centre was established, it was also a means of protecting essential services in French, now threatened by this Conservative majority government, which believes it can get away with anything.

We also know that in Québec City, fully bilingual staff are not to be found in the centres. The decision was made to close the centre in Québec City and transfer half the calls to Halifax and the other half to Trenton. It was also decided to transfer calls from Cap-à-l'Aigle west to Trenton, and from Cap-à-l'Aigle east to the centre in Halifax.

However, the decision made in 2011 has so far generated huge costs in logistics, competitions and job offers to find people who are competent. Efforts have been made to recruit people, but experts do not come in a Cracker Jack box. Experts are really hard to find because it takes years of experience, specific qualifications and academic credentials to build that kind of expertise.

● (1620)

When they sought to transfer the centre from Québec City to Trenton, they relaxed the selection criteria in order to find recruits. According to the latest information, they nevertheless still have not found the staff they need in Trenton to handle the calls. In Halifax, the people are not yet sufficiently qualified.

In Halifax, a rescue drill was held last February. I gave a press briefing, one of many about the Québec City centre. The rescue drill, which was billed as normal procedure, was a complete failure because, for a normal operation, it seems that they unfairly increased the number of people assigned. In spite of that, the bilingual coordinator was reportedly overwhelmed; people involved who thought they could operate just as well in French as in English were completely powerless to cope with the work to be done; there were also complaints about a lack of familiarity with the St. Lawrence, a river with a long history.

Even in the time of Jacques Cartier, there were difficulties in navigating some parts of the St. Lawrence. It is a distinctive river. There are strong currents in some locations, and some parts of the river have yet to be charted. Some parts are familiar to people who use the river, but are not necessarily to be found on the numerous technical applications for navigation. That tells you how much we need experts familiar with such details, which are not always incorporated into any kind of device.

Despite the failure experienced last February, the Conservatives had decided to press on, even with failure after failure. They are transferring the Québec City centre to Trenton and Halifax, even though nothing is right, and nothing is working after so many years. Yet they were told. What is more, there was no public consultation on the matter and there was no impact study before the decision was made. We understand, moreover, that the minister never visited the centre in Québec City to see the work being done on site.

*Government Orders*

Whatever bill we are discussing in the House, whether it relates to transport, health or employment insurance, I am always surprised that impact studies are not carried out, and people are not consulted: neither the provinces, nor the municipalities, nor the experts in the field. No. The government believes it is right, and goes ahead and makes the decision. This is regrettable, however, because what leads us to make wrong decisions is the belief that we are right, and that we are capable of handling everything ourselves.

Nevertheless, hundreds of resolutions were adopted across Canada by associations of pilots, fishers, enthusiasts, pleasure boaters and front-line people in favour of keeping the Quebec Marine City Search and Rescue Centre open. A motion was adopted unanimously in the Quebec National Assembly. Resolutions by a number of municipalities, including the City of Quebec and everywhere else, even in eastern Canada, for example, called for maintaining the centre. Despite this, the government always turns a blind eye.

You cannot reduce services and claim to maintain them by saying that nothing will change. It is untrue. Whenever I hear the Conservatives talk, I get angry because I say to myself that they understand nothing.

In this case, whether it is the Coast Guard or the veterans that are involved, there is no app for it. You cannot say that people will manage by going on line, and everything will be done automatically. No, you need experts, you need people who can answer questions and who operate in the field. That is what is important. That is what needs to be understood in the case of Bill C-3, but also in all the decisions the government may make.

In closing, the bill seems to be part of a concerted effort by the Conservatives to address their lack of credibility in the area of transport safety. We in the NDP know very well, however, that transport safety is not something the Conservatives do.

•(1625)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Québec, Ethics.

[*English*]

Questions and comments, the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite closed by talking about the need to ensure that we have a very strong regulatory framework for the transportation of goods in Canada. That is exactly what the bill would do. It seeks to strengthen the regulatory framework that we have.

One of the measures I am quite interested in is the fact that the bill would require oil handling facilities to notify the minister of their operations, submit their pollution and prevention emergency plans, submit notices of proposed major expansions or conversions of their facilities. These are all very good things. They will also allow monetary penalty provisions to be expanded to section 8 of the Canada Shipping Act, which will hopefully also allow that strengthening of the regulatory regime to happen.

I am wondering why my colleague opposite would not support the bill. She talks about vague generalities, but with regard to these measures, these are really good things to help strengthen our regulatory framework. I am wondering why specifically she would not support allowing monetary penalty provisions to be expanded to section 8 of the Canada Shipping Act, as I did not hear a good argument in her speech.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Annick Papillon:** On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, we in the NDP feel that the government must stop cutting Canadian Coast Guard services. We feel that the government must stop making cuts, cuts and more cuts, and developing very simplistic regulations. That is not working. We think there is more to be done.

Tanker traffic has gone up and therefore so has the risk of oil spills in Canadian waters, but the federal government is reducing the programs provided by marine communications and traffic service centres and by environmental emergency centres. Tanker traffic is forecast to triple in volume by 2016, the way it did between 2005 and 2010. That is what we want the person on the other side to understand. The pipeline expansion projects would also increase crude oil shipments from 300,000 barrels to 700,000 barrels a day. That is why we feel that the regulations must be taken a step further, considering the speed at which things are going.

•(1630)

**Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations to the hon. member for her excellent remarks and for showing the mindset of the Conservative government. The government is drafting bills without considering the other bills that are in progress. In other words, the government is not able to see how its actions fit in the big picture. Of course, the research centre the government is trying to close in Quebec City would be useful for scientists in other fields, including the safety of oil tankers in the St. Lawrence River.

Could my colleague explain why this Conservative government is not looking at the big picture? It is coming up with bills left, right and centre, with the sole purpose of catering to the elite and to the business community.

**Ms. Annick Papillon:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

Consider the example of the maritime search and rescue centre in Quebec City, which is being shut down, apparently because the Conservatives still have not figured out that it was a bad decision, one that perhaps should be reversed. The problem is that they are not talking to the people affected. They are incapable of listening to the municipalities or citizens. I am convinced that they are not even listening to the members of their own party, because the Conservative association in Lévis—Bellechasse has even asked them to back down on this matter involving the Quebec City maritime research centre. When you cannot even listen to members of your own party, you must be pretty obtuse, if I may say so.

[*English*]

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise to speak to the motion.

*Government Orders*

I have been following the debate and we will, very reluctantly, be supporting Bill C-3, an act to enact the aviation industry indemnity act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

As a teacher, I learned a long time ago that one absolutely has to recognize when baby steps are taken. This is definitely a baby step on behalf of the current government to do the right thing.

The reason I am in favour of supporting the bill is because it is a baby step in the right direction. I am hoping that, with positive reinforcement, we will get other baby steps, which would lead to good legislation to address the major concerns we have with what the Conservative government has been doing around environmental protection and protecting our pristine coastlines.

As members know, I come from the most beautiful province in Canada: British Columbia. I used to live in Quebec many years ago, *La belle province*, and I used to say that it was the most beautiful province. I will say that we live in a country that has amazing geography. For those who were born here and many, like me, who chose Canada to be our home, we are privileged to live here.

I decided to raise my children here not only because of the geography but because I fell in love with Canada and all it had to offer. However, I can assure members that one of the key factors was our amazing geography: our lakes, rivers, seaways, coastlines and mountains. Believe it or not, it was even our beautiful Prairies, which I thought were amazing when I drove across Canada for the very first time.

However, I have had this fear for many years, which is one of the reasons I am a member of Parliament today, because I did not like where Canada was being taken by consecutive governments, especially over the last number of years. One of the key concerns I have is the stewardship of our beautiful nation, and I will speak specifically about our waterways.

As I said, the proposed legislation does take a baby step in the right direction. However, it always amazes me that, over and over again, when the Conservatives actually follow a UN convention that we have been a signatory to for a number of years and decide to implement it, they make it sound as if it is a revolutionary move. In some of the speeches by the minister at the time, he talked about double-hulled vessels. Well, that already exists.

At the same time, we are very pleased that our government has come to realize that, yes, we did sign agreements with the United Nations. It behooves us as a member of the United Nations in good standing to implement those agreements. Members of the NDP are very committed to protecting our beautiful waterways and coastlines, as I am sure are many of my colleagues across the way who really want to agree with us, especially those from coastal communities.

• (1635)

We have all seen the terrible damage that oil spills can do. I had the chance to visit a cleanup. Members should see the birds and the kind of cleanup that has to occur after an oil spill, especially to the environment around it. We have all seen TV images, but to actually see something like that is so scary. I do not use that word lightly. We do not appreciate the kind of damage that can be done.

We want to make sure that we absolutely mitigate and minimize, and put into place extra protections to make sure our coastlines are protected. When we talk about oil spills, we are not just talking about the oil that is lost to the oil producer, we are talking about the impact on our environment. We are talking about the impact on communities and the impact on our food supply, because everything around an oil spill gets damaged.

At the same time, we have to say that the last budget bill, not the current one but the previous one, took so many environmental protections away from our waterways. When we really think about it, that is quite scary. This is a time when we know more about our environment than we have ever known before, when we should be putting in protections. However, the government has taken away the protection.

Now that we are rewarding the Conservatives by supporting this baby step, I am urging them to try to undo the damage that they have done in previous legislation. It is never too late to learn. One thing I learned as a teacher is to never quit. It is always possible for the other person to learn. We are willing to provide the Conservatives with evidence, with science, with whatever they need to convince them, but there is no answer to blind commitment to an ideology or blind commitment to doing damage to our environment in the name of so-called economic gain. There is no economic gain when our environment gets damaged.

Our job is not only about responsible resource development with the right environmental protection, but we are also the stewards of this country for future generations. I would urge all my colleagues across the way to remember that.

The NDP has been calling for a ban on oil tanker traffic through the corridor of the British Columbia coastline for a very long time. As a matter of fact, 75% of B.C. residents support that. It is supported by first nation communities; local, regional and provincial politicians; environmental groups; tourism, recreation, fishing and other potentially affected industries. We are really talking about listening to people, local government, environmental groups as well as everyday Canadians. The evidence is right here and the commitment to looking after our coastline is here.

The current study that the United States Coast Guard is doing, which is on the rising number of tankers on the west coast and their size, is proactive. We should be joining them in that study to decrease the risk of a spill. The United States is taking this risk seriously, and the Minister of Natural Resources is taking the opposite approach, because he keeps telling everyone everything is safe, even with projected increases in tanker traffic. United States Senator Maria Cantwell said that a supertanker oil spill near our shore would threaten the thriving coastal economy and thousands of jobs.

*Government Orders*

We really do have to start paying attention. I am not a very close supporter of the B.C. government. In B.C. we have a so-called Liberal government, which is really a Liberal-Conservative coalition government.

● (1640)

Premier Christy Clark sounded the alarm bells on October 2, 2013, after her election. That was not so long ago. She sounded the alarm over Canada's inability to handle a major coastal oil spill now, let alone in the future, should new pipelines be approved. She stated that we are "woefully under-resourced", yet the Minister of Natural Resources has told *CBC News* that the system now in place could handle a fairly large spill off the B.C. coast. He may know something that we British Columbians do not know. He may have all these resources hidden and buried somewhere for the day we need them. What we do know is that the government, through its actions, is limiting the kinds of protections we need. The closure of the Coast Guard facility at Kitsilano is a prime example. Why would they take that away? All of that is very worrisome for us.

That is not the only thing. I have other quotes from people who are saying we need to take a bit of a halt and put the environmental protections in place. We know there are oil tankers going down that coastline. However, we also have to realize that the Burrard Inlet and area is very rocky. I tried to kayak it at one time. I know members will find that strange, but I did used to kayak at one time. My partner has done it many times. I would not say it is a dangerous place to have those huge ships going through that inlet, but it is not that easy to steer through. It is a very narrow inlet, yet the tankers would have to go up there.

We have heard similar concerns from the north. They do not want to see those tankers coming down the coast. They do not want to see an increase because they know we cannot take the chance of an oil spill.

We know there are tankers there now, but surely we do not want to double the tankers, which is what the projections are. It shocked me, and not too many things do, but oil tanker traffic has tripled between 2005 and 2010. Tanker traffic is planned to triple again by 2016. It has tripled, and it is going to triple again. The proposed pipeline project would increase crude oil deliveries from 300,000 to 700,000 barrels a day.

As I was saying earlier, Burrard Inlet is the second most dangerous navigational point in Vancouver. It is very difficult to navigate through it. A simple weather malfunction, with a little wind and current, could lead to catastrophic results. This happened in October, 1979 with the freighter *Japan Erica*. We shut down the north shore bulk terminal for three months and railway traffic for almost five months.

We only have to see the kind of damage that these spills can do. On May 25, 2010, as we all know, the Malaysian registered *Bunga Kelana 3* collided in the Singapore Strait. An estimated 2,500 tonnes, or almost 3 million litres of crude oil, poured into the sea.

Let us put that one aside for a minute. The holding capacity of a double-hulled designed tanker would be a million plus barrels. The VLCC class of supertankers dwarfs the *Exxon Valdez*. Risk assessment measures have to be reconfigured. We cannot keep

using the old risk assessments when the tankers are becoming so gargantuan. It is hard to imagine. The shocking part of it is that today's supertanker can weigh up to 320,000 DWT, with a capacity of two million barrels of oil, drastically increasing the risk of a spill.

● (1645)

With the bigger tankers come bigger risks, and the realization that we have to look at this in a different way. Once again, we have to take a look at the risks to the environment.

We will hear from the Conservatives. We will not hear too much today, and not at all this afternoon, I do not think. That is another tactic I do not understand. In my naivety before I became a member of Parliament, I actually thought this was a place where we could debate issues. However, it seems that the government side has decided to sit out the debate for this afternoon.

I am here to make my points and I will answer questions, but it seems that the government does not want to hear or debate anything too much because it has made up its mind. The government sees this part as a bit of a nuisance that it has to put up with because it is part of the process.

However, let me tell members that, for us, this is very serious. The health of the planet, the health of our waterways, and the safety and environmental factors are critical for us as we look into the future.

We also have to take a look at who is going to be paying for these oil spills once they occur. We do not hear the government side addressing that too much. If there is this massive oil spill, who is going to be on the hook for the cleanup? I have not heard much about the kind of protection that would be provided to taxpayers. We have to take a look at some of the ways this is done in other parts of the world. For example, both Norway and Greenland have no pre-set limits, in terms of liability across the board for oil spills. I am not saying that is the solution, but it is a conversation we need to have. We need to bring the right people to the table to have that kind of discussion and debate at committee stage.

By the way, I was proud of my colleagues and our critic in this area. They have, and had, ways to improve the legislation. However, once again, what we have seen is the same as we have seen with most of the bills. There is very little movement from the government side because once it puts something on paper, that is the way it is going to be. It has already made up its mind, so why debate and go through all of those issues?

As was said earlier, when we look at what the government could be doing to make this piece of legislation more effective, the first thing is to pay some attention to what our people said at committee. It is never too late, by the way. Here is an example of what we would like to see in the bill, if anybody on the other side is paying attention. If they are not, I am sure they can read the written record later, which I am sure they are dying to do.

Number one, let us have the government reverse the Coast Guard closures and the scaling back of services, including the closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station. That is one of the baby steps the government could take in the right direction.

Then, let us take a look at the government cancelling the cuts to marine communications and traffic services centres, including the marine traffic control communications terminals in Vancouver and Saint John. If we are really worried about safety and the environment, then why, when we are talking about increasing all this traffic, would we be closing those offices?

The government could stop the closure of B.C.'s regional office for emergency oil spill responders. It is beyond my comprehension. Why would we want to close an emergency response centre?

• (1650)

We could cancel the cuts to Canada's offshore oil, gas and energy research centre. We could reverse the cuts to key environmental emergency programs, including oil spill response for Newfoundland and Labrador and B.C.

We could also require the Canadian Coast Guard to work with its U.S. counterparts and conduct a parallel study to examine the risks that additional supertanker traffic would cause in Canadian waters.

As I said, we are going to support this legislation because it is a baby step in the right direction, and I am hoping my colleagues will add many other baby steps.

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always amusing to me when the NDP members make comments about the state of Canada's environment. They never provide any numbers. A recent UN report showed that Canada and Sweden were tied amongst all industrialized countries for the highest water quality in the world.

I would like to talk about economic policies, and the Province of Saskatchewan is very instructive. During the NDP years, the Saskatchewan economy was floundering. It limped along under the dead weight of toxic socialist policies. Then the Brad Wall government came in. There was a snap of the switch, and all of a sudden their economy boomed. Natural resources were being developed. Jobs were being created. Mines were being built. At the same time, the environment was protected.

Those are exactly the kinds of policies that the government is implementing. However, we know that the NDP thinks the natural resource industries are a Dutch disease.

I would like to ask my colleague why the NDP wants to see natural resource development stopped in Canada.

• (1655)

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to thank my colleague for the almost Santa-like hyperbole that I just heard from him. I thank him for the question as well.

Let me make it very clear that the NDP is not opposed to development of our resources. We are not opposed.

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

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** I am very respectful when other people are speaking, and to have that kind of response when I put forward what I firmly believe in is not respectful or needed in this place. I would remind our colleagues that each and every one of us is elected to represent our constituents in this House. We should pay some respect to that.

### *Government Orders*

We are for resource development. We are for resource development that is responsible and environmentally sustainable, for the simple reason that this planet has to be protected, for our sake and for the sake of our children.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, looking at Bill C-3 and the name of the bill, I am sure the government must pay some individuals to be creative in coming up with names. The name of this bill is the safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act. I give the government full credit for whoever it is in the background, maybe someone in the PMO's office, who is paid an excessive number of taxpayers' dollars, coming up with these creative names for legislation.

I am wondering if the member might provide some comment on the following. To what degree does the member believe the implementation of this piecemeal-type of legislation, which we do support going to the committee stage, is going to ensure the safeguarding of Canada's seas and skies, given that a more holistic approach of dealing with the issues at hand would likely have given more merit to the title?

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, let me take us back to what happened during the budget.

The budget, which was thicker than many of the phone books for municipalities around this beautiful country, buried all kinds of stripping of environmental protections. There was much that was taken away, and then legislation is brought in which puts a little back in again. Then we are told, "Look, we are doing you a big favour. We are good people for doing this".

All the government is doing is taking some parts of our agreement with the United Nations and putting it into legislation. There is nothing new in here. It is missing about 99% of what needs to be there to protect our environment. I am hoping the government will be open to those amendments at committee stage.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this debate hits home with me. A lot of people in northern Manitoba right now are very concerned about a proposed shipment of crude oil on the bay line and through the Port of Churchill. Anybody who knows Canada's north knows that the terrain is extremely challenging. In fact, there were two derailments in the last two weeks. Thankfully, they were railcars that did not contain crude oil. People know that if something like this were to happen, it would be devastating if the derailments led to oil spills. People do not want to see that either on land or in Hudson Bay and into the Arctic Ocean.

One of the other reasons why people are very concerned about this is because we know that under the current government there has been a record loss of environmental regulations, so the checks and balances simply are not in place. Canadians want those checks and balances in place to protect their communities and coastlines. I would like to hear from my colleague what she thinks about that.

*Government Orders*

• (1700)

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague because she is an incredibly hard-working member of Parliament in the House. I am always amazed by her energy and the advocacy she puts forward for Manitoba and the north especially.

It is not rocket science. I think most people will get it. If people have even spilled a bit of oil in their kitchens, they know how hard it is to clean that up. Imagine hundreds and thousands of tonnes of oil in the ocean. Remember that the ocean has life in it, the ocean has waves and those waves lap against the coastline. Before we know it, the environment is degraded in a huge way. It is time for the government to revisit its omnibus budget from last year and to put right the wrong steps it took. Let us build a progressive environmental agenda.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since the Conservatives were elected, we have noticed a pattern involving environmental deregulation and a tendency to transfer those powers to businesses. It is a bit like having the fox guard the chicken coop. Businesses are self-regulating when it comes to environmental impacts. We saw this regarding infrastructures that cross waterways and in almost all areas that require environmental assessments.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of this pattern on the part of the Conservatives.

[*English*]

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, that was a very thoughtful question and my colleague summed it up. It is like we are going to go ahead despite the science, the evidence and everything we know and we are going to take away all the environmental protections, safeguards and regulations that existed. That is what the government believes, while not paying any heed to what processes and systems are in place.

The government's own audit of the Canadian Coast Guard's capacity to monitor and respond to a marine oil spill found a system that was outdated, disorganized and in need of a major overhaul. The national capacity for oil spill cleanup is slightly less than 6,900 tonnes due to storage limitations in all regions, the report said, yet as I said earlier, we are now looking at millions of litres of oil being put into the ocean and there is no plan on how we are going to tackle that. At the end of the day, neither industry nor the government has a huge commitment that has been evidenced. Once again, who will pay the price? Aside from the environmental price that ourselves, our children and our planet will pay, who will pay the price for the cleanup?

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to what should have been a much more important bill than it is, because it should have had a lot more things in it. We have already advised what we think should also be in the bill, but it is part of a disturbing trend on the part of the government members to be all talk and very little action when it comes to the environment. When they do bring forth action on the environment, it is to reduce or eliminate environmental protections. One has only to go back to the last budget, and some of this budget,

in which environmental protection was weakened or eviscerated entirely.

In the 2012 budget, we lost a lot of the environmental assessment process. The act was changed. Some of the act has yet to be defined. Unless for people on a reserve, we still do not know what the definition of “the environment” is because the ministry has yet to promulgate the regulations that come with that act.

We also have the loss of navigable waters protection, which has hurt thousands of rivers across the country that are no longer protected from oil spills for example.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Compton—Stanstead, Mr. Speaker.

This bill, ironically named “the aviation industry indemnity act” to make consequential amendments to other acts, would do essentially five things. It would allow some air carriers to be indemnified for flying in war-risk areas. It would allow for civilian aircraft accidents to be investigated in part by the military, which there may be some difficulties with in terms of how public that would be. It would amend the Marine Act to define what the effective date of the appointment of a director of a port authority would be. However, the two most important things that we have been talking mostly about in the House are the portions that deal with tanker traffic and oil transfer capacity in the deep-water ports of Canada.

We have some serious concerns on the part of the people who live along those coasts that they do not wish accidents to happen at all, period. The NDP believes that prevention and preventing accidents, not having them in the first place, is exactly what should be done. We are much better off if what we do is prevent the spill of oil into the oceans in the first place. However, I am afraid the government is not going in that direction. Its philosophy seems to be that it is okay to pollute as long as somebody has insurance, as long as somebody has some means of paying for the cleanup. Given that diluted bitumen has not yet been transported in great numbers and has not been fouling the ocean, we do not even know what the cleanup of that would look like if it should happen. Believe me, spills unfortunately will happen.

All of these systems come with a mean time before failure, MTBF, which means that everybody expects something to fail. When they fail at the same time, as was the case at Lac-Mégantic, an absolutely horrific disaster unfolds. There were several different failures that happened at the same time in Lac-Mégantic, and of course we all wish it had not happened. We all wish we had been more careful with our regulations with the rail industry. We wish we had been more careful with the size and type of railcars that we use to transport dangerous liquids. We all wish we had been more careful with the use of one person instead of two in those rail disaster prone areas. We all wish we had been more careful with the transportation of dangerous goods, but we were not. Therefore, we had a disaster that claimed 40-odd lives and basically incinerated the centre of a town. That should never have happen and it should never happen again.

*Government Orders*

• (1705)

The NDP is committed to seeing that we build into all of our systems for transporting dangerous goods, including on the open seas, outside of ports and on the west, east and north coasts, systems that prevent the spill of dangerous goods and prevent the disasters in the first place.

The Canadian Transportation Agency and the Transportation Safety Board of Canada have made recommendations to the government on a number of occasions about how to make the rail transportation of dangerous goods safer. Has the government acted on any of those recommendations? Not so far. We wish it would. We wish it would bring in positive train control. We wish it would eliminate the DOT-111A tank cars and replace them with tank cars that are actually capable of withstanding even a small collision, but the government sits on its hands and says and does nothing.

I am afraid that is part of what we are up against in the NDP. We are up against a government that is committed to extracting stuff out of the ground as quickly as it can and getting it to market as quickly as it can and hopes that nothing will happen. We cannot live with just hope. We have to build regulations and enforcement mechanisms that prevent things. When things do happen, as we all know they sometimes will, we need to have systems in place that find a way to clean them up. When we close, as the government has done, British Columbia's oil spill response centre and shut down the Kitsilano Coast Guard Station, those are two things that are designed to deal with this kind of thing in the first place. The government shuts them down, rather than builds them up.

If we are going to have more tanker traffic, if we are going to transport more oil and if we are going to suck more oil out of the sands of Alberta, which we apparently are as the government is determined, getting it from Alberta to the rest of Canada and the rest of the world has to be done safely. It cannot be done in rusty old pipelines. It cannot be done in tank cars and railcars that cannot survive a fender-bender. It cannot be done with double-hulled tankers on the ocean. Although the government would like to claim that it has introduced the notion of double-hulled tankers, they have in fact been around for more than 20 years and they, too, have spills. They, too, are subject to being punctured in a disaster at sea.

On May 25, 2010, the Malaysian registered *Bunga Kelana* collided with a bulk carrier. A 10 metre gash was torn in the side of the ship, which then spilled an estimated 2,500 tonnes, or 2.9 million litres, of crude oil into the sea. It was a double-hulled tanker. It did not prevent oil from spilling into the sea.

That is what we are up against. Some might argue that out in the middle of the ocean, if an accident were to happen, nobody is out there anyway. Actually, there is a lot of wildlife out there. There are fish and entire ecosystems that could not stand to have their systems fouled by oil.

To look at the pristine and beautiful coast of British Columbia and to suggest that we are going to allow giant tankers that carry two million tonnes of crude in their hulls along a very rocky and dangerous shore is just playing with danger. It is just inviting a disaster. We in the NDP believe that should be avoided. We believe disasters are meant to be avoided, not played with or messed with.

That is our position on this. That is what we have been saying all along.

When we want to safely carry oil, my riding has a rail corridor through it that has hundreds and hundreds of those lightweight DOT-111A tanker cars going through it. When residents in my riding wrote to Transport Canada and asked the director of rail safety to come and talk to them, he said sure, that he would love to come and talk to them and tell them how safe the rail system was. That was until the minister nixed it. The minister actually interfered and muzzled the Transport Canada official. The minister said that he was not allowed to talk to people. There were some brochures and flyers, and that is all they would get. They were not allowed to be told face-to-face.

We in the NDP want a bill that actually prevents spills and measures taken by the government that actually prevent and stop them before they happen, rather than trying to find ways to ensure people are insured for when they do happen.

• (1710)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I would remind all hon. members that we have a five-minute questions and comments time. We will try to keep the questions and responses to no more than one minute.

[*Translation*]

We now move on to questions and comments. The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

**Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as we have already said, the NDP will be supporting this bill. I understand the government will likely boast about having proposed provisions to clean up our coasts and so on. However, there is a problem here. Why bring forward a bill to ensure that those responsible pay for damages, while at the same time, make cuts to search and rescue centres and maritime search centres, which could help reduce the damages and impacts, thereby reducing the amount the government, businesses and citizens would have to pay?

I wonder if my colleague could comment on the parallelism of the government's interventions.

• (1715)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** Mr. Speaker, the whole polluter pay notion is actually an NDP notion. Because it has some credence, it has been adopted, but the government has not implemented it. That is one of the problems with the bill. It suggests that the liability for tanker carriers is somehow covered by a fund that has not been added to in almost 40 years. That fund has \$400 million in it; a small oil spill might cost \$3.5 billion to fix.

Who will be on the hook for that extra money? It is not going to be the polluter, the oil tank company; it will be the public. It will be just like the tar ponds in Sydney or like Giant Mine in the Northwest Territories: the government will end up picking up the cost.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, would my colleague like to comment on the extra dangers and risks that are involved with transporting diluted bitumen? We know that the Enbridge spill in Michigan on the Kalamazoo River has proven to stymie all sorts of normal methods of cleaning up oil spills and that it seems to have different properties from other kinds of oil.

Given that the whole question of tankers on the west coast is tied to the government trying to get diluted bitumen out to the west coast, I wonder if my colleague could comment.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** Mr. Speaker, the whole notion of what is in a tanker is something that needs to be absolutely crystal clear before anything is done about changing the rules by which these tankers operate. If in fact something different is going to be in that tanker that we do not know how to clean up, as is evidenced by what is going on in Kalamazoo, then hold the phone. Let us not put it out there. Let us not actually put anything in a tanker that we do not know how to clean up should it spill.

As is evidenced by the fact that there have been so many spills already, it is going to happen, so let us make sure we know what it is and how to clean it up before we put it in the tanker.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

How is it that the government is tabling bills like this one, bills that contain many often disparate components, when at the same time it has trouble disseminating information? We have just been discussing materials that are being transported without our really knowing their exact nature. How can we trust a government that refuses to disseminate information and that brings in seemingly disparate measures? How can we feel safe when all of these materials are being transported by land, sea or air?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** Mr. Speaker, just this week there was yet another derailment just west of Edmonton, so we have had two on the same line in two weeks. In this case, sulphur dioxide was being transported in one of the tank cars. Luckily, it did not rupture, but something is wrong with the system when we keep having these incidents involving dangerous goods being transported in a way that is not necessarily safe.

The railroads argue that the number of accidents is way down. The railroads have forgotten that the number of cars carrying dangerous goods has risen exponentially, and if only one of those bad things happens in the centre of a town—oops, it did, in Lac-Mégantic—then we have a disaster. We have to prevent those disasters.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would especially like to thank my colleagues who took part in this debate throughout the course of the day and who pointed out many times that this government is incapable of drafting simple bills. Bills can be complex but yet easy to understand. They can contain a series of measures that can be implemented so that the public feels safe about the hazardous goods being shipped across the country.

It seems challenging. As I said when I put a question to my colleague, the government has trouble disseminating real informa-

tion. It often leaves the job of disclosing information to businesses and then we need to invoke the Access to Information Act. That can take weeks or months, when sometimes the information is needed immediately. In an era when information can travel at the speed of light thanks to social media or telecommunications, we must rely on procedures that can take weeks or months.

I experienced first-hand the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic and five months after the fact, we are still not sure what some of the railcars were carrying.

How then can we trust the government when it tables legislation respecting Canada's seas and skies? How can we trust the government and feel safe? This government lacks credibility. The short title of this bill is: Safeguarding Canada's Seas and Skies Act. This bill will enact or amend five acts that cover different subjects. Again, we are being served up a kind of minibus bill. It is not an omnibus bill, but rather a minibus bill.

Well, we have no intention of climbing aboard this Conservative minibus. We will continue to fight for Canadians who want to feel safe by knowing what materials are being transported by rail and by sea. Canadians are concerned about the environment.

It is always the same story. Members of the scientific community are muzzled at a time when the public is deeply concerned about the environment. Many Canadians from coast to coast are worried about the environment. They are asking questions. Why is the Conservative government acting this way? Why is it not concerned about the environment?

It is not that we are opposed to the development of raw materials and natural resources, far from it, but we want to make sure some will be left for the decades and centuries to come. We want future generations, my children and my children's children, to have a healthy environment, clean air, fresh drinking water and fertile land for agriculture, whether it be in the Eastern Townships, Quebec or elsewhere in Canada.

When we see bills such as this one, questions come to mind. Is this government aware of and even vaguely concerned about the environment? I wonder. My fellow citizens ask me what planet the Conservatives are living on and what they are thinking.

Earlier, my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour quoted Commander Cousteau, but I could also cite Hubert Reeves and Albert Jacquard. In the 1980s, they raised environmental concerns based on the type of capitalism they were already seeing at the time. They said that the greatest threat was focusing on this damned economic growth regardless of its collateral effects.



*Government Orders*

• (1720)

The aim was always greater productivity regardless of the collateral effects of economic growth and productivity growth, always staggering and without concern for the environment. The more we consume, the more we keep on consuming.

Yes, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must still rely on fossil matter and fossil fuels, on development of the oil sands, development of shale gas and various other forms of fossil fuels. Development is one thing, and we can already see the Conservatives are not very concerned about the environment when it comes to developing certain sites. We want to consume more and we want more growth. That is all well and good, but we need more vehicles in order to do that. More hazardous materials are travelling on our railways, on the railway lines and highways.

Supertankers are starting to navigate our great St. Lawrence River, historically one of the most beautiful on the planet. They contain up to two million barrels of oil. A spill from one of them and we would completely forget the *Exxon Valdez*, whose impact on the biodiversity and drinking water of the Alaska coastline is still being felt 25 years later. It is incredible to think that we can develop raw materials and transport them anywhere without any concern for public safety, the safety of Canadians across the country.

Climate change is obvious. With respect to the airline industry, the insurance industry is the one that would like to dictate how "war risk" incidents are redefined. In agriculture, some insurance companies are already reluctant to see those kinds of crops in certain areas of the country since it is clear that the sector is at risk because of climate change. Unbelievable. It is sad to hear that. It is sad to realize the truth of that considering that we are a democratic institution that should discuss the real issues, like the environment, and yes, natural resource development.

In fact, that is currently the engine and lever in our economy. The NDP is very proud, just like many workers, the hundreds of thousands of workers in these industries and industries that depend on those large businesses. However, we must be mindful of our everyday actions and of the regulations we put in place because we are talking about our land, our drinking water supply and our air.

Back in the 1970s, we were trying to fight acid rain here because the automobile industry parked it in our driveway. We spent over 20 years fighting acid rain, and we were successful. In the past 10 years, the trend has reversed. However, under Liberal and Conservative rule, scientists and anyone who denounces these things have been muzzled. The government has even said that people who care about the environment, activists, are terrorists. I cannot believe people say that. It is unbelievable that people who want to protect their land, their seas, the sky and the air we breathe are treated like terrorists. It is as if some of the hon. members across the way are sometimes not getting enough oxygen.

• (1725)

It gives me great pleasure to do my work here. I understand that it is now time for me to answer my colleagues' questions.

[*English*]

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend for his speech,

because he has given us so much ammunition. He has exposed the NDP for what it actually is. It is anti-free market, anti-trade, anti-growth, and anti-prosperity. We are going to have great fun reviewing this particular speech, so I want to thank him for exposing the NDP for what it actually is.

A number of years ago, an award-winning economist named Kuznets created something called the Kuznets curve. He compared a country's wealth with its environmental performance. I would like to inform my friend that as a country's wealth grows, environmental protection improves. Therefore, far from growth and prosperity, which he obviously despises, being a drag on the environment, a country getting rich is actually good for the environment. Why is he so against growth, prosperity, and economic development?

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean Rousseau:** Mr. Speaker, I think that the member suffered from a lack of oxygen in the past few minutes, because I said specifically that we were in favour of developing natural resources, but that development had to be carried out in accordance with sound environmental practices. It must be carried out in co-operation with other groups, including groups that care about maintaining Canada's prosperity. Our country has always been prosperous and we on this side of the House want our prosperity to continue. We must ensure that Canada continues to grow and also that there are jobs for everyone.

We will not be able to reach this goal if we destroy the social fabric. The social fabric is not just employment insurance and old-age pensions. It also involves the environment. It also involves helping the poor and our veterans.

In order to reach this goal, we need to have sound economic growth in which everyone takes part. Our unemployment rate is much higher than we think, because people are fed up with this government and they drop out of the system.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question follows up on the issue of pipelines. I know that many westerners are familiar with his leader's comments in regard to Dutch disease, which many people felt somewhat offended by.

I am interested in his thoughts on pipelines and the role pipelines could be playing in the extraction of resources, whether from the east or the west. What role does he feel pipelines should be playing?

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean Rousseau:** Mr. Speaker, when a sector of economic activity is developed, all the components and all the related activity sectors must be put in place. If it is a pipeline, it will be a pipeline. However, it must always be developed in harmony with the environment—every time. If we do not consider the environment today, tomorrow there will be nothing left for future generations.

This is why the NDP will always defend the environment first. Without a sound environment, the kind of environment we need, there will be no future opportunity to develop anything in Canada or anywhere else on this planet. Everything must be done in harmony, and that means that we must work together, not separately.

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his passionate speech. I work on a regular basis with my colleague from Compton—Stanstead, whose riding is next to mine. I know that he is always very concerned about the environment. In my view, it is one of the most important issues not only for my generation, but for everyone.

My colleague drew a parallel between the Lac-Mégantic tragedy and the transportation of goods by sea or rail by certain companies and which may be just as dangerous. This huge bill tackles this issue in part by requiring that companies pay compensation for damages, as in Lac-Mégantic. This municipality is currently having problems with the main company that caused the damage and that should help to pay for the reconstruction.

Does my colleague think that in the event of accidents it is up to the public to pay for reconstruction or should the companies shoulder their responsibilities?

**Mr. Jean Rousseau:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague, the young member for Sherbrooke. Yes, we are working for this generation and for all future generations.

Private companies, as in the case of Lac-Mégantic, are a very good example. So far, we know that up to \$60 million or \$80 million will be spent on the site. However, the MM&A was insured for \$25 million only. It is unbelievable. We have not finished digging and decontaminating the site.

We must demand more protection for our constituents. To do so, companies that ship such hazardous materials need to have much more extensive coverage, especially when they go through the downtown core of a number of communities across Canada.

• (1735)

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing by time with the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-3, An Act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

As we can see, this bill has a long title. Bill C-3 is an omnibus bill that seeks to enact or amend five pieces of legislation. For the benefit of those watching us, I will try to summarize it. The first part implements the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act that has allowed the

Department of Transport to compensate certain airlines for any war-risk losses, damages or liability. As a result, the government can cover the cost of damages related to unlawful actions, such as rebellions, attacks or armed conflicts. The goal is to ensure the continued operation of Canada's major aviation services in the event of seizure, regardless of whether stakeholders are able to obtain insurance at that time.

With respect to Part 2, to provide certain persons with powers to investigate aviation accidents or incidents involving civilians and aircraft or aeronautical installations operated by or on behalf of the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Forces or a visiting force.

Part 3 amends the Canada Marine Act in relation to the effective day of the appointment of a director of a port authority.

Part 4 amends the Marine Liability Act to implement the International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea, 2010.

Part 5 amends the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, by imposing new requirements on operators of oil handling facilities, including the obligation to notify the minister of their operations, and submit their plans to the minister.

Part 5 thus introduces a new requirement whereby the operators of oil handling facilities must submit to the minister a response plan, civil and criminal liability for response organizations engaged in response operations, the application of new measures and monetary sanctions, with new investigative powers for Transport Canada investigators.

After initial review of this omnibus bill, and despite the rejection of our proposal to expand its scope, I offer my qualified support for Bill C-3 at second reading, while drawing attention to the Conservatives' lack of credibility with respect to marine and aviation safety issues, and their contradictory policies.

As the saying goes, this Conservative government does not put its money where its mouth is. This has become the trademark operating mode of this Conservative government. This bill is an attempt to make up for its lack of credibility in the area of transport safety, particularly with respect to tanker traffic on the West Coast and growing opposition to the northern gateway pipeline, first proposed in 2006.

• (1740)

This bill also implements the International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea, 2010, to which Canada is a signatory.

*Government Orders*

The government is trying to make up for lost time, which is unfortunately difficult to do. In the fall of 2012, two large ships at sea off the West Coast were wrecked because of the current volume of traffic. The amendments proposed in this bill are not enough to prevent a catastrophic spill. The context of the bill puts the emphasis rather on administrative organization and a real failure to improve the environment. Mr. Ben West of ForestEthics Advocacy has said that we have moved ahead quickly in the wrong direction on this matter.

If the Conservative government was really concerned about safety, why did it not apply what was agreed to under the 2010 convention immediately? If Bill C-3 was really designed to promote greater safety with respect to oil tanker traffic, a Conservative government should have seized the opportunity to cancel the cuts in the most recent budgets and the shutdown of marine safety programs.

The NDP is committed to the polluter pays principle. We also want to strengthen the petroleum boards' capacity, which is currently zero, to deal with oil spills, as recommended by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. In addition we want the Coast Guard to be required to work with its U.S. counterparts and to conduct a parallel study to examine the risks resulting from additional tanker traffic in Canadian waters.

It is appalling that this government is constantly making cuts in structures that have proven effective in the past, or that it is closing them, just as traffic increases and the ships carrying oil and potentially hazardous substances get bigger.

I wonder what is the idea behind the bill before us. I moderately support the bill, but I would like it to go to committee and have experts speak out on parts 4 and 5.

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her remarks.

Like me, she lives in the Montreal area, through which flows the magnificent St. Lawrence. Like me, she recognizes the economic importance of the river, a priceless resource that is also a source of drinking water for the entire Montreal area. The St. Lawrence also represents a major thoroughfare for shipping as an economic vector for the transport of goods.

I would like my colleague to go into greater detail about the importance of setting up machinery to ensure that goods are transported safely. I would also like her to talk about the importance of protecting our magnificent St. Lawrence River, its importance economically and as a tourist attraction, and the fact that it is also a source of drinking water.

• (1745)

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her timely question. She is well aware that I represent a constituency on the South Shore of our beautiful and mighty St. Lawrence.

Since my election to this House, I have noticed that the Conservative government is unfortunately not concerned about the environment or climate change.

We must protect our ecosystem, and our fauna and flora. We have a duty to preserve the environment for future generations. I would like my children and grandchildren to have access to drinking water that is not contaminated. God knows what that is going to cost them, because future generations will inherit a heavy burden through the inaction of this Conservative government.

**Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will merely repeat the same question I asked my colleague about the requirement for parallel action by the government.

It is all very well to pass a bill that makes the polluter pay. As I have said, this is the polluter pay principle long advocated by the NDP. At the same time, however, Canadians and Canadian organizations are not given the necessary resources to clean things up.

They make people pay, but they are closing marine search and rescue centres. Agencies are not even given the resources to do the cleaning up. It will therefore mean a higher cost for Canadian consumers, for the citizens.

Why this parallelism between two measures taken by the government?

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my young colleague for her timely question. I will answer it by saying that unfortunately, this Conservative government is not concerned about the environment or the costs that could result from its inaction or its approach.

The Conservatives act only after the fact. Prevention is not part of their thinking. After the event, it is necessary to legislate and think about compensating people, instead of working within a preventive framework, step by step.

Unfortunately, however, we cannot blame this Conservative government, because as far as it is concerned, science does not exist. The Conservatives govern exclusively on the basis of their ideology.

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House as the representative of the people of LaSalle—Émard to debate Bill C-3, An Act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001—

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order, please. There is too much noise in the chamber. I would ask hon. members, if they wish to carry on conversations, to keep them really hushed or to go to their respective lobbies.

The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, let me tell you a little about where I come from. My father was born in southwestern Nova Scotia, in Pubnico, by the sea. My mother was born in L'Islet-sur-Mer, Quebec, near the St. Lawrence River. I was fortunate to grow up by the Bécancour River.

*Government Orders*

I am fortunate that my constituency borders the St. Lawrence River. My partner often asks me whether I am a cowboy or a sailor. He is more of a cowboy, but I tell him right off the bat that I am a sailor. For me, water is a vital resource. It is a source of life. Not only is water part of my personal story, but it is also part of the heritage of Canadians and that of first nations.

Lakes and rivers were the highways. They made communication and transportation possible. That is a good thing because the bill we are currently debating happens to deal with that reality, which has been part of our history for centuries. I would particularly like to focus on the parts of the bill that deal with marine transportation. I am referring to the freight and passenger transportation using our waterways, lakes and rivers. Must I remind you that our motto is *From Sea to Sea*? Now, it has even become *From sea to sea to sea* to reflect the reality of Canada's north, where another ocean borders our country.

Earlier, my colleague from Nova Scotia spoke at length about the many kilometres of coastline that we have in Canada. We are surrounded by oceans. We have lakes and rivers. There is no need for me to tell you how important all of this is.

We have come to realize that more and more materials are being shipped today on our waterways, and not just any kind of materials. Tanker traffic tripled between 2005 and 2010 and is set to triple again by 2016. Pipeline expansion projects would increase crude oil shipments from 300,000 to 700,000 barrels a day. This represents a challenge of sorts for Canada. I for one believe that we can turn this challenge into an opportunity.

I served as opposition science and technology and industry critic. Along with the challenges associated with the increase in shipments of materials, I see opportunities for Canada to become a leader in protecting the waterways that surround this country. We could also use our know-how to create jobs that would benefit science and technology, including oceans sciences and the fields of shipping logistics and shipbuilding engineering. This has been mentioned. The risk of accidents could thus truly be minimized.

Action needs to be taken in the area of prevention. We cannot act after the fact because we know that these disasters wreak havoc on fragile ecosystems and that the damage is sometimes irreversible. I am referring in particular to the ecosystems found primarily in Canada's North.

So then, this is an excellent opportunity for us to talk about environmental protection.

● (1750)

As I said before—and I will say it again—protecting the environment does not conflict with responsible economic development. It provides opportunities for job creation, wealth creation and knowledge development for Canadians.

Still, the bill puts things in place. The NDP will support the bill because it contains things that ensure that we are moving in the right direction. The bill provides the following: intensification of tanker inspections, increased air surveillance to monitor maritime traffic and detect oil spills, a review of the requirements that apply to escort tugs, broadened research on oil products, and the list goes on.

This is exactly the direction I was talking about. In other words, we need to know the environments these goods will pass through, but we also need to have good knowledge of the goods themselves. In addition, we need to have plans in place in case of an emergency or a disaster.

Several steps are necessary to develop a coherent system and show that we are really serious about protecting the environment and about the transportation of petroleum products, in this case. This is important because we really have to consider the increase in the transportation of these goods.

Transportation of hazardous materials by rail has also increased. The tragedy this summer made us realize that Canada was ill-prepared and that we were then obliged to clean up the mess. Did we do it the best way possible? Were we prepared to do it? Did we really handle it well?

If Canada purports to reclaim Canadian sovereignty in Canada's Far North and is really serious about it, we have to have fully studied the environment, we have to have the ships and inspections required to protect the environment, but above all, we have to have a rock-solid plan for what to do in case of a disaster. It is really important to allocate the resources required so that the measures are in place when there is significant marine transportation of petroleum products.

This bill is a step in the right direction. However, Canada needs to be really serious about allocating resources so that we can study or continue to study these fragile ecosystems in our oceans and drainage basins. We must also use the expertise of Canadians in science and technology and ocean sciences so that our expertise can be spread internationally.

● (1755)

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for LaSalle—Émard for her speech and for having mentioned growing up near the Bécancour River. I know she is very interested in environmental issues.

Earlier, I asked my colleague about whether or not companies should be better equipped and have the highest possible level of liability in case of very serious accidents that can impact our ecosystem for decades and centuries to come.

Should the companies that deal with the transportation of hazardous materials be responsible for their actions in case of an accident? Should they have sufficient insurance to pay for cleanup costs? At present, unfortunately, it is the public that has to foot the bill because companies are not adequately covered. What does she—

● (1800)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for raising this important issue. Responsibility for this matter should rest with the companies involved in developing resources and transporting them on Canadian waterways.

*Government Orders*

Indeed, these companies should be held accountable; it is the honourable thing to do. As the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development pointed out, protecting the environment makes good business sense. Companies that behave ethically and responsibly and treat our environment as a valued asset would receive social recognition for their efforts.

Our governments should also shoulder their share of responsibility. They need to implement strict inspection systems. They need to ensure that companies, which are always guided by profit whether we like it or not, implement emergency preparedness plans. Any responsible governments should see to this.

**Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, again, I thank my colleague from LaSalle—Émard for her excellent speech and for her participation in this debate.

I represent a riding with several coasts: the coast of James Bay, the coast of Hudson Bay and the coast of Ungava Bay. People understand the environmental, social, economic and historical importance of the St. Lawrence River. This waterway is not only beautiful; it is also historically important. In fact, we met more than 400 years ago along its shores, did we not?

I would like my colleague to tell me how she interprets this. I have a hard time understanding how the government can miss such a good opportunity to do things properly and express a broad vision that is desperately lacking from this bill.

Does she feel that the government is missing the boat?

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, I really like the expression “to miss the boat”. In the 21st century, we must understand that the economy is not an end onto itself.

The Conservatives believe that the economy is an end onto itself, but it is not. The economy provides a means for living in society and sharing wealth. The economy has several pillars, including social acceptance. We cannot run rough shod over communities, continue as though it was business as usual and ignore a lot of things.

We have to have a connection with communities, show social acceptance and protect the environment. Only at that point do we have a sustainable economy. However, for the Conservatives, the economy is an end onto itself. Everything else does not matter. We have to change this view and think of the economy as a means for living in a society. Protecting the environment is one condition for living in a society.

• (1805)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to address Bill C-3. It is an interesting bill, to say the least.

I have some opening remarks that I would like to get on the record regarding what I think are some interesting points.

First, it is important to note that here we are in day two of debate, and I give credit to the government as it has not yet introduced time allocation. I think that is an encouraging thing. I hope that I do not precipitate the government bringing in time allocation, but I think it is important to recognize that it has not.

The other interesting thought I want to share with the House is in regard to the name of the bill. It is an interesting name, the safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act. If one has listened to a lot of the debate that has taken place today, there has been a great deal of discussion about our environment and oil, and the importance of those two issues. I plan on adding some comment on that.

Suffice it to say that I believe there is someone somewhere within the Prime Minister's Office, who I suspect gets paid quite well with tax dollars, whose job it is to come up with creative names for the legislation that comes before the House of Commons. I have had the opportunity to briefly go through the bill and I never would have thought of it as being the safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act. To me, that is not necessarily the most appropriate name.

When I think of the bill, after having gone through it somewhat briefly, a lot of the changes are of a very technical nature. In fact, members will find more substantial changes to legislation affecting our waterways or our environment in budget legislation. We have had three huge budget bills that contained, for example, changes for our waterways. Hundreds, if not thousands, of waterways were profoundly affected by using the back door of a budget bill to make significant changes to our waterway and environmental legislation.

Of course, we had a bill within the budget bill, Bill C-38, which was passed, that I thought was quite an interesting change. I think very few people picked up on it, but it was a fairly significant change. In essence, it allowed the cabinet to get more politically involved in pipeline projects by getting the final say. As opposed to allowing our National Energy Board to review and base decisions on science and the best interests of the environment, we had legislation, again brought through under the pretense of a budget implementation bill, that made quite a significant change in allowing the cabinet to make the decision. The bill took the decision out of the regulatory regime and ultimately it now rests with the cabinet. Again, this was something that was done in a budget bill.

Having said that, I want to respond to a lot of the comments made by members of the New Democratic Party particularly, and to a certain extent members from the Conservative Party, that I found quite interesting on the whole issue of oil and the impact oil has on our environment. This has been widely covered in the discussions. The transportation of oil is of national interest. It is not something that Canadians take lightly. Indeed, it is a very serious issue that deserves a great deal of debate inside the House.

• (1810)

It has been interesting to follow some of the debate on this very important issue. Oil is a natural resource from which all of us have benefited immensely. Every Canadian from coast to coast to coast has benefited from Canada's ability to export oil. It is what has enabled us to pay for much of what we have today. It has improved the quality of every Canadian's lifestyle. It is encouraging when we see developments where we have capitalized on this wonderful natural resource, whether in Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, or Saskatchewan.

*Government Orders*

It is also important that we behave responsibly with respect to our environment and the way we transport that oil, whether by train, pipeline, or ship. There are areas we can improve upon.

I have been following the debate on the Keystone issue, as have many Canadians. What I like about Keystone is that it has shown the different types of leadership for each political party. All three leaders have gone to the United States to deal with the transportation of oil via pipelines.

On the one hand, the leader of the New Democratic Party, a while back, went to the U.S. and dumped all over Canada, and to a certain degree, our natural resources. I do not think it went well.

The leader of the Liberal Party went to Washington and talked about the benefits of Keystone for both Canada and the U.S., with an emphasis on the benefits to Canada and how important it is that we also pay attention to our environment.

The Prime Minister, bypassed Washington and flew to New York. In New York, his statement was that the government would not accept no for an answer. I suspect that this profound statement by the Prime Minister in New York did not keep President Obama up late at night. Given the importance of Keystone to all the stakeholders, I believe that the Prime Minister should have gone to Washington, discussed it in a conciliatory fashion, negotiated in good faith, lobbied, and shown concern for the environment.

Pipelines are important for transporting oil. If it were not for the pipelines, the amount of train traffic would increase substantially. We are all aware of the rail lines and the number of accidents that have occurred.

●(1815)

We need to do a lot more in terms of rail line safety and ensuring that communities, where there is a high density of population, or even a low-density population, or a pristine environment, whether it is lakes or rivers, are being protected. We could do a whole lot more in ensuring a secure environment in the transportation of oil in our pipelines and on our trains.

When we look at the specifics of Bill C-3 in terms of what it would do, and when we reflect on what I have stated, I am suggesting that once it is all said and done, we could have done a whole lot more in taking that—and I often use these words—holistic approach. I do believe that it is an applicable term for this piece of legislation. I believe we could have taken a larger holistic approach in dealing with these issues, as opposed to it being done in a piecemeal fashion.

In order to illustrate that, I thought I would highlight specifically what is inside the legislation. This way the House will get a better understanding of why I am suggesting it should have been a stronger holistic approach.

In essence, the bill is broken into four different parts. Part one deals with the minister undertaking to indemnify all aviation industry participants. This gets back to the whole issue of terrorism and war risks. The issue of insurance has become a very hot issue in what role the government should and could be playing. This is something that has been deemed necessary. From what I understand, the government in the past has attempted to bring it in, and it has

incorporated it into this bill. I suspect the genesis of the idea might be the whole 9/11 issue and the cost that followed 9/11 in terms of insurance. There is some benefit in acknowledging that part one is an important part of the legislation.

We would go on then to part two. I thought part two was interesting. It mentions that new powers, comparable to the powers exercised by the Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board, are being given to the Canadian Forces air worthiness investigation authority to enable it to investigate military-civilian occurrences. Again, this is something that is hard to argue against. Based on my understanding and what has been provided to me, this is a movement in the right direction.

I was a member of the Canadian Forces for a few years. The area I was posted to was squad 435 search and rescue, in air traffic control in Edmonton. I had the opportunity to meet with a number of pilots, navigating officers, radar officers and aircraft professionals, and I can tell the House that there is a high degree of incredible individuals who have a level of expertise that should and could be tapped into. I would think there is some merit in what is being proposed here, and to that extent, there is merit for part two.

We then get into an area in which there has been a great deal of discussion today. That is the area I was referring to on the Canada Marine Act. In relation to the effective date of the appointment of a director of a port authority, we need to recognize we have 18 Canadian port authorities that are operating in Canada.

●(1820)

We are seeing a little more clarity in the appointment process in relation to the effective date of an appointment for the director. There is some merit there. When I say “merit”, it does not necessarily mean it absolutely, definitely should happen; I mean that there is benefit in allowing the bill to go to committee, and in principle I am supporting that aspect of it.

Part 4 is a very important aspect of the bill, and I suspect it is one of the reasons we are getting so much discussion on it. Hopefully I will be able to get through reading this part, because it is important.

Part 4 amends the Marine Liability Act to implement the International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea, 2010, in particular a couple of clauses.

The MLA provides for the liability of ships' owners and operators for damage caused by pollutants. In particular, it implements in Canada the liability scheme established by the International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage; the International Convention on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage of 2001, which is known as the bunker convention; and the International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage, 1992, and in 2003, the protocol to that convention, the acronym being the IOPCF convention, creating the international compensation fund and a supplementary fund to compensate for oil pollution damage covered by the CCL and the bunker convention.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

That, in my mind, emphasizes just how important it is for us to look at the whole issue of oil transportation. That is the reason I spent some time talking about the ways in which we transport oil. We have a lot of control here in Canada through our rail lines. We have control through our pipelines to properly regulate and protect. Where it becomes more challenging is once we get to our oceans and our ports.

It can be very difficult to ensure that we are providing the type of diligence that is important and providing the resources that are necessary for enforcement. We talk about what takes place within the line of responsibility, I believe 200 miles from our coastline, and we anticipate that it will be extended. We have to have an insurance scheme in place, which could lead to a wide variety of revenue sources to support it, but we have to have compensation sufficient to clean up the oil spills that will take place.

There are vast amounts of oil in our oceans today, and the question is what is actually being done to clean up that oil. Not only do we have a responsibility for Canada and our shorelines in that 200-mile zone, but I would argue that we can go beyond that. That is why it is important as a nation that we should be leading some dialogue on how we can have an impact on cleaning up oil spills throughout the world, whether it is the Atlantic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, or any other international body of water where the restrictions are not as strong. The need is still there, and the Canadian public want and desire strong leadership on this issue.

• (1825)

That is one of the reasons I believe the government could have come up with more substantial legislation to deal with the many concerns that Canadians have on this very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to share a few thoughts and words.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, our hon. colleague from Winnipeg North mentioned earlier that he spent some time in the Canadian Armed Forces. Therefore, I thought I would ask him his opinion on one aspect of Bill C-3 that we in the NDP think should be looked at carefully in committee.

In part 2, under section 19, it appears that the military is now being given the traditional Transportation Safety Board investigative powers in the event of an aviation accident involving the military. If we assume that might involve a military-civilian incident, the question then becomes whether the rules that the TSB used to have to follow, including making its report public, would apply to this new military process. At the moment it appears the military only has to report to the minister of defence.

Therefore, given his experience and interest in this kind of issue, does my colleague from Winnipeg North think we should make sure that reports of any incidents involving military and civilian aircraft are made public in the fashion of the TSB?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, there is merit to what the member is ultimately advocating. My biggest concern in regard to the Canadian Forces is to recognize the level of expertise they can bring to the table. There is some merit in us moving forward and taking advantage of that level of expertise in a more formal process. To what degree should they be leading investigations on military and

civilian incidents that occur? That is something I would feel more comfortable with the Liberal Party critic addressing.

There is no doubt that we support the bill in principle in terms of sending it to committee. I suspect that there is a need for us to look at getting some answers to some specific questions, such as the member has just posed, and looking at ways in which we could improve the bill by bringing forward amendments that would make it a stronger and better piece of legislation.

I am not overly optimistic, based on the past, that the government would accept amendments. However, I am a guy that looks at a glass as being half full, so hopefully we will see some positive—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the concern that my colleague from Winnipeg North just expressed is very important and it worries me. The government has a record of not really allowing amendments to occur at committee. My colleague mentioned that the legislation affects the transport of Canadian energy to market. It seems to me that because of that we should do a very careful job with the legislation.

Would my hon. colleague agree with me that it is especially important, because of that fact, that the government seriously consider amendments at committee on Bill C-3?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I do share the concerns the member for Kingston and the Islands has expressed. It is important for us to recognize, as the member highlighted, that this is the way we transport a vital natural resource. Canadians have a vested interest in seeing that we are as successful as possible in protecting our environment and being able to use that natural resource to the best of our ability.

The legislation could be doing so much more. It does fall short. Using amendments to improve the quality of the legislation would be wonderful to see. We could only hope that the government would be receptive to those amendments because I am sure there is going to be a high level of interest in proposing amendments once that time comes.

• (1830)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg North will have five minutes remaining in the period for questions and comments when the House next resumes debate on the question that is before the House.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

*Adjournment Proceedings*

[Translation]

**ETHICS**

**Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week, I asked the government a crucial question. However, as usual, I did not get a response. It is a question that has been on everyone's lips, particularly during the Conservative convention that took place this past weekend. It is a question about the Senate.

It is clear that a number of senators have to further justify their expenses. We have every right to be concerned. I would like to mention one senator, Mike Duffy. He was caught up in a story involving two cheques. Not one, but two. The Prime Minister's chief of staff, Nigel Wright, wrote him a cheque for \$90,000. All of that took place under wildly suspicious circumstances.

Let me recap the facts. Together, we will try to find out the truth and understand what happened in the Prime Minister's Office. The Prime Minister is aware of what happened. Did Nigel Wright resign or was he dismissed by the Prime Minister? I personally think Canadians have a right to know. They have a right to better understand what the Prime Minister did, how he did it, under what circumstances and especially in whose interest. What is the nature of the relationship? Why are Mike Duffy and Nigel Wright involved in a story like this? Clearly, other senators could benefit from a slush fund. Some people are wondering about the Conservative Party fund and taxpayers' money being mixed up. Is that the case, yes or no?

When the Prime Minister shrugs his shoulders and has trouble answering questions, we see that he lacks courage. He is not even able to say whether he fired his chief of staff or whether his chief of staff resigned because he did something unacceptable. The Prime Minister is not able to be frank and say what happened. The Prime Minister does not uphold Canadian values such as sincerity and respect for Canadian taxpayers, who are struggling to make ends meet each month.

I know that, right now, the Conservatives are saying that this story is fishy and that it will clearly haunt them long after Halloween and All Saints' Day. I personally urge the government once again to tell the truth. I want to know the truth. I want to know whether Nigel Wright, the Prime Minister's former chief of staff was fired or forced to resign. This is a legitimate question and I would like an answer. I am happy to be here tonight, because I want to know the answer. I think Canadians deserve to have an answer.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker,

she has asked why Nigel Wright and Senator Duffy find themselves in this situation. The reason they find themselves in this situation is because Senator Duffy had some expenses which he was not entitled to and, unfortunately, Nigel Wright repaid those expenses. Nigel Wright, of course, understands that was a mistake. When the Prime Minister found out about this, he was very clear to Mr. Wright that had he known, he would have in no way approved of such a scheme and that is why Nigel Wright no longer works in the office of the Prime Minister.

● (1835)

[Translation]

**Ms. Annick Papillon:** Mr. Speaker, we know that Mr. Wright no longer works in the Prime Minister's Office. We know that he is no longer on the payroll. However, we want to know more. We do not want to know whether he regrets the \$90,000 cheque, or other cheques we may not yet have heard about.

Sometimes what we worry about is not necessarily the tip of the iceberg we do know, but what we suspect is underneath, the rest of the iceberg that could be worse than what we know. That is what Canadians are worried about. They are wondering what, exactly, is going on. They want to know what is behind this whole thing. We still do not know whether he was dismissed or whether he resigned. It is easy to talk around the answer. Every time the Conservatives rise in the House, they talk around the issue instead of giving a straight answer of whether Mr. Wright resigned or was dismissed.

There are two options: (a) dismissed, or (b) fired. Which one was it?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, the issue is that there are a number of senators who accepted expenses to which they were not entitled. These three senators are right now before the Senate and we hope the Senate will pass a motion that will suspend these three senators without pay. Canadian taxpayers are looking for that.

At the same time, we know that Nigel Wright issued a cheque to repay Senator Duffy's expenses. That was inappropriate and that is why he is no longer working in the Office of the Prime Minister.

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

(The House adjourned at 6:37 p.m.)







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