



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, April 1, 2014**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 1, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)  
[English]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to 11 petitions.

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### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fall report of the Canadian delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in the European Parliamentary Assembly respecting its participation at the 22nd annual session of the OSCEPA in Istanbul from June 29 to July 3, 2013.

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### PETITIONS

#### EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP):** Mr. Speaker, petitions continue to pour in from Canadians across the country who are urging the government to save the Experimental Lakes Area. The government revoked funding for the ELA in 2012, but it has been negotiating to save the research facility after public outcry.

It gives me great pleasure to remind my fellow parliamentarians that the Experimental Lakes Area is not yet dead and hopefully we can still save it.

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition from Canadians who are interested in saving the Experimental Lakes Area. It is a place where science is done for the good of all of society, indeed, the whole world, because of the importance of freshwater to human beings.

It is my pleasure to present this petition to the House today.

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### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP)** moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, government planes, and in particular the plane used by the Prime Minister, should only be used for government purposes and should not be used to transport anyone other than those associated with such purposes or those required for the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family.

He said: Mr. Speaker, as always, it is a great honour to stand in this place and be chosen to speak on behalf of the people of Timmins—James Bay. I am certainly proud to rise today on the issue of the abuse of the public trust in taxpayers with the misuse of government resources, particularly the use of the Challenger jet.

Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

This issue needs to be debated in the House because we see within the government the continual and deliberate blurring of the lines between the use of government resources that are meant to serve the people of Canada and the partisan narrow interests of the Conservative war machine. Whether it is the misuse of government resources or the redrawing of the websites, everything the government seems to be doing is taking public resources and turning them to the personal use of the party or its friends. That is something the Conservatives used to rail against in the old Liberal regime.

*Business of Supply*

Very clear rules about the use of flights were set up by the Board of Internal Economy. For members of Parliament who do have to charter planes into isolated regions—for example, I have had to charter flights up into James Bay—there are clear rules. Number one is, we have to ensure that the only people on those planes actually are government staff. Anyone else on the plane would have to be put on the flight manifest and would have to pay the full charge. The Board of Internal Economy is very clear on this, so when we find out that a guy who raised \$3.5 million for the Prime Minister gets to fly back and forth from Calgary, that is simply not acceptable. That is an abuse of trust.

I would like to read a few quotes that will put this into context:

We have seen the Prime Minister flying around the country on Challenger jets doing a few hours of government work, then spending the rest of the time campaigning and fundraising.... Meet the new boss, same as the old boss. The... culture of entitlement goes on. The public must be given a chance to put an end to it.

Who said that? It was our present Prime Minister when he was in opposition. Yes, meet the new boss; same as the old boss over there. The issue here is that this is a government that is telling the rest of Canadians that the cupboard is bare and yet the Prime Minister can fly one of his buddies down to watch the New York Yankees at a ball game, where the Challenger jet cost taxpayers anywhere between \$8,000 and \$11,000 an hour to run. When the government is telling senior citizens in my riding that the cupboard is bare, while it is flying its friends to ball games, I would ask the Canadian people if they think that is fair.

A number of people have spoken out on this issue. I would like to quote them now:

Mr. Speaker, while Canadians are barely coping with higher gasoline prices, the... ministers do not share such mundane concerns. They prefer going from Ottawa to Toronto aboard a luxury jet that costs \$11,000 an hour to operate.... How can the Prime Minister justify such a waste of public funds?

Who said that? It was the present Minister of Employment and Social Development.

There are a few others:

Mr. Speaker, if \$1 million on airfare were not enough, it turns out, through access to information, that of the 141 flights taken on the Challenger jet between January and July, over \$71,000 was spent on food. That does not include the bar bill. That represents an average of \$508 per flight, just less than the monthly grocery bill for a Nova Scotia family of four. How does the Prime Minister justify spending the equivalent of the cost of a monthly family grocery bill on an air flight? Just what was on that menu?

Who said that? It was the present Minister of Justice. We all remember him when he was minister of defence. He is the man who ordered a search and rescue helicopter to pick him up from his hunting camp because he was too lazy to come out on his own. He used our military government resources to fly him from his hunting camp.

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** He had to get to dinner though.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, oh, he had to get to dinner, yes. He had the lobster dinner he had to go to.

• (1010)

Here is the man who is the Minister of National Defence, using taxpayers' resources to go to court to tell veterans of our country that this government has no obligation to them. If we asked any Canadian

on the street what they think of our obligation to veterans, they would say that it is shameful that the Conservatives are using taxpayers' dollars to argue that they have no social contract with veterans.

Yet the Minister of Justice had a total social contract with the military when he needed to be picked up from hunting camp to be flown to his lobster dinner. This is the kind of abuse that Canadians—

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Got any more?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** We have got lots of them, Mr. Speaker. I have been holding this one back, because it comes from one of the most quotable and most ridiculous members of Parliament that have ever sat in this House in the last 150 years.

...the minister has been at his post for five years.... The Sea Kings are no closer to being replaced.... Instead there are Challenger jets to fly the Prime Minister and his cabinet around in luxury.

Who said that? Think, folks. It was the member for Calgary West.

We are having fun with this, but this is not a funny issue. This is about a contempt for the Canadian people. The Prime Minister told Canadians in 2006 that he would clean up this culture of entitlement. Instead, his attitude was that he would clean up the Liberals, and once they were done, then he and his friends would pork out at the trough.

That is not what Canadians voted for. This is not about saying that the Prime Minister and his family should not use the Challenger for security reasons, although I note that the present Minister of Industry said:

There is something else the government can do. If the government wants to show confidence in the commercial airline industry, here is a suggestion. Will the Prime Minister park his Challenger jet and fly commercial skies as other Canadians do as a sign of faith that security works?

That is what the present Minister of Industry said when he was in opposition. He wanted the Liberal Prime Minister to fly commercial air, but he has not said that in cabinet because they enjoy the perks.

Again, this is abuse of the public trust from a government that said it would do something better. The Conservatives are doing it at a time when they are telling senior citizens that the cupboard is bare; when they are telling veterans who served our country, "Hey, buzz off, we are done with you, and we will go to court to fight you"; when they are telling first nations children in the north, "You do not deserve schools because we cannot afford them". However, when it comes to looking after their pals, there is all the money in the world.

Speaking of which, I go back to the Minister of Justice and his complaint about the cost of food. He wanted to know how they could justify wasting that much money on a flight. Yet we just found out that the Prime Minister spent \$32,000 feeding his hand-picked crew who went to Israel. That was \$150 per meal, and if we look at what they were serving, oh, man, those sandwiches looked pretty brutal. If they are going to blow money like that, at least they could serve people well.

*Business of Supply*

We Canadians expect better from this Prime Minister and we are not getting it. That is why we brought this forward, and we are doing it in a non-partisan manner. This is what the Conservative Party stood for. We are asking Conservatives to return to their roots. Perhaps they have forgotten where they came from. Perhaps they have forgotten how they used to be offended by the use of taxpayers' dollars to help friends, insiders, and buddies.

This is a moment where we reach out across the aisle to our poor, wayward, lost children of the Conservative Party and try to bring them back into the fold of accountability and say, "This is just one little way of doing this".

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** We could rehabilitate them.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** We can rehabilitate them, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if we could rehabilitate all of them, but we are willing to try. That just shows the kind of people we have on our side; that we believe that people can be reformed, even the old Reformers, who have certainly given up on their sense of accountability.

We are asking for all-party support on this. We are not saying the Prime Minister cannot fly the Challenger. We are not saying his family cannot fly on it, but people like bagmen and buddies have no business getting free and cheap flights on the taxpayers' dime. Let us have some rules. Let us follow the rules. Canadians follow the rules. It is time the government followed the rules.

•(1015)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was a little surprised when I saw that the NDP has brought to the floor an issue it has decided is one of abuse of public trust. The reason I am having a difficult time with that is because we need to appreciate what the leader of the New Democratic Party has been up to lately.

We can talk about the millions of tax dollars that have been abused through the direct mail that has gone out. We can talk about the outreach office. The outreach office is supposed to be in Saskatchewan where the NDP does not have any members of Parliament, and it is there to service constituents.

The NDP does not have any right to give lectures regarding the issue of public trust. It has done a disservice to public trust. Remember how it had to be dragged kicking and screaming on proactive disclosure because it did not want to tell Canadians where it was flying and the prices it was charging? It had to be dragged, kicking and screaming on this issue.

Why does the member feel that the NDP has to have an outreach office in Saskatchewan and have the taxpayers pay for that, as opposed to its own political party that should be footing the bill?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised that I struck a nerve with the Liberals when it comes to the abuse of the taxpayers. This is the party that invented it. My colleague is jumping up and down like an angry man. I am not surprised. I have certainly touched a chord with the Liberals.

The member has the gall to refer to mailings and to Bourassa, when Elections Canada has ruled that we did everything perfectly legally. That is different from what happened with the Liberals. It

was a government that was corrupt from the beginning. It is as corrupt now. The Liberals are certainly angry.

When their new leader came in, they were going to do politics differently. All they have done in terms of their politics is continually attack the New Democrats for the fact that we stand up for regions, that we go to the House of Commons and talk with them about what is legal and how to do things right so that we can represent people. At the same time, the new Liberal leader is off selling Keystone XL for the oil lobby. We talk to average Canadians; he talks to oil lobbyists.

I know that the member is angry. He is an angry old man, but that is because his party has been relegated to the wilderness for its contempt of the Canadian people.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I first wish to congratulate my hon. colleague on his eloquent speech.

As entertaining as his quotations were, I find the current state of affairs quite unfortunate. People spent years criticizing the Liberals when they were in power. Some Liberals are even making a lot of noise. I have a new seat in the House, and I had forgotten how loud it can get in this part of the House.

People have been having strong reactions; they feel as though they are being attacked. There seems to be a culture of corruption and an abuse of Canadians' trust.

My colleague already mentioned this in his speech, but I wonder if he could elaborate. Could he comment on how the NDP would respect the trust that Canadians have placed in us to represent them, as well as the trust they will place in us in 2015, when Canadians vote in a new government to replace both corrupt parties?

•(1020)

[*English*]

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, I will try another one:

Madam Speaker, the government each day and every day continues to show the Canadian taxpayer that it does not care. [...]

One of the most recent examples of this is the use of the Challenger jets as flying limos, as party taxis, as a way of not having to sit with the regular folk.

[...] In just a few hours of travel the government has spent the annual earnings of a family in Canada.

[...]...if a year's salary spent on these flights home is okay. Let us ask seniors or farmers who just had the oil tank filled for the winter if these flights are okay.

Who said that? That was the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London. Come on down and show us that you stand for accountability and that you are not going to hide behind a government of corruption. Stand up and stand with us. We are calling on you. This is your chance.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Timmins—James Bay has been here long enough to know that he should address his questions and comments to the Chair, not to other members in the House.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

*Business of Supply*

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate the indulgence of all members, because I have a touch of the flu. I may need a few breaks.

I am pleased to join the debate on the motion before us today. Considering the commotion it is causing in the House, we seem to have touched a sensitive spot that needs to be explored. I am pleased to have the opportunity to do so. It can be hard to have to speak following my colleague from Timmins—James Bay, who is always so eloquent and who was able to present various examples of abuse of power by the other two parties, but I will do my best. He already gave all the best quotations, but it would be worth hearing them in both languages. This is an important moment for my colleagues from Quebec.

Even though I have the opportunity to rise in the House to discuss the motion before us, I am disappointed because the motion speaks to something so obvious and so logical that I do not understand why we are even talking about it today.

When the Conservatives were in opposition, they complained about this type of abuse of public trust and public money. Still today they are trying to pass themselves off as great defenders of the use of public money. They ask Canadians to trust them with their money and to give them the responsibility to run the country. They say that they will not be like the Liberals, they will not betray Canadians and they will use the money wisely. If the Conservative Party had truly adhered to that principle, we would not be here today talking about this and instead might be discussing things that Canadians are interested in and concerned about.

My colleague was talking about the cuts to veterans' services. CFB Valcartier is in my riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier. That base sent an incredible number of soldiers to the front lines in Afghanistan. I have had the opportunity to welcome a number of them home since being elected. Every time, it is an unsettling and difficult experience for me. I am 28 and I see people younger than I am returning from Afghanistan, where they experienced things I cannot even begin to imagine. They need help from our government, but our government tells them that it has to balance the budget by 2015, in time for the election. The government tells them that they will have to wait a while because it does not have a social contract with them. That is a matter for another speech. It is terrible to say such a thing. It is even worse to try to use such a defence to create a legal precedent.

I am straying somewhat from what we are debating, but I am using this example to illustrate the Conservatives' bad faith towards those truly in need. There have been more than 10 cases of suicide among soldiers who needed help. According to the DND ombudsman's most recent report, we need 15% to 20% more mental health care professionals.

Just recently, we heard that our francophone soldiers in Afghanistan had to obtain psychological services from the U.S. forces. DND did not even have the decency to provide them with services in their official language. We are told that it is not possible to deploy psychologists and other professionals. That shows a poor understanding of national defence. That is the argument that I heard and I could not believe it.

The U.S. can deploy psychologists and provide essential services to their troops. DND says that there was a problem, that it was not an ideal solution and that there might be a cultural or language shock, but that it would eventually resolve this situation when it has the time to consider it.

Such terrible things are being said. Then the government tells us that it supports our troops, but that we all have to tighten our belts. It says that everyone has funding problems and that everyone has to make sacrifices. Everyone has to tighten their belts, except for the Prime Minister's cronies. That is another class of Canadians, the pampered elite. Personally, I do not get to pay the equivalent of economy class for flights worth \$11,000. That never happens. I cannot afford that kind of luxury even with all the Aeroplan points I collect because I travel a lot.

● (1025)

It is a whole different story for people who raise over \$3 million for the Prime Minister's election campaigns. Those people can travel on the Challenger. They are spoiled and can go wherever they want at very affordable prices. I should spend more time talking to the Prime Minister so that maybe I too can enjoy these privileges. I would like to experience that luxury sometime. I find the whole thing mind-boggling. There are no other words to describe how I feel about this situation.

I am going to follow my colleague's example and give some quotations. I find them delightful. Here is one that we have not heard yet today. I will start with the Prime Minister. At the time, he was an entrepreneur. He has worked hard in his life, and he understands the issues facing the middle class, people who do not have very much money. At the time, he and his wife owned a small business. He said:

My wife, Laureen, and I ran our own small businesses. We had to pay our own health care premiums. We had to purchase our own supplemental health care coverage, like most people in the country. We cannot afford to fly to clinics in the United States to get health care when things go wrong and we certainly cannot afford to get on Challenger jets to do it.

He said that on October 1, 2005. Much has changed since then. Apparently, the Prime Minister can now afford to travel all over the country for various reasons. If I am not mistaken, he travels to many different places, not only in Canada but also abroad. That is a problem. In the quote that I just read, the Prime Minister was trying to show Canadians that he truly understands the problems of the middle class and that he is there to listen to them and to ensure that their money is spent wisely. However, now that the Conservatives have a majority, it is too late to go back. We are stuck with them until the next election. We are stuck with people who regularly betray our trust.

I feel shortchanged, and so do the voters in my riding. People voted for the Conservatives because they hoped to see something new. The Conservatives played the game right, and many people put their trust in them. I can understand that. Unfortunately, people very quickly became disillusioned.

*Business of Supply*

It is rare to see people looking forward to another election. People are realizing that a lot of money is being spent and a lot of time and energy is being wasted. People want their elected officials, their members of Parliament, to work for them, to represent them in the House and to be genuinely deserving of their trust. When I visit my riding now, people ask me when the next election will be so that they can toss this government out. The Conservatives have told them so many half-truths and have regularly shaken their confidence.

Voters do not want an election so they can bring back the Liberals. On the contrary, my constituents want something new. They have not heard any policies from the current third party. I am still waiting. I would like to be able to debate policy, since that is my job. I was sent here by taxpayers and Canadian citizens to debate issues, present ideas and try to put forward solutions to make Canada a better country. I am still waiting for proposals from the Liberals to give me a little something to debate. I imagine that we will see something in 2015, which is still a ways away.

Regardless, people are looking forward to a change and to getting the government they deserve: a New Democrat government that will defend their interests and ensure that the taxes it collects—because taxes will have to be collected, as they are now—will be used properly to provide services to the public. Furthermore, a New Democrat government will not use public funds to help Conservative friends and backers live in the lap of luxury. That is completely unacceptable. We saw that under the Liberals, and it is still going on under the Conservatives. In 2015 it will be time for a change, time to elect a New Democrat government.

• (1030)

[*English*]

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are listening to this debate today and it is a wonderful attempt, so to speak, by the New Democratic Party to deflect attention from what actually is happening. We all know that the leader of the New Democratic Party travels using taxpayer funds, for example, to Washington to lobby against Canada. Perhaps I will provide a little reminder to the NDP members that when they and their leader travel outside the country, they should be travelling in support of Canada, for which Canadians elected them to the House.

However, more importantly—and more poignantly, I would like to say—let me point this out. Parliament ordered the leader of the New Democratic Party to appear before the procedure and House affairs committee to respond to questions about the misuse of funds by the New Democratic Party to set up satellite offices in regions of the country where there is no elected member of Parliament from the New Democratic Party. This is the party that has been called upon to appear before the PROC committee, and the motion today is simply a partisan attempt to deflect attention from the fact that the NDP members have to respond to these actions.

I ask the member the following question. How does she feel about her leader being called in front of the PROC committee to respond to the misappropriation of taxpayer dollars?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about two things. First, I can see that the Conservatives are trying to sidetrack

debate by accusing the NDP of certain things, but Elections Canada has already cleared the party of those allegations. I would like to point that out to the member.

Second, the people who sent me here did not elect me to represent oil and gas industry lobbyists. They sent me here to represent their interests. Many of my constituents are concerned about this issue, and they are very pleased to hear the questions that the NDP is putting to the government and the concerns being raised about obvious abuses in the oil industry.

I believe that I do my job quite well and that I represent my constituents quite well. I have no issues on that front. No one in my riding has come to me to say that Keystone XL is an excellent idea and that it will create a lot of jobs in the area. No one has said that. My constituents feel they are very well represented, but I thank the member for his concern, all the same.

However, we should be focusing on today's debate. That is what is important right now. I would like to see the Prime Minister appear before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to explain his use of the Challengers. If my leader has to appear, the Prime Minister should have to respond to questions as well.

It is unfortunate that I cannot hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, indeed, the issue today is about the abuse of trust, abuse of the way in which tax dollars are being used inappropriately. We have heard it from the mover of the motion and the second speaker from the NDP on this issue.

I want to again highlight where a lot of that flagrant abuse has taken place, which is right from the office of the Leader of the Opposition who, in essence, is using a budget that has been allocated for leader's staff here in Ottawa. That is fully paid for by the taxpayer. He is taking staff from Ottawa and building an office out in Saskatchewan, where the NDP has not seen representation since 2004. New Democrats are, in essence, trying to set up a publicly funded political party. This is something that the party should be paying for, not taxpayers through the Leader of the Official Opposition's office.

My question to the member is this. How does the member defend her leader's approach to abusing the trust of tax dollars by creating this office?

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier has 40 seconds to answer.

[*English*]

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, it sounds as if the member thinks that the louder he is, the better his point is, but it is not.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

Right now, the offices are there to serve Canadians. Those people are not doing partisan activities. I see the work that is being done and I have no qualms about standing up for the work those people do. Their work is in no way partisan.

Whether we have MPs in a place or not, there is no reason not to go talk to Canadians, to see what their concerns are and to try to stand up for them properly. I know that is different from what the Liberals and Conservatives are used to doing. They assume that they know what is best for Canadians. However, we in the NDP want to know what is best for them and we will go on the ground to find out.

[English]

**Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

I would like to begin by reminding my colleagues that Canada is a vast country and an important, respected international player, and as such, it is an absolute necessity to have a government fleet of aircraft capable of transporting government ministers as they do their business on behalf of Canadians, when necessary and when it is appropriate.

Virtually every country on the planet has a similar arrangement and similar equipment, including all of our G7 partners. Our use of such aircraft is not only the most open and transparent of all these countries, but also the most necessary.

I do want to take a moment to thank the fine airmen and airwomen of the Royal Canadian Air Force for providing such dedicated service to Canadians.

Our fleet, including six CC-144 Challenger aircraft and five Airbus CC-150 Polaris aircraft, is a crucial tool for the operations of the government. Even in our increasingly connected age, the human touch is still fundamental to doing business. It is simply indispensable.

Representatives of the government must travel around the country and the world on government business. Our fleet, along with our flight crews, maintenance staff, and many support personnel, make sure they do so quickly, efficiently, and safely.

We require capabilities that guarantee we can rapidly reach every corner of our territory, from coast to coast to coast. This is precisely what these aircraft are bringing.

The dedicated VIP transport aircraft are operated by two squadrons, 437 Transport Squadron at CFB Trenton and 412 Transport Squadron here in Ottawa. Both these squadrons have a proud and storied history originating in the Second World War. The history of the 437 squadron goes back to 1944, providing crucial transportation in Europe.

Today it operates the Airbus A310-300s, all designated as CC-150 Polaris aircraft. Only one of these, number 001, is operated in what one might call a true VIP configuration, and for good reason. It has been used by Her Majesty the Queen and other members of the

royal family. The other four Polaris are configured as normal aircraft with cargo transport capabilities and air refuelling capability.

The 412 squadron can trace its origins back to the Battle of Britain and D-Day. It was the squadron of John Gillespie Magee, Jr., the RCAF pilot who wrote the poignant and memorable poem *High Flight* only months before his death in 1941.

The 412 squadron operates the CC-144 aircraft, the Bombardier Challenger business jets, in a VIP configuration from Ottawa's Macdonald-Cartier International Airport. These aircraft are twin engine, long-range executive jets, offering rapid air transportation up to 5,930 kilometres and a maximum speed of about 1,000 kilometres per hour. The Challengers can quickly deliver passengers almost anywhere in the world and can be used in a medical evacuation role when required.

It is important to understand that these aircraft are not sitting idle at a terminal just waiting for an urgent call to ferry a minister to a meeting. These are working aircraft undertaking either training or other military work. For example, the 437 squadron used its Polaris air-to-air refueling capabilities to support CF-18 fighters in operations over Libya. The Polaris were also used to ferry Canadian troops back and forth from Afghanistan.

It is important to realize that there are strict rules in place for how these capabilities are used. Most fundamentally, for security reasons, the Prime Minister cannot use commercial aircraft. We all understand that and we all appreciate it. Canadians would be somewhat concerned to see the Prime Minister flying on a commercial jet because of the public safety issues that surround him.

In addition, the use of the fleet is strictly governed by Treasury Board guidelines. Government administrative aircraft are only to be used for government purposes and government business when, first, the flight is being made to a point where there is no commercial air service, when no space is available on a commercial air service, or when because of difficulties in routings or time tables substantial savings of essential time can be made by using administrative aircraft in place of commercial aircraft.

The second instance is when official parties of some size need to travel together and significant advantage can be gained by using a government aircraft. The third is where security considerations render commercial travel impractical. The final one is when the aircraft is being used to transport visiting foreign dignitaries, where it is deemed appropriate or is in the best interest of the Canadian government.

•(1040)

The guidelines are quite clear. Ministers must thoroughly justify their use of government aircraft, and I can assure members that our officials thoroughly review each and every application.

We understand that Canadians do not have the option of government aircraft and, therefore, expect us to ensure the use of our fleet is under careful scrutiny and the use of our RCAF fleet is a last resort, when commercial flights or other options simply will not permit the effective execution of government responsibilities.

*Business of Supply*

When the Prime Minister uses RCAF aircraft on his trips overseas, it is by necessity. Again, I want to remind members that when the Prime Minister uses government aircraft, the RCMP is first of all responsible for the safety and security of the Prime Minister, and its advice is that he should not travel on commercial flights.

As a standard practice, when the Prime Minister uses the Challenger to travel on Conservative Party business, the party reimburses the government the cost of an equivalent commercial flight.

Finally, we have reduced the cost of ministerial travel on government aircraft by nearly 75%, compared to when the Liberals held office.

The Government of Canada is committed to a modern, flexible, and agile Canadian Armed Forces, supported by a professional multipurpose air force. It is always a great pleasure to talk about the great work of the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces and, in this particular case, the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Members in the House and Canadians across the country should be proud of their tireless dedication and their tremendous world-leading skills, and this pride should be equal whether our airmen and airwomen are conducting surveillance at home to defend Canada and the North American continent, or quickly deploying a fighter jet capability at home or for overseas operations, or shuttling equipment and personnel deployed on an operation, or as in the case of this motion, transporting government representatives as they do their required business on behalf of all Canadians.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his excellent discourse in terms of the men and women from our squadrons who do such amazing work for us, and how we count on them. We certainly expect and trust that they will keep the Prime Minister and his family safe. That is government business, and I certainly agree with the member. I am glad to see that he said there need to be some very clear rules around transporting. This is not about saying the Prime Minister should not be able to travel. He is the Prime Minister of the country. He has many concerns.

In terms of the issue of making sure these rules are followed, when Mark Kihn was flown back and forth from Calgary on numerous flights, was he listed on the flight manifest as a member of the Prime Minister's staff? He is clearly not; he is a party fundraiser. These are the issues we need to clarify. This is why I think hon. colleagues will be supporting this motion. We want to make sure people are doing government business, but if people who are friends are being flown to baseball games, how do they get on the flight manifest, because I am sure the men and women of our Air Force are going to want to follow the rules. Was Mark Kihn listed as the Prime Minister's staff or listed as a fundraiser?

• (1045)

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, there are clear rules of who can use government aircraft and how it is done. At times when parties are with the Prime Minister or with certain ministers and there is a certain volume of people, they will travel together and a significant advantage can be gained by using a government aircraft on government business. In the case when the Prime Minister travels for personal reasons, he reimburses the

Government of Canada at the equivalent value for a commercial flight, because he cannot use commercial flights; so taxpayers are not on the hook. If he had been able to travel commercially, he would have reimbursed those dollars based on a commercial value back to the taxpayer. For safety, it is in our best interest that the Prime Minister travel on government aircraft.

We will continue to make sure that the rules are tight and transparent and that people who are travelling with the Prime Minister or on ministerial delegations using government aircraft are accounted for and well explained.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, given the land mass of Canada and the many different regions and the responsibility of the Prime Minister to travel into the regions, one can appreciate why we have to provide aircraft support for him.

My question is related to the issue of safety. Quite often most people might think about safety for the Prime Minister, but it actually goes beyond that in terms of flying on a commercial aircraft, for example. Having a Prime Minister on a commercial aircraft goes beyond just the personal safety of the Prime Minister.

I wonder if the member would provide comment on that aspect. This is something on which the RCMP, I understand, has also made significant comment.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend from Winnipeg North for his comments. He is exactly right.

I think that any Canadian would be somewhat concerned to see the Prime Minister getting on a commercial flight, knowing that because of the world we live in, the Prime Minister could be a target for those who hold ill will toward him or our country. Everyone on that commercial flight would be at risk. For that reason, it is important that the Prime Minister be flown on government aircraft.

Of course, all these aircraft are assets of DND and are operated by the Royal Canadian Air Force. Who better to provide security and protection for the Prime Minister of Canada when he is in the air than our own brave men and women who serve us in the Canadian Armed Forces?

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity, while I am on my feet, to thank the member for Selkirk—Interlake. I know that he is strongly committed to working with Ukrainians in Canada. He has spent tremendous time and commitment flying back and forth on government aircraft to make sure that things are being done as best as they can be for Ukrainian Canadians.

We are talking about government resources. However, we did not get an answer from the NDP. The member is well aware that the Leader of the Opposition has been asked to sit before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to explain his plans to open political branch offices across Canada, which clearly are not for government uses. With the smoke and mirrors and the opening statements we have heard from our colleagues across the way, I am wondering if he could clearly state his position and understanding of the appropriateness of using funds for political offices being opened up across this country.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment for his comments and for this thanks for working with Ukraine.

The Ukraine is actually a good point in that I have travelled to Ukraine with the Prime Minister on government aircraft. I have also travelled there with the Minister of Foreign Affairs on commercial aircraft, because it was the best option available for the size of the delegation we were taking.

On the question of the hypocrisy we see sometimes in this place, the Leader of the Opposition is now having to appear before the procedure and House affairs committee to talk about the NDP using government resources for political operations in Montreal and Regina. It is completely despicable, and I think all Canadians are upset about it. The motion today is about trying to turn the channel and distract from the NDP's own shortcomings, when its members are using government taxpayer funds for political operations across this country.

• (1050)

**Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House today to oppose the motion put forward by the member for Timmins—James Bay.

Our Conservative government has strongly and consistently stood up for protecting taxpayers. That is why we have reduced the use of the Challenger for the Prime Minister and members of his cabinet by nearly 75%. However, that said, unlike the NDP and the member for Timmins—James Bay, our government is responsible and lives in the reality that Canada is not immune from the threat of radical-led terrorism.

As we recently saw from the good work done by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Canada Border Services Agency, and other law enforcement partners as part of Project SMOOTH, there are those who wish to harm law-abiding Canadians to further their radical political and social agenda. Two individuals plotted to destroy a train bridge near Niagara Falls as part of an al Qaeda-inspired plot. If this is not a reality check that our country needs to take national security seriously, then nothing is.

That is why, when it comes to national security, we listen to the security assessments of the RCMP.

The RCMP handles the protection of the Prime Minister. The RCMP's National Division Protective Operations provides domestic and international protective services to the Prime Minister and the Governor General and their families. It also provides protective services within the national capital region to ministers of the crown, Supreme Court justices, the diplomatic community, internationally protected persons, and others designated by the Minister of Public Safety as requiring protection.

Additionally, the RCMP's National Division Protective Operations is responsible for the protection of designated federal properties, such as Parliament Hill grounds, the Supreme Court building, Rideau Hall, and the Prime Minister's residences, and for running the NCR command centre for safeguarding the public's safety during

various events. With few exceptions, I am pleased to say that there have been very few security incidents.

Wherever the Prime Minister travels, the RCMP works to ensure that he and his family are kept safe and secure. Most Canadians would agree that it is an extremely important thing to do. This is not a perk, and this is certainly not a luxury. This is most certainly not an abuse of taxpayers' dollars. This is the reality of living in a world in which certain radicalized individuals want to cause harm to Canadians, to our government, and to our way of life.

The RCMP has rightly assessed that the Prime Minister cannot and should not travel on commercial aircraft. I would be hard pressed to find many Canadians who think that he should. I am not a law enforcement professional, but neither is the member for Timmins—James Bay, and I will take the assessment of the RCMP to heart regarding what is and is not safe.

It is abundantly clear that the NDP is simply not ready to be trusted to govern this country. That party does not treat serious issues with the gravity they deserve.

Securing the Prime Minister is not a partisan interest. It is in Canadians' interest. Should a serious incident arise involving the Prime Minister, there would be serious economic implications and a great impact on this country.

We should not be surprised that the NDP is the same party that voted against the Combating Terrorism Act, which made it a criminal offence to go overseas to engage in terrorist acts or to receive terrorist training. It also opposed our new tools in economic action plan 2014 to combat terrorism financing.

Those members even voted against the Faster Removal of Foreign Criminals Act, which gives more tools to our front-line border security guards to remove people from this country who are here illegally. They even voted against combating human smuggling, which is very often a key fundraiser for terrorist groups.

When it comes to national security, Canadians know that the NDP has quite a laughable record on the issue. Only our Conservative government can be trusted. That is why we take the necessary action to protect the Prime Minister and to protect this country, and we take it on the advice of the RCMP. That is why we have also created the Wanted by the CBSA list, which helps to remove dangerous and violent criminals from Canada. Again, they are those who are in this country illegally. We have also increased the number of front-line border security guards by 26%.

Our government also created Canada's first counterterrorism strategy and cybersecurity strategy. That is why we have invested nearly a quarter of a billion dollars to protecting Canadians from hacking and cyberespionage.

The facts are clear. We have removed over 115,000 illegal immigrants since being elected in 2006. While the member for Timmins—James Bay plays partisan political games, it is our Conservative government that is focused on the real issues that matter to Canadians.

*Business of Supply*

●(1055)

While our government is creating jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity, the member for Timmins—James Bay is trying to take operational control away from the RCMP and away from those who work on the front lines keeping Canadians safe from national security threats. We are not just talking about the Prime Minister here. We are talking about all Canadians.

We will take no lessons from the NDP on important national security issues, such as the proper protection of our Prime Minister. In fact, there is very little the NDP has to contribute on this serious issue. This is the party whose leader bought into conspiracy theories that doubted the death Osama bin Laden. This is the party that has two deputy leaders, the members for Vancouver East and Halifax, who have content on their websites advocating offensive conspiracy theories that blame the United States, the United States of America, its government, for the horrific tragedy of September 11. This is the party whose member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie said that the First World War was “a war between the bourgeois who wanted to make more money”.

We all know that the NDP will never be serious on issues of national security. That is why it brings forward motions like this that seek to insert the NDP members into the process for which the RCMP employs experts. Rather than playing politics, our RCMP will give our front-line police officers the tools they need to do their jobs. We will give them the respect they deserve when they provide that advice, and we will not interfere on operational matters.

Let us look at the facts. Canada has a world-leading economy. We have created a million jobs since the end of the recession. We must operate within the bounds of the current reality in the area of national security.

It is simply a fact of life that we must take steps to secure our leaders and our country, regardless of political stripe. That is why we are opposing the motion brought forward by the NDP member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, where to begin? We are talking about entitlement and breach of trust, and we have a government member who wants to focus on something else. That is fair. The government has a record of appointing people, who are in jail now, to head our CSIS oversight body. We could go there, but I am not going to go there, because today we are going to talk about the motion in front of us.

I did not hear anything in my friend's speech as to whether or not she believes in the following statement:

That, in the opinion of the House, government planes, and in particular the plane used by the Prime Minister...

which we believe should be used,

...should only be used for government purposes and should not be used to transport anyone other than those associated with such purposes or those required for the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family.

Is there anything in that statement with which she disagrees, and does she agree when her Prime Minister brings his buddies along to go to ball games?

That is the question in front us. I would like a clear answer on that.

**Ms. Roxanne James:** Where do we begin, Mr. Speaker? Is it a breach of trust? Is the member kidding me?

That member has brought up issues when the leader of his own party has to appear before the procedure and House affairs committee about concerns that the NDP has violated the rules of the Board of Internal Economy.

I just want to make clear that the NDP has admitted that it is running an office in Montreal that is partially funded by the House of Commons budget for MPs' offices and the opposition leader's office. This is clearly in violation of the rules. Because of that, the leader of the NDP now has to appear before the procedure and House affairs committee. These activities violate the Board of Internal Economy guidelines that members of Parliament cannot use their budgets to fund activities related to the administration, organization, and internal communications of a political party.

When we talk about ethics, when we talk about where we begin, I think we should begin with the NDP.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I find it rather amusing to see the Parliamentary Secretary using thick markers to try to describe the well-known reality of the Prime Minister's security. A bit like a child, she is laying it on thick, telling us that this is a tree, this is the sun, this is the safety and security of the Prime Minister. Let us be serious. The issue is not the safety and security of the Prime Minister, but rather the discount fares the Conservatives have put in place using public money and money from some of the Conservative Party's donors.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary tell us whether, just like in the cartoon of the Minister of Justice, she is going to use the Sea King helicopters to find some semblance of credibility?

●(1100)

[*English*]

**Ms. Roxanne James:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague, the parliamentary secretary, has already addressed that concern and indicated that those who have travelled with the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister have in all cases reimbursed the Canadian taxpayer for the commercial cost of that flight.

However, in regard to the security of our Prime Minister and of this country, I will take the opportunity to speak about the serious threat that we have here in Canada. Canada is not immune to the threat of radical-led terrorism. We only need to look to recent headlines in the papers with regard to people who have gone overseas for radicalized training to assist other countries in their wars and have come back to Canada. We need to think just recently about the VIA Rail plot and of the Toronto 18 group.

We have to take security seriously. We have to ensure that our Prime Minister's safety and security are foremost and paramount to this country. He represents this country. We need to keep our national borders and our country safe from all types of radicalization. Most Canadians know that they can count on this Conservative government to do just that.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice to get into the debate today and speak to this motion. The motion raises very serious concerns about the proper use of government resources and government funds, and it raises questions about accountability.

First, to the movers of the motion, I have heard some members of the NDP talk about how they are vigilant in the public interest and public matters and issues that are important to Canadians, yet today we are dealing with this motion. I do not think that this is at the top of Canadians' list of important issues to be dealt with.

This is the same NDP that is now before the PROC committee to discuss its leader's actions in opening an office in Saskatchewan, where there are no NDP members. If we look at the job description, we see that it talks about assisting members of Parliament through outreach to their constituents so as to best represent them, but the NDP does not have any constituents there. The telling tale in the job description is under the qualifications, which ask for experience in election campaigns. It is clearly a breach of government resources and House of Commons resources to open up an office to carry out partisan activities. That is coming from the NDP.

Let me come back to this issue. Yes, we must hold the government to account. We need to know who flew on the taxpayer's dime and whether those costs were reimbursed in the appropriate manner. These are important issues to bring forward.

Let us be crystal clear that we also understand that the Prime Minister cannot travel on a commercial aircraft. Any time that the Prime Minister must travel, for whatever reason, he must travel under the protection of the Department of National Defence. Most Canadians and most parliamentarians understand and respect that.

However, the use of government aircraft for party business is a broader pattern of public resources being used for Conservative partisan purposes. It goes well beyond shuttling top Conservatives to partisan events. We will look at some of the examples.

Let us look at government advertising. This includes tens of thousands, even hundreds of millions, spent on high-cost, low-information government advertising, such as advertising the government's action plan. These advertisements are clearly meant to sway Canadians toward the opinion of the Conservative Party and are not government advertising.

It also includes over a quarter million, and still counting, to send out press releases. It goes on to talk about the government's websites. The government has just completely overhauled its websites and has moved away from providing information and toward more partisan advertising for the government.

We can then look at the Prime Minister's new 24 Seven website, which shows the farcical videos launched by the Prime Minister's Office. There are four staffers spending their time and using government-owned equipment to create these videos of the Prime Minister and senior Conservatives to promote nothing other than themselves and the Conservative Party. Many of these videos have had only a dozen hits. This is not a very good use of taxpayers' dollars.

To come back to the use of government resources to shuttle around cabinet ministers, we still have the former Minister of

National Defence being airlifted by a search and rescue helicopter out of a fishing trip that he was on. This just goes to show the very poor planning of the government on this particular issue. The minister knew well in advance that he had a meeting and a press conference that had been planned for weeks on that particular day. He could have altered his schedule somewhat, but no, he decided to call in the resources of the Canadian military to airlift him out of a fishing camp.

Let us get back to the use of overseas travel and using these government aircraft to ferry delegations around the country and around the world. It is an important task. We have to be represented in the world and we have to provide transportation to these delegations. The problem is that a lot of these delegations do not truly cross partisan lines.

• (1105)

In the past, when Conservatives went to the Ukraine and other places, they invited other members of Parliament from all parties to represent the government and Parliament. However, we have seen more and more often that they are only using it for their own Conservative MPs and their buddies. One only needs to look down the passenger list of some of these delegations to see that they are all well-connected Conservatives, including donors and fundraisers. It shows a partisan face to the world when this is done.

To summarize, yes, Liberals are very concerned about the proper use of government aircraft, and we should be vigilant about it. If these uses cross the line, it is only right that the governing party reimburse Canadians fully and fairly for the expenses at fair market value. Unfortunately, we keep seeing many examples of the Conservatives harnessing public resources for clearly partisan ends. The use of government aircraft for Tory officials only came to light through access to information. That leads to the question of what else might be going on that has not yet come to light.

Where is the total respect for taxpayers' dollars? This is a government that rode in on the high horse of accountability. It might have been a pink My Little Pony, because everything they said they would not do, they have done. Where is the transparency and accountability?

Liberals will be supporting this motion. We look forward to hearing other members' opinions on it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite funny to hear the hon. member for Avalon trying to lecture us, when he was faced with a decision that caught him unprepared, like all of his caucus colleagues. It was the hon. member for Papineau's decision to exclude Liberal senators from the caucus. It was an impulsive decision. The member for Papineau was probably thrown hard off his horse on the road to Damascus, because he had fought tooth and nail for years to keep senators in the Liberal caucus.

*Business of Supply*

However, what is pretty incredible is that, in the end, the hon. member for Avalon is clearly ignoring the fact that the Liberals have populated the Senate with organizers and fundraisers for decades. This practice was widespread among the Liberals. It was systematic, in fact.

Would the hon. member for Avalon like to recognize the wrongs of the Liberal Party and perhaps help his party emerge from its third party status in the House?

• (1110)

[*English*]

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure where that is going, but if he wants to talk about Senate reform, let us talk about Senate reform.

The member for Papineau has done more for Senate reform in the last six months than either of the other parties in the House in the last six decades. We are looking, on a going-forward basis, at appointing senators in a non-partisan way and removing the Senate from the powers of the Prime Minister. We are talking about senators being totally independent officers of Parliament, while the position of New Democrats is to abolish the Senate altogether. They clearly do not understand that they need the provinces to tell them that, and they know that is not achievable. Then we have the government on the other side wanting to continue appointing people. The Prime Minister has appointed more senators than he said he would.

I am not quite sure where that question was going.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will first comment on the member's last discussion on the Senate. As far as I can see, having elected senators retire and then be replaced by elected senators is a very good thing, because it brings accountability to the Senate. What I hear from Canadians is they want more accountability. They do not want a process that actually allows unelected people to decide who should represent regions that are also unelected. That is what the member is talking about. That is what his leader has done.

I will come back to the actual discussion. The hon. member has asked for openness and transparency. First, that is the idea of today's discussion. It is so we can discuss these issues.

We are being very open. The reporting mechanisms are there. The Prime Minister, upon achieving office, made it a policy that anyone who is not on direct government business or is not a family member or a member of security staff should reimburse the taxpayer for the cost of the flight, and I think that is eminently reasonable.

We have seen a 75% reduction in Challenger use. If the member thinks there is a better solution, why did his party, when it was in power, not bring forward this policy of reimbursement to the taxpayers? If it is such a good idea, why did the Liberals not propose it when they had the opportunity?

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** Mr. Speaker, I will start with the first part of his question because I do not know who he asked the question to. I know all about unelected senators because I defeated a Conservative who could not get elected and then they appointed him to the Senate. Two years later, he quit the Senate to run against me again. He could not get elected again, and then was appointed back to the Senate.

Therefore, if he wants to talk about appointing senators and elected senators—they cannot get elected to here but they appoint them over there—go right ahead.

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to bring up a point by my hon. colleague from Avalon. He was saying that what is important is not only who is on these flights, whether it be a Conservative fundraiser, but also who is not on these flights. If the government assembles a group and allows Conservative MPs to be part of the group representing the country, and does not allow opposition MPs, Liberal and NDP, to be in that delegation, then that is also using government resources for partisan purposes. I wonder if my colleague would like to elaborate on that a little more.

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** Mr. Speaker, that is a troubling fact. In this place, we are seeing more and more of that from the governing party. It is using these things for its own purposes and not using them for the collective good of Parliament. Many times there are good reasons, for the collective good, to do things in the world and represent all parties.

Ukraine is a great example of where all parties are supportive; there is no division amongst our support in the House. Canada is going there to talk about democracy and monitoring elections. What better way than to have all parties there, and to use government resources so that all parties can take part in this?

More and more, no matter what trip it goes on, the government tends to be more partisan. We only need to look at the recent trip to Israel, where the member for York Centre made it quite clear that his purpose was to get the million-dollar re-election shot. He was on the trip for his own personal re-election.

• (1115)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to know exactly where the party stands. I assume from what I am hearing from my friends down the way that they are going to support our motion.

However, I want to talk about the question that is upsetting most people. It is not just about whether one pays or not; it is about who has access. I know that the Liberals had a lot of problems when they were in government about the entitlement piece, and hopefully they are working on that. However, the question for the House, for the government, and for all of us is, is not about whether or not someone pays. No constituent of mine can phone up the PMO and say "I'd like to hitch a ride with you". This is about access entitlement and the separation we are seeing between the political class and the everyday citizen.

I ask my friend, is he going to support our motion, and would he support our attempt to stop this bandwagon of entitlement that we saw with his party when it was in government and that we see with the present party now in government?

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** Mr. Speaker, I did say clearly that we would support the motion and that the government must be held accountable for who flew on the taxpayers' dime and whether these reimbursements took place at an appropriate market rate. I did say that.

*Business of Supply*

Regarding his question of getting access to the Prime Minister, people can get access to the Prime Minister in several different ways. It does not necessarily have to mean flying on his aircraft. It could be by lobbying and the number of times that one is lobbied. It does ask the question in the broader picture here of who has access to the Prime Minister and when.

[Translation]

**Mr. Raymond Côté:** Mr. Speaker, it is a shame that the hon. member for Avalon refused to answer my question. The Liberal track record on the abuse of public funds is quite telling.

In fact, at the time, the Conservatives criticized the use of the Challenger jets, which amounted to \$1 million, according to the speeches we heard. That is a huge amount. Admittedly, the Liberals are difficult to match when it comes to their misuse of public funds, not to mention the meal-related expenses.

Would the hon. member for Avalon like to comment on this use of funds at the time?

[English]

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** Mr. Speaker, I would not like to talk about it because I was not here; I was only elected in 2008. I have no intention of trying to go back in time to relive things that have happened in the past.

We can talk about the time that I have been here and the time for moving forward, and how we move forward in the future with these things. We can learn of the past practices from all political parties and all governments in all provinces, but I do not think it serves the debate.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this House to speak to our opposition day motion, which reads:

That, in the opinion of the House, government planes, and in particular the plane used by the Prime Minister, should only be used for government purposes and should not be used to transport anyone other than those associated with such purposes or those required for the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family.

Coast Guard helicopters, \$16 orange juices, five-star hotel stays, in and out scandals, senator housing and expenditure scandals, unethical lobbying, and the list goes on. What do all of those points have in common? Shady Conservative ethics.

Canadians want to believe that politicians fight for them in this House, and that every day in the work that they do, politicians are adhering to those basic principles, the importance of transparency, accountability, and ethics.

Unfortunately, despite the rhetoric we have heard from the governing Conservative Party, we have seen anything but that, whether it was the current Minister of Justice being flown around by Coast Guard helicopters; or the former minister of international development, who went abroad to talk about the importance of development in some of the poorest countries in the world and ordered expensive orange juice and stayed in five-star hotels; or fundraising friends of the Conservative Party, who were rewarded with plum positions in the Senate and then proceeded to blow taxpayers' money on shady housing and expenditure accounts.

Where are the days of the Reform Party? I come from western Canada, and I remember growing up at a time when the Reform Party took western Canada by storm. The rhetoric was very strong on the issues of accountability and throwing those out who had wasted taxpayers' money, who had indulged in the culture of entitlement that we have seen too often from previous Liberal and Conservative governments. Lo and behold, the Reform Party became the current Conservative Party and gained power. We have seen that same culture day in and day out, rewarding themselves, rewarding their friends, and all the while telling Canadians that they have to tighten their belts and that the cuts are necessary for them to continue lining their own pockets.

Let us look at those cuts. In the last number of years we have seen record cuts by the government. We have seen cuts to pensions. We have seen cuts to the public service. In fact, by 2015, we have been told there will be a total of \$10.8 billion in cuts when it comes to public services. This is in the areas of food inspection, aviation safety, environmental regulation, employment insurance, and the list goes on.

We can look at the recent round of cuts that Canada Post has announced. Yesterday, there was public outrage over Canada's failure to engage in a proper investment in terms of our Canada Health Act. We have seen record environmental deregulation and cuts to important departments, such as Fisheries and Oceans and Environment Canada, which are there to keep our communities safe.

We have seen a retraction in terms of our international obligations and the kind of investments that we used to make around the world in order to support communities that are dealing with challenges on that front.

In my riding, perhaps the clearest indication of cuts has been the experience of first nations people. First nations people have always borne the cuts of government, whether it be Liberal or previous Conservative governments, but under Harper we have seen record amounts of cuts with respect to—

• (1120)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Churchill has used the Prime Minister's name rather than his position. Would she not repeat that, please.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is just that it is a name that I repeat often, and Canadians repeat often.

Since I have the opportunity, I would like to note that I will be splitting my time with the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

When it comes to first nations, for the last number of weeks I have had a chance to travel on the winter ice roads, connecting with some of the most marginalized communities in our country. At the doorsteps, I often hear people ask why it is that the Prime Minister is flying around with his jet and cutting favours for his friends. I am hearing this at a time when they have an underfunding of education, or not enough housing, or where there is no investment from the federal government in making sure that first nation communities have running water and proper sewer services.

*Business of Supply*

Where is the federal government when it comes to making investments to an all-weather road system, which the Province of Manitoba is investing in? The federal government shrugs its shoulders and says it has nothing to do with improving the lives of first nation people.

People on the ground, first nations people, indigenous people, and all Canadians, see a major disconnect. They see the ways in which the Prime Minister and his government are cutting favours for their friends. They are spending taxpayers' money to make their friends happy, all the while cutting essential services for Canadians.

We know that the Conservatives spent \$118,090 on the flights in question. That is equal to old age security for 19 seniors, a GIS allowance for 20 seniors, survivor allowance for 16 seniors, or an average annual pension for five retired veterans.

The cost of flying around the country and around the world, of flying around friends like Mr. Mark Kihn, the fundraising project manager for the Conservative Party of Canada, and flying around friends and donors of the Conservative Party, unfortunately, equals the same cost that would make people's lives livable.

When we are talking veterans' pensions or survivor allowances, I am sure that every single member on that side of the House knows constituents who are struggling and are hurt by the cuts that their Conservative government has brought forward. Yet, they sit by while their Prime Minister, who is enforcing these cuts, continues to spend money on this culture of entitlement, which they have indulged in as well.

Words like "hypocrisy" come to mind when we hear about these kinds of expenditures. We have to look no further than a record of statements, and there are many, where the same members, including the Prime Minister of the government, used to cry foul about these kinds of expenditures that they are now engaging in.

I want to read a quote from the former leader of the official opposition, who is now the Prime Minister. He said:

What Mr. Martin wants now is to have a 10-month election (campaign) where he can fly around the country on a government jet at taxpayers' expense, and he can throw enough money all over the country to cover up the stench of corruption.

The "stench of corruption" are strong words. They are words that are entirely applicable to the kind of behaviour we are seeing from the government today.

The Prime Minister also said, in 2004:

It's not a question that I'm hanging back. It's a question that I don't have a Challenger jet paid for by the taxpayers to fly myself and my people around the country....

Well, the Prime Minister now does have a Challenger jet that he can fly himself and his people around the country. What is he going to do about it?

We heard from the Minister of Employment and Social Development, who many years ago, as a member of Parliament in the opposition, said:

Mr. Speaker, imagine taking a Challenger jet across the country at a cost of \$55,000 for an 800 word speech. I think that works out to about \$72 a word.

I wonder if the Minister of Employment and Social Development is calculating the per-word dollar count that his government is racking up at taxpayers' expense.

There are numerous quotes by people who are now senior ministers in the Conservative government, including the Minister of Justice, that decry the kind of culture, entitlement, and waste of taxpayer money that we saw from the previous Liberal government. Yet, we are seeing that hypocrisy loud and clear as they sit by and engage in those kinds of expenditures, certainly fanning the flames of that stench of corruption that they decried so clearly.

• (1125)

I am proud of the position that we in the NDP are taking to shine a light on the waste, the culture of entitlement, and the hypocrisy that we have seen from the government. We are here to speak out on the fact that this is about priorities. The government is here to govern in the best interests of the Canadian people.

Our message is that if the government is not willing to do that, then it is time to step aside and let us govern with the best interests of Canadians at heart.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech.

I would also like to thank her for reminding us that a good, accountable government prioritizes the right things by investing in and supporting initiatives of vital importance to Canada. This government abandoned one such world-class initiative, the Experimental Lakes Area, a one-of-a-kind science program that helped us save waterways and learn about the environmental consequences of various elements.

Can she talk about how a good, accountable government would make wise choices to save projects and initiatives such as the Experimental Lakes Area or to invest in new co-ops?

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her very good question.

It is clear that we have lost several programs because of this government's budget cuts. This proves how messed up its priorities are. The Experimental Lakes Area is an excellent example. In my home province, Manitoba, hundreds of Manitobans and Canadians opposed cutting that program.

We all know that the government chose to protect oil companies and their interests rather than ensure that we had a way to do environmental protection research, which was the purpose of the Experimental Lakes Area.

Every day, every week in the House, the government puts corporate interests, such as big oil, and friends who fund its electoral interests ahead of the well-being of Canadians.

Our motion today asks the government to put an end to that culture of hypocrisy and act in Canadians' best interests by making investments on the ground to ensure their well-being.

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**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite funny to see the party that will be relegated to the opposition benches for quite some time remain silent and let us carry the full weight of the debate on this important issue.

I thank the hon. member for Churchill for her speech, which referred to the Prime Minister.

I would like to remind the House of another example of this government's twisted logic and contradictions: the series of cheques made out to Senator Duffy. At the time, the Prime Minister staunchly defended his chief of staff, saying that he had his full confidence, only to repudiate him later.

Would my hon. colleague from Churchill like to draw a parallel between the current debate and the bad faith shown by this government in defending the indefensible?

[*English*]

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely a trend here. Time after time the government, whether it is Prime Minister or senior ministers, has prioritized the interests of friends, friends like Mr. Duffy and others in the other House, at the expense of Canadians.

Where are the champions of accountability and transparency that were heralded by the Reform Party? Where are their friends, like Mr. Kihn who was involved with the National Citizen's Coalition, who fought for increased transparency?

Those days are gone. Canadians have gotten a whiff of that stench of corruption that has emerged with the government, and they want change. They deserve better.

We are on Canadians' side in putting forward this motion and calling for real accountability on behalf of Canadians' real interests.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I referred to the scandal involving just Senator Duffy, but I also could have included Senator Wallin. We have lost count of this government's improprieties.

At some point, there are limits to defending one thing one minute and then defending the opposite the next. Talk about a contradiction. The government will have earned its fate. To continue along the same lines as my colleague, I really enjoy being in my riding, and I am sometimes embarrassed and surprised to hear some of the comments from my constituents regarding the Prime Minister and his government. People sometimes even go a little too far in their choice of words to describe the actions of the Prime Minister, who is abusing his majority. Personally, I always accept the will of the people.

The issue we have brought before the House is a very important one. We are talking about the proper, reasoned and intelligent use of public money. The Conservative Party's discount travel system is a very popular concept in the private sector. It helps people save money if they are frequent travellers or if they want to go on vacation for the first time in their life. However, the system is largely dependent on public funds—even money from Conservative

contributors—which is truly scandalous, particularly since it is clearly not economically viable.

I am wondering why the Conservatives are defending the indefensible and why they feel they can deflect our attention by saying that they are acting with complete transparency, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence claimed.

In an article published in *iPolitics*, journalist Elizabeth Thompson demonstrated the exact opposite. She had to resort to the Access to Information Act to prove that one of the Prime Minister's close family friends was able to use the Prime Minister's Challenger at rock-bottom prices. There is no way the competition can match those prices because public money is what keeps them so low.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety was thoroughly incapable of proving that she was talking about real issues. She was completely off-track with her comments about the Prime Minister's security. She said that it is important to deal with terrorist threats and so on. I would invite her to meet with the Minister of Industry as quickly as possible, because he had this to say on October 1, 2001:

There is something else the government can do. If the government wants to show confidence in the commercial airline industry, here is a suggestion. Will the Prime Minister park his Challenger jet and fly commercial skies as other Canadians do as a sign of faith that security works?

That comment is over a decade old. Perhaps the Minister of Industry was lacking in judgment at the time. That said, the parliamentary secretary could always meet with him to talk about it. However, he told the House that it is absolutely impossible, for security reasons, for the Prime Minister to fly on commercial airlines. That is perfectly understandable.

• (1140)

However, the Prime Minister must in turn respect all Canadian taxpayers by not engaging in this type of abuse to benefit such a small circle of friends. I raised the example of Senator Duffy because, like Mark Kihn, he is a major fundraiser. In Senator Duffy's case, he was able to put on a good show. He raised millions of dollars by making thousands of people laugh at Conservative Party events. In both cases, these men were given preferential treatment. The government was even providing privileges erroneously, almost fraudulently, to these people who are so important to Conservative Party fundraising activities.

Let us now talk about the invoices another Hill reporter mentioned and how much Conservative Party fundraiser Mr. Kihn was billed. Mr. Kihn is friends with the Prime Minister's children on Facebook, which shows how close he is to the Prime Minister. For the same trip, no airline in Canada can come close to even double the cost that was billed to Mr. Kihn. There may be some airlines in the U.S. that charge that much, but even that is questionable.

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How can my colleagues from the government, especially my colleagues from the west, the successors of the Reform Party and the Canadian Alliance, who defended integrity and transparency in Ottawa, continue to defend the indefensible, especially with their noses stuck in their iPads, computers, or newspapers? I just do not understand it. The only thing I do understand is that the Prime Minister apparently continues to keep his caucus in a yoke of ironclad discipline, unless he is in a really tough spot, as he was with former Conservative Party executive director Dimitri Soudas, who really went too far. How many more of these incidents and abuses are my colleagues willing to tolerate after nine years of Conservative rule on the Hill?

Let me be clear. Taken in isolation, what we are debating right now in the House is a mistake that we could consider excusing if the Conservatives would acknowledge their mistakes or their lack of judgment. However, when we look at the big picture, we can point to the in and out scandal of the 2006 election; the robocalls to mislead voters and send them to polling stations that did not exist; all the Senate scandals; not to mention the problems of the Minister of International Cooperation, who had a great deal of difficulty deciding where to put his lunch box and sleeping bag on certain outings to the Quebec cottages of prominent Canadians; and of course we could mention the former minister of international cooperation, Bev Oda, who threw tantrums in order to be able to smoke in her room and treated herself to \$16 glasses of orange juice.

It seems to me that there is a limit. Some of my colleagues were elected because of solemn promises they made. Their constituents truly hoped that they would clean up Ottawa. It seems to me that, at some point, some of them should stand up and say that the party is over, that those who abuse the system will be shown the door, and that they will openly revolt and say that this type of abuse will not be tolerated.

• (1145)

As the official opposition, we are pointing out serious problems that, when taken as a whole, are indicative of a well-established and deeply rooted culture. After nine years, this government has amply demonstrated the extent to which it has used public resources for personal gain. That is enough. We will form the next government in 2015 because Canadians really deserve better.

[English]

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my friend across the way that I was not reading my iPad or my newspaper when he was speaking. I was really trying to follow him, but he took such a pretzel-like turn in his speech that it was really hard to follow everything he said.

Overall, what we are trying to get at here is the use of the Challenger jet for travel by the Prime Minister and ministers. All members in the House are aware that this government has reduced ministerial travel by over 75% since we took office, and that is a good news story for taxpayers.

How can my friend across the way justify his party's use of taxpayer dollars to fund satellite offices in areas of this country where that party does not even have members of Parliament? Could he address that question?

[Translation]

**Mr. Raymond Côté:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend opposite for his question. I especially want to thank him for paying attention to my speech, unlike some of his colleagues who still have their eyes glued to their screens.

That said, I have been active in politics for nine years, and I believe that, as a member of Parliament, I represent my constituents in Beauport—Limoilou first and foremost, but that I also represent all Canadians. This May 2 will mark three years since the orange wave took over and we began our terms. There were 4.5 million Canadians across the country who put their hopes in us.

People in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, supported the NDP and came to see us during our last caucus retreat there, even though we do not have an MP in that city. People who had not supported the NDP were happy to see one of their representatives in the House of Commons, an MP from Quebec, a member of the official opposition. Part of our job involves being on the ground and being available to people.

I remind my colleague that I think it is useful to meet with the groups who come to make representations on the Hill, but I do not think that that is the most important part of my job. The most important part of my job is meeting people directly, knocking on doors and going to see them wherever they are, all across Canada.

[English]

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the previous question from the Conservative side.

I was looking at the advertisement for a full-time position put out by the NDP. The advertisement was paid for with House funds. The NDP is looking for somebody with a number of qualifications, including experience in election campaigns.

I take issue with my hon. colleague from the NDP saying he is a member of Parliament for all Canadians. I wonder what his constituents would think if he went into his own riding and told the people who voted for him that he is really the MP for all Canadians. As members of Parliament it is important for us to represent all of the people in our ridings, whether they voted for us or not. It is not for us to say that we represent people in other parts of the country as well.

Party funds are available to pay for people in the NDP, for example, who want to resurrect the NDP in Saskatchewan.

Does the member represent all Canadians, or does he represent the people in his riding?

• (1150)

[Translation]

**Mr. Raymond Côté:** Mr. Speaker, first, I do not agree with my colleague's statement that MPs do not represent all Canadians. After all, we are all gathered here in the House to truly represent the entire population. We are here to serve Canadians.

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I do not understand why both the Conservatives and the Liberals are so determined to try to draw attention away from a debate that is really very important. The crux of the problem is that government resources that have been put at the Prime Minister's disposal are being misused in order to benefit a group of close friends.

I am reminded of the scandal involving Senator Duffy, not to mention certain Liberal senators. It started out as a seemingly minor thing, but then it snowballed into a major issue. This is only the beginning of the debate on what will no doubt become a major issue in the public arena. We will therefore continue to stand behind our arguments in this regard.

[*English*]

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak against the motion put forward by the member for Timmins—James Bay.

As well, I will be splitting my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board.

Our government has the utmost respect for the men and women who serve as members of the police in Canada. As such, we take their advice with regard to safety and security very seriously and with due consideration. Our government acknowledges the professionalism and expertise of the members of the RCMP, who are responsible for decisions relating to the safety of the Prime Minister. This is why the deployment of RCMP assets is based upon operational considerations.

While the opposition is busy filling its time with motions such as this one, which it brings forward only to play partisan games, our government is actually delivering results for Canadians and their families. Instead of putting forward ideas to grow our economy, create jobs, balance the budget, and reduce taxes, we are debating a motion that reeks of partisanship.

When I return to my riding this weekend, I do not think that the constituents of Brandon—Souris will be pleased to know we were debating what plane the Prime Minister should be on. The people of Brandon—Souris want all members of this House to work on passing legislation approving funding that would build new roads and bridges, get our grain moving, and open new markets for our products.

It is unfortunate, with everything we could be debating today, that the member for Timmins—James Bay has decided to put partisanship ahead of getting results for Canadians.

I would also like to use my time to speak about what our government is doing to stand up for law-abiding citizens.

While the opposition is playing games, we are concentrating our efforts to ensure Canadians have safe communities. As mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, we are committed to combating the scourge of human trafficking. We have kept our promise to Canadians to work to make communities safer places for Canadians to live, work, and raise their families. Like many Canadians, the Prime Minister looks to the judgment of the RCMP in matters of security.

This government wants to create an atmosphere for Canadians to prosper as individuals and groups. We want our children to be safe

online. To this end, we have recently introduced the protecting Canadians from online crime act, to protect children and youth from cyberbullying.

As the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness recently said:

Too many families across this country have experienced the devastating effects of cyberbullying. Our government will not stand by and watch the online harassment of our children. Thanks to this national campaign, we are informing parents and youth about cyberbullying and how it can amount to criminal activity.

This is what Canadians care about. They want their children to use the Internet responsibly, and they want others to be held responsible for their actions online.

We believe prevention is worth a pound of cure. That is why, when the RCMP recommends that the Prime Minister follow certain security protocols, we listen. We listen to the advice of experts and, importantly, to the people of Canada who voted our government into office in 2006 and who expect that we not only keep security at the level it was when we took office but that we make Canada a safer place for law-abiding Canadians. When we took office, Canadians expected this government to put their rights before the rights of criminals, which is why we are keeping criminals off Canadian streets with mandatory prison sentences.

People want to be able to live their day-to-day lives without having to worry about dangerous and violent criminals working in the shadows of their streets and communities.

In a country like Canada, the safety of the individual should be a given. The government has no higher calling than ensuring the safety of its citizens.

The Prime Minister does not stop being Prime Minister of Canada when he goes home in the evening. What I am explaining is that the leader of a developed nation should not be a target of ill-willed individuals. It is shocking that the opposition thinks so little of Canada's international reputation that it would, for petty partisan reasons, seek to put the security of the Prime Minister at risk. It concerns me that the NDP is not aware of the very real threats in our world. We should not live in fear, but we should certainly practise prudence.

• (1155)

Our government is reasonably cautious because we know that we are not here for ourselves, but on behalf of our constituents and to serve Canadians. We continue to do this in many different ways, whether through long-term investments in community infrastructure or by balancing the budget so that future generations can benefit from this government's fiscal prudence. We have always looked to Canadians to tell us where their priorities lie.

I am concerned that NDP members have consistently voted against many of our government's measures that Canadians have asked for. Let me provide a snapshot of what they have voted against: giving victims more information about criminals convicted of victimizing them, ending criminal record suspensions for child molesters, ending early parole for white collar fraudsters and drug dealers, cracking down on human smugglers, stopping prisoners from making frivolous complaints, repealing the so-called faint hope clause that gave early parole to convicted killers, cracking down on drug dealers who target children, ending house arrest for serious and violent criminals, and creating tougher sentences for desecrating war memorials and for those who kidnap children. The opposition has voted against all of these.

We will not take any lessons from that party on how best to secure our country. We will work hard to secure Canada's reputation on the world stage and to make sure that we leave a better Canada for future generations. That cannot happen if we do not work seriously on issues of national significance, such as providing appropriate security for the Prime Minister. That is why Conservatives will be opposing the motion by the NDP member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Speaker, following question period yesterday, I referenced in a point of order the dates Monday, March 17, and Tuesday, March 18. The record should indicate that the dates were in fact Monday, March 24, and Tuesday, March 25, respectively.

[Translation]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Brandon—Souris for his speech, even though he chose to debate our motion in a surprisingly roundabout way. In fact, I am wondering if he even read the motion or whether he focused only on the speech he was told to give.

I would like to reread the motion for the House's benefit:

That, in the opinion of the House, government planes, and in particular the plane used by the Prime Minister, should only be used for government purposes and should not be used to transport anyone other than those associated with such purposes or those required for the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family.

Can my colleague explain what is so partisan about this motion, which he is so awkwardly speaking out against?

• (1200)

[English]

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Mr. Speaker, anyone who looks at the priorities of the government versus those of the opposition would see very clearly that I was referring our priorities, thinks like security, better communities, and safer homes and streets for families and children in this country. That is very relevant because it points to the fact that the NDP members have voted against all of the things I outlined in my presentation this morning.

If the opposition has time to worry about the jet that the Prime Minister may take in situations like this, I think it has its priorities wrong, which should be making sure that we are fulfilling the needs of families across this country and the voters who elected us all to the House of Commons.

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when there is a delegation representing Canada, does my hon. colleague think that the government should be excluding opposition

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members of Parliament? Should there not be some representation from different viewpoints in the country when a Canadian delegation goes to an international event? Is that not a misuse of taxpayers' dollars, because it makes the delegation somewhat partisan?

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was very clear why the delegation was travelling in regard to the recent situation in Ukraine. The opposition parties in the House were not clear where they should come down in regard to whose side they were on and the hon. member's leader who was not sure about the seriousness of the situation. So there was a decision made to move forward with the delegation as quickly as we could. I commend the Prime Minister for taking a leadership role among the whole G7 in regard to activity in this area.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on the motion by the hon. member of the opposition.

I think it is important to be clear on what this motion is actually proposing. The motion is not attempting to prevent the Prime Minister from using the Challenger aircraft for security reasons, although some have suggested that it is. The opposition seems to recognize the security needs established by the RCMP for him to travel in this manner. The motion is also not about the fact that the NDP is using House resources to open a political office in Saskatchewan, a point that has often been raised in this discussion today. What the motion proposes to do is to restrict who can travel on the Challenger with the Prime Minister.

I did some research on the use of government aircraft like the Challenger. Our government has reduced the cost of ministerial travel on government aircraft by nearly 75% compared to when the Liberals held office.

From a Treasury Board perspective, I can remind this House that in budget 2009, we announced a spending freeze by all departments on travel, hospitality, and conference expenditures. Then, in 2010, we froze these expenditures at 2008-09 levels for two additional years. In 2011, we announced a new directive on the management of expenditures on travel, hospitality, and conferences to replace the existing hospitality policy. Each year, departments have to publish their total annual expenditures for travel, hospitality, and conferences, including an explanation of the main variances from the previous year's expenditures.

In economic action plan 2012, we committed to modernizing and reducing the back office, and identified ways of reducing travel expenses by using online tools, such tele-conferencing, video-conferencing, and virtual presence.

In economic action plan 2013, we implemented measures to cut departmental travel spending by over \$42 million, or about 5%.

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In all, between 2008-09, the base year for the travel cap, and 2011-12, government-wide travel expenditures went down by over \$240 million. Our government has taken considerable action to reduce travel expenses in the government. These efforts have been part of our government's overall effort to save taxpayers' money.

However, getting back to the opposition motion, the motion is not intended to save taxpayers' money, as few opposition motions ever are. The opposition is attempting to suggest who can and cannot be onboard a Challenger flight with the Prime Minister. Let us think about that for a moment.

Canada is an incredibly diverse and unique country. It is also vast and large. As every member of the House knows, air travel is a fundamental part of the work that we all do. As much as we all travel, for the Prime Minister, travel is significantly more extensive.

Given the huge amount of time we all spend in the air, many of us try to use that time as productively as possible. I know that recently I read a tweet from the member for Calgary Centre-North who uses her air travel time productively to read her departmental briefing binders.

For some of us, air travel may also be a time to meet with Canadians, fellow members of Parliament, or other members from different levels of government to discuss items of mutual concern. Recently I enjoyed a flight with a local first nations leader.

The point is that the huge amount of time we spend in the air can be very productive in our work as members of Parliament. I would submit that it would be no different for the Prime Minister. To arbitrarily attempt to restrict who can and cannot sit onboard with our Prime Minister, in essence, would deny the leader of our country the same opportunity that we as MPs enjoy.

• (1205)

Given the significant amount of time our Prime Minister spends in the air, I feel it is important that the Prime Minister have the opportunity to have on board those passengers deemed necessary. We live in a democracy. We do not live in a dictatorship where we limit who elected officials can and cannot travel with. The same principle that applies to members of Parliament, in my view, would apply to our Prime Minister and that is why I am speaking against this motion.

I would hope that all members of this House ask if they believe that there should be restrictions on who can or who cannot sit next to them on the same aircraft because, in essence, that is what the opposition members are suggesting by tabling this motion for debate. I submit that is wrong. This motion is not about costs nor is it about security. It is the opposition attempting to arbitrarily restrict and deny who the Prime Minister can share an aircraft with.

Our Prime Minister was elected to lead our great country. Canada today is standing tall and is the envy of many around the world. I will leave out the many talking points on where Canada leads in so many different and important areas. However, I submit it is the role of our Prime Minister, and not the opposition, to decide who is on board to make the most productive use of "wheels up" time. Should the opposition ever form government, it would be free to set policy for aircraft use by the Prime Minister. If, as government, it would like to delegate that authority, the opposition would be welcome to

do that. However, to date, I have certainly not observed any examples of the opposition delegating any authority to the third party on who visits Stornoway or not.

Canadians have made it clear that it is our Prime Minister and not the opposition who makes these decisions, and I ask all members of this House to oppose the motion for the reasons that I have given.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by the member opposite. We are well aware that the Prime Minister has to travel to various locations. However, we need to put this into perspective.

Under the regulations in effect in Parliament, only staff of the Prime Minister's Office or people who work in the House of Commons have the right to be on board the Prime Minister's private planes. Anyone else has to pay the full price of the flight. We learned that people who travelled with the Prime Minister were required to pay only \$260, when we know that a similar economy class flight with Air Canada costs between \$600 and \$800.

What is the reason for this price difference, and why were these party donors on a flight paid for by taxpayers?

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak to the member's own party's motion.

There is no mention of, and the motion has nothing to do with, dollars. Again, as my speech says, it attempts to restrict the Prime Minister from whom he may have along with him. If this member had issues, then maybe that should be part of the motion. However, I will remind this House that this is government policy the Prime Minister follows, they are government jets used for government business, and there are specific provisions on how the Prime Minister may carry.

Unlike the Liberals, this Prime Minister set the policy that if people are on board who are not there for government business, for security or whatnot, they should pay their fair share. If that member has an issue with that policy, then the New Democrats should table a motion to address that question.

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when there is a delegation representing Canada, I wonder if it is also a policy of the current government to exclude opposition MPs whenever a convenient rhetorical argument can be found for doing so. I ask the same question of this member as I asked of the previous member, and I hope he can give a better answer.

When the government prevents opposition MPs from joining a delegation representing Canada that includes government MPs, is it not using taxpayer dollars for a somewhat partisan purpose?

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**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the sentiment, but let us focus on what the question is at hand. When we have an election and someone is named prime minister, that person represents the Government of Canada and whoever decides to go on an official Government of Canada delegation is decided on by that person and his or her staff. If the member wants to join an interparliamentary group and travel as a parliamentary delegation, he can join those groups and he can advocate for those budgets that come to the House to make sure he can participate in them. However, who goes on trips and represents the Government of Canada is exclusively the Government of Canada's decision.

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment my colleague on his very insightful speech today. I would like the member to please go over, with all parties in the House, particularly opposition, how important it is for the Prime Minister to have that opportunity to invite people on the jet in terms of the business of Canada. Could he expand on that?

• (1215)

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the compliment and I will certainly try my best to answer the question in the limited time.

To be frank, the motion that the opposition parties have put forward do not represent some sort of appeal to protect the taxpayer. In fact, every time we bring forward motions and budgets that do exactly that, they vote against them.

It is important that the Prime Minister be able to use that air travel time as productively as possible, the same as we do. It was this Prime Minister who took the leadership that was absent from the Liberals and made it so that not only are there reductions of 75% to Challenger use, he also put in place a policy to make sure that taxpayers are fairly compensated.

Again, if they want to bring up those facts, then they should actually put forward a motion that speaks to it and not remain silent.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, before I begin my comments, I inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

We have heard a lot of discussion on many different topics with regard to government costs and the rationale for certain procedures. However, there have been a lot of comments that are really off the topic. We have a very simple proposition before the House that the official opposition brought forward, which I gather the other parties do not want to support. I want to read it into the record to bring us back to the issue. My colleague from Timmins—James Bay brought forward the following motion:

That, in the opinion of the House, government planes, and in particular the plane used by the Prime Minister, should only be used for government purposes and should not be used to transport anyone other than those associated with such purposes or those required for the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family.

It is not about security of the Prime Minister or the need for him to have security. It is not about whether the Prime Minister should have a plane. It is not even about whether his family should be on the plane with him, and it is not about people having access to the plane to do government business, so let us clear that all up because some people have been wandering off and making comments as though we had challenged that premise.

The facts are those. The motion I read in is what the discussion is about, or should be about. Sadly, it has gone off in other directions. That is the choice of members, but I just want to bring it back for Canadians because this is about trying to bring back accountability to this place and to government.

My mother was mayor of Ottawa for a while and she had a driver. Most people who knew my mother knew she was a terrific person, a great mother and not a bad mayor, but she was not a great driver, so many people were happy with that. However, the purpose of her having a driver was for her to be able to do her business and to make sure that she was able to do her business on behalf of the citizens of Ottawa. It was not a fancy car, just a basic car, and she used it for the business of the city.

The same should apply to our Prime Minister, who has to conduct business on behalf of citizens of this country. Where it gets blurred is when people accompany the Prime Minister who are just friends and they have access. I also want to bring into the debate that this is not about the repayment, although there are issues there because if we look at the repayment costs, there are some really good deals going on. Most people who try to get a flight at Christmas, I think, pay more than \$250 to go from Calgary to Ottawa, but maybe that is just me. We will set that aside. The motion is not only about that; it is also about access.

The government seems to be arguing that because some money is paid back, it is okay for friends of the Prime Minister to jump on board with him and fly around the country for social events. It is not okay, and why is that?

I have noticed in the last number of years, and we have talked about this government and previous governments, that there has become quite a void between the political class, which is creeping, and everyday people. That is what this is about. It is about trying to bring back some sensibility of what these entitlements are for. They are there for the Prime Minister to do his business, not to have his friend from Calgary, whom I am sure is a fine friend, but why is he on the plane with the Prime Minister to go to social events?

A constituent of mine or of any member of the House cannot call the Prime Minister and say that they have a friend who wants to go on a flight with the Prime Minister, and they know he is going from Calgary to wherever and can the friend jump on board. They cannot do that. Why? Because they do not have access.

That is what we are talking about. We are talking about the entitlement. We are talking about access to these services. What the Conservatives have done, and it happens when governments and parties have been in power for a while, is that they start to slide and slip and make excuses, and say that they will pay the money back. I am sure many MPs have had to explain in their constituencies and to their base that “I know you are upset that this gentleman got a ride with the Prime Minister, but he paid it back, so it is okay”.

• (1220)

I suspect that many people would follow up and say that they cannot get on board with the Prime Minister, or friends of theirs cannot, so why is that okay?

*Business of Supply*

The Conservative government has started to rationalize its behaviour in a way that is distancing itself from everyday Canadians and in fact from the accountability program that it came in on.

I was on the committee for Bill C-2, the Accountability Act. I remember well the Conservatives saying that we had to change the behaviour of government and that government should no longer act in an entitled way. They brought in some measures that our party supported. Some of them have not been realized, and that is for another speech, but the premise was that we needed to see more accountability.

It was also really about ethics and about this seeming distance between citizens and the political class. There was this notion that if someone knew someone in the PMO or in government, they could get access, they could have favours done, and they could get jobs and appointments to agencies, boards, commissions, or the Senate. It was getting out of hand, and we agreed with the government in 2006 when it brought in the Accountability Act. We agreed with the spirit of it.

However, what we have seen in the last while—and there is quite a list—is that there is a behaviour that tends to creep into governments after they have been in power for a while. At that point we see the rationalization that certain senators had to be appointed “just because”. We have heard it many times. However, the government did not have to appoint those senators. It could have appointed other senators, but it chose not to. It could have appointed people who did not have connections directly to the Conservative Party to agencies, boards, and commissions, but it did not.

The premise was that the government had to put those people in because they would help with its agenda and those people would help the government get there. That is where we have seen this kind of rationalization creep in and take hold, to the point where many people I know in the Conservative Party are very alienated right now. They thought that the Conservative government of the day and its predecessor parties were about bringing accountability to Ottawa and bringing an end to these entitlements at the highest level.

It is really about that. It is bringing us back to that discussion. In the case of planes, should those planes be used only for government business? That is all we are talking about here. It is not about anything else.

It is also about the spirit of what the Conservative government was talking about way back in 2006, when it came into power. Mr. Speaker, you received that mandate as an MP with the party ticket that you ran on. You did it for what you thought were the best reasons to be involved in public service—to represent people—and you were lauded for it. Many people would say that you were elected on that basis.

We are trying to bring people back to that conversation. We are trying to say that when it comes to government services, they are there for the people.

I will make reference to my mother again. When she ran for office—and she passed this on to me—she always said that running for office is like a job interview. We go door to door and we put our resumés forward to ask if people would hire us to represent them.

That is what elections are about. In between elections, we work on their behalf.

I sense that we are starting to see that idea slip a bit around here. I sense that people are starting to say that they deserve this car or that entitlement. What happens is the people who are hurting right now, such as seniors and veterans, wonder who is representing them.

At the end of the day, this motion is not just about planes: it is about entitlement, and it is about bringing all of us back to ask what we are here for. These public services, planes in this case, are purchased by taxpayers, by the citizens. Who are those services there for? Who has access to them? This simple, straightforward motion is just to clarify that question.

For those who disagree with the motion, I would ask them how they will rationalize it to their constituents and tell them that it somehow is not fair. There is nothing wrong with voting for this motion. It will not affect you. In fact, people might laud you for getting behind a motion that might bring you back to why you got involved in politics in the first place.

• (1225)

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague really placed this issue where it needs to be. This morning we have seen all manner of banter and side-talk, but the issue is on the fair use of resources. It is not about a witch hunt.

We were told by the first Conservative speaker that government resources are to be used for government business and that there are strict rules in place. Also, we know the Prime Minister needs to be able to use the Challenger because of security. Our motion certainly recognizes that. Those points are bedrock in terms of life in the 21st century for a world leader.

The question arises when the Prime Minister flies to Sarasota, Florida, and needs the Challenger jet. That is okay. Then we can expand that, and he flies down to New York to watch a baseball game. That is okay, but why are party fundraisers travelling on that jet and getting extraordinarily low fees in terms of their payback?

I would ask my hon. colleague if he wonders how these flight manifests are set up. How is it that the Conservatives tell us there are clear rules in place, yet people who do the fundraising work of the party are able to fly on flights that are supposed to be clearly regulated?

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Speaker, we have to have clear rules. When we see breaches like this, I do not think anyone over there would want to rationalize or defend the fact that fundraisers and friends of the Conservative Party are going on these trips with the Prime Minister. I do not think they look forward to answering these questions, so they should embrace fair rules and daylight and sunshine. That is what this motion is about.

I would say to my colleague for Timmins—James Bay that we know certain people are getting on the plane and paying back perhaps \$250 for a ticket that I think would cost a lot more. The point is, how do they get on the plane? Who creates the manifest? I think we need to actually have rules on that aspect.

*Business of Supply*

I hope to see, as we might see after this debate, the government bringing forward new rules. I really hope the Conservatives do that, because all we are asking for are some fair rules, some daylight, so that everyday Canadians can see that their Prime Minister has a plane that he needs and is using, but it is only for him and for government officials and not for friends of the Conservative Party.

[Translation]

**Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech, as usual. I have listened all morning to the discussions and questions in the House. We have a very straightforward motion. There is a tendency on the other side of the House, and in the corner with no one in it right now, to try to divert the conversation on the issues before us.

The issue before us is of great concern, of course. For a few years now, we have seen what I would call a very serious tendency by the Conservatives with respect to the kind of scandals we see day after day in Ottawa.

Could my colleague comment on that? We are not dealing with an isolated issue here with these trips for the Prime Minister's friends, but a very serious tendency on the other side.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Speaker, I mentioned in my speech this notion that we are starting to see a separation of the political class and citizens, and it starts with things like this.

When I was taking a bus a couple of years ago, I remember a gentleman recognized me and called me by name. I said yes, that was who I was. He said, "You're on the bus". I replied, "Yes, I am". He was from Bangladesh, and he said, "You don't understand. In my country, that would never happen".

I share that anecdote because I want to make sure we stay true to our values and that we do not separate, to the extent that we see in some countries, the people who represent the people. However, that is what we are starting to see, and it creeps in like this. People say to themselves that someone can come with them because they are friends and they are busy people and they need to have friends with them from time to time.

It creeps in, and that is what this motion is about. I would ask my colleagues to think of it in that vein and get on board.

• (1230)

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to the current motion by my colleague from Timmins—James Bay.

Allow me to read the motion in order to put us back into context. The motion reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, government planes, and in particular the plane used by the Prime Minister, should only be used for government purposes and should not be used to transport anyone other than those associated with such purposes or those required for the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family.

Last week, on March 25, iPolitics revealed that the Prime Minister approved the use of Challenger jets not only for the travel of

members of his family, but also for the travel of his personal friends and Conservative Party fundraisers.

The Prime Minister is supposed to pay back a part of the costs when he uses those planes for non-official functions, but shortly after coming to power, he changed the reimbursement formula. As a result, from that time on, he has been reimbursing only an amount equivalent to an economy class ticket.

In my opinion, and in the opinion of all my colleagues here today, it is completely unacceptable to change the rules of the game to his advantage in that way, especially since his opponents were the targets of criticism in the past for similar practices.

Last week, we learned that the Prime Minister used a private jet, paid for by taxpayers, for the travel of Conservative Party fundraisers and that he was sticking taxpayers with the bill.

A close friend of the Prime Minister, Mark Kihn, brought in more than \$3.5 million for two of the Prime Minister's election campaigns. As a reward, Mr. Kihn was entitled to travel in the government's private jet at taxpayers' expense. This is unacceptable.

If the Prime Minister wants to take a plane trip with his friends and Conservative Party fundraisers, he should not be sticking taxpayers with the bill because it is not their bill to pay.

When I see things like this, I cannot help but think about all the budget cuts that this government has made. The Conservatives are literally taking an axe to our social safety net by making cuts to employment insurance, protection for seniors, environmental protection, health care, the fight against homelessness, care for veterans, care for refugees, and postal services. I could go on and on.

I find it particularly unacceptable to see frivolous spending when the government is cutting essential services to the public. We are talking about a government plane that the Conservatives use for non-government purposes, and the taxpayers are paying for it. Taxpayers are struggling more and more to make ends meet, and they are the ones paying for it all.

Can we remember the times when the Conservatives used to fight against this kind of privilege? Well, they are now worse than the Liberals they replaced. Let me quote the Prime Minister before he came to power. He made one such statement in the House of Commons on November 24, 2005:

We have seen the Prime Minister flying around the country on Challenger jets doing a few hours of government work, then spending the rest of the time campaigning and fundraising, often at exclusive cocktail parties where big Liberal donors pay \$5,000 a ticket to discuss public business. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss.

The Liberal culture of entitlement goes on. The public must be given a chance to put an end to it.

Well, the Prime Minister made that statement in 2005, before he came to power, and now he is doing exactly the same thing. Can we let this slip by? I think not.

In April 2005, he also said that Mr. Martin really wanted to have a 10-month election campaign to fly around the country on a jet at taxpayers' expense in order to throw enough money all over the country to cover up the stench of corruption. In his view, that type of campaign was not in the best interests of the country.

*Business of Supply*

I think we have enough quotes to show that the current government is not walking the talk. We are seeing a double standard, as the government is saying “do as I say, not as I do”.

Does the House want to know how much the government's junkets in the jet are worth—a jet that, by the way, belongs to taxpayers?

• (1235)

That is the equivalent of old age security benefits for 19 seniors, guaranteed income supplement benefits for 20 seniors, the survivor allowance for 13 seniors or the annual average pension of five retired veterans. That is huge.

I would also be curious to know how much public housing that corresponds to. I would like to know how many homeless people could be brought in off the street with that money and how many employment insurance benefits could be provided to people who need them. How many people are being deprived of their rights because of this needless spending?

In 2005, when the Prime Minister sat in opposition, he made a big fuss about the Liberals, who were taking their backers all over Canada in the prime minister's private planes. He was right; it was appalling and the abuse needed to stop. However, he is doing exactly the same thing now and is refusing to change his ways.

Journalist Elizabeth Thompson, who writes for the electronic news service *iPolitics*, discovered that the Prime Minister took his backers on a trip between Ottawa and Calgary and asked them to pay \$260. However, a similar flight in economy class with Air Canada costs between \$600 and \$800.

I would sure like to provide such perks to my political pals, but I do not because we are not supposed to. I do not have that kind of power anyway. Things like that should not even happen. We should not even have to talk about them today.

According to the rules governing Parliament, only people working for the Prime Minister's Office or the House of Commons are allowed to travel on the Prime Minister's private airplanes. All other individuals must pay full price for the flight. The Prime Minister and his assistants have tried to convince us that a flight from Ottawa to Calgary costs taxpayers just \$260 per person, but the truth is that Challenger airplanes cost taxpayers \$11,000 per hour.

Imagine how disappointed honest people must be when the government thumbs its nose at them by spending money frivolously on things that are completely foreign to the lives of ordinary Canadians. These are people who pay their taxes, who donate to charity to help the least fortunate, who often have a hard time making ends meet, who hope that nothing happens to them because they know they might not be entitled to employment insurance now that the program has been reformed, and who know they have to work two extra years before they can retire.

I truly hope that all of these scandals will end once and for all in 2015 when an NDP government comes to power.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed the remarks my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot made. She talks about important issues frequently

in the House, and she speaks very eloquently on behalf of her constituents. I would like to thank her for that.

Like the member for Ottawa Centre so aptly mentioned, the motion states that the plane used by the Prime Minister should be used only for government purposes. That seems pretty straightforward. However, the Conservatives and the Liberals would rather dismiss this motion because they think it is up to them to decide what justifies using the government plane.

In the past, the Prime Minister criticized the Liberals for using the plane to transport contributors, which he said was inappropriate. Now he seems to have changed his mind. My question for my colleague is simple.

Why did the Prime Minister change his mind, and does he want to use the plane for whatever purpose he desires?

• (1240)

**Ms. Marie-Claude Morin:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent question.

Why did the Prime Minister suddenly change his mind, and why did he use the plane for personal and partisan reasons? I think that is utterly shameful and an abuse of power, pure and simple.

This points to a double standard. The government's actions are totally inconsistent with the values it espoused when it was the official opposition, with what it fought for tooth and nail and with its condemnation of the former government. All I can say is that this government is no better than its predecessors.

[*English*]

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the NDP members' speeches today, and it seems as if they are trying to blur the lines. They should know that the use of government aircraft is strictly governed by Treasury Board guidelines. They are trying to pretend that there are no guidelines. If we look around the world at our colleagues in the G7, their countries all have strict rules that when their prime ministers or the leaders of their countries are travelling, it is very important to keep those leaders safe.

The truth of the matter is that the New Democrats put forward the motion today to muddy the lines. This is about using government resources properly. They know that their leader is being asked to appear in front of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to justify opening partisan offices around this country in areas where they do not even have any MPs. That is very clear.

I want the member to stand and tell Canadians the truth. What is their hidden agenda? What is the NDP doing using House resources to open partisan offices around the country?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Claude Morin:** Mr. Speaker, the government is trying to distract us from the main subject because it is feeling the heat.

The NDP plays by the rules. We opened offices to better serve the people, and we did so in accordance with House rules and procedures. We have nothing to apologize for. They need to stop changing the subject and start talking about real issues in the House.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's debate. I will be splitting my time with the member for Etobicoke Centre.

The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces operate flight services for representatives of the government on government business. The flight service operates throughout the year, seven days a week, 24 hours day.

The government ensures that taxpayers' dollars are always respected by strictly adhering to the Treasury Board of Canada's guidelines and policy. The very fact that we are discussing the use of these aircraft today is a testament to the exceptional services offered by our men and women in uniform.

It seems to me that we need to ground today's debate in a better understanding of the vital role military aircraft, aircrews, and air support play in enabling our armed forces to protect Canada's interests and values at home and abroad.

Readiness can be defined as the preparedness and flexibility needed to deploy in response to government direction, no matter the type, location, or severity of threats. This government has recognized the vital importance of readiness to succeed in ensuring Canada's security, in acting as a solid ally in defending North America, and in doing our fair share internationally, as stated in the Canada first defence strategy.

The Canadian Armed Forces are agile. They are capable of taking on multiple missions at a time. When they need to respond to a natural disaster at home or abroad, they deploy at a moment's notice. When they need to transport representatives of the government on government business, they answer the call.

Our readiness and our flexibility have been proven time and time again. That is why I would like to take a few moments to remind the men and women of this House of some of the security challenges our men and women in uniform have successfully taken on in recent years. They were challenges such as the Afghanistan mission, which saw over 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces members deployed over a 13-year period to help Afghans transition to a more democratic, secure, and prosperous future. There was Operation Mobile in Libya, which helped protect innocent civilians from the forces of the Gaddafi regime and helped move that country towards democracy. There were also hundreds of search and rescue missions mounted in co-operation with other organizations and levels of government, operations that have saved, on average, 1,200 Canadian lives every single year.

Rapid air response, and in particular transport capabilities such as those provided by the Airbus CC-150 Polaris, constitute a key component of readiness for these operations. In today's world, complex security challenges can arise quickly and can escalate rapidly in any part of the globe, from the high Arctic to the desert plains of the Middle East.

Not only are military aircraft usually the first responders when crises arise, ensuring rapid and effective delivery of emergency assistance, they are also key to the sustainability of any mission, because they provide supplies, troops, and medical evacuation.

In Afghanistan, for example, the Polaris fleet formed part of the air bridge between Canada and Afghanistan. It transported thousands of passengers and over seven million pounds of cargo during Operation Apollo alone.

When forest fires broke out in Kelowna, B.C., in 2003, the Polaris fleet airlifted around 1,500 troops to the area to battle the flames. When a devastating earthquake hit Pakistan in 2005, Polaris aircraft carried members of the Canadian Armed Forces to that country to provide emergency assistance. Clearly, the Polaris formed a crucial component of operational readiness in all those cases.

Let us take a more recent example, one that will be fresh in the minds of all present here today: Typhoon Haiyan. On November 8, 2013, it crippled the Philippines, setting off landslides, taking out power and ground transportation, and killing over 6,000 people.

The Canadian Armed Forces' response to this disaster was rapid and effective. It enabled the purification of around 500,000 litres of water, the medical treatment of around 6,500 patients, the delivery of over 230,000 pounds of food, and the clearing of over 130 kilometres of roads.

• (1245)

This response relied on capabilities like those of the Polaris, which was used to transport members and equipment from Canada's disaster assistance response team to the Philippines.

This government recognizes the vital importance of aircraft like the Polaris to operational readiness and success. That is why we continue to invest in the maintenance of these aircraft, the training and the well-being of their crews and support personnel, and upgrades such as the recent conversion of two Polaris aircraft to strategic air-to-air refuellers for Canada's CF-18 fighter aircraft. That is why we continue to ensure that these assets are available and ready for rapid deployment on Canadian Armed Forces operations around the world.

The proof is in the pudding: the proven ability of the Canadian Armed Forces to respond effectively whenever it has been called upon to do so in recent years.

While it is important for us to discuss the occasional use of the Polaris to ensure the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family, I would ask the men and women of the House to put this debate into its larger context and remember that the Canadian Armed Forces stands ready to serve all Canadians whenever and wherever it is called upon to do so.

• (1250)

[Translation]

**Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member did quite an amazing job skating around the issue. Let us make one thing clear: everyone assembled here today respects and supports the armed forces. To say that this problem should be set aside because it plays down the effective functioning and abilities of the armed forces is merely an attempt to divert the debate.

*Business of Supply*

I will try another approach with my hon. colleague. Does it seem normal to him, yes or no, that resources that belong to such a respectable organization—yes, these are resources that must sometimes provide a framework for the Prime Minister's activities to ensure that they are safe—resources that we value, respect and regard as very important, could suddenly be used as a form of discounted public transportation for the Prime Minister's buddies? That is why this makes absolutely no sense.

[*English*]

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP understands 100% that the use of government aircraft is strictly governed by Treasury Board guidelines. It has always been like that. The guidelines are very clear.

It is shameful that the NDP has brought this motion forward today. I was in the House when the member for Timmins—James Bay brought the motion forward. I saw those members laughing and heard them making fun of the issue of security for the Prime Minister of this country—

**Some hon. members:** Shame.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. Is the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster rising on a point of order?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. These are entirely inappropriate comments coming from the parliamentary secretary. He should know better. He should be sticking to the subject of debate, which is the use of government aircraft.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I am not sure that is a point of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat myself. I was sitting here. I will read the motion to the House:

That, in the opinion of the House, government planes, and in particular the plane used by the Prime Minister, should only be used for government purposes and should not be used to transport anyone other than those associated with such purposes or those required for the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family.

Many times the NDP have brought up ridiculous points of order that have nothing to do with today's motion. I stand here defending the system that we have put in place, the strict guidelines of Treasury Board, and the men and women who fly these planes and put their lives on the line by providing security for our government leaders and the Prime Minister of this country.

The NDP is trying to blur the lines because those members know that their leader is going to be in front of PROC defending their inappropriate use of government resources to open up partisan offices across this country without any rational government business. The Liberals have brought forward good points in an attempt to get members who are politically motivated to fill these positions. That is what this is about. I am proud—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. Questions and comments. The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I hear the words from members on the other side about respecting the Canadian Armed Forces, but they certainly do not understand them.

It was the Liberal Party that plunged us into the decade of darkness, and I remember those years very well. We did not have the

equipment we needed, the boots, the uniforms. It is thanks to this government that the Canadian Armed Forces has the major equipment pieces it needs. This government rebuilt the respect and the pride and the capability of the Canadian Armed Forces around the world.

I would like the hon. member to comment on the utility of the Polaris and its role in security and domestic operations, its international roles, and its impact on the morale of people around the world. When I speak of its impact on the morale of people around the world I am referring to people in the Philippines who saw this aircraft land in their airport with Canada written on its side.

● (1255)

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, as I have the floor right now, I want to thank my colleague from Etobicoke Centre for all the good work he has done recently in Ukraine, and he is aware of this. He has been travelling back and forth on government planes, and he has been secured by military officials because that is his role. That is because he is dedicated to holding up the ideals of this country, just like the men and women who put on that uniform every single day. He talks about the Polaris and what we have done. This is something Canadians should be proud of: Canadian men and women who go out into the world to make a difference.

I want to say that this member has himself worn that uniform. He understands the values and the commitments, unlike the New Democrats over here who are using this motion for partisanship and gains against the men and women who put their lives on the line to defend the leaders of our government. I want to thank the member for his commitment and his action to hold Canadian values up in the world, which we can all be very proud of.

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud and pleased to be able to rise today and participate in the debate on the use of government aircraft and, in particular, on Canada's Royal Canadian Air Force. There is not a day that goes by when its members are not standing on guard for us, both here and around the world. Their job is to ensure Canadians are safe and to make a meaningful contribution abroad and on behalf of Canada, and they so proudly do that.

As part of this important contribution, the Department of National Defence operates flight services for representatives of the government on government business in accordance with the Treasury Board of Canada's guidelines and its policy. This flight service operates throughout the year, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. As with all its activities, National Defence strives to use resources in the most economical, efficient, and cost-effective manner when it comes to the use of the aircraft. It is appropriate, however, to put this debate into context.

The efforts of our men and women in uniform begin right here at home, and their top priority is the security of Canada and of all Canadians. Additionally, another key role of the Armed Forces is supporting civilian authorities during a crisis such as a national disaster, which is one of its additional core missions. The devastating floods that hit Alberta in June 2013, for example, are still fresh in our memories. That flash flooding was extremely dangerous, put the lives of Canadians at risk, forced road closures, damaged the infrastructure, and isolated entire communities. When the Province of Alberta asked the Canadian Armed Forces for assistance, our military responded by deploying approximately 2,300 personnel to save lives, reduce any human suffering, and mitigate property damage. Our men and women in uniform made Albertans and all of Canada proud.

Search and rescue aircraft in the Royal Canadian Air Force are generally the first military assets involved in the assistance effort. They provide evacuation and aeromedical support to people in need. The Royal Canadian Air Force participated in Alberta with six Griffon helicopters as well as two CH-149 Cormorant helicopters and one Hercules aircraft, as well as the Aurora. About 100 personnel from the RCAF were part of these operations. One of the most amazing efforts was in the Kananaskis area west of Calgary, where two Griffon helicopters and one Cormorant evacuated more than 200 people from hotels impacted by the floods.

These kinds of rescues are remarkable, and they also remind us that the Canadian Armed Forces makes search and rescue a priority every day across this country. An incredible search and rescue operation happened just this past December when a fire broke out at a student residence in Kingston and a crane worker was stranded about 100 metres above the blaze. The Kingston fire department and police requested search and rescue assistance to save the man, and a CH-146 Griffon was launched from Trenton, complete with a search and rescue crew. In a brave and very delicate operation, as I am sure members can imagine, the search and rescue technician and crew helped hoist the crane worker into the helicopter and quickly airlifted him to a hospital where he was treated for burns. That rescue clearly was a great success, and yet another of those examples of how the Canadian Armed Forces uses military aircraft to keep Canadians safe each and every day.

Of course, our military has a long history of contributing to peace and stability abroad, and that is why deploying in response to crises around the world is one of the six core missions of our Armed Forces and why our military maintains contingency plans for rapid deployment to the scene of a disaster overseas. A recent example, which has already been cited, is of the Armed Forces' incredible work when a devastating typhoon hit the Philippines in November 2013. Typhoon Haiyan was one of the strongest storms of its kind ever—

•(1300)

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

The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, this has absolutely no relevance to the matter that is before the House. The member cannot just stand and start talking about a subject that has no relationship to what is

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clearly the motion today, that, in the opinion of the House, government planes should only be used for government purposes.

I am not sure why the Conservatives object to that, but I would hope, Mr. Speaker, you would ensure that the member actually speaks with some relevance to what is before the House.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** This member is correct. There is a rule of relevance in this chamber.

At the same time, members are given latitude in order to bring relevant facts and context to bear on that.

I would ask the hon. member who is speaking, as well as others, to keep this in mind and to ensure that what they say before the House is relevant to the motion before the House.

The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I realize the member is new in his role, but I am speaking on a relevant topic, in that this is about our Canadian Armed Forces, our Royal Canadian Air Force, and their value to Canada, and I appreciate not being interrupted.

—and as that hurricane slammed into the Philippines, many people lost their lives and sustained life-threatening injuries; millions of people needed humanitarian support; and power and communications were cut in several provinces across the country. I think we all watched, astounded at the impact that storm had on the Philippines.

As part of the Government of Canada response, the Canadian Armed Forces provided just that. At the height, the Canadian response was 319 military personnel, with diverse specialities, who were part of the operation. Their work included purifying nearly—

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

The member is rising on the same point of order?

The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening attentively. I think you have been very patient. We have been very patient. Again, the member has a speech, which he has obviously crafted, that has nothing to do with the motion before the House. It is not relevant, Mr. Speaker. I would ask, through you, that the member speak with some relevance to the motion, which is that government planes, and in particular the plane used by the Prime Minister, should only be used for government purposes.

If he objects to that, then he should state that. If he supports us on that, he should state it. However, he should be relevant to the debate in the matter before the House.

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

The Chair is looking at the motion that is before us. In that motion, it states:

That, in the opinion of the House, government planes, and in particular the plane used by the Prime Minister, should only be used for government purposes—

and it goes on, from there.

As is the practice in this House, members are, and have been, granted latitude in terms of what they speak to.

*Business of Supply*

This motion, by my reading, references government purposes, implicitly I guess, which asks the question: What would government purposes be?

If members want to talk about what ought to be considered government purposes, then I think that is within the relevance of the motion, and the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre can continue.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** Mr. Speaker, I consider aid to the civil power a government use. I consider the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family in transit a government purpose. I consider an international request for the use of our aircraft and military personnel in dire circumstances, where people in various nations are at risk, to be both a government and humanitarian purpose, in accordance with the values of Canada. I know that the member is new and does not understand the Canadian Armed Forces, but hopefully that clarifies it.

In that situation, transport was also provided by one of the Challengers, a Polaris, and three of our new Globemaster aircraft. Also three CH-146 Griffin helicopters were on the ground for medical evacuation, mobility, and coordination, which is a government purpose in a humanitarian cause overseas. However, I do not want to put too fine a point on the notion of government purpose here. Humanitarian operations, such as those in the Philippines, show that Canada is a global player and that the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces are prepared for a vast range of missions.

As we know, one of our military's defining contributions to international peace and security was in Afghanistan, where our armed forces were employed for more than a decade. We will always remember their efforts and their sacrifices. We know these would not have been possible without the right equipment provided by our government.

One of the shining examples was the 429 Transport Squadron, which was an integral part of our military's mission in Afghanistan since 2002. As part of the squadron, the CC-130 Hercules tactical airlift detachment logged over 1,800 operational flying hours on more than 320 missions in the Arabian Gulf from January to August of 2002. In 2003, the squadron successfully delivered 30,000 pounds of materials to a bombed-out runway in Kandahar while under direct small arms and rocket fire. With the introduction of the Globemaster in 2007, the squadron began to deliver troops and trade to Kabul, Kandahar, and Bagram, making a vital contribution to the Canadian and international efforts there.

When we discuss the use of government aircraft we should understand how they enable the Canadian Armed Forces to do their incredible work and in effect project Canada around the world to our allies in a very positive light. This work is crucial to the security of Canadians, whether they are assisting civilian authorities in response to floods at home, helping local authorities rescue Canadians in danger, providing humanitarian relief to those in need around the world, or contributing to security abroad with our international partners. The Canadian Armed Forces help keep Canada and Canadians safe every single day. They use the right equipment to do it, whether on the ground, sea, or air.

The stories I have shared today are just some of the examples of how our military aircraft contribute at home and abroad. They

transport representatives of the government on government business and are indispensable to helping our men and women in uniform keep Canada strong and free.

• (1305)

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it will not surprise you that I think our House leader was absolutely right when he reminded the member that he was not speaking to the motion before the House this afternoon. He did it twice. Obviously, the member disagreed. However, I do have some sympathy for member for Etobicoke Centre, because the Prime Minister's Office has asked him to do the impossible, which is to defend the indefensible.

In the motion before us, we are asking that the government use government jets for government business. I agree with the member that we have a lot of Canadians who have bravely served our country in the armed forces. Absolutely, they have. However, if I ask those very veterans whether they think that Canada's government jets ought to jet around Conservative fundraisers, I suspect I would not find a single one who would say that it would be a good use of taxpayers' dollars. That is what the motion before us today is all about.

I know that the member will listen to the debate today as attentively as I did earlier when the member for Brandon—Souris, who to his credit actually did speak to the motion before us, tried to trivialize it as if it were no big deal. The cost we are talking about here is \$118,000. That cost is the equivalent of old age security for 19 seniors, the GIS for 20 seniors, the survivor allowance for 16 seniors, and an average annual pension for 5 retired veterans. Is the member really saying that the ability to fly fundraisers across the country is more important than the well-being—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her dissertation, which highlights the incredible lack of understanding on that side about what government business involves and what our aircraft do. I just laid it all out, including their use for international purposes, aiding civil powers, securing and protecting Canadians, and projecting the image of Canada and our great Canadian Armed Forces abroad. It just demonstrates that the members opposite do not understand, and the very new House leader is possibly just smarting at the fact that he lost the other week.

Other than that, if the hon. member needs further clarification on what the Canadian Armed Forces are and what some of their equipment actually is, I am prepared to sit down over a coffee and explain it to her.

*Business of Supply*

•(1310)

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member referenced the use of government jets by the Canadian Armed Forces, which is clearly an effective and efficient use of government assets. Would the hon. member disclose to the House the number of times he has travelled on a Challenger aircraft, to what locations, who was onboard, and what was the parliamentary purpose involved?

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** It is zero, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend from Etobicoke Centre for his words and support for the Canadian Armed Forces and his point that these assets are used by the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Today's debate is about the NDP members trying to turn the channel and distract from the attention they are getting because their leader will have to appear before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for the illegal use of dollars being funnelled into political operations in Montreal and Saskatchewan. We also know that they use House resources to interfere in byelections in Montreal.

Would my friend from Etobicoke Centre want to comment on how our government, since coming into office, has really reduced the use of government aircraft? The Challengers in 2002-03, for example, had over 2,000 hours of logged time flying around ministers, the Prime Minister, and the Governor General. In 2011-12, the latest data I have show that the Challengers were used for only 574 hours. In addition to that, we actually reduced the travel costs of all ministers using commercial and government aircraft by over 23%.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his question and the great work he does as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence. As a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, I am very much looking forward to the appearance by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

With regard to the Challengers, absolutely, their use has been reduced, which goes to the judicious use of this aircraft for good reason. However, all of those missions where the aircraft are used are looked at thoroughly and completely and the missions evaluated for their cost-effectiveness.

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of today's opposition motion by the member for Timmins—James Bay, because it identifies an abuse of the public trust, which, unfortunately, is part of a much larger pattern by the Conservative government. In this case, we are talking about the use of government planes to transport Conservative Party fundraisers around the country.

Let me be clear. I am not disputing the use of government jets to transport the Prime Minister, his family, his security detail, or even public servants assisting the Prime Minister with government business. To me, the line is crossed when party fundraisers are flying on government jets. As we have now learned, that was a regular practice for the Conservatives. In particular, the flight logs reveal that Mark Kihn, who lists his job as a fundraising projects manager for the Conservative Party, has been a regular passenger,

travelling with the Prime Minister on government jets every year from 2007 to 2012.

While this may seem to some a narrow issue for an opposition day motion, it tries to shine a light on a failure by the Conservatives to recognize the importance of respecting the line between the public interest and party interest. On those grounds, it is clearly wrong to use government jets to transport Conservative Party fundraisers.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, this example illustrates a larger pattern by the Conservatives, which is to seek every partisan advantage for themselves, whether by using their majority to change the rules or by running as close to the line as possible when it comes to the existing rules. We have certainly seen this in Bill C-23, where the Conservatives have included a provision exempting fundraising expenses from election spending limits. Spending limits, as many will know, were introduced in Canada in the 1974 Election Expenses Act in an attempt to level the playing field for elections, so that those with the most resources would not automatically win elections.

Public support for spending limits as an essential part of electoral fairness has always been and still remains very high. The comprehensive Canadian election study conducted in 2000 specifically asked about this and found that 93% of Canadians supported spending limits for candidates and political parties, but what this motion points to is an attempt to get around those kinds of spending limits by using government resources for partisan purposes. Both the transport of Conservative Party fundraisers on government jets and the attempt to undermine spending limits in Bill C-23 violate the fundamental sense of electoral fairness that is an essential part of our Canadian democracy.

These attempts to skirt the rules on election spending limits are not new for the Conservatives. In fact, they began with the first omnibus budget bill. In that bill, the Conservatives used their majority to eliminate public funding for political parties. Normally, in seeking to change fundamental rules in our democracy, we would expect the governing party to consult widely and seek the broadest support for changes to the rules. We would expect this in Bill C-23, and we have not seen it. We would certainly expect them to hold those kinds of consultation and not to sneak in changes through what should have been a technical budget bill.

As in the case of Bill C-23—

•(1315)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence is rising on a point of order.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, I want to reflect on the point of order that was raised by the NDP House leader just a few minutes ago, that we want to make sure that the debate on this motion is relevant. What the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca is saying has absolutely nothing at all to do with the motion at hand.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The Chair appreciates the unsolicited advice that members are offering about relevance. The Chair is mindful of the question of relevance. It has been pointed out more than once that members are given significant latitude to speak about a motion and the context surrounding a motion. Having said that, I would also remind all hon. members that what they say in debate ought to be relevant in some way to what is before the House.

I will return the floor to the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Mr. Speaker, again, let me say that what I am talking about here is a pattern of seeking partisan advantage, in every possible way, by the other side of the House.

The motion today speaks to the question of using government jets to transport Conservative Party fundraisers. I am saying that using them to transport fundraisers is clearly not a part of government business and clearly not what was intended for those jets. It is not an isolated incident. I am connecting it to all the other cases where the government has tried to seek advantage under the rules around fundraising.

I believe that I forgot to say at the beginning that I am sharing my time with the member for Newton—North Delta.

For me, the broader pattern for the Conservatives of eliminating public funding for parties, exempting fundraising spending from spending limits, and taking Conservative fundraisers along on government jets is one where Canadians clearly deserve better. In the case of the Conservatives, we have a party that promised better when it campaigned for office on the issue of accountability.

Today it must be somewhat painful for the old reform party supporters to see the Conservatives say that they comply with all of the Treasury Board guidelines on the use of government planes, when they are clearly missing one of the fundamental guidelines, which is that the use of government planes must be for government purposes. By no stretch of the imagination can we qualify transporting government fundraisers as a government purpose.

The Conservatives promised to do better than the Liberals when it came to the use of public funds and accountability. However, it is not good enough for the Conservatives to say, as they have repeatedly this morning, that at least they are not as bad as the Liberals when it comes to the use of government jets. That is hardly a defence for transporting fundraisers on those jets. It may be an improvement over the Liberals, but both parties developed a sense of entitlement when they were in office that I am sure rankles ordinary Canadians, as it does me.

The motion before us today is fairly simple. It does not try to address all of the aspects of the Conservatives' pattern of seeking maximum partisan advantage, whether by stretching the rules or using its majority to change those rules. The motion is very simple: Should the Conservatives be able to shuttle their party fundraisers

around the country on government jets? I think that most Canadians would agree with me; the answer to that is a simple no.

What did we hear on this topic before the Conservatives were in government? We have heard extensive quotations in the debate this morning from members of their party, criticizing the Liberals for their misuse of public funds. It is hard for me to imagine how difficult it must be for Conservatives to stand up and speak, especially if they come from that old reform tradition in the Conservative Party. How do they stand up and speak on this bill today when they were such strong champions of accountability?

**An hon. member:** Can we get to hear some of those quotes?

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of them this morning, and I am not going to indulge in them again now.

My point is that we have a pattern; we have a pattern of stretching the rules. When we looked back at the last election and the robocalls that were made, we were not able to identify exactly who was responsible. We see this pattern of pressing the lines and using every advantage. We have a judge saying that the Conservative Party database was used to make the calls that attempted to direct voters to the wrong polling place to suppress voting. With that, along with a pattern of exploiting every advantage and pushing the rules to the limit, we have to wonder whether the Conservative Party has not at least created the atmosphere that makes it responsible for this kind of election abuse.

I find myself speaking to a very simple motion. We heard from the Liberals, eventually, that they plan to support it in the House. I would be interested in knowing if there are any Conservatives on the other side who would say that the motion is very simple. They should maybe all say it. The motion is very simple. It says that government resources should be used for government purposes. I cannot see what they would disagree with in the motion.

I have been accused of being naive, as well as off topic, this morning, but it is such a simple motion that it would seem easy for the government to stand up with the other parties to say that this is what accountability means. "If we are champions of accountability, we will only use public resources for public purposes".

Again, the Conservatives have tried to push the issue off to some kind of attack on the Canadian Forces or on the Prime Minister's security detail. No one on this side of the House is doubting that the Prime Minister cannot travel as an ordinary Canadian can every day. He cannot simply go out and take public transit. We know that is true. The security threats are quite great.

● (1320)

Nobody has attacked the Prime Minister's use of the jet, even when it is for personal use. He is going to have to do that, and he does repay the public treasury. However, that is not the question. The question is on the inappropriate extension of the use of those public resources for partisan purposes, which is what we have in front of us.

*Business of Supply*

It is unfortunate that we have to have these kinds of debates in the House of Commons. It would seem to me to be common sense that a Conservative Party fundraiser does not get on the plane. They should use ordinary transit, which the party pays for.

The Conservatives have said that they are billing back and paying for the resources they use. However, this is not the question. It is on the appropriateness of putting that person on the plane.

Now, we can dispute whether they are paying back the real cost of those flights, and it does not look to me like they are. However, even if they were paying the real cost, I think Canadians still have a problem with it. They would ask why we have party officials going to fundraising events to raise money for the Conservative Party on this jet.

At the end of the day, I hope to see all members standing in favour of accountability of public funds and putting a very strict line between public and partisan interests, something which the Conservative Party seems to have trouble doing.

**Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think that is a little rich coming from the other side. When the Prime Minister is travelling, and if he is going to a partisan event, he does reimburse the Government of Canada based upon a commercial equivalent flight. He sometimes travels with larger groups, and people with those types of events will also reimburse the government.

However, it is pretty rich for NDP members to suggest that there should be this clean separation, which I agree with. I agree there should be a clean separation between what we do as parliamentarians, as government officials, and what we do from a partisan standpoint.

I want that member to stand in his place and say that it is inappropriate to use taxpayer funds for setting up regional political operative offices in Saskatoon and Montreal; that it is completely unreasonable and unwarranted to use government resources to fund householders and ten percenters to go into ridings that are having byelections, in contradiction, not only to the rules of the House, but of Elections Canada.

I want him to also talk about how his leader has to now appear before the procedure and House affairs committee to explain the actions of the NDP on the misappropriation of taxpayer money.

• (1325)

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to do so.

The problem is that we have the Conservatives standing up in this House and, unfortunately, saying things that they know not to be true.

When they say that the NDP misused resources in byelections, unless they have been asleep, they know that Elections Canada has ruled there was no inappropriate use of House of Commons' funds with regard to the byelections.

When the Conservatives talk about the offices that the NDP set up for outreach, they know these were approved in advance by the House of Commons and that they meet all of the rules of the House of Commons. These offices are trying to provide service to all Canadians.

The NDP maintains party offices, pays party staff, and takes care of party functions for itself. It is very surprising to hear the hon. member stand up and say things which he knows are not true.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech given by my esteemed colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

I have been in the House from the beginning of this debate, and the Conservatives have done nothing but try to divert attention. In fact, my colleague across the aisle just tried once again to deflect the interest of the public.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness tried to suggest that we wanted to jeopardize the Prime Minister's safety, and yet the motion that we moved refers specifically to his safety. The root of the problem is the inappropriate use for the benefit of certain friends, including, for instance, someone who is friends with the Prime Minister's children on Facebook.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of what the current Minister of Industry said in 2001. He called upon the then prime minister at the time to park his Challenger jet and fly commercial flights as other Canadians did to prove that he trusted the security measures in place. It seems to me that the Conservatives are talking out of both sides of their mouths. It is absolutely unbelievable.

[*English*]

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Mr. Speaker, I actually have a great deal of sympathy for the Prime Minister and his family and the demands that being Prime Minister places on his family life. I have absolutely no objection to his family making use of the Challenger jet to try to maintain what little privacy and family life they have. I have absolutely no objection to that.

Let me restate that this motion points to none of those things about the use of those jets. It is about Conservative Party fundraisers ending up on the plane, which is paid for out of public resources, in an attempt to help raise money for the Conservative Party.

With regard to the security of the Prime Minister and his family and their ability to maintain family life, I am completely supportive of the use of government jets to do that.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca for a truly thoughtful presentation on this whole issue. It was well balanced, taking security into account, and the family life of our Prime Minister, who has a very demanding job.

We reiterate that the motion we are here to debate today has nothing to do with that. If we look at the wording of the motion, it reads:

That, in the opinion of the House, government planes, and in particular the plane used by the Prime Minister, should only be used for government purposes and should not be used to transport anyone other than those associated with such purposes or those required for the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family.

As my colleague mentioned, we have already taken that into consideration. The motion does not go as far as many of the cabinet ministers sitting on the front bench would have gone if there had been a different government in power.

*Business of Supply*

We have all read quotes, and during the day members have heard innumerable of them, which questioned why the Prime Minister could not get on a regular plane like other Canadians. We do have business class at the front, and those accommodations can be made.

There are countries where prime ministers actually do that, and our cabinet ministers get on the plane all the time. However, this motion is not about getting the Prime Minister off of the Challenger and on to a commercial flight. The world has changed since 9/11, and we are far more conscious of security. That is why I am proud to be standing up and speaking to a motion that takes that into consideration.

However, it behooves us, then, that when there is a government plane to be used for government business and also to transport the Prime Minister and his family for security reasons, that this is what the plane is used for. If the Prime Minister wants his bagmen, whose job it is to travel around the country to make money for the Conservative Party, it does not matter whether they are enjoying a holiday with the Prime Minister; they can join him when he gets to the other side. That is not the purpose of the Challenger and its availability to the Prime Minister. Canadians are paying attention because of that.

Last week, I heard rhetoric that the fundraiser had paid back the fare at commercial value. He paid back two hundred and something dollars for a trip that he took over the Christmas period. I would like to know who could find a commercial flight across this country for just over \$200 during a peak period. For those of us who have to shop around for cheap flights, we know that is not possible.

I noted with interest that the Prime Minister was very vocal, almost vitriolic, in his criticisms of the Liberal Party. By the way, I would say that he was justified because there were all kinds of abuses. None of us who are working people in Canada, and taxpayers, can stand for that kind of largesse that gives an individual a sense of entitlement just because constituents have enough faith to make them a member of Parliament. It is that kind of largesse that is concerning Canadians now. The very Prime Minister, who used to be very vocal against that kind of largesse by my colleagues in the far corner, is now finding himself caught in the same thing.

I notice that the rules were changed once the Prime Minister came to office. Now, since the Prime Minister has been leading the government, whoever travels with him only has to repay the amount, and does so at economy rates.

• (1330)

That seems a little strange. I would say that we need to take a look at that. I am sure that travelling on the Challenger is anything but economy class, never mind all the convenience and everything else.

Here is a quote from the Prime Minister on April 25, 2005, taken from the *Prince George Citizen*:

What Mr. Martin wants now is to have a 10-month election (campaign) where he can fly around the country on a government jet at taxpayers' expense, and he can throw enough money all over the country to cover up the stench of corruption.

What has changed? That is the question taxpayers are asking today. I am sure a lot of the people who voted for the government in power right now will be asking themselves the same question. What has changed? We went from one party of entitlement to a party that

smacked that party over and over again for its entitlement, and now that it is in government, it feels it is entitled to those same entitlements.

I have heard my colleagues across the way make these obtuse arguments about fliers, like the ten percenters that went into a riding. That, by the way, was cleared by Elections Canada, which said that all the rules were followed because they went out long before the election was called.

By the way, let me remind my colleagues across the way that it is not the opposition that determines the date of the by-election and can therefore start counting backwards; that date is determined by the government. Those ten percenters and those communications went out well ahead of the election announcement by the government side.

What we have right now, and what has brought us to debating this issue, is a fundraiser, a guy who has raised over \$3.5 million—and I am sure it was much more than that, but that is the number that is out there—who gets to travel on the Challenger to go to another place where he is speaking, not on government business, and he gets to buy a ticket for just over \$200.

There are times when I want to travel with my friends on a plane. I cannot always do that when I am coming here on MP business as a parliamentarian. Sometimes I have to travel on a different plane, and sometimes it is in a different part of the plane. That is right.

Just because someone is friends with the Prime Minister does not entitle them to use a government asset to make partisan gains for a political party. That is what this debate is about today. I cannot wait to hear a substantive argument from my colleagues across the way that could justify such gargantuan largesse and such a sense of entitlement.

Let me repeat, because sometimes it is hard for my colleagues to pay attention, that the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family are taken into consideration right in this motion. This motion is not about the Prime Minister travelling on the Challenger; this motion is about non-government business people, such as fundraisers, travelling on that plane.

The Prime Minister goes to all kinds of events. As an elected leader, that is his right. He gets invited and he goes. What is not the Prime Minister's right is to put his fundraiser on a government plane. I am open to being persuaded, but I do not think anybody could ever persuade me that having a fundraiser on a plane is government business.

• (1335)

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member might share with me, because she seems to have obviously done a bit a research, how many times over the past eight years individuals other than government officials have actually been on the Challenger. Has she looked at the manifests? Can she identify for me the number of times that a private individual has been on that Challenger?

*Business of Supply*

I doubt she can, so I am going to help her. It is eight times. It is eight times in eight years that a private individual has been on that Challenger and has repaid the equivalent cost to the taxpayer, a policy that was not in place before.

Moreover, the individual that she talks about is a very close friend of the Prime Minister, somebody who has been a friend of the Prime Minister for a long time, somebody who is trusted by the family to take care of the kids when the Prime Minister is on foreign vacations. Moreover, this is an individual who might be in the exact same city as the Prime Minister on a jet that is empty, aside from the Prime Minister.

Is she really suggesting that on those very few occasions, the Prime Minister should be cocooned and this individual should be sent somewhere else and not allowed to be on that plane?

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, I do not have access to all the manifests, but I would be really delighted—

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Yes, you do.

• (1340)

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, I have not accessed them.

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** You pulled the records.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, I have not accessed them. However, if the member could request them and table them, it will save me having to do some digging and research.

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

I would just ask all hon. members to control themselves.

The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am always in control. Just to let you know, the request was made of me, and I am asking my colleague across way if he could table those documents to which he has alluded.

However, what I want to say is that we, all of us, have friends. All of us have friends who are very dear to us. Suddenly, however, I am hearing today that this friend is also kind of a nanny and looks after the kids as well.

Guess what: that still does not justify it in this case, because that is not why he was travelling with the Prime Minister. It was not government business. It had nothing to do with endangering the Prime Minister's security or his family's security.

This is abuse.

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this hurts the Conservatives hard where they really do not like it. That is the reason we are getting this kind of response from them.

The reality is what the individual had to pay to get taxied from Calgary and back, twice, was \$260. I do not know if my hon. member has taken a plane recently, but 260 bucks does not cover a ticket from wherever to Calgary. It hardly covers from Ottawa to Montreal, for that matter.

There is a double standard here. The double standard is that most Canadians have to pay out of their pockets, like good taxpayers, but the government spends its time with its entitlements, just like the

Liberals before it. This is an issue of respect for taxpayers' money, and that basic respect is just not there from the current government.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, my response is very short and very clear. He was not doing government business and was not on government business. He is a private moneybagger who collects money and raises funds. I do not care if he is the twin brother of the Prime Minister, in this case, or the closest friend he has had since the day he was born. The point is that this is a taxpayer-funded jet, so it has to be business only.

**Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to join in this debate on the use of government aircraft. I will be sharing my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs.

Canada prides itself on having a first-class air force that excels in its multiple tasks and roles. I am proud to have been a part of that air force for more than 30 years.

Just as is the case with other forces around the world, the tasks of Canada's air force includes providing transportation for government representatives on government business, a role that is expected for a country that demonstrates leadership and involvement on the world stage. Canada is a serious international player, and that role comes with some responsibilities that can only be fulfilled by using those very assets, whether it is transporting the Prime Minister or other purposes.

I would like to take a moment to recognize the excellent work of the men and women of the Royal Canadian Air Force, which is celebrating its 90th birthday today.

The operational tempo of the air force and the Canadian Armed Forces as a whole has been unrelenting in the past decade. The air force has served both the government and the people of Canada. Our airmen and airwomen have excelled in their roles, serving with the professionalism and expertise we have come to rely on.

Our air force has provided air support through years of sustained combat operations in Afghanistan. I have flown with our men and women a number of times, and I cannot say highly enough how professional they are.

They were able to mobilize fighter aircraft within 24 hours to conduct operations over the skies of Libya. A couple of weeks ago I had a briefing by the wing commander of 3 Wing Bagotville, whose job at that point had been to deal with readiness and get the forces off the ground from Bagotville to Libya. The readiness that they displayed was absolutely exceptional.

Our air force also helped Canadians deal with the aftermath of devastating floods in Alberta, which was an around-the-clock job. That included transporting the Prime Minister via helicopter to have a good look at what was happening on behalf of the Government of Canada, on behalf of this place, and on behalf of the people of Canada. That is an exercise in leadership.

The Royal Canadian Air Force has risen to the challenge time and time again. I would like to thank the Canadian Forces. *Per ardua ad astra.*

*Business of Supply*

The operational success of our airmen and airwomen is the result of the government's unprecedented investments in the Canadian Armed Forces. In 2006 the government made a commitment to modernize our military's core equipment needs. Since then we have been steadily delivering on this commitment by giving our military men and women what they need to operate on the seas, on land, and in the sky. This has been a Canadian priority, a government priority, and a priority for our Prime Minister.

For the Royal Canadian Air Force in particular, we have made acquisitions that are making a big difference in the way it conducts operations. For example, the government replaced the aging military tactical airlift fleet, the Hercules, which had been serving since the 1960s. The RCAF now operates a fleet of 17 new CC-130J Hercules, the last of which it received about two years ago. The aircraft has proven its worth many times. The crews I have talked to absolutely love it and are grateful for having it in their fleet.

Within seven months of delivery in January 2011, the first CC-130J was already flying its first mission to Afghanistan. By the end of 2013, the new J model Hercules had surpassed one million flying hours worldwide. As usual, our transport fleet will probably be the high time users of that aircraft type worldwide.

These hours were spent coming to the direct aid of Canadians, evacuating them from the dangers of forest fires in the summer of 2011, and serving around the world in locations such as the Mediterranean in support of Operation Mobile in Libya and the remote Canadian Forces Station Alert, located just 800 kilometres from the geographic North Pole, and which the PM has visited himself, courtesy of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

In addition to renewing existing capabilities, the government has provided the air force with new capabilities that greatly enhance its range of operations. For example, the acquisition of the CC-177 Globemaster strategic airlift in 2007 has greatly improved the RCAF's ability to respond and deploy quickly at home and abroad. With this purchase, our air force has significantly reduced its dependence on allied or contracted strategic airlift when transporting troops and equipment in a theatre of operations or when delivering lifesaving supplies to an area hit by a natural disaster.

Previously, for example, during the floods in Winnipeg and the ice storms in Quebec, we had to rely on United States Air Force C-17s to deliver the heavy equipment we needed. We do not need to do that anymore. In fact, we can now turn around and help the citizens of the United States if they have a particular need. We are in a position to assist.

In August 2007, within days of being delivered, our first Globemaster's inaugural mission was to deliver emergency supplies to Jamaica in response to a hurricane. More recently, it was ideally suited to help the French support mission in Mali, and it was essential to Canada's contribution to the relief efforts in the Philippines in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan. As well, this aircraft has taken the PM to Afghanistan in support of our troops on the ground.

• (1345)

In addition to the Globemaster, the delivery of a medium-to-heavy lift helicopter capability, the CH-147F Chinook, was also a

priority for this government. This too is a new capability for the Royal Canadian Air Force, one that will increase its ability to operate and succeed as a multi-role, combat-capable air force.

Internationally, we have already seen the tremendous value of Chinook helicopter operations in Afghanistan. The helicopter has airlifted troops and equipment, protecting them from improvised explosive devices that were encountered on roads. The air force was proud to take delivery of its first of 15 CH-147F Chinooks in June last year. The project is on schedule to deliver all 15 aircraft by the end of this year.

When the new helicopters, which were designed especially for Canada's unique needs, become fully operational later this year they will increase our military's mobility, flexibility, and ability to deploy and to perform complex operations both here at home and abroad. The new Chinooks will enhance the military's ability to operate in remote and isolated areas and will provide assistance following natural disasters such as floods, fires, earthquakes and more; and provide mobility support to the Canadian army, other government departments, and law-enforcement agencies and other civilian authorities, such as the Prime Minister.

These procurement initiatives, to highlight just a few, are prime examples of how the government is providing the men and women in uniform with the equipment they need to do their jobs. This commitment was further solidified with the government's announcement of the new defence procurement strategy last February. Defence procurement continues to be, above all, about getting the right equipment, at the right time, at the right place, and at the right price, to our men and women in uniform. They deserve nothing less.

The Government of Canada is committed to maintaining a modern, flexible, and agile Canadian Armed Forces, supported by a professional, multi-role air force. We will continue to provide the men and women of the Royal Canadian Air Force with what they need to excel in their wide range of missions: whether conducting surveillance at home to defend Canada and the North American continent or quickly deploying a fighter-jet capability at home or to overseas operations; shuttling equipment and personnel deployed on operations, or transporting government officials as they do business on behalf of Canadians. All the while, this government will continue to ensure that the use of government aircraft follows the guidelines and policies strictly outlined by the Treasury Board of Canada.

I just want to say "Per ardua ad astra" and happy birthday to all our friends in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

*Business of Supply*

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by the member opposite. He does not seem to have grasped the crux of the motion or the issue. He boasted about the work of our troops, our Canadian Forces. No one on this side of the House will contradict him. I am from a military family. Both my parents are still serving in the armed forces. My grandfather is a veteran of the Korean war. Therefore, I know very well all the sacrifices made when someone chooses to serve their country as a member of the military.

That is not the issue here. We are talking about the abuse of public resources by the Prime Minister and this government in connection with travel for the Conservative Party's friends. That is what I want the member to comment on.

We are not really interested today in hearing their views about the military. We know what our troops are doing, the courage they demonstrate and the sacrifices they make for our country. What I want the member to do now is to explain to me and to all Canadians why the Prime Minister uses public resources and funds to fly his friends and backers all over the country. That is the issue. We are not interested in their other side comments. I really want to hear what the member has to say about the motion moved today.

[*English*]

**Hon. Laurie Hawn:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the comments. I am really sorry she is not interested in the tremendous role that the Royal Canadian Air Force plays in the life of Canada. However, on this April Fool's Day, with this motion and the birthday of the RCAF, I might ask her the question about the use of public funds to open offices in Montreal or elsewhere around the country for clearly partisan purposes.

We have scaled back the use of the Challengers, and much less than I think is appropriate, to about 25% of what the previous government did. Governments will do what they want to do and that is fine. If their members can justify it, that is fine. We thought they overused them and we have scaled that back to about 25% of what they used. There is a requirement for a serious country with serious international obligations to have transport available. If there is an empty seat on an airplane, it does not cost the taxpayer one single penny to fill that seat, other than maybe the cost of a boxed lunch, which, trust me, is not worth a whole lot of money.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have had some of those delicious boxed lunches in the back seat of a Hercules aircraft. I can say that we too in the Liberal Party acknowledge the valuable role that the air force and, in fact, all the Canadian Forces personnel, play in very important roles around the world.

Having said that, I want to pick up on the conversation, when the member talked about this whole equipment argument. There has been a great deal of frustration. Conservatives have been talking about the F-35 for I am not too sure how long. Tens of millions of tax dollars have gone virtually missing as a result of incompetence. There have been issues related to submarines and a whole litany of procurements the government has not done all that well on. Yet he talked about having the right equipment for the right time. That got

me a little excited. I see it gets the member across the way a bit excited. Conservatives have really failed on that.

My question is pretty simple. Given the remarks that the member has put on the record, can he give us a tangible indication of when he anticipates Canada's CF-18s will be replaced? When do we get to see the—

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

The hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

**Hon. Laurie Hawn:** Mr. Speaker, I will point out that it was the Liberals who actually bought the subs. In fact, they bartered for them. They were fighting tooth and nail to get those submarines that will eventually serve Canada well, with a lot of money and time put in by the dedicated men and women of the Canadian Forces and others.

With respect to the F-35, I believe we spent about \$455 million on that. Much more than that has already been recouped by Canadian industry, contracts that will last for the next 30 or 40 years. I think that is money pretty well spent. Of course, the CF-18 is going to be replaced and I look forward to that. I personally want to see it replaced as soon as possible, with the best equipment possible. At the risk of stating a personal opinion, to me, that is the F-35, clearly.

• (1355)

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House of Commons and speak to any issues, even if they are issues like this.

I listened to the member for Newton—North Delta. I asked her if she had researched and taken a look at the manifest to see how many times individuals outside of government had actually been on the plane. One would think that would be something that the opposition members would look at if they were going to take an entire day of the House of Commons' time, that they might actually do a little research. But the answer was "I don't know, I didn't look into it; you guys have that information". All Canadians have that information because it is made public.

Imagine this: a full day of the House of Commons' time when we have issues with respect to our economy, with respect to our natural resources and environment, issues with respect to the situation in Ukraine and the incredible leadership the Prime Minister has shown to bring the world community onside. What do NDP members want to talk about? A topic that they know nothing about, that they have not researched but have tried to score some silly, cheesy political points with. This is a sad commentary on what the NDP has become.

*Statements by Members*

New Democrats are like a stinky skunk in a corner. They are the shadow of what they used to be; a party that used to stand for something in this place, that on occasion used to fight for the things they actually believed in. Now they are like a scared little skunk in a corner, ready to spray that smelly spray one last time before they go into oblivion. That is what they have become. They get up in the House, day in and day out, and talk about all the bad things that everyone else is doing. This is a party whose leader has been ordered by Parliament to appear in front of a parliamentary committee to answer questions about the potential abuse of taxpayers' money. The leader of the NDP has been ordered by the House of Commons to appear in front of a parliamentary committee. It is absolutely shameful.

Are we talking today about the economy and the fact that the government has created over one million new jobs? No, we are not, because the NDP has decided to talk about something else. Are we talking about the very important priority of making sure we get a pipeline to the west coast so that we can extract our natural resources and create jobs? No, we are not talking about that. Are we talking about grain, the fact that our farmers have done such a great job and the yields have increased so much and that the government has taken action to make sure that the crop gets to port and around the world? Are we talking about that? No, we are talking about the fact that over eight years, the Prime Minister has on eight occasions taken an individual who is not part of the government on a Challenger jet. That individual has been asked to pay back the equivalent cost.

New Democrats say this does not exist. Two seconds on a website would show that 12 fares by WestJet actually exist. I know members over there may not take WestJet, but it proves that those types of flights are available. More importantly, the members are saying, “Do as we say, not as we do”.

A very close friend of the Prime Minister visited at his home. Someone the Prime Minister has known for many years was going back home at the same time as the Prime Minister, to the exact same airport because they were flying out of the Ottawa Airport. There are 7 to 8 extra seats on the plane, but he is not supposed to go on that one; he has to go somewhere else. It is absolutely ridiculous.

It is another reason why, after 16 straight elections, the NDP has never had the opportunity to sit on this side of the House. Canadians know full well that New Democrats cannot be trusted anymore. It is not the same party that used to stand for something. They stand for nothing. They are a shameful disgrace of what they used to be; a party that sometimes Canadians would look at.

● (1400)

They used to call themselves the party that would stand up for some of the moral values in the House. Now they are nothing but smelly, stinky skunks—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please. The time for government orders has expired.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, I hear from you all the time about proper decorum and proper language. Is “smelly, stinky

skunk” now parliamentary? I just want to know, Mr. Speaker, if you think that is acceptable language.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The Chair agrees with the member for Timmins—James Bay that members often use questionable language in this place, and it is the role of the Chair to point that out to them.

If language that is used causes disruption in this place, then it is a violation of the Standing Orders. I would encourage all hon. members, including the parliamentary secretary and the member for Timmins—James Bay, to be mindful of that in the future.

The time for government orders has expired. The hon. parliamentary secretary will have five minutes remaining when this matter returns before the Chamber after question period.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### ELMWOOD—TRANSCONA COMMUNITY SERVICES

**Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the many contributions of seniors and people with disabilities in Elmwood—Transcona, along with the organizations supporting them in sharing their knowledge and talents in our community.

It is important that seniors and people with disabilities have community places they can access to stay active and engaged. This ensures that they stay healthy, maintain their independence, and enjoy a high quality of life.

Organizations like L'Arche Winnipeg, Transcona Memorial United Church, the Transcona Council for Seniors, the Elmwood East Kildonan Active Living Centre and the Transcona Royal Canadian Legion are shaping better lives for seniors and people with disabilities. I am pleased that our government's enabling accessibility fund and the new horizons for seniors program have supported these groups in their efforts to eliminate barriers and bring our community together.

We all have a role to play in improving our communities, and I am very proud to acknowledge these groups for their hard work to ensure that people of all ages and abilities can participate fully in our community.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### CO-OPERATIVES AND MUTUALS CANADA

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to pay tribute to Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada, known as CMC, which launched today. This organization will unite the co-operative sector from coast to coast. I salute those running the CMC, which will continue to demonstrate the spirit of unity and the strength of the co-operative sector.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

Today marks a milestone for the co-operative sector with the launch of Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada, the organization that will unite all co-ops and mutuals from coast to coast.

I invite all members to come and celebrate tonight at 5 p.m. at Vetta Osteria on Bank Street.

[Translation]

There are many reasons to celebrate co-operatives and mutuals because their future looks promising. They are key parts of a sustainable, democratic and 100% Canadian economy. The NDP will continue to work with them to develop policies that help them thrive.

\* \* \*

[English]

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all of us here who represent the great province of Alberta are proud of our government's solid partnership with Albertans. We have more than doubled the social transfer to collaborate on important programs, including those for children and post-secondary education. It is now at almost \$1.5 billion.

The former Liberal government shortchanged Alberta in health care support. That has now been rectified to provide \$3.7 billion this year under the health transfer.

Annual infrastructure funding to Alberta has increased by an average of 700%. In my city, it invested in projects such as the ring road and Calgary Transit. Albertans will also be relieved to know that the federal government is covering 90% of last June's devastating flood damage. Almost \$2 billion has been set aside.

These are a few examples of the strong partnership with our federal government that benefits Albertans every single day.

\* \* \*

**CONDOLENCES**

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise on a tragic note. Over the weekend, a fire claimed the lives of three boys from my riding and sent a fourth to hospital in Halifax. This week the community is mourning the loss of these boys, who were just starting out in their lives. That tragic accident is a heartbreaking reminder of how fragile life is and how, in the face of such unimaginable pain, the importance of family and community becomes so apparent.

To the families and friends of Kenneth Cameron Irving, aged 15, Brandon Daniel Alexander MacKinnon, aged 16, and Joseph Allison Reeves, aged 19, I send sincere condolences on behalf of every member of the House of Commons. We join with the people of Prince Edward Island in mourning your loss, offer you our deepest sympathy, and send you strength, courage, and comfort in your time of sorrow.

● (1405)

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, recently our Prime Minister announced that Canada and South Korea have concluded negotiations on a new free trade agreement. The opportunity to access such a large market, with a fair playing field, was welcome news to value-added wood producers, winery owners, and others in my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla. It was also welcome news to the Premier of British Columbia, who said, “The news today from the Prime Minister and the federal government on the Korea-Canada trade deal is great news for all British Columbians”.

Even more surprising was the response from the British Columbia NDP. What did the B.C. NDP say about this free trade deal? It said, “We look forward to the expansion of trade with South Korea and the future of shared economic prosperity it will bring us here in British Columbia”.

No, that was not an April Fool's joke. If the B.C. NDP can figure out the opportunity for prosperity in our government's free trade agenda, I submit that there might be hope for the NDP in this place.

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**NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

**Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today Newfoundland and Labrador marks the 65th anniversary of Confederation. Canada joined Newfoundland at one minute before midnight, March 31, 1949, Ottawa time, which would have made it 1:29 a.m. Newfoundland time, April 1, 1949, April Fool's Day.

A national story from that day read: “Today a country dies, not as they die in Europe by enemy fire and sword, or by aggressive annexation, but by its own hand, the democratic choice of the people”.

The question today is whether we are further ahead because of the death of Newfoundland, the country.

I have travelled the world as an MP to Africa, Japan, and the Middle East. Canada is in so many ways the envy of the world, but here at home, our commercial fisheries are in tatters. Shrimp is now in trouble. The lack of a fair energy policy has held us back for decades. Gulf ferry rates are too high, search and rescue is not up to snuff, and the environment is under threat. The face of Canada is changing under the current Conservative government.

Conservatives and Liberals have failed us. It is time for Canada to work for all provinces.

*Statements by Members***PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH**

**Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, April marks the beginning of Parkinson's Awareness Month, a month-long celebration to recognize members of the Parkinson's community across Canada. Throughout the month, Parkinson Society Canada will be showcasing the efforts of extraordinary volunteers, scientists, and leaders who help improve the lives of people affected by Parkinson's.

Over 100,000 Canadians are affected by this chronic degenerative neurological disease, which currently has no cure. The average age of onset is 60, but Parkinson's can affect people as young as 30.

During April, the Parkinson's community asks all members to recognize the contributions of everyday heroes, particularly during National Volunteer Week and on World Parkinson's Day, April 11. I encourage every member of this House to think of how they can assist and inspire much needed hope for their constituents affected by Parkinson's.

I would like to thank the members of Parkinson Society Canada, who are in Ottawa today, for their great efforts and dedication.

\* \* \*

**YOUNG HERO**

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand up in the House today and honour eight-year-old Ben Caprio from Oshawa.

This past Sunday evening, Ben faced a very frightening situation when his father, Tony, collapsed from a severe epileptic seizure. Ben's mother, Lori, had gone to work, and it was up to Ben to help save his father's life. When describing the event, Ben said, "I was feeling panicky because my mom wasn't there. She taught me you can call 911. You don't have to be afraid".

Despite his fear, Ben dialed 911 and directed emergency services to his south Oshawa home and stayed on the line with the attendant until they arrived. Durham police who listened to the 911 recording commented on how calm Ben was during the call. They described Ben's call as sounding as if he was talking to his friends. Because of Ben's composure, his father Tony is alive today.

After the frightening event, Tony said of Ben, "I'm really proud of him. No one could ask for a better son".

Ben's calmness and swift action in such a frightening situation is an inspiration to all of Oshawa. I would like to ask everyone here to stand with me today to honour Ben for his heroic actions.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**619 RAF SQUADRON**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in the early hours of April 25, 1945, 24-year-old Wilfrid DeMarco flew out with 619 RAF Squadron on the last great raid of the war. Their target was Hitler's mountain fortress at Berchtesgaden.

DeMarco was considered a brilliant pilot, but the young crew of Canadian and British airmen faced an impossible task. Flying low over the SS barracks, they were hit by a heavy wall of flak. DeMarco

attempted to keep the plane level while the crew bailed out. Three men survived. The other four were the last of the 50,000 airmen lost in that brutal campaign.

Next April, the village of Adnet, Austria, will commemorate their loss, and on this side of the pond, the city of Timmins, our museum, Legion Branch 88, and the Algonquin Regiment will host our own commemoration.

On behalf of the Parliament of Canada, I want to thank Mayor Wolfgang Auer and the people of Adnet, as well as the supporters of 619 RAF Squadron, David Young and Kevin Ruane, for remembering our young men.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.

\* \* \*

**ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE**

**Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 90 years ago today, in 1924, King George V proclaimed the birth of the Royal Canadian Air Force. Building on our aviation heritage, from the Silver Dart of Baddeck in 1909 and Billy Bishop's courage of the early morning in World War I, the men and women of the RCAF, in service of King, Queen, and country,

have slipped the surly bonds of earth  
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings  
Along the way, they have been  
supported by thousands of dedicated ground crew and support personnel as they

joined the tumbling mirth  
Of sun-split clouds—and done a hundred things  
You have not dreamed of—

They brought glory to themselves and Canada through large wars and small, peacekeeping, search and rescue, disaster relief, and maritime operations, while protecting our sovereignty and security and contributing to making the world a better place.

It did not come cheap, and more than 17,000 airmen and airwomen have made the ultimate sacrifice. They have

topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace  
Where never lark, or even eagle flew  
And, while silent lifting mind [have] trod  
The high untrespassed sanctity of space  
Put out [a] hand and touched the face of God.

We salute you. *Per Ardua Ad Astra*

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**VOLUNTEERS**

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the remarkable contributions and the excellent work of our volunteers and all of our community organizations.

*Statements by Members*

We must show them our gratitude for everything they have accomplished. I want to thank all volunteers, whether they volunteer with youth or seniors, in the health care field or elsewhere. One hour, one day or one year is something quite remarkable.

I cannot overlook their passion and generosity. These volunteers play a very valuable role in our communities. They are role models for everyone.

Next week is National Volunteer Week, when we have the opportunity to use the Volunt-Hear hotline to thank a volunteer. It is a small gesture, but it can make a big difference.

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[English]

**FIRST NATIONS HOCKEY**

**Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and pay homage to a great Canadian.

On Sunday, the Edmonton Oilers hosted a celebration of first nations hockey at the pre-game ceremony where Fred Sasakamoose, the first first nations NHL hockey player, was honoured as part of the many touching commemorations held in conjunction with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in Edmonton.

Fred's story represents both the dark past experienced by first nations as well as their hopeful future. Fred was removed from his family, his community of Ataakahkoop First Nation, and his Cree culture at six years of age, and was placed in a residential school in Duck Lake. Like so many children in residential schools, Fred found refuge in hockey. He later attended hockey training camp and was called up on February 27, 1954, to play for the Chicago Blackhawks.

At 80 years of age, Fred remains involved in his community, mentoring young athletes and volunteering in sporting events. He remains an example to the younger generation of aboriginal NHL stars.

I would like to congratulate Fred for his leadership and encouragement of first nations youth to reach their full potential.

\* \* \*

●(1415)

**SEALING DISASTER**

**Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate a sad saga in Newfoundland history, as Sunday March 30 marked the 100th anniversary of the great sealing disaster of 1914, which claimed the lives of 251 Newfoundland men and boys as they worked on the edge of dangerous ice floes to earn a living for their families.

These men and boys, some as young as 13, would travel miles to the ice front. They would hunt in treacherous ice conditions and winter snow storms in temperatures that were below -30.

A hundred years ago these men were ordered onto the ice in the middle of a storm, a vicious snow storm with drifting so bad there was no visibility and they could not make their way back to the ship.

So 78 of them perished on the ice floes of the cold Atlantic. It was that same storm that took down the sealing ship, *Southern Cross*, and with it the lives of another 173 men and boys of our province.

Today we remember them and their determination and the importance of the industry in which they partook.

\* \* \*

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition leaders cannot help but repeat the promise to not raise taxes on the middle class, which begs the question: what income range constitutes the middle class?

I will assume that the opposition did its homework and knows that the middle class is leading Canada's wealth increase, with the median net worth of Canadian families increasing by 45% since 2005.

However, based on the leader of the third party's answer to such a basic question, it is clear that the former teacher does not do his own homework. He claims that "...the middle class is people who work for their income, not people who live off their assets and their savings." Under this reckless definition, our Canadian pensioners and retirees, who live off their savings, are not middle class. It is unbelievable.

Canadian families have seen increases of 10% or more in their pay since 2006. We are on the right track for Canadian families. As for the Liberal leader, he is clearly in over his head.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ETHICS**

**Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, another name has been added to the list of bad appointments by the Prime Minister.

After Nigel Wright, Mike Duffy and the rest, now it is Dimitri Soudas' turn to have had the Prime Minister's full confidence before demonstrating a complete lack of judgment and being shown the door, or resigning, depending on the version of the story. That reminds of something.

In the midst of an unlikely love story straight out of a soap opera, Dimitri Soudas is being accused of misusing the Conservative Party database. It is odd that he is now able to say who used the database because during the robocall scandal, he claimed he did not know who had access to it. In fact, he maintains that claim.

While the middle class, which is not made up just of people living solely off their income, is struggling more and more, the Prime Minister is spending his time settling schoolyard disputes in his party.

Canadians want a government that focuses on what really matters. Unfortunately, they will have to wait until 2015 to vote for the NDP.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has delivered historic tax relief. We cut the GST, introduced pension income splitting, and created the tax-free savings account that has benefited more than nine million Canadians. Because of this tax relief, a typical family of four will save nearly \$3,400 in taxes in 2014.

Our low-tax plan is working. Statistics Canada confirmed that middle-income families are better off today under the Conservative government than under Liberals. The net worth of families was up 44% from 2005. Unfortunately, the Liberal leader has no idea what it is like to be middle class. Middle-class families do not live spoiled lifestyles while collecting thousands in speaking fees on the backs of charities. They also know that budgets do not magically balance themselves.

Despite the inexperienced Liberal leader, Canadians can rest assured that this government will stand up for middle-income earners and all Canadians.

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**

• (1420)

[Translation]

**JUSTICE**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court categorically rejected Marc Nadon's appointment to the highest court. The judges rejected the Prime Minister's choice because Mr. Nadon did not meet the criteria required to represent Quebec on the Supreme Court.

I would like the Prime Minister to be very clear, as he is so fond of saying. Will he tell us clearly that he has no intention of reappointing Marc Nadon to the Supreme Court?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously, the government will respect the letter and spirit of this ruling.

I must point out that, during hearings and consultations, the NDP said that it did not object to appointing a Quebecker from the Federal Court to the Supreme Court. Now, the NDP has changed its tune.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is one of two things: either the Prime Minister is revealing a secret that he does not have the right to tell or he is not telling the truth. I can tell you that he is not betraying a secret because what he just said is the opposite of the truth.

Can the Prime Minister tell us who Mark Kihn is? What is Mark Kihn's role in the government? Can the Prime Minister tell us why he invited Mr. Kihn to travel on the government plane on at least five occasions?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have already answered those questions.

[English]

We have been very clear. My practice as Prime Minister is that any use I make or anybody else makes of the Challenger for anything other than government business is reimbursed immediately at commercial rates.

That has been done in this and all cases.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, maybe he could tell Canadians where they can buy a commercially available ticket for \$200 between Calgary and Ottawa on a private plane.

Mark Kihn is a Conservative Party bagman who raised millions of dollars for the Conservative Party and \$3.5 million for the Prime Minister personally. By the way, we are all still waiting to see the final list of his donors from his leadership campaign.

Is it not clear that Mark Kihn was invited on the Prime Minister's taxpayer-funded jet as a reward for raising money for the Conservative Party? Can the Prime Minister tell us in good faith that he thinks there is nothing wrong with that?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, the RCMP requires me to fly on a non-commercial aircraft. Any use of government aircraft for non-commercial purposes is reimbursed.

When an individual is on the plane who is not a parliamentarian or a staff member, we are always sure that it is done in a way that actually lowers the cost of the flight to taxpayers.

\* \* \*

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pretty sure it was not the RCMP that invited a Conservative Party bagman on that flight. It is just a feeling I have.

[Translation]

Over the past few weeks, there has been increased opposition to the Conservatives' unfair elections bill across the country from federal and provincial election administrators, international observers, hundreds of constitutional law and political science professors, and most importantly, thousands of Canadians who participated in public consultations organized by the NDP. Scathing editorials have also been written in this regard.

Does the Prime Minister realize that this is the only time in Canadian history that a government has sought to use its majority in the House to change the fundamental rules of our democracy in its favour? Does he have no shame?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps this is the only time in Canadian history that an opposition party decided to oppose an electoral reform bill before reading it.

*Oral Questions*

I encourage the NDP to really examine these proposals. The reform is important in order to maintain and improve the integrity of Canada's elections.

[*English*]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, even the slim support that the Prime Minister claims to have for his bill is evaporating before his eyes.

The former Chief Electoral Officer, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, has said that under this bill "...Canadians will lose their trust and their confidence in our elections." Harry Neufeld has said that the Conservatives have been blatantly misrepresenting his work.

The Prime Minister has claimed that they were both supporting his bill. Of course, he was wrong. Is it not time for the Prime Minister to simply withdraw this undemocratic bill?

• (1425)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course, the NDP's main complaint, after not having read the bill, is that it tightens the rules to make sure people cannot vote without any identification whatsoever.

We know the fundamental rule of elections in democratic societies is that votes are supposed to be secret but voters are not supposed to be secret.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, of all the recent appointments that demonstrate the Prime Minister's poor judgment, perhaps the most serious is the one that leaves a vacancy on the Supreme Court bench. That seat has been empty for seven months now, which means that the Supreme Court is less in tune with Quebec's stance on significant issues such as the structure of Parliament or the right to die with dignity. When will the Prime Minister appoint a qualified Quebec judge?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during consultations, all of the parties in the House agreed with the idea of appointing a Quebecer from the Federal Court to the Supreme Court. It is surprising to learn that the rule for Quebec is completely different from the rule for the rest of Canada. I am disappointed that the Liberal Party keeps changing its stance and that it is trying to politicize the process. Obviously, the government will respect the letter and the spirit of the ruling.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is the first day of the fiscal year, and today the government has slashed the building Canada fund by 87%. Canadians and their communities need greater infrastructure investment to create good middle class jobs and improve economic productivity and quality of life. How does the Prime Minister justify today's 87% cut to the core infrastructure program?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the Liberal Party actually was familiar with the budget, he would know that last year the government announced the largest infrastructure program in Canadian history, \$70 billion over the next 10 years.

To understand that, one would have to understand things like the fact that bank presidents are not members of the middle class and retirees living on their savings are members of the middle class.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this from the first Prime Minister in Canadian history to see his nominee to the Supreme Court rejected.

[*Translation*]

Today, the building Canada fund has been slashed by 87% for this fiscal year. Canadians know that infrastructure investments are a necessary part of creating good jobs for the middle class, increasing productivity and improving quality of life. How can the Prime Minister justify today's 87% cut to the infrastructure program?

[*English*]

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, in terms of the preamble, the Liberal Party in fact supported the nominee for the Supreme Court because all experts agreed that, as has been done in the past, judges who come from a certain province and sit on the Federal Court can be named for that province in the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Supreme Court of Canada has now made a decision otherwise. We will respect that, but it is disappointing to see the Liberal Party completely reverse its position and politicize the process. That is not the reason we do consultations.

\* \* \*

**SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, from the unfair election act to Kijiji labour market stats, Conservatives love to cherry-pick facts to defend their ideological arguments, all in an effort to distract away from the very fact that 300,000 Canadians still do not have a job but had one before the recession. However, instead of helping small businesses, which create the vast majority of jobs, the Minister of Finance is killing the small business tax credit. Will the minister now reverse his decision to kill this valuable program?

• (1430)

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we recognize the vital role small business plays in the economy and job creation. That is why, since 2006, we have lowered the average small business tax by over \$28,000. That is over 30%. That includes tax cuts like reducing the small business tax from 12% to 11% and increasing the amount of income eligible for a lower small business tax rate from \$300,000 to \$500,000. Ours is a pragmatic approach, not an ideological approach, which we hear from the other side.

*Oral Questions***GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if their ideology and stubbornness will not allow them to help small businesses, will they at least promise to stop wasting taxpayer money due to Conservative management?

The Procurement Ombudsman blew the whistle about inflated costs for court documents after learning that taxpayers were getting ripped off. The Conservative response was to reward the very same company with another contract.

Why add insult to injury?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this particular organization, this Courts Administration Service, is an arm's length organization. In fact, it is done that way so it will ensure greater judicial independence.

What has happened here is that the government, in respecting taxpayer dollars, has had an open, fair, transparent bidding process. What we see now is a situation where it is before a tribunal. It is being adjudicated, and we are not going to talk about something that is before the courts.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, have members ever noticed that when the Conservatives get caught wasting money, it is always before the courts or it is an arm's length organization? It is never their responsibility for wasting the money in the first place.

How about another example of Conservative mismanagement?

They spent \$3 million to create apps that Canadians do not know about and cannot use. Does a Conservative staffer need a taxi? They made an app for that.

Do members want to know how make a hedgehog-shaped cake? The Conservatives spent \$60,000 on an app for that.

On a more serious note, helping our veterans, they cut the very services veterans need and, instead, put an app in its place. It is shameful.

How can the Conservative minister justify such outrageous spending, while cutting the services Canadians need?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am shocked and dismayed the hon. member is taking that attitude.

We have food recall apps. We have an app for product recalls. We have an app that lowers the amount of time people are waiting in lines at the border. We have these apps to help serve Canadians.

I am very pleased to say the federal government had the first appathon last Friday. We had coders from all over the country, private citizens, who competed for the chance to do more government apps, because we care about Canadians and we care about their getting the right information at the right time.

[*Translation*]

**SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there are currently 300,000 more unemployed Canadians than there were before the recession. Far from promoting job creation, the budget bill indicates that the Conservatives wants to axe the tax credit encouraging SMEs to hire more workers.

I do not want the Minister of Finance to tell me what the government did in 2006, in 2008 or in 2009. I want to know why, in an economy that continues to be uncertain, the government has decided to do away with this tax credit encouraging SMEs to hire more workers, thereby undermining the main driver of job creation in Canada.

[*English*]

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on what matters to Canadians: jobs and economic growth. Even though the global economy remains fragile, especially in the United States and Europe, our economic policies have helped protect Canadians and have created one million net new jobs since July 2009: over 85% full time, over 80% in the private sector—the best creation of jobs in the G7 by far. Both the IMF and the OECD forecast Canada will be among the fastest growing economies in the G7.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**PENSIONS**

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as if attacking SMEs was not enough for the Conservatives, they are also trying to make financial security in retirement more difficult to achieve.

As many experts have said, it is imperative that public pension plans be improved gradually in order to deal with the crisis that is taking shape. It is the best way to guarantee our seniors a dignified retirement. Even the Department of Finance recognizes that improving the Canada pension plan and the Quebec pension plan would be good for both retirees and the economy.

Why does the minister refuse to take action?

• (1435)

[*English*]

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP, again, is trying to defend hiking payroll taxes for every Canadian employee and every Canadian employer. What the NDP will not tell us is that the same document he referenced said that, while the department estimates impact of doubling the replacement rate could reach up to 70,000 jobs, some organizations arrive at even larger numbers.

We want to protect jobs for Canadians. We want to create jobs for Canadians. The NDP works against that end.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister just does not get it. Not being able to afford a decent quality of life in retirement is what hurts Canadian families. Even the minister's own department contradicts his bizarre claim. Government research has shown that gradually expanding the Canada pension plan would be affordable and would be good for Canada's economy. However, the Conservatives prefer to implement ideologically driven policy rather than factually based evidence.

Why will the minister not do the right thing, the sensible thing, and work with provinces to strengthen retirement for Canadians in their retirement?

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me refer to that very same document one more time. The document also says that a study of the impact of doubling the replacement rate prepared by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and based on analysis by the University of Toronto's policy and economic analysis program, assumed that an increase in contribution rates would be phased in over seven years, yet found a higher annual impact on employment.

We will continue to protect jobs for hard-working Canadians.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, even though government data contradicts the Conservatives regarding the skills shortage, the Conservatives continue to support hiring temporary foreign workers.

We now know that this is because the foreign companies that want to develop natural gas in British Columbia do not want to have to pay their workers high wages.

Why are the Conservatives opening this sector to even more temporary foreign workers when the figures show that Canadians have the training needed for these jobs?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is ridiculous to see how hypocritical NDP members are on this issue. I receive more files from NDP members with applications to facilitate the entry of temporary foreign workers than on any other subject.

Yesterday I made it clear to the energy industry in British Columbia that Canadians must have first shot at available jobs; more needs to be invested in skills training, especially for aboriginal people; and the temporary foreign worker program is only available on a limited basis as a last resort.

[English]

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, New Democratic Party MPs want the program fixed and they want it used properly, while the Conservatives are making up data and using it to go after workers' wages. Canadian workers deserve a government that is on their side; so projects like B.C.'s natural gas development means a generation of quality, decent-paying jobs for British Columbians. Why are Conservatives making

it easier to bring in even more temporary foreign workers when there are plenty of Canadians who could do the job?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is amazing here. The New Democrats do not even talk to employers, because if they did, employers would tell them how this government has made it more difficult to bring in temporary foreign workers. The member knows that, because she is lobbying me to facilitate bringing temporary foreign workers in to help constituents in her constituency. I was absolutely clear yesterday with the B.C. liquefied natural gas industry that it must employ and train Canadians first, particularly young Canadians and aboriginal Canadians, and only look to the TFW program as a last and very limited resort.

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is proposing new penalties but no oversight and no enforcement. Just ask the workers on the ground in the oil sands. Sixty-five iron workers on the Imperial Oil Kearl site were unceremoniously laid off and ordered to leave, including first nations workers. They were replaced by less-skilled temporary foreign workers. Only after the union intervened were only one-third of the Canadians rehired for less-skilled work.

Stiffer penalties will not work without proper oversight. Will the government now pull permits for violating companies?

• (1440)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as usual on this matter, the New Democrats are living in fantasyland. The reality is that, according to the president of the ironworkers' union, every single one of those individuals got immediately employed in the energy sector in northern Alberta.

Let us be clear. We are going to throw the book, with tough mandatory financial penalties, at non-compliant employers who do not respect the rules of the temporary foreign worker program, thanks to the powers in the budget implementation act, and we fully expect the NDP to vote for that act, so we have the power to impose those fines.

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**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today is the day the massive Conservative cuts to infrastructure kick in, a staggering reduction of almost 90% in available funding, and that is no April Fool's Day joke either.

*Oral Questions*

In Trinity—Spadina, for example, almost 30,000 workers, 35% of the residents, use public transit each and every day. Can the government explain to the constituents of that riding and to all Canadians, for that matter, why it will not improve their public transit, give rise to new technologies, create jobs, and help our middle-class families?

**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, once again the second opposition party is misleading the House. Canadian municipalities have access to 71% of all the programs. This program is \$70 billion for 10 years. They only want to take a part of that. We have to consider the whole plan, and that statement is untrue.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is this minister who is telling the untruths. It is the government that is misleading Canadians. A cut is a cut. The government promised—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg North has the floor. He has a few seconds left. I urge him to use his language very cautiously. I heard something that was very close to being unparliamentary. Saying that something is untrue has been acceptable, and I know he is not trying to impugn motive on this.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North has the floor.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the truth hurts, but so do the cuts.

The government promised that cities would be able to apply for the building Canada fund. Members can check out the website. It has not even established the criteria. How can cities apply if they do not know what the criteria are? Imagine being in Fort McMurray or Wood Buffalo. Without the criteria, they cannot apply. The government has failed.

The question is, why has the Prime Minister—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**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, the member knows well that he is talking about one of the four components of the building Canada plan. He knows that very well. He does not talk about the gas tax fund and the GST rebate, which represent \$32 billion that are available for municipalities. He does not talk about those things. He does not talk about the national infrastructure component. That is the biggest plan ever for this country.

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**HEALTH**

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the health accord between Prime Minister Martin and the premiers ended. The government's abandonment of the accord and the Prime Minister's refusal to meet with premiers for eight years was a blow to medicare. Today a new health formula imposed on provinces is another blow. It abandons the principles of equalization, so small provinces cannot provide the same care as others.

Yesterday I asked the health minister to prevent this disaster and return the concept of equalization to the formula. She did not answer that question. Will she do so now?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has committed to health care in Canada by providing long-term sustainable health care funding—in fact, the highest recorded health transfer dollars in Canadian history—to the provinces and territories. We have increased transfers by almost 50% since we became government.

As I have said repeatedly, and Brad Wall said the same thing yesterday, this cannot just be about money. We have to work together with the provinces and territories on sustainability and innovation, and to that end, I have been working with my provincial and territorial partners. We are working together on a health innovation framework, and I am sure we will do a lot together on sustainability.

\* \* \*

• (1445)

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the list of experts coming forward to oppose the Conservatives' unfair changes to the Elections Act is growing daily. First there was Marc Mayrand, the current Chief Electoral Officer; then Jean-Pierre Kingsley, the former chief electoral officer; then Harry Neufeld, author of the report misleadingly cited by the minister; then Paul Thomas, professor and expert on Canadian elections.

Given the almost unanimous condemnation of this seriously flawed bill, will the minister now listen to the experts and agree to fix this bill?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a terrific bill, and Canadians support its elements. It would create a new registry, requiring that those making mass calls register them so that authorities can surveil them and make sure that they are lawful and accurate. It would create new penalties for those who impersonate other parties or who impersonate Elections Canada officials. It would close loopholes to big money, such as the loans loophole that the Liberals used or the donations that the NDP received through wills and testaments. Finally and proudly, it would require people to show some ID when they vote, which average Canadians think is very reasonable.

[Translation]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know which world the Minister of State for Democratic Reform is living in, but it is clearly not the same one as most Canadians.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to hear professor Paul Thomas express his views on Bill C-23. He emphasized the fact that other countries that conduct free elections recognize that election laws must not be changed unilaterally, without consultation. As well as being dangerous for our democracy, the Conservatives' electoral reform bill will undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process. It will not help the Conservative government earn the trust of voters.

Will the minister listen to the experts at last?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Fair Elections Act is very reasonable. It creates a new registry to oversee the robocalls and telemarketing calls that many Canadians receive, as well as to protect the legitimacy of those calls. The bill creates new penalties to punish those who mislead voters with fraudulent calls. It also guarantees that the legislation limiting donations will be obeyed. Yes, the Fair Elections Act will require people to present a piece of ID when they vote.

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it would be good for the minister to start listening to the experts.

Twenty years ago, Canada was a major player on the international stage in terms of sharing best practices in order to strengthen institutions in countries in democratic transition.

Today, our own institutions are threatened. When we have reached the point at which international experts begin expressing concern about the Conservatives' electoral reform bill, we can see how far we have fallen. If we add to that the fact that the government is giving itself almost unlimited spending power when it comes to contacting some former contributors, we can see that our democratic system really is in danger.

Why are the Conservatives trying to get around the upper limit on spending?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is the New Democrats who have been trying to get around the legislation on political party financing. First, they tried to receive money from unions, but they had to pay it back. Second, they were getting money from people who had died. Third, they opposed our efforts to limit expenses and donations.

The measure that the hon. member is referring to is restricted to people who have given money in the past five years. It cannot be used for advertisements or other methods of contact. It is a very reasonable measure.

[English]

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on another unfair elections act front, today in committee my questioning of CRTC lawyers confirmed my suspicions of a huge loophole in Bill C-23's voter contact registry scheme, which was supposed to prevent fraudulent calling to voters. Live calls by a party's internal

### Oral Questions

services are not covered, so Conservative Party phone banks can live-call Canadians during elections with no oversight.

My question is to the minister. Is this massive omission deliberate?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is not an omission, and yes, it is deliberate. Let me tell the House why.

What the member is talking about are the regular calls that are made by volunteers out of local campaign offices every single day. An example would be a small lawn sign committee that puts out signs. A volunteer in the office, usually a senior, makes about five or 10 calls to arrange to put out lawn signs. The member across the way thinks that the volunteer should fill out a bunch of forms with a national telecommunications registry.

How are we expected to encourage people to get involved in democracy when we bury them in that kind of—

• (1450)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Mississauga South.

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### CANADIAN HERITAGE

**Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the evils of Communism defiled much of the 20th century, killing over 100 million worldwide and wreaking misery on countless more. The impact is felt today not only in the shadows of current and former totalitarian regimes but by the eight million Canadians who trace their roots to countries that lived under Communist regimes.

Could the Minister for Multiculturalism update the House on the status of the monument to the victims of Communism here in Ottawa?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right. From the killing fields of Cambodia to the victims of Stalin's gulag to the victims of the Holodomor famine genocide and Mao's great leap forward, over one hundred million people were killed under Communist regimes in the past century, and that continues in the world's largest concentration camp, for example, in North Korea.

That is why, on behalf of the eight million Canadians who are descendants of countries that lived through Communist terror, we are erecting a national monument for the victims of Communism. Today we are launching the artistic competition for the monument.

We would like to thank all of those thousands of individual charitable contributors who are building this sacred place of common memory.

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[Translation]

### JUSTICE

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, talking about evil, the Conservatives are once again using a budget bill to try to sneak in changes that have nothing to do with the budget, but that have serious consequences.

*Oral Questions*

On page 262, it says that administrative tribunals, such as the Human Rights Tribunal, will now have to be accountable to the Minister of Justice, through the new Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada.

How can the Minister of Finance justify this so-called budget measure that may well affect the independence and autonomy of those tribunals?

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, administrative tribunals are arm's-length organizations. This measure is very much designed to respect the judiciary and to respect their ability to continue to provide service, while at the same time bringing them together for the sake of saving taxpayers' money. I know the NDP is a bit foreign to embracing this idea. I know this is something it is not quick to acknowledge.

The reality is this is a cost-saving measure that continues to respect the administrative independence of the courts. That is exactly why we have included it in the budget bill.

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for cost savings, yes, but the tribunals must also remain autonomous and independent of government. They include bodies like the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, the Social Security Tribunal, the Specific Claims Tribunal, and the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board. However, Conservatives are using their monster budget bill to reduce the tribunals' control and hand it to a new chief administrator named by the Conservative cabinet.

Why is the minister reducing the independence of these tribunals and grabbing more power and control for the Conservative cabinet?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I just said, we are not doing that. We are in fact respecting the independence of the organization. At the same time, we are making administrative changes that bring these organizations together for efficiencies, for the purposes of saving taxpayers' money.

Again, God forbid that we take the responsible step to try to save taxpayers' money, while at the same time allowing them to continue in the tradition of independence and in the tradition of supporting the judiciary and other organizations in a manner that causes an effective result for taxpayers and all Canadians.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the budget implementation bill also deals with railway safety.

The Conservatives have given themselves the power to amend safety rules without notifying the public. The three months' notice will now go down to one month. That is not nearly enough. Experts will no longer have enough time to provide their opinion. We need stricter railway safety rules, not looser ones.

Will the Minister of Transport ask that those dangerous provisions be removed from the omnibus bill?

• (1455)

[*English*]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth.

This government believes very firmly in protecting the safety and the security of its citizens. As a result, we want to ensure that we are lining up appropriately with the United States in how regulatory matters progress.

That is simply the answer in this matter. It is making sure that we are doing exactly the same things on a quick basis in order to protect the country and in order to ensure that we have the best regulations in place. It is quite the contrary to what that member is indicated.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, well, the Conservatives are doing nothing to address the concerns of Canadians.

That is why parents in Beauport—Limoilou were forced to form a watchdog group called Vigilance ferroviaire Limoilou to make up for the government's inaction.

They are concerned about the train traffic by their children's school, and I do not blame them. They do not understand why carriers have no obligation to disclose the contents of their cars, and neither do I.

What does the minister intend to do in practical terms to reassure the parents in Limoilou?

[*English*]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government has done several things in this area. Most notably, two months ago we introduced new regulations for grade crossings to ensure that there is a communication and an understanding between municipalities and railroads about the appropriate way to ensure that types of traffic are separated from one another.

Second, we also provide funding for municipalities to ensure that they can upgrade their rail crossings to protect the children around the area.

Third, we fund Operation Lifesaver to make sure we communicate and educate kids about being around rail lines.

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**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in Bill C-30, the government seeks to regulate contracts between farmers and grain companies, but it is not clear what kind of regulation. They should in fact table the draft regulations.

One problem is the so-called basis calculation, meaning how grain companies discount world prices to set the actual Prairie price paid to farmers. Farmers call this deduction "tookage", and it has never been bigger than it is today.

Would Bill C-30 force transparency and put some limits on this grain company cash grab that is gobbling up about half of the farmers' price?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Wascana has pointed out a portion of the new legislative package, Bill C-30, and the regulatory capacity under that. As he well knows, witnesses will be there all this week at the SCAAF committee, talking about this very issue.

What we have in mind is for the ability of farmers to have some reciprocity when a contract is issued by a grain company, so they actually have some power to push back. Right now, there is only buyer's preference. We would like to see something from the farmers' perspective that would give them some leverage as well.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the impact of the grain transportation and supply chain crisis goes far beyond the lack of grain cars. Lost sales are leaving many producers without funds to pay their bills or put in a crop this spring, yet the government cut AgriStability in half and it slashed access even more. Further, the government cut the AgriInvest contributions from the government, which seriously undermines the economic safety net for producers.

Will the government reconsider its lack of support for farm safety nets and income protection for the farm community?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member's lack of knowledge about the agricultural safety nets probably underscores why he was moved from that particular station.

At the end of the day, farmers have access to far more. They have increased value in their crop insurance. They now have livestock price insurance available to them. A number of things have come forward that are much more usable, bankable, and predictable than AgriStability or AgriInvest ever were.

We continue to build a solid business risk safety net system for farmers.

\* \* \*

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the misleading answer given by the minister. The whole question of whether or not phone banks should be covered has nothing to do with the volunteers at the local level; it is all about central national party databanks. It is also about the central national party databank that will be making all the fundraising calls that are exempted from the expense limit under this act, which the minister said would be covered by the voter contact registry scheme. It is not.

Why is the minister misleading Canadians?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is indeed wrong, and very wrong again.

There are three types of calls. There are automated calls, which must be registered under the fair elections act.

There are telemarketing calls, which are probably the largest number, and they involve hiring professional firms that make tens of thousands, in fact, hundreds of thousands of calls. Those calls must be registered, and the scripts must be retained.

Then, there are calls that are done by parties themselves, almost exclusively by volunteers. They do include the volunteer calls, the types of which I just described, and no, we are not going to bury these people in red tape.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to our questions about the IPCC report on the effects of climate change, the minister did not once use the words "climate change". Perhaps that is because she does not believe in it, even though her part of the country is melting at an accelerating rate.

We need to regulate the oil and gas sectors if we want to combat climate change. Why is the minister refusing to take immediate action?

[English]

**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 protecting the environment while keeping the Canadian economy strong. Thanks to our actions, carbon emissions will go down by close to 130 megatonnes, compared to what they would have been under the Liberals. This is equivalent to shutting down 37 coal-fired electricity plants, and we are accomplishing this without the Liberal and NDP carbon tax, which would raise the price of everything.

\* \* \*

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last night, the NDP proved once again that it cannot be trusted to manage the economy and that it is unfit to govern. This is not a joke.

Last night the anti-trade party stood in the House and voted against yet another job-creating free trade agreement.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade please explain how this agreement, and others like it, will benefit job creators in the Peace Country, which I represent, and the rest of northern Alberta?

**Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for that question and his personal efforts to grow our trade relationships. Yesterday, we saw the anti-trade NDP rear its head again, when its members voted against the Canada-Honduras free trade agreement.

Whether it is our blockbuster European deal, the Korean, our first deal in Asia, or even a smaller deal in our own hemisphere, the NDP opposes trade and the one in five jobs that come from it.

*Oral Questions*

I can assure the member that Peace Country will benefit from this agreement in a big way.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CANADA POST**

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are saying that they can no longer rely on Canada Post's services.

Canada Post has raised its prices and reduced its services at the expense of those who depend on postal services, including small businesses. These businesses are saying that their invoices are no longer received on time, that payments are no longer delivered on time and that there are weeks when their mail is not delivered. How could the government have let this happen?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada Post has, through this government, a charter which it upheld, and it indicates in the charter the service levels that are expected. Because of the complaints we have been receiving recently, we have asked the department to contact Canada Post, because it is an arm's-length organization, to report to us on its efforts, and indeed on its progress with respect to this charter.

\* \* \*

**SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, time and time again, Conservatives refuse to help small businesses, leaving them on their own to fight skyrocketing credit card processing fees. In its decision on merchant fees, the Competition Tribunal took the highly unusual step of saying that the proper solution will require a regulatory framework. Now there are two class action lawsuits looming because of the government's inaction.

When will the new Minister of Finance listen to small business and do what his predecessor refused to do? Will he cap merchant fees and put an end to this gouging?

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have heard the concerns of small business and introduced a code of conduct. The code has been welcomed by consumers and industry groups, especially small business. We continually monitor compliance. We are working with small business and consumers to ensure that both are heard. However, the NDP and the Liberals have voted against the accord and against supporting small businesses and consumers.

\* \* \*

• (1505)

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in 2003, the Yukon Territories signed its devolution agreement. Since that time, it has enjoyed 10 years of positive GDP growth.

Today marks the first day that the Northwest Territories devolution agreement will come into effect, and northern constituents are wondering if the fantastic Minister of the Canadian Northern

Economic Development Agency could update the House on the benefits of the Northwest Territories devolution agreement.

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the milestone is a result of years of consultations, and many northerners have worked very hard for this day. I want to personally congratulate the premier and his cabinet, and many aboriginal leaders, for the historic achievement.

I firmly believe that northerners are best placed to make important decisions on their lands and resources. This historic agreement will enable people from the Northwest Territories to manage their land, their water, and natural resources. This is key to creating jobs and building a stronger north and a prosperous—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Windsor West.

\* \* \*

**CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS**

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since signing the crossing agreement, the new Windsor-Detroit bridge project, often referred to as Canada's top infrastructure priority, has been utterly mismanaged by the Conservative government. The latest problem is that the U.S. government is refusing to say who will pay the \$250 million needed for the U.S. customs plaza.

Could the minister assure Canadians that they will not be on the hook or front the money for the cost of building the U.S. government's customs plaza in Detroit?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to talk about this incredible project because this is a project that is going to help to create jobs. It is going to add to our growth and our long-term prosperity. It is an incredibly ambitious and bold project, and I am very proud of the work that our government is doing on it and has done on it.

Indeed, we have included money in the budget for 2014 to ensure we can move ahead on this project and get it done. Of course, we are committed to paying our fair share, and we expect as well that the United States will pay and be responsible for its share. We will continue to talk with our partners in the U.S., and we will continue to work on this bridge.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE**

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government is in its own world when it comes to the Champlain Bridge. It rejected requests from Quebec, Montreal and Longueuil and all the partners to create a joint office for the project and is obsessed with imposing a toll. This shows that it is out of touch with Quebec. The same goes for economic spinoffs. Yesterday the federal government met with companies from all over the world that are interested in the lucrative contract to build the bridge, but it has not proposed anything to ensure that Quebec companies will be eligible for the contract.

Will the Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs guarantee that Quebec companies will get their fair share of the economic spinoffs?

**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, the preamble to the member's question was incorrect. We had more than 80 meetings with representatives from the Government of Quebec, more than 80 meetings with municipal representatives and just as many meetings with business people. We were extremely proud to see that 400 companies came to the open house for information yesterday. We want the bridge project to come in on time and on budget.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Glen Abernethy, Minister of Health and Social Services for the Northwest Territories.

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

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

#### RESIGNATION OF MEMBER

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of order. This will be the last time I rise to speak in the House. Effective immediately, I am tendering my resignation as the member of Parliament for Scarborough—Agincourt.

It has been over 25 years since I walked into this place, and I still get goose bumps every time I walk in here. There was an article written in the *Toronto Star* on December 18, 1988 by Susan Kastner, which concluded:

The national news cameras caught [the member for Scarborough—Agincourt] strolling to the Senate ballot box to cast his vote for Speaker. The diamond-pattern red tie blazed and his face, as he took it all in, was the face of a fellow who was having the time of his life.

I have to admit that over those 25 years, I have had the time of my life.

This is a place where one can make a difference. I think I have made a difference. This has been possible with the continued support of my family.

The same article describes when I was sworn in for the first time:  
Smoothing their taffeta and organza dresses, the four little girls spilled into the halls.

It was describing my four daughters, Emily, Penny, Joanna, and Gina on the occasion of my first swearing in ceremony.

My family has grown since then. Toula and I have another daughter, Dina, who is now 23. We have two son-in-laws, Mike and Jeremy, and a few waiting in the wings.

#### Routine Proceedings

We hear about a lot of hanky-panky going on here. In the same article, I said:

You hear things about the Ottawa cocktail circuit. Me, I'm very, very close to my family. I'm proud to say I've been married 13 years. Never even looked at another woman....

I am proud to say that this has not changed. I am even more in love with my wife today than the first time I saw her 38 years ago, and I thank her, my daughters, my sons, and my mother. The article goes on:

As his son swore to honor the Queen, tears came into Kosta Karygiannis' eyes. Afterwards, he pressed his son to him hard, and kissed him on each cheek.

Unfortunately, my father passed away last year and we truly miss him. My mother is getting on in age. She will be 85 soon, and I need to spend more time with her.

Then there is my staff who have supported me over the years. On my current staff, Kathy Gooch, my executive assistant, has been with me for close to 21 years; Margot Doey-Vick, for ten years; and there are Nick Manta; Lori Sweetapple; Shirley He; Annie Zhou; Letitia Lee; Daron Mardirossian; and Debra Dorion.

There have been other staff who were with me for a long time. Here, the article continues:

Jim left Toronto at 2:30 in the morning, driving all the way with Ian Perkins, his executive assistant. They had to make an unexpected stop in Kemptville, because Perkins' '78 Mustang ran out of gas.

Ian Perkins was with me for 16 years; Nina Adamo, 16 years; and there are Robert Kernoghan; Anton Kanagasuntheri; Steve Chatzibasile and Aglaia Kalogeropoulos, now married to each other; Vicky Balogiannis; Zain Dossal; Frank Caligiuri; Laura Maria Nikolareizi; Demetre Dellis; Grace Miao; Mandy Lo; Tina Kapelos; Shana Ramsay; and many more who were summer students or interns. I thank them all.

Then there are the volunteers who helped me get elected and then re-elected time and time again. On May 2, 2011, election day, we had close to 1,000 volunteers, scrutineering, getting the vote out, calling voters to vote, and driving food to volunteers.

While, unfortunately, other Liberal ridings were going down, we were able to get the highest Liberal plurality west of the Maritimes.

I sincerely thank all my volunteers over the years and look forward to working with them very soon.

However, the people I want to thank the most are the constituents of Scarborough—Agincourt. They put their trust in me time and time again for eight continuous terms. I am proud to have served the people of Scarborough—Agincourt and hope to continue to serve them in the future in another capacity.

I am leaving this place to be closer to my family and spend time more time with them. Being here has not allowed me to pass by my mother's home every night and see her before I go home. I am looking forward to doing just that.

● (1510)

In the article I quoted earlier, I said:

*Routine Proceedings*

Three weeks ago, the morning after I won my daughters said to me, 'Dad, now can you drive us to school?' Gosh, it hasn't hit them yet, their dad isn't gonna be able to drive them to school again for a long, long time. Oh, it's gonna be tough. The first morning when the kids wake up and find daddy's not there, and the wife reaches over in bed and finds that empty space....

Well, there will not be an empty space and maybe in the near future, God willing, I will be able to drive grandkids to school.

Then there is this place and the colleagues whom I started with and the colleagues who have moved on in private or public life. There has been the Liberal Party that, to me, is my political family. There have been nine leaders whom I have served under: the Rt. Hon. John Turner, the Hon. Herb Gray, the Rt. Hon. Jean Chrétien, the Rt. Hon. Paul Martin, the Hon. Bill Graham, the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Michael Ignatieff, the Hon. Bob Rae, and the member for Papineau. There have been colleagues from the other parties for whom I have much respect and others with whom I have had a difference and I will remember.

I am sure that in the next election, coming in the near future, there will be a collegial fight, and in my heart and mind the Liberal Party will form the next government. I am entitled to my own opinion. I want to wish my Liberal colleagues good luck in the upcoming election. I look forward to working hard to return a Liberal as the member of Parliament for Scarborough—Agincourt and to see my party form the next government.

Over the years, I have served in many different positions in the House and on committees. I have worked and advocated for many communities and groups. I will continue to work with and advocate for rights and privileges in this country and around the world. I have travelled, advocating and watching democracy and human rights evolve around the world. I have led trade missions and spoken about Canada on four continents and made many friends with international leaders, members of legislative bodies, governors, first ministers, and prime ministers. I am humbled to call these people my friends. I will continue working with them for a better world.

Do not be surprised, Mr. Speaker, if you see me in the future in these halls advocating and fighting for the underdog. The Rt. Hon. Paul Martin wrote in a letter on November 22, 2013, to mark my 25th anniversary in the House, the following:

Since he was elected [he] has been a powerful advocate for his constituents who he loves and cares for as few other members of Parliament do. He built a legendary reputation in Ottawa, fighting for the most vulnerable among us. Reuniting families and combating injustice are in particular close to his heart. As Prime Minister, it was my pleasure to ask [him] to join the Privy Council and serve as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport where he worked hard to keep Canadians safer and the economy firing on all cylinders.

[He] can out campaign and out organize above anyone. He has built an impressive record of election victories over the years and has shared that expertise with grassroots Liberals in ridings across Canada. His strength and support have been invaluable to me and to the Liberal Party of Canada.

There are very few people who have the capability to organize and help others to get elected. Many people say I am the last samurai of our party.

I have made reference to working with my volunteers in the immediate future and continuing to serve the constituents of Scarborough—Agincourt. I will be running in the next municipal election for the position of councillor in the City of Toronto for Ward 39 Scarborough—Agincourt. The current councillor, whom I helped

get elected and who has done tremendous work, Mike Del Grande, announced a few months ago that he will not be seeking re-election. I will continue working and fighting for the issues that are important to the people of Scarborough—Agincourt: new immigrants and providing settlement services for them; ensuring that our local hospital, Scarborough Grace, remains open and functions as a complete hospital; upgrading our public transit and bringing the subway to Scarborough and Sheppard Avenue; and ensuring that our neighbourhoods are safe places to live and raise our children.

● (1515)

I would like to thank all of the people across this country and in many places around the world whom I have worked with, helped, and from whom I have received help in return, who have made a difference in my life and my work here in the House of Commons.

As I depart this place, I would like to mention two people who are special to me, my political mentors Styli Pappas and Judi Longfield. I would like to thank my wife, who is here with me today. I would like to thank my staff. I would like to thank my family and my mother.

I say a special thank you to my political family, the Liberal Party, and the Liberal leader, the member for Papineau.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of a long-time, dedicated member of the House, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt. Over the years, he has held a number of positions, both in opposition and in government, including as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and the Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal .

● (1520)

[Translation]

Throughout his career, this member has made his riding, which is one of the most ethnically diverse in Canada, his priority.

[English]

For 25 years now, he has embodied what it means to be a constituency MP. There is no better reflection of his dedication to his constituents than the fact they elected him to this chamber in eight straight elections.

Today, we remember the member's dedication to relief efforts following many natural and humanitarian disasters. He never shied away from calling for action, notably following the 2010 floods in Pakistan, the devastating earthquakes in China and Haiti, and the typhoons that have ravaged a number of southeast Asian countries in recent years.

I would also like to recognize the member's role in 2008, when he travelled as an official election observer to Pakistan. He has also witnessed elections in Somaliland and Russia.

[Translation]

We know him as a passionate man who has never been afraid to express his opinions.

*Routine Proceedings*

[*English*]

Proud of his Greek heritage, his is a story shared by millions of immigrants who arrived on these shores and created new lives for themselves.

On behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada and our parliamentary caucus, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and best wishes to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt and his whole family, knowing that his father is up there somewhere, still beaming with pride. I know I join with many in the House in wishing him only the best.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House to thank a colleague, a friend, and a fellow member of a community that I am proud to belong to, the Greek Canadian community.

The news that my colleague will be resigning today came as a surprise to me. Only a few short days ago, we talked about common interests. We talked, in fact, on March 25, a day that is important to us both and to many Greeks in Canada and around the world.

Even so, here we are today and I rise in the House on behalf of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party to thank our colleague for his service and his commitment to his constituents and to our country.

Regardless of political differences, I stand here to acknowledge the tremendous work done by the member for Scarborough—Agincourt and to recognize the tremendous commitment and service he has given to our country.

I want to especially acknowledge the way that he has blazed the trail, when it comes to issues of human rights that are important to many people who live in the diasporas in Canada.

I want to recognize his work in putting forward the private member's bill that finally recognized the death of 1.5 million Armenians as a genocide.

I want to thank him for his work around the importance of recognizing the Greek province of Macedonia as being an integral part of the Hellenic Republic.

I want to recognize his work in ensuring that Canada's trade interests were not exercised at the expense of the security of the Greek people, or anyone in our world.

I want to recognize the way he has been a strong champion. I have had the honour of working with him on the issue of justice for Cypriots and recognizing that the issues faced by Cypriots, no matter what side they live on, are issues that Canada can help address and that there must be justice for Cypriots today.

I want to particularly recognize the way in which he has been an important force in a very important community in Canada. Again, despite our political differences, I have only appreciated the strong voice he has been for Greek Canadians, for Canadians of all backgrounds, including Armenian Canadians, Kurdish Canadians, and others, in the fight for human rights and recognition.

We are fortunate to live in a country like Canada that has been built by many. Canada only becomes stronger when we recognize

the importance of recognizing everyone's human rights at home and abroad.

I want to thank my colleague, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt, for being a tireless voice for human rights, for the diasporas in Canada, and for showing that children of immigrants and those born abroad can become not just great Canadians but also leaders and take our country forward in ways our parents could only be proud of.

I want to thank him very much.

[*Member spoke in Greek*]

• (1525)

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join my colleagues in the House in wishing the member for Scarborough—Agincourt all the very best after this announcement today. I think I may be one of the few people in the House who was here when he was first elected back in 1988. I remember it very well.

The representative for the NDP pointed out his enthusiasm and determination with respect to human rights issues. I actually do remember that, going back to the late 1980s and early 1990s in the House, and so it was of particular interest to me when I had the opportunity to come back in 2004.

Mr. Speaker, you might remember that you and I were members of the transport committee when he was the parliamentary secretary to the transport minister. So we had the opportunity to work with him on that committee. Again, he brought that same determination, that enthusiasm, and that commitment to that role that he has demonstrated over the years.

I am glad to have the opportunity to wish him all the very best. It is not an easy career to choose. It is very few who ever get the opportunity to serve for about twenty-five and a half straight years, but the hon. member has been able to do that.

Again, I join everyone in the House in wishing him all the very best in the future.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to join my colleagues in saying farewell to our friend. Twenty-five years in politics is quite a commitment. It is also very rare. Twenty-five years of service to our constituents, regardless of the political party we serve and the political ideas we defend, is always an honour for the person who achieves it.

It is with regret that I see him go. I think that every time a member leaves, the entire House of Commons loses a member of its big democratic family.

*Business of Supply*

I know that he has some regret about leaving us because he had hoped to become the dean of the House of Commons. Indeed, he would have been my successor had I left. At one point, he told me that I should not run in the next election because he wanted to be in the chair for the first day of a new Parliament. He wanted me to leave so that he could hold that position. Today, he is the one leaving and I am the one who will run again in the next election. It is the opposite, but I know that he would have made a very good dean of the House.

I wish him all the best in the new municipal career he wants to start in beautiful Toronto. I will close by thanking him for helping democracy grow and develop in the House of Commons with through his actions, suggestions and wonderful speeches.

[English]

**The Speaker:** As the Minister of National Defence mentioned, I had the pleasure of serving with the hon. member on the transport committee on my entrance to this place in 2004, and I would just add my voice to those wishing him the very best in his future endeavours.

He did not always make my job an easy one, but he certainly made it a memorable one. I wish him the best in whatever life brings him now.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1530)

[English]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member has five minutes left to conclude his remarks.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I too want to say a couple of words of congratulations to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt on his many years in this place. One thing is for certain, that his love and affection for his family is something that we have all known and something that, when I was first elected, he talked to me about. I congratulate the hon. member and wish him good luck.

I want to complete what I was talking about before question period, and that is how disappointed I am that a motion like this was brought forward in the House. An entire day has been devoted to talking about the fact, as the Leader of the Opposition in question period said, that in over eight years, somebody has joined the Prime Minister on the government Challenger jet five times.

Let us take a look at what the government has done with respect to the Challenger jets. This is a government that, when in opposition, campaigned on the fact that the use of the Challenger jet was out of control by the previous Liberal government. We campaigned on the fact that when we were elected, we would change how that is done and would significantly reduce the use of Challenger jets. The use of the Challenger jet by both the Prime Minister and members of cabinet has been reduced by some 75% since we become

government. What that has enabled us to do is to sell four of the six Challenger jets because they are just not being used.

Moreover, this Prime Minister put in place something new, which was that when the Challenger was going to be used for non-governmental purposes, the equivalent cost of a commercial flight would be reimbursed to the Department of National Defence. That is why the Conservative Party has repaid thousands of dollars to the Department of National Defence and why, in instances where the Prime Minister has used the Challenger for personal reasons because he cannot fly any other way but through secure government aircraft, he also reimburses the taxpayers the equivalent cost.

We also heard during question period today the Leader of the Opposition say that he could not find any equivalent fares that were paid by some individuals. I have in my hand the fares of WestJet. It is a commercial airline. The opposition was unable to find fares. I found 12. I will stop at 12, but the list goes on. The fares are \$282, \$261, \$266.10, \$261.58, \$266.10, and on and on.

Ultimately, with this motion New Democrats have clearly signified that they actually have nothing to talk about of any substance because they know, like all Canadians know, that when it comes to issues that actually matter to Canadians—balancing the budget, cutting taxes, supporting small, medium and large job creators—this government is on the right track.

Moreover, when we talk about the Canadian Armed Forces, Canadians know that it was this government which ended the decade of darkness we inherited from the Liberal Party and increased the budget for our armed forces by some 27%. We bought new aircraft, the Globemaster. We all remember the sad spectacle when there were international crises and Canada had to beg and borrow from our international allies to get our troops around the world. Those days are done and our allies know that they can always count on Canada.

The list goes on. It is this government and the leadership of this Prime Minister and this cabinet and the support, of course, of all members of Parliament on the Conservative side that have helped restore Canada, that have seen us through the global economic downturn. New Democrats are bringing silly motions like this forward because they know full well that on all the issues that matter to Canadians, this government is on the right side of Canadians and will continue to be.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in listening to the member, I understand that if he looks, it is possible to find a fare to \$200 and some—I think the figure that is used for the repayment is \$260—but the seats on those airplanes will not provide access to the Prime Minister.

People travelling on the Challenger jet are travelling as part of an inner circle. We can look at Mr. Kihn and his association with the Conservative Party, the fundraising and all of the things he has done. I am not impugning the work he has done on behalf of the party, but it is understandable that Canadians would question this and wonder about it. It is obvious that people would question why this individual is entitled to spend that kind of personal time with the Prime Minister.

*Business of Supply*

•(1535)

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, this is a close personal friend of the Prime Minister. He has been a long-time close personal friend from long before he was actually elected Prime Minister, long before he was elected leader of our party, and long before he was elected leader of the Canadian Alliance Party before that. Is the NDP actually suggesting that once one becomes Prime Minister of our country, one is no longer entitled to have friends and that is all done? Does the Leader of the Opposition not have his friends over to Stornoway, the government-funded residence for the Leader of the Opposition? Does he not bring people in his taxpayer-funded limousine? I think he probably does. I do not think there is anything wrong with that.

The Leader of the Opposition himself indicated that it was five times over eight years. We are devoting one full day of debate in the House of Commons to discuss five occasions when a good friend of the Prime Minister was on a Challenger jet with the Prime Minister and actually repaid the cost of that flight. When Canadians take a look at this, they will understand and know full well why they can no longer trust the NDP. It is because they stand for nothing.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned equivalent cost. I am curious. When he talks about equivalent cost of seats, is he seriously trying to tell the House that a seat on a private jet is the same as an economy seat on a chartered flight?

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister of Canada can only travel on a secure government jet. He can only travel on the Airbus or the Challenger. He has no opportunity to travel on any other type of government aircraft.

Is the hon. gentleman suggesting that when the Prime Minister of our country travels on the Challenger jet, no one can travel with him? In essence, what the opposition is saying is no one can ever travel with the Prime Minister. He cannot have any friends, and if he does, it is not good enough just to pay what a commercial equivalent would be. One would have to pay thousands of dollars more, so no one would ever be allowed to be on that Challenger jet. That makes no sense.

I do not think Canadians would expect that type of standard. Canadians understand the job of a prime minister is a very difficult one. When they look at what we have done by reducing the use of the Challenger jet by some 75%, allowing us to actually sell four of the six jets, and when they look at the thousands of dollars the Prime Minister has personally repaid because he is forced to travel in this fashion, they know we are on the right side of Canadians. They look at this motion and see a silly NDP doing silly things to try to score cheap political points. That is why the NDP will always be on that side of the House.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, sometimes I think my colleague across the way protesteth a little too much. What we are talking about here is not the Prime Minister's ability to have friends or that he should not have friends, nor are we questioning his ability to travel with his family on the Challenger jet. What is being debated here today is use of those resources for partisan affairs and for friends of the Prime Minister to be travelling on a government plane. Two hundred and sixty dollars during the peak period just does not cut it. No one believes it.

Whether it is more or less, can my colleague justify that the Prime Minister can use the jet for business other than government business and for business other than transporting his family for security reasons?

•(1540)

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, yes. The Prime Minister is not supposed to just stay in Ottawa. The Prime Minister, like any other Canadian, is entitled to take time off. He is entitled to vacation. His job is not to sit at Sussex Drive like some kind of captive and not move, and God forbid he should actually take a flight somewhere else. He does not have the option to call up WestJet and book a flight. He does not have that option. He can only travel on secure government aircraft. He has no other option.

What the member is saying is passing ridiculous. She herself admitted that she had not researched any part of this issue. She had no idea of who was actually on the Challenger jets, yet she is coming before the House trying to waste an entire day on a topic she did not even research.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. At no time did I say I did not have any of the information. I said my information may not be as extensive as his.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I do not think that is a point of order. This often occurs when we have a dispute as to what was said.

Does the hon. parliamentary secretary wish to make a comment?

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to table, in both French and English, two pages of fares from WestJet indicating the actual costs. The member for Newton—North Delta just said that there were no such fares. There are some 12 fares.

I seek unanimous consent to do that so that I can provide the additional information that the member was just looking for.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to table these documents?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** There is no consent. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate that I will be sharing my speaking time with the hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

I am pleased to rise in the House today, on this opposition day, to speak to the motion brought forward by my colleague from Timmins—James Bay. I will read it for the benefit of my constituents.

*Business of Supply*

That, in the opinion of the House, government planes, and in particular the plane used by the Prime Minister, should only be used for government purposes and should not be used to transport anyone other than those associated with such purposes or those required for the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family.

Here is the reason we brought forward this motion. Just last week, a reporter from iPolitics discovered that a government plane, paid for by taxpayers, had been used to fly Mark Kihn, one of the Prime Minister's good friends and one of the government's main fundraisers. In our opinion, the issue is important enough for us to take a day to discuss it.

Today, Conservative members are trying to undermine our position by saying that this is not important, that we should not have set aside a day for it, and that we should be talking about the economy instead. Personally, I feel that it is an economic issue. The government says that certain services have to be eliminated and that it will not be able to make federal health transfers at previous levels because there is not enough money. However, we can see clearly that the Prime Minister is using taxpayers' money to help his Conservative buddies. Therefore, this is an economic issue, in my opinion.

It is also an ethical issue. The Prime Minister is fine with flying one of his friends around the country at a ridiculous cost. I too would really like to be able to say to my friends that I will use taxpayers' money to show them a good time and that if they need to get to such and such a province, I will organize a meeting with some people there and slip it into the expenses for my parliamentary work. That would get them a free trip. Things do not work like that in Canada. Unfortunately, it is an issue for which the current government and the Prime Minister fought when the Liberals were committing the same kinds of swindles. Once again, here we are confronted with a done deal, and that does deserve our attention for a day.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister said that we think the Prime Minister should not have any free time and should not spend any time with his friends. He thinks that we are mean because we do not want him to have a social life. That is not at all what we are talking about today. We are talking about the fact that the Prime Minister travels in a secure plane. Even though I do not share his political opinions, I think it is important that the Prime Minister, his family and his children travel in a secure plane. A country like ours must ensure that he receives the protection he needs. If that protection comes in the form of a secure plane, that is fine by me. However, if one of his friends boards that plane, and if that friend is the guy who runs Conservative fundraising campaigns, he should pay more than \$260 to board the plane. That just makes sense.

The parliamentary secretary is trying to convince us that the Prime Minister's jet provides the same class of transportation as a WestJet plane. I have news for him. Maybe he does not fly WestJet, but I can tell him that the experience is not at all the same. We are talking about a private jet with food and alcohol.

I would like to talk about the hourly cost to operate that plane. I do not have the numbers in front of me, but it costs taxpayers \$11,000 per hour to fly the Challenger. Now they are saying that the Prime Minister's friend, who is probably rich enough to pay more, should not have to pay more. The Conservatives are trying to convince us that this is good for taxpayers and that the \$260 will go back to them.

I think that is shameful sophistry. That is why we wanted to spend the day talking about it.

Now I would like to read an alarming quote from the Prime Minister in 2005, during the Liberal reign, which was just as murky.

• (1545)

We have seen the Prime Minister flying around the country on Challenger jets doing a few hours of government work, then spending the rest of the time campaigning and fundraising, often at exclusive cocktail parties where big Liberal donors pay \$5,000 a ticket to discuss public business. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss. The Liberal culture of entitlement goes on. The public must be given a chance to put an end to it.

Who said that? Our current Prime Minister, right before the end of the Liberal reign. I am tempted to say the same thing to him now and ask if he thinks this is all right. I find this a little disheartening.

Sometimes I walk around my riding and meet young people and seniors alike. I often visit low-income housing areas, which people seem to like. They tell me that it is the first time an MP has come to meet them and make them feel important. They often ask me questions, especially about my age. They like seeing a young woman in her 30s who is active in politics. They ask me what it is like in Parliament, and whether they can still trust our system. When these people ask me that question, I sometimes think of scandals like this one and I have to think about how to answer them. Can they still trust our system?

Sometimes I feel as though if I say "no", that politicians can no longer be trusted, I will destroy all their hopes. However, my conscience always tells me to look at what the Prime Minister and his cabinet are doing, and look at what the Liberals did in the past.

This is Canada. We have a wealth of natural resources and raw materials. We have good universities and can become the richest country in the world. However, Canadians have been fucked over by the government so often that many are living in poverty. People have to use food banks because they cannot make ends meet. Seniors often come to see me. They have rotten teeth and need to go to the dentist, but they cannot afford to go and are not doing well. Then people ask me if they can still trust our political system. I am tempted to tell them to ask the Prime Minister, because my own trust is somewhat lacking right now.

However, I do not want to say no to them. I try to tell them that there are good people in every party. I hope that a new party will be elected soon because people want a change. There are honest people. Some members do good work for their constituents. Some Conservatives, Liberals, independents and members of our party have values and are ethical.

However, we have a Prime Minister who is willing to fly his friends around to participate in fundraisers. We have a government that introduces bills to completely change our electoral system, which will change the democracy of our country. I find that disheartening.

*Business of Supply*

What I find even more disheartening is to see that the Conservative members are not even listening to me. We moved a motion and, since this morning, we have been hearing a lot of sophistry. They try to ridicule our arguments. They do not even have the decency to listen to what we are saying. If they engaged in this discussion, then they might realize that this is indeed an abuse of public money. If they truly believed in ethics and respecting public money, then they might ask for more from the people who travel in our Challenger jets.

We are simply asking that the Prime Minister stop bringing people with him on his plane because it is a secure aircraft and it is the Prime Minister's plane. It is not a limousine or a flying taxi. This plane should not be used for the Prime Minister's friends. It is a plane that should be there for his safety.

If the Prime Minister wants to take some time to go see his friends, then he is free to do so. A Prime Minister does not work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 12 months a year. The Prime Minister just has to pick up the phone if he wants to talk. If he is on a plane and he wants to have a conversation, then he can pick up the phone and talk to his friend. I find this disheartening.

• (1550)

I hope that the members who still have a bit of sway in their caucus will stand up and remind their colleagues that they fought for ethics. It is important to fight for ethics and I thought it was meaningful that they fought against the Liberals because the Liberals had a culture of abusing public money. Nonetheless, once a party is in power it still has to stand for ethics, which the Conservatives currently are not.

[English]

**Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you review the *Hansard* transcript of what the member was just saying. I believe she used unparliamentary language, the f-word.

The f-bomb in French and English both start with *f*, and they both kind of translate to the same meaning. I do not believe that is parliamentary language that we should be adopting here. She may admire the Liberal leader for dropping the f-bomb this weekend at a charity event, but we do not need to start emulating that type of language in the chamber.

What is kind of laughable is that this is all the NDP has to talk about today. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister has already said today, there are only eight occasions in the last eight years when private individuals have accompanied the Prime Minister on the Challenger. In each and every case, those individuals have paid commercial fare to accompany the Prime Minister to go to an event.

The opposition has agreed that the Prime Minister has to travel by government plane. That is the only way that is safe and secure. Often when he is travelling on personal business or partisan business, he will be accompanied by family members or close personal friends. Those people who accompany him also pay their way. Whether they are flying on commercial flights or on the Challenger, they are paying their way according to commercial rates. The taxpayers have been refunded. This whole debate is just ridiculous.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Before we go to the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, I take it that the parliamentary secretary is wanting to raise a point of order on his first comment. I did not hear anything unparliamentary, but, of course, we will check the record and get back to the House as the need may be.

The hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

[Translation]

**Ms. Isabelle Morin:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague said that it happened eight times in the past eight years and that there are more important matters. Even if it happened only once, it would be one time too many.

This is not about whether or not eight times is too many. It amounts to one misuse of public funds every year. My colleague said that it did not happen often enough to be taken seriously and to represent an ethical problem. Really? What are they talking about? That does not make sense. If I steal something from a grocery store, I am not going to tell my constituents that it is not serious because it only happened eight times. However, that is what my colleague is saying. That is ridiculous.

With respect to the other part of his question, the f-word is not part of my vocabulary. However, he says that I said it. If that is the case, I apologize, because I did not mean to. However, I really do not believe that I used such colourful language in the House.

• (1555)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the member's comments, she talked about the misuse of public funds and made reference to the Liberal Party. I find it somewhat interesting that it was not that long ago, days or possibly a week, when the leader of the official opposition, the leader of her party, the New Democrats, took money that had been allocated for staffing of the leader's office to establish "outreach" offices in provinces like Saskatchewan and Quebec.

In essence, these outreach offices are no more than political party offices that are being established at the taxpayers' expense. That is the reality of what the leader of the NDP is doing.

I question the member on whether she would apply the same code of ethics to the leader of her own political party and the manner in which he is abusing tax dollars, and make the suggestion that he should repay that money to Revenue Canada.

If the NDP is going to have a political office in Saskatchewan, it should be the NDP that pays for the office, not the taxpayer.

[Translation]

**Ms. Isabelle Morin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

It is typical of the Liberal Party to say that it would seem that a few weeks ago the leader may have misused public funds. The use of the conditional in that sentence indicates that it cannot be true.

*Business of Supply*

I invite my colleague to come to my Montreal office. I will show him what our employees do. In my case, my employees prepare householders and help me write press releases, among other things. They are completely non-partisan. They help me with my work as an MP and not with my partisan work. We have never engaged in that kind of activity.

The Liberals and Conservatives are all about entitlement. When they form the government, they raid the public purse for partisan ends. That has been going on for far too long in our country.

It is time to put an end to this charade and to elect an ethical party that will do things differently and stand by its principles for a long time, even if it is in power for a long time.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** With respect to the recent point of order raised by the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, I recognize that the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine has withdrawn the remark in her comments. On that basis, I will consider the issue closed.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the NDP motion before us about the misuse of taxpayers' dollars.

It seems that the Prime Minister and his friends have been wracking up flights on government Challenger aircraft as if these jets are their own personal planes. Access to Information documents reveal that the Prime Minister is increasingly using Challenger jets, not only for his own family's travel, but for personal friends and Conservative Party fundraisers.

Furthermore, the government has changed the rules so that it only has to reimburse taxpayers an amount equivalent to economy class airfare. Those jets cost nearly \$4,000 an hour to fly, yet the Conservatives, after changing the rules in their favour, only reimbursed taxpayers an average of \$260 a flight. Wow. No wonder they are using these jets so frequently for personal and partisan reasons; they get to travel like rock stars but pay seat sale rates.

When average Canadians are looking to book a flight, they tend to go online, compare prices and schedules, then choose the best deal. They wait for seats to go on sale because they have a budget to worry about. However, not the Conservatives. They have devised quite the scheme to get taxpayers to subsidize their non-government-related travel.

iPolitics, through an access to information request for documents, found that the Conservative Party has reimbursed the Department of National Defence 17 times, for a total cost of over \$37,000, but the actual cost of the flights in question is about \$118,000. Let us not forget that taxpayers were also on the hook last year for about \$50,000 for a paint job for one of these jets, after the Conservatives decided to paint it Conservative colours.

I speak on behalf of the majority of British Columbians when I say that the Conservative Party is unrecognizable from the party that people once hoped would come to Ottawa to clean up the Liberal legacy of corruption and entitlement. The Conservatives said they

would make changes once in Ottawa, but instead Ottawa has changed them. I have three examples to illustrate this point.

The first example is with respect to the Senate. The Conservatives promised not to nominate new senators but went ahead and appointed 59 of their closest friends, including Pamela Wallin, Mike Duffy, and Patrick Brazeau. The Senate is under investigation. A Senate expense scandal showed a complete disregard for ethics and transparency. The NDP says that it is time to roll up that red carpet. The record of the Conservatives on the Senate shows they are no different from the Liberals when it comes to a sense of entitlement.

The second example is with respect to the Conservatives abuse of Parliament, specifically time allocation. The Conservatives have shut down debate more than 50 times over the past two years. That is more than any other government in Canadian history. There is a constant use of in-camera proceedings in committees, thereby shutting Canadians out of the proceedings. That severely restricts studies. The Conservatives also pick pro-government witnesses.

When it comes to contempt, the 2011 election was triggered after the Conservatives were found to be in contempt of Parliament for misleading parliamentarians and refusing to provide key details on proposed bills and their cost estimates. The Conservatives record of abusing Parliament as a democratic institution shows they are no different from the Liberals when it comes to transparency and accountability.

The third example is with respect to the Conservatives unfair elections act. The bill would remove powers from the Chief Electoral Officer. That individual would be stripped of investigative powers as well as the power to engage in public education. The bill would make voting much harder for vulnerable Canadians. It would end the practice of vouching, and voter ID cards would no longer be accepted to confirm identification. The unfair elections bill would change political financing rules in favour of the Conservatives. It would increase allowable levels for individuals to contribute, from \$1,200 to \$1,500, and it would give an advantage to wealthy Canadians by allowing—

● (1600)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order. The hon. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs is rising on a point of order.

**Hon. Lynne Yelich:** Mr. Speaker, I have to check what the debate is about. I thought we did the elections debate yesterday. If we are on the debate that I thought we were on, I think the member is being very irrelevant.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I thank the hon. minister of state for her intervention. Members know that there are rules with respect to relevance to the question before the House. I know there have been points raised on this matter earlier in the day during this debate. I recognize that the member is about halfway into his time and I am sure that he will be presenting arguments that bring his commentary around to the question that is before the House.

*Business of Supply*

It is always instructive to all hon. members to be aware that while they have great liberty to provide arguments around the question before us, we encourage them to make comments relevant, either in the early part of their remarks or certainly toward the end of their remarks so that it will be understood how their particular arguments all connect together.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** Mr. Speaker, I think I did link the topic of ethics. I also talked about transparency and accountability. I am going to finish with priorities, in terms of where we should be spending the money that is being wasted by the government.

Hopefully the member is paying attention to this intervention and does make the link to my points. I spent a lot of time in preparing my comments and I hope members do take note.

As I was saying, this does give an advantage to wealthy candidates. They can contribute up to \$5,000 to their own campaign and \$25,000 to their own leadership campaign. It exempts fundraising calls made during elections from counting as electoral expenses.

The NDP has fundamental concerns with the bill. We join with journalists, academics, and other Canadians speaking up for democracy, who are now saying that if the bill is not amended, we should kill it.

When it comes to improving our democracy, Canadians cannot rely on the Conservative Party. Its record is one scandal after another. Once again, Conservatives cannot be trusted.

What should we be talking about? What should we be focused on in terms of spending? When it comes to transparency and accountability, Canadians deserve better leadership than what the Conservative government has been offering.

I would like to expand on what this means. Last month I held my annual series of town hall meetings as part of my community consultations. I asked constituents to rank by importance a variety of public policy issues and economic concerns. As was the case in every year I have held these consultations, health care was the highest-ranked issue.

Since coming to power, the government has made little to no progress on reducing wait times, increasing home care, ensuring better access to primary care, or implementing a cost-saving pharmacare plan.

Yesterday the 2004 health care accord officially expired, with no new accord to replace it. Instead of negotiating a new deal, the Conservatives unilaterally imposed a new funding formula on the provinces and have walked away from the commitments to setting standards on wait times, home care, and prescription drugs. The government's record on health care is clear. It is failing to show leadership on this crucial file and is opening the door to increased disparities across our country.

As official opposition, the NDP is listening to Canadians and is holding the government to account for its failed record on health care.

Today we are holding Conservatives to account for their abuse of taxpayers' money and the culture of corruption and entitlement that seems to have overtaken the leadership of the Conservative Party. The public purse is out \$118,000 because the government has been treating government jets as personal and partisan taxis. That \$118,000 equals old age security for 19 seniors, GIS allowance for 20 seniors, or the average annual pension for five retired veterans.

The Conservative government has done little to address the challenges facing Canada's aging population or to provide adequate services to our Canadian veterans. I find this appalling.

Instead, Conservatives have made it harder for seniors to retire with dignity. OAS changes mean many are forced to work an additional two years before they are allowed to retire.

This is unacceptable. We need change. The NDP is focused on change, and we will bring that change in 2015.

\* \* \*

● (1605)

**OFFSHORE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT**

BILL C-5—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the third reading stage of Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and other Acts and to provide for certain other measures.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose, at the next sitting, a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage of the bill.

\* \* \*

**COMBATING COUNTERFEIT PRODUCTS ACT**

BILL C-8—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the third reading stage of Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Copyright Act and the Trade-marks Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose, at the next sitting, a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage of the bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I am sure the House appreciates the notice on the part of the government House leader.

*Business of Supply***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the member address the House on the opposition day motion and to the point of order that was raised. I am all for leniency in ensuring members get to say what is on their minds, and I was making a note of the issues he raised.

The member pointed out health care as a very important issue to his constituents, and the 2014 health care accord has now expired. The government has made a mess of that. Debating the expiration of the health care accord would have been a great opposition day motion. In Canada we now do not have a valid accord.

He pointed out improving democracy, the Senate, the Elections Act, and the issue of time allocation. We just witnessed the government House leader bringing forward time allocation. He mentioned in camera proceedings and government priorities. Very little that was talked about had to do with the planes. The misuse of taxpayers' dollars was also referred to.

I have a question for the member. Can he explain to us how the NDP came up with the current motion as the priority, given the list of other priority issues that were provided as potential opposition day motions? The member made reference to a number of them that would have been of great value in a debate here today. In the member's opinion, would some of those other issues have been better opposition day motions?

● (1610)

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments and his observation of my speech and intervention. I was trying to point out some relevant priorities that we could be looking at for the use of those dollars, and that Canadians want to see a better use of taxpayer dollars.

To add to the list that I have, the truth is the government does not care about the growing inequality in our country. It does not care that child care is wildly unaffordable or that poverty among seniors is on the rise or that British Columbia has the highest child poverty rate in the country. In fact, the government does not think it has a responsibility to feed our neighbour's child. It simply does not care.

For the government, it is business as usual, whether it is bringing friends on the Challenger jets or trying to find loopholes and ways that are not fair. The average Canadian would not have that opportunity.

That is what I am trying to point out to the House as what we do not want to see. We want to change that situation. The NDP is bringing forward motions that address this kind of waste and inequity.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party is trying to tell the NDP what issues are important to Canadians and how we should be doing our jobs.

Throughout this debate, instead of talking about the issue at hand, the Conservatives have gone off track, taking their time. They are praising our military, but they are completely out of touch with the

debate. My colleagues in the other parties do not seem to see a problem with the abuse of Canadians' trust and taxpayers' dollars. That does not seem to be an issue or a priority.

Can my NDP colleague elaborate on why we in the NDP feel that the abuse of trust and the waste of public funds for the benefit of the Prime Minister's friends is an important issue to Canadians?

[*English*]

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** Mr. Speaker, that is a great point. I think that is at the heart of the matter of why we were debating this motion that we have brought forward.

It is the responsibility of each of us as parliamentarians to ensure that public money is spent with a frugal and restrained spirit. When spent properly, tax dollars can be used by government to make smart investments, provide impressive returns, and improve the socio-economic prosperity of all Canadians.

We are pointing out that the use of tax dollars is critical when we are seeing cuts across the country to all departments that provide important services and programs to Canadians. Canadians do not want to see flagrant misuse of tax dollars by the Prime Minister's wealthy friends when we know what they are doing is fundraising for the party through specific partisan purposes and rewarding their friends by using taxpayer-funded jets. We find that unacceptable.

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with the sometimes dishevelled but always chivalrous member for Winnipeg North.

If we could get to the heart of this particular issue, the House of Commons has spent nearly a day talking about a particular topic, a high-end and sensitive subject about jets and a privileged and executive class that gets to access the jets.

A Canadian, on a normal day in a normal lifetime, will never set foot on an executive private jet to go from one point to another within our country or to another country. It is a privileged notion, but it is also part of doing business in a country as affluent, as vast, and as broad as Canada.

We are talking about this issue because it is a touchstone. It is an example of whether we are stewards of the public trust and stewards of the tax dollar and understand that our roles and responsibilities go beyond the norm in making sure that not only are we ensuring the integrity of the public purse but are seen to be ensuring it.

We are talking access by the ruling party, the front bench, and occasionally guests on board private jet aircraft going to different events. I think we all recognize that a prime minister of Canada has unique responsibilities and circumstances that require his or her access to these types of travel services.

*Business of Supply*

What I note about the debate is that we have not necessarily done a very good job of isolating the issues, proposing and formulating solutions, and seeking consensus on solutions. I suggest we have not used this debate very wisely because I really have not heard a concrete agenda come forward as to how we can move the goalposts and actually increase the level of accountability, create a consensus as to what that accountability should be, and then enact it.

I have heard a lot of talk during the course of the morning and afternoon about “That crowd did it, so do not expect us to do anything different” or “We never had a chance to do it, so we can say whatever we want.” It is not really so simple or trite as just that. Canadians who are listening to this debate carefully are asking for a little higher discussion and resolution to evolve.

If we simply say the goalpost is what was done in the past and anyone who did anything that may bear criticism in the past is no longer competent to participate in the debate, the debate shuts down pretty quickly. In fact, just about every debate that will ever occur in the House will shut down very quickly if that is the standard we use. One of our objectives, responsibilities, and requirements as parliamentarians is to move the debate and the standard forward. We have not done that today.

For example, if we were to simply say there is a vacant seat on an aircraft and that it is therefore not only reasonable but responsible for a civilian non-government employee, someone outside the government's normal business, to occupy that seat on a private executive jet to travel with a formal government party to another location, I am not so sure that would bear scrutiny if we were to apply the same principle to a military aircraft going between Trenton and Halifax. If I wanted my son's hockey team to go on it because it was empty and had some space in it, and my son's hockey team was going to Halifax for a tournament, why could the whole hockey team not be put on that military plane to go to Halifax?

•(1615)

It does not seem that this is a sensible option, administratively, from the point of view of ensuring that taxpayers' assets are protected and that stewardship of those assets is ensured. The military would probably be the first to say that it is not a responsible use of defence assets. Why is it then okay for a civilian, a friend of someone, a business partner, or a friend of a political party to accompany the Prime Minister on that jet if there is an empty seat on it? Why would someone not do that? It is because there is a protocol.

Perhaps it is not the right standard to use to simply say that if there is a seat vacant, it is open for the next occupant who might want to use it. How would we price that seat if indeed we were to use it? Perhaps I might be able to bid on a plane ticket at a charity auction. If the plane ticket came in at \$50 to go between Halifax and Ottawa, maybe that would be the market value of the seat. That is what I saw here today. There was a little bit of trying to determine the lowest value of a seat. We would establish that by getting the lowest fare one could possibly find and using it as the benchmark. There might be a lot of \$50 seats in private executive jets in the very near future.

I am not so sure this is the right standard to use for pricing this particular service and for making sure that the taxpayers' investment is protected.

What the jet should be used for is also relevant and important. It would have been good if we could have come to a consensus within the House as to whether it is right for the Prime Minister to use a Department of National Defence Challenger jet aircraft to go to political events. The answer could be yes if we were to determine that the Prime Minister has certain responsibilities and has to travel on this aircraft, based on RCMP security advice. The question then becomes whether it is something that should occur on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis. We did not establish that.

The other thing we need to establish is whether it is fair for the Prime Minister, who has to use these jets, to expect the taxpayers to transport his family to different events. Again, the argument comes back to the Prime Minister having to travel by this aircraft to go to other locations in the country. The question then becomes not whether it is responsible but how often it is responsible for the Prime Minister to use this jet.

If we establish a credible standard of accountability, give people confidence that we understand that the stewardship of taxpayers' dollars is our primary objective, and at the same time take complicated matters, assimilate a variety of issues, and come forward with a credible plan that meets a 21st century standard, we will have done our jobs. I cannot see how we have done that here today, because we are really no further ahead in establishing a reasonable, responsible standard for an executive of the Prime Minister's Office or a minister of national defence to use when allocating or accounting for these resources and reporting the use of these resources to the public. Maybe at another time we might be in a position to do so.

•(1620)

**Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I come from a province where we have only 14 MPs, because we have representation by population. We are protected by the Constitution, so we do not need more MPs.

The New Democrats are not represented by their party in our province. Is it ethical for them to set up an office in Saskatoon because they feel that they have to have an MP there, yet there has not been an NDP candidate elected as an MP? I want to hear the member's comments on that.

•(1625)

**Hon. Gerry Byrne:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question on the use of the Challenger aircraft by the executive, or was it actually a question about the use by the NDP of House of Commons resources?

The hon. member raises a valid point. The use of House of Commons resources to establish offices outside the national capital region by the leader's office is actually being examined by the Board of Internal Economy. That question will be answered through a set process. Obviously, on its face, there seems to be a disconnect between the normal purpose of those resources versus what they are being used for by the NDP.

*Business of Supply*

We live in challenging times. These are challenging questions, but we have a responsibility to ask them and to have them answered. That is why it would have been very helpful for the members of the government to have come forward today with a stronger blueprint for the use of executive aircraft by the executive of the government.

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as it is the first time I have risen after the speech by our colleague, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt, I would like to congratulate him on his more than 25 years of service to the House and for being such a strong defender of Scarborough and of his constituents. I wish him luck in his future endeavours and much happiness with his family.

On today's debate, I just heard the member say that he would have liked the government to have come forward with a stronger blueprint in regard to the use of the Challenger jets by the government and by the Prime Minister. Of course, with opposition motions, we collectively, as a House, try to make the determination that the government should provide that clearer blueprint in the future.

Of course the jets should not be used to transport anyone other than those required for the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family. I would like to ask the member if he actually has any suggestions to give the government in regard to how we could offer better transparency and accountability with regard to the use of the Challenger jets.

**Hon. Gerry Byrne:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. Communication on the use of the jets is normally achieved through filing an access to information request. One suggestion I would offer is that there should be an open portal, a recorded log on the use of all Challenger jets. In it would be recorded the purpose of the flight. It would be made available on the Internet for all to see. Those who were part of the flight manifest would be recorded. It would also note whether they were government employees or were associated with the government directly. If they were not, it would note what exactly their role was and why they were on the jet.

Instead of having to file access to information requests on an event-by-event basis, which can be administratively cumbersome, having an interface where this information is open and available on a portal makes a lot of sense to me.

• (1630)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Before we go to resuming debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, Rail Transportation; and the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, International Trade.

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to address the NDP motion. I had the opportunity to address it through questions. I have listened attentively to a number of speakers on the motion, and a number of questions come to mind. I would like to look at what I believe the NDP is hoping to address with this particular motion.

Some of the consistent phrases we get from the members are “misuse of taxpayer dollars”, “abuse of public trust”, “holding government accountable”, “wasting government resources”, and “abuse of public funds”.

We have had members, in particular the most recent NDP speaker, say that it is the heart of the matter. Let there be no doubt that what offends the New Democrats on this particular day is the issue of abuse of public funds. That is something I want to spend some time talking about, because as they have clearly indicated, that is what is really at issue.

It was not that long ago that we had our opposition day motion. Members will recall that we had an opposition day motion that received the unanimous support of the House. With that particular motion, we too were trying to get more transparency and accountability inside the House. Who would oppose something of that nature? It was with regard to the issue of proactive disclosure.

Members will recall that it was the leader of the Liberal Party, back in June of last year, who stood in his place and tried to get the unanimous support of the House for proactive disclosure for all members of Parliament.

A number of New Democratic MPs said no. As a result, we were not able to enact it in June. We were not overly discouraged by that, because we believe in transparency and accountability. The leader of the Liberal Party has talked a lot about that. He mandated that if a person is a Liberal member of Parliament, he or she will be participating in proactive disclosure. It was to take effect, I believe, in the last quarter.

If people go to my website, if I can get in a bit of a promotion, [www.mpkevin.ca](http://www.mpkevin.ca), they will be able to link to my proactive disclosure. I did not object to it, but the leader of the Liberal Party did not give us a choice. We had to participate, because he made it in the form of a motion for which he could not get unanimous support, and we wanted to move forward.

It was not that much longer before the Conservatives jumped on board on that particular issue. It was only the leader of the NDP and the New Democratic caucus who resisted. They resisted for months.

The abuse of public funds, public trust, misuse of tax dollars, and holding government accountable being the heart of the matter, we introduced an opposition day motion that, in essence, forced all members of the House into proactive disclosure. The NDP members were kind of cornered, and they ultimately voted in favour of it. Why? I suspect that they had to vote in favour of it.

Part of proactive disclosure means that we have to now tell our voters, or all Canadians, where we are flying and the actual costs of our flights.

We have been doing this for months within the Liberal Party caucus. However, because of that opposition day motion, the NDP will have to do it. Its members did not volunteer.

To me, this was a very productive opposition motion. It realized an obligation to improve the system.

*Business of Supply*

•(1635)

As my colleague from Atlantic Canada has so eloquently put on the table, it would be nice to see an opposition motion here that would provide a little more guidance.

I would put a challenge to the New Democrats to tell us where the leader of the New Democrats has been flying at taxpayers' expense, and the dates, if NDP members do not have a problem with transparency and accountability. This is something the Liberal Party does and the Conservative Party has been doing. However, I would argue that the New Democratic members do have a problem with that issue. They like to talk tough, but in reality it is quite different.

In reality, we have the leader of the New Democratic Party, who believes he has the right to establish offices in Saskatchewan and Quebec. On the surface, he does. Nothing prevents him from going ahead and establishing party offices wherever he wants, but there is a bit of a condition here: it should not be the taxpayers of Canada who are responsible for financing those offices. If it wants to open up a political office in Saskatchewan or Quebec, it should be the New Democratic Party that foots the bill and not the taxpayers. However, he has found a way through the leader's office and allocated money that was meant to support the leader here in Ottawa. He has kind of shuffled those responsibilities off. Is that not an abuse of taxpayers' dollars?

This issue is going to the procedure and House affairs committee and in part to the Board of Internal Economy committee, and there have been references to other outside independent organizations on this.

Now that the NDP has been caught with its hands in the cookie jar, its members are being relatively quiet on the issue, which is why I am surprised they would bring up this issue today. I would have thought they would have had a little humility in terms of the abuse of our taxpayers here in Canada, because it is not just the leader's office. Remember, they spent close to \$2 million on mail going into 30 ridings, or something like that. It is an outrageous amount of tax dollars that are going out. Let us see how that is going.

I was surprised, but there was one member who stood up who I think should be a part of the NDP House leadership team because he had a lot of good ideas. He was talking about issues that are important. In one of his answers, he talked about feeding children and poverty in Canada. These are very important issues. He also talked about health care.

Well, the health care accord has expired, and it is a very important issue to all Canadians. Why not challenge the government in terms of why it has not renewed the health care accord?

Given the importance of today, April 1, there is no longer a health care accord in place. It expired yesterday as of midnight. As the member said, it was a very important issue in his constituency. I can tell members that in Winnipeg North it is a very important issue.

The member also made reference to improving democracy and the Canada Elections Act. The reason I was not able to be in the chamber for the full day was that I had to sit in on part of the procedure and House affairs committee, which is dealing with the Canada Elections Act. The member is right, 120-plus political

scientists and all sorts of others are offended by this. It is a bad piece of legislation, and the member then went into detail in terms of why it is so bad.

I could also make reference to time allocation, the Senate, in camera proceedings, and priorities. This is what the New Democratic member was talking about, all of which I would suggest are very important issues.

•(1640)

That is why I am surprised that it is today, of all days. When I first saw it and understood that we were going to be debating it, I thought about April Fool's. I thought the New Democrats had to be joking, on April 1. It is no joke. This is the issue they wanted to deal with today.

We will have to wait and see what happens.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, listening to the member, it is very interesting to hear the focus where he feels he has to generate his so-called attack.

Every member knows full well that the work the NDP is doing through its Montreal office is using the same dollars that are being brought together to deal with the constituents there, in the same fashion as for the constituency offices that have just been merged, because we have a new caucus down there, to make things work more efficiently. It is to use the dollars as they should be used.

I know there is a history in the Liberal Party of the entitlements and the sponsorship scandal, where millions of dollars drifted off to who knows where. However, today we are talking about the government use of jets and who has access to the Prime Minister through travel.

It is very important and, truthfully, I think the Liberals should spend a little more time shooting at the government side, rather than shooting at the NDP.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, sometimes it is important to remind the NDP of how out of touch it is with Canadians.

Let us take a look at the statement made by the member. I happen to have one of the applications for the job opportunities that lists the qualifications expected of individuals who were applying for the jobs out in Saskatchewan in the so-called outreach office. It is interesting. The very first qualification is "Experience in outreach, event planning, election or issue based campaigns". I would underline the word "election".

These are things that political parties are doing. Who are they trying to fool? Shame on the New Democrats for trying to stretch reality to fit what they cannot do, and that is come up with enough money to finance their own political offices in the provinces.

I trust and I hope we will get to the bottom of this issue.

**Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP member said that in Montreal he can qualify it, but he did not qualify it in Saskatchewan. I believe it is because in Montreal they have members, so they are pooling their resources, if I understood it correctly.

*Business of Supply*

I wondered if the member understood it correctly. In Saskatchewan, I do not know if he has heard, but there are no NDP members there, and I doubt there will be for a long time.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, there have not been any NDP members in Saskatchewan since 2004. Whatever the voters decide in 2015, they will ultimately decide.

What I will suggest is that an outreach office is an outreach office, so if they are calling it an outreach office in Saskatchewan and an outreach office in the province of Quebec, I assume they are doing the same thing. The bottom line is that they are being financed with public dollars, when they should in fact be financed by their own political party.

Raise the money and properly finance it. Do not abuse the Canadian taxpayer.

That is what the heart of this motion was all about today. That is actually what they said. They talked about abuse of public funds. One member said that was the heart of the matter. I am right at the heart of the matter. That is why they need to reflect on what they are doing.

Eventually, we will find out. Whether it is through the Board of Internal Economy, the procedure and House affairs committee, Elections Canada, or even possibly the RCMP, we will get to the truth of the matter.

The leader of the New Democratic Party needs to come to the table and be a little bit more transparent on this particular issue.

• (1645)

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North started his remarks by recounting the history of proactive disclosure in this place and properly indicated that it was the Liberal Party that took the lead with the proactive disclosure of expenses. The Conservatives then followed and, several months later, it appears that now the NDP is on side.

I wonder if the member could provide, for the benefit of the House in general and the NDP in particular, what the post-proactive disclosure world is like? How have his constituents responded? Has it changed the way in which he has been able to do his work? Just for the benefit of the NDP, which is not yet there, what is it like once members start proactively disclosing their expenses?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure members will find that it really is not very difficult and that their constituents are encouraged by it, because they do ask why not share with the taxpayer where members are flying at taxpayers' expense, the cost of that, and the hospitality. This is something that will evolve in time. I am very grateful that it was the leader of the Liberal Party who came out with this initiative in June of last year.

The Conservatives took it upon themselves to ultimately accept it. We had to kind of haul the New Democrats or force them to do it, but I am sure they will respect the new administration and will comply. I am sure they will find there is nothing really to fear, as long as they are following the rules of course.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Laval.

I thank the House for the opportunity to speak to this subject matter.

I understand why the Liberals are lighting their hair on fire and getting upset about this issue because it really brings out the government's hypocrisy, which is what part of today's motion is about. The Conservatives criticized the Liberals for things they were doing when they were in office but the Conservatives are now doing the very same things.

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien called the Challenger jet a "flying Taj Mahal".

This is about whether we can trust the Conservative government. Questions are raised when a government does the exact opposite of what it said it would do before it took power.

There are a lot of important matters to talk about in this chamber and I will touch on some of them, such as where the resources could go. I am also going to talk about Conservative hypocrisy, about doing the opposite of what they said they would do.

I will be in the House 12 years this coming May. I have been here during a Liberal majority, a Liberal minority, a Conservative minority, and a Conservative majority. I have seen the back and forth that goes on. It reminds me of the days of Tommy Douglas, when he talked about Mouseland and the white cats and the black cats; the only two choices that people had.

The government goes back and forth on many different issues. What really burns the Liberals about this issue is that it brings out their hypocrisy as well.

I am going to read the motion brought forward by the member for Timmins—James Bay carefully:

That, in the opinion of the House, government planes, and in particular the plane used by the Prime Minister, should only be used for government purposes and should not be used to transport anyone other than those associated with such purposes or those required for the safety and security of the Prime Minister and his family.

It is interesting to note that in question period today, the Prime Minister said in response to a question by the Leader of the Opposition that he was lowering the cost by bringing his buddies along. That is condescending. The public knows it is pretty hard to get a \$260 ticket on a plane that is fully catered, fully staffed, private, and provides special privileges. That is not real.

The former premier of Alberta recently resigned over costs to Alberta taxpayers. It must be in Conservatives' DNA. I do not know why the Conservatives are wired that way.

It is clear that this is an important issue to talk about because it is about trust. It is about the Conservative government being unaccountable to taxpayers.

*Business of Supply*

Mark Kihn is one individual who is on the plane quite often. He goes back to the Prime Minister's roots. He was a party fundraiser and was also involved in the Prime Minister's election campaign. He raised millions of dollars for the Prime Minister. He is not an ordinary individual. If he can raise millions of dollars for the Prime Minister, then why can he not pay the equivalent of a first-class ticket on the Prime Minister's plane instead of paying the economy fare? It is also important to note that he and everybody else on that plane has the Prime Minister's ear. They could be VIPs, corporate and such. These individuals have access to privileged meetings with the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister once fought against this. Here is what he said:

My wife, Laureen, and I ran our own small businesses. We had to pay our own health care premiums. We had to purchase our own supplemental health care coverage, like most people in the country. We cannot afford to fly to clinics in the United States to get health care when things go wrong and we certainly cannot afford to get on Challenger jets to do it.

• (1650)

That was what the Prime Minister said in 2002. Interestingly enough, that was shortly after he came back into the House of Commons. There was a group of seven of us at that time in the May byelections 12 years ago, and he said that as the member representing the Canadian Alliance party. Members will remember the Canadian Alliance party. Well, they are here. They actually devoured the Conservative Party, essentially, and that is what we have right now. The Prime Minister, at that time, made that comment.

A couple of years after that, he also said the following:

We have seen the Prime Minister flying around the country on Challenger jets doing a few hours of government work, then spending the rest of the time campaigning and fundraising, often at exclusive cocktail parties where big Liberal donors pay \$5,000 a ticket to discuss public business. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss.

The Liberal culture of entitlement goes on. The public must be given a chance to put an end to it.

That is what the Prime Minister said then.

I understand why the Liberals feel they have something stuck in their teeth on this. It is because their behaviour was called out at that time by the Prime Minister, but the Prime Minister has lost his way. There is no doubt about it. He has lost his edge in terms of wanting to clean up Ottawa. Ottawa has clearly cleaned the Conservatives up. This is what has taken place, and we have seen that erosion take place over time. It is unfortunate. Whether it be democratic reform most recently or cuts, this money is consequential, and I want to touch on that briefly.

Let us look at what is taking place in my riding of Windsor West. The Conservatives have closed the veterans office. They recruited out of my riding very heavily. Two years ago, they closed the recruiting office. Just over a month ago, they closed the veterans office, with over 4,000 cases worked on by that office per year. People now have to go to London, Ontario, or have somebody come from London, Ontario—over a two-hour drive away—to see someone. How is it possible that there is no money to support our veterans?

Postal services are being cut. Get this. There is no money to sort the mail in Windsor any more and despite having the highest

efficiency rate in the country, the mail is gathered up, driven to London Monday to Thursday, it is sorted, driven all the way back to Windsor on Highway 401, mixed in with just-in-time delivery trucks for the auto industry, the aerospace industry and other types of industries, and finally gets distributed around the community. That is all because there was not enough money to purchase a new sorting machine that would have increased efficiency. Businesses are getting their cheques later, people are getting their bills later, and now there is going to be a reduction of home delivery services as well. The consul general's office closed in Detroit. Service Canada, with one of the highest records of staff, two years ago received an award for efficiency. Do members know what the result was? It was that approximately 73 employees got pink slips in a high unemployment area.

When we talk about this issue, we talk about it in terms of what the Conservatives said they would do when they got to power versus what they are doing right now, and that is really about trust. It is why more and more Canadians do not trust the Prime Minister and the government anymore, because they have lost their way. The small things do matter. They matter in the House of Commons and they matter in life. Although some may say this is a small thing and brush it off, it is part of a pattern of behaviour that needs to end, and the New Democrats will do that.

• (1655)

**Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but enter the dialogue after hearing the member misquote and misrepresent what our government has in fact done for and on behalf of veterans and their families. His information with respect to where people have to go now to obtain services is absolutely not correct.

Veterans who need services who are under the care and support of Veterans Affairs Canada, do not have to leave at all. Since 2005–06, our government has put aside some \$4.7 billion of extra funding for services and benefits for veterans and their families. The member is indicating otherwise when he and his party, the New Democratic Party, in at least eight consecutive budgets in which we proposed increased benefits and services for veterans and their families, voted against all of them. For the party to criticize any of that is the height of hypocrisy.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to that.

What I want to point out is that it is not only the issue of how our veterans are treated in our community, in terms of what they can get right now and the service changes they never asked for that are taking place, but also about the approach. How bad is it that the government did not even have the courage to actually consult those veterans? Shame on it for that.

Shame on the government for not even calling on the veterans to get their opinion first. It did not even have the backbone to do that.

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I realize that this discussion has now gotten a little away from the motion, but I cannot resist the opportunity to join this discussion.

*Business of Supply*

I am from Charlottetown, P.E.I., the only province in Canada that no longer has a district office. That district office is now staffed by a caseworker from Saint John, New Brunswick, who is there on a six-month contract. That is the situation.

Throughout this past week, the Confederation Bridge has been closed due to storms. The veterans in P.E.I. who were supposed to be getting personal attention in the past week have had none because there are no front-line workers. They have to come from another province.

I do not have a question, but I do have a comment directed at the person who asked the last question. Veterans are being drastically shortchanged, and that member is absolutely correct when he says so.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, I have been noticing the weather and everything that has been going on, and I wish the member's community well during this difficult time.

The member is absolutely correct to point out that there are other factors that will influence the connection of veterans and services, extenuating circumstances that we cannot control. It is one of the reasons New Democrats will open those offices back up in 2015.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy the comments made by the member for Windsor West.

The member raised the issue of cutbacks to veterans' services. Earlier today, we had some Conservatives trying to avoid the issue of the misuse of government planes. They tried to tie it in as somehow being something that was appropriate for the military and because of that, veterans would be supporting this misuse of government aircraft.

I want to ask the member for Windsor West a question. I am certainly talking to veterans in my riding who are extremely upset, as I have never seen before, with the government. How does the member think veterans will react to knowing the government systematically misuses government planes at the same time it is cutting back on veterans' services?

• (1700)

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. It is almost like the Conservatives have come up from the ocean floor too fast and cannot think right.

It is impossible to try to understand their logic that the veterans would actually support this. This is a serious issue in terms of financing. What is interesting is the Conservatives have not even produced a report, study, or evaluation that shows that by closing the Windsor office, or other offices, they are actually going to save money. There has been no accountability whatsoever.

That is one of the reasons veterans are so upset. Not only was it insulting, at best, it was a back of a hand to the face when the Conservatives did not even consult veterans in the first place.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on May 2, 2011, when I was elected, I had to come to Ottawa right away to attend the training and orientation sessions for new members of Parliament.

Those few weeks of intensive training were very useful. What really stood out was the role that all members of Parliament must fulfill in their respective constituencies and here in the House of Commons. It became clear to me that the magic word was "integrity".

I realize that all of us here, as elected representatives, are faced with all sorts of constraints and personal ethical problems when authorizing expenses or making choices as MPs. Integrity seems to be the obvious answer.

I also realize that individuals appointed as ministers have the budget of a department available to them and sometimes must make choices and authorize expenses. There are more and more constraints. However, integrity must always guide our choices.

What is worse, when an individual becomes prime minister, that person must act with the utmost integrity. Otherwise, that individual could easily be criticized for misconduct. If the individual starts to make choices and approves certain expenditures because of a lack of judgment or a political agenda, and that results in poor decisions, he or she must answer for it.

All of that to say, I was surprised and disappointed to hear the news that motivated our party to look into this issue today in order to manage or direct the use of certain resources that are meant for use by elected officials.

I understand that the Department of National Defence manages the Challenger. The department likely receives specific instructions from the Prime Minister's Office about having a certain plane travel with certain resources—such as pilots, for example—or about fuel, time on the tarmac, aircraft maintenance and so on. All of that is paid for by taxpayers.

It is even more disturbing that this is coming specifically from the Prime Minister, who fiercely attacked the practices of previous governments, such as the Liberals during the sponsorship scandal.

That surprises me, and I am honestly disappointed to see how easily integrity can be tainted when an individual does a favour for a friend or someone close.

• (1705)

I had to laugh because I remember an expression my grandmother used to use when I was very young: "If you need something, always try to reciprocate. Never ask for a favour." Why? It is because a favour is priceless and it is very difficult to refuse to reciprocate when someone has done you a favour. Personally, I did away with favours a long time ago. That is what everyone should do, from the Prime Minister right down to the last MP in the House.

In terms of the arguments I have heard today about the motion we brought forward, that National Defence should have a more suitable and legitimate procedure for the use of aircraft, the Challenger in this case, I have no idea. Reporters never paid attention to the use of those famous planes in the Liberal government's time. However, it seems to me to be very much the same thing, as the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine explained so well.

*Business of Supply*

She mentioned that we should look at other important factors, not just travel costs, because they are not the crux of the issue. It is not about going through the expenses; it is about knowing why they approved the use of taxpayers' resources for partisan matters or for other things that have nothing to do with the functions of government.

I was surprised to hear the comments from my esteemed colleague from Oak Ridges—Markham. He was trying to muddy the debate with arguments that made no sense. In addition, the hon. member for Winnipeg North, for whom I have the greatest respect, also tried to muddy the debate by accusing our party of having incurred bizarre expenses for satellite offices, among other things.

I am proud to say that our caucus is a model of integrity. None of the claims they are making are true. They will see how things are. They cannot act without integrity and then claim to be calling for more transparency in members' expenses. I do not agree with that.

Why do we have to move a motion to manage the Prime Minister's travel in an aircraft that belongs to Canadians and is operated by a major department, the Department of National Defence?

● (1710)

We already know what once happened with the current Minister of Justice. He was also the target of a lot of attacks because he used a helicopter for personal reasons. That is unacceptable.

I believe the motion makes sense, because, if someone cannot do something, it should come from the House of Commons.

[English]

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was really moved by the story of the member opposite's grandmother who told him he should never accept favours. I recall that during the 2011 election, CUPW used its resources to contact every person who worked in a post office, letter carriers, et cetera, encouraging them to vote for the NDP. That, to me, constitutes a favour.

What has the NDP done, now that it is the official opposition, in return for that favour?

[Translation]

**Mr. José Nunez-Melo:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for my colleague, I do not consider this a favour. The definition of favour is different than that. I do not think it has anything to do with what happened in a post office.

Honestly, a lot of Laval residents come to my office and ask me why we are allowing the current government to make cuts and make decisions about certain allowances, budgets and grants without slapping its wrist. The reason is simple, and in 2015, these people will have the chance to unseat the Conservatives, and they will see what a good government is.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to the search and rescue helicopter that ultimately picked up the minister. It is a great issue in showing where the government has really made a mess of a situation. I concur 100% with the member on that and think he will find the record showing

that both Liberals and New Democrats were one in opposition to that issue because it was an abuse.

The member referred to the New Democrat caucus as a model of integrity. In this regard, could he reflect on what the leader of his party has done about the abuse of mail allegations regarding his satellite office, and does he believe that is proper for the leader of the official opposition to do? How does he justify using public tax dollars for that massive \$2 million mailing to 30 ridings, which, from what I understand, the NDP does not even hold?

● (1715)

[Translation]

**Mr. José Nunez-Melo:** Mr. Speaker, I will respond to the two points raised by my colleague from Winnipeg North. I want to point out that integrity begins with the member. When someone is minister, that person must show even more integrity, and when that person is prime minister, even more still. The member understands.

The second point is that we truly represent integrity. I remember that in late 2012, when we were still on budget 2011-12, the *Ottawa Citizen* listed the names of the 10 MPs who had spent the least out of their budget. I was on the list, and that proves everything.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** It being 5:16 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

**The Acting Speaker (Bruce Stanton):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

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

● (1755)

[English]

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

(Division No. 94)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)  
Ashton  
Aubin  
Bellavance  
Benskin

Angus  
Atamanenko  
Bélanger  
Bennett  
Bevington

*Privilege*

Blanchette  
Boivin  
Boutin-Sweet  
Brisson  
Byrne  
Casey  
Charlton  
Chisholm  
Cleary  
Côté  
Cullen  
Davies (Vancouver East)  
Dewar  
Dionne Labelle  
Doré Lefebvre  
Dubourg  
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)  
Easter  
Fortin  
Freeman  
Garneau  
Genest  
Giguère  
Gravelle  
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)  
Hsu  
Hyer  
Jones  
Kellway  
Lapointe  
Latendresse  
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)  
Liu  
Mai  
Martin  
Mathysen  
McCallum  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)  
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)  
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)  
Mulcair  
Nantel  
Nicholls  
Patry  
Perreault  
Plamondon  
Rafferty  
Ravignat  
Regan  
Saganash  
Scarpaleggia  
Sgro  
Sitsabaiesan  
Stewart  
Sullivan  
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Boulerice  
Brahmi  
Brosseau  
Caron  
Cash  
Chicoine  
Christopherson  
Comartin  
Crowder  
Cuzner  
Day  
Dion  
Donnelly  
Dubé  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Dusseault  
Eyking  
Freeland  
Fry  
Garrison  
Genest-Jourdain  
Goodale  
Grogulé  
Harris (St. John's East)  
Hughes  
Jacob  
Julian  
Lamoureux  
Larose  
Laverdière  
Leslie  
MacAulay  
Marston  
Masse  
May  
McGuinty  
Michaud  
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)  
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)  
Mourani  
Murray  
Nash  
Nunez-Melo  
Pécllet  
Pilon  
Quach  
Rankin  
Raynault  
Rousseau  
Sandhu  
Scott  
Sims (Newton—North Delta)  
St-Denis  
Stoffer  
Thibeault  
Tremblay  
Turmel

**NAYS**

## Members

Ablonczy  
Albas  
Alexander  
Allison  
Ambrose  
Armstrong  
Aspin  
Benoit  
Bernier  
Blaney  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Calandra  
Carmichael  
Chisu  
Clarke  
Crockatt  
Davidson

Aglukkaq  
Albrecht  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambler  
Anderson  
Ashfield  
Bateman  
Bergen  
Bezan  
Block  
Braid  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Butt  
Calkins  
Carrie  
Chong  
Clement  
Daniel  
Dechert

Del Mastro  
Dreeschen  
Dykstra  
Fantino  
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Galipeau  
Gill  
Goguen  
Goodyear  
Gourde  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hayes  
Hillyer  
James  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kent  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Lebel  
Leitch  
Leung  
Lobb  
Lunney  
MacKenzie  
Mayes  
McLeod  
Merrifield  
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Nicholson  
Obhrai  
Oliver  
Opitz  
Paradis  
Poilievre  
Raiitt  
Rathgeber  
Rempel  
Rickford  
Saxton  
Seeback  
Shiple  
Smith  
Sorenson  
Strahl  
Tilson  
Trost  
Trotter  
Truppe  
Valcourt  
Van Loan  
Wallace  
Warkentin  
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)  
Weston (Saint John)  
Wilks  
Wong  
Yelich  
Young (Vancouver South)

Devolin  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Falk  
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)  
Fletcher  
Gallant  
Glover  
Goldring  
Gosal  
Grewal  
Hawn  
Hiebert  
Holder  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kerr  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
Leaf  
Lemieux  
Lizon  
Lukiwski  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Maguire  
McColeman  
Menegakis  
Miller  
Norlock  
O'Connor  
O'Neill Gordon  
O'Toole  
Payne  
Preston  
Rajotte  
Reid  
Richards  
Ritz  
Schellenberger  
Shea  
Shory  
Sopuck  
Storseth  
Sweet  
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**PAIRED**

Nil

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

\* \* \*

**PRIVILEGE**

RESPONSE TO QUESTION NO. 176

**Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising to add to the initial response by the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons to Thursday's question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Avalon in relation to the answer he received to his written Question No. 176.

*Privilege*

First, I would like to challenge his question of privilege on the ground that he did not raise it at the earliest opportunity. The response to which he takes exception was provided to the House on March 6, 2014. While I can see that there was a two-week adjournment shortly thereafter, the hon. member then waited until the fourth sitting day after the March break, or three full calendar weeks after his question was answered, before coming forward with his question of privilege. In short, the member's question of privilege should fail on this ground alone.

Nonetheless, I would like to address the substantive issues he raised. The hon. member for Avalon has claimed that there is a prima facie case of privilege here based on his assertion that he, in the performance of his duties, has been intentionally interfered with, obstructed, and impeded. Yet the hon. member has not indicated which duties have been so impeded or in which manner he has been impeded in relation to those duties. This is simply a matter of being dissatisfied with the response that was provided.

Last week, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons quoted from page 522 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, on this matter. I want to add to this a few precedents.

Mr. Milliken, at page 3,255 of the *Debates* of February 6, 2003 said:

...as hon. members know, there is no provision in our rules for the Speaker to review the content of responses, nor would that be appropriate. In this regard I would simply state that any member not satisfied with the response provided by the government may raise supplemental questions either orally or in written form.

In his second ruling that day, Mr. Speaker, your predecessor said, at page 3,256:

It is not within the powers of the Chair to judge the adequacy of an answer.

Finally, Madam Speaker Sauvé said, in her ruling at page 12,836 of the *Debates* of November 17, 1981:

Furthermore, the quality of the answer as given is not generally within the responsibility of the Speaker, who should not be asked to pass judgment on the substance of an answer to a question, be it oral or written.

Before wrapping up, let me respond to the member's assertion that there has been a change in practice with questions answered by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. The hon. member told the House in his submissions:

I have placed a past order paper question concerning projects funded in part or in full for my riding through ACOA. On each occasion, the minister has provided a detailed list of all approved projects within the riding. This just is not the case.

I have a response from 2011:

Insofar as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency...is concerned, with regard to grants and contributions in the riding of Avalon from April 1, 2011 to December 10, 2012, ACOA does not track approved projects by federal ridings. Information on projects approved by ACOA in Newfoundland and Labrador can be found on the Agency's website, by search criteria and by geographic location....

Then it gives the website. So the hon. member's assertion that there has been some change is patently false.

The hon. member told the House that he has placed a past order paper question, and he was provided with a detailed list of all projects approved within the riding. Later in his arguments, he indicated, "The question I asked, in 2010, was answered and the information was provided". If members were to check the records of

the House for the third session of the 40th Parliament, which captures the year 2010, they would see that the hon. member for Avalon asked about a dozen written questions that calendar year. Two of them are identified as relating to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

On March 5, 2010, he asked written Question No. 91, which requested:

...projects approved for funding in Atlantic Canada...broken down by the provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador...

The government's response, in the range of 600 pages, was a table outlining approved projects, which were largely coded by province.

That same day, the member also asked written Question No. 92, which requested:

● (1800)

With regard to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and, more specifically, the Recreational Infrastructure Canada (RInC) Program administered by ACOA in Atlantic Canada...(d) what were the names, addresses and submission dates of the applicants submitting an application...from the constituency of Avalon...?

While the government's response did include a one-page chart with specific projects, it is important to note the following qualifications that were in the body of that response. Firstly, the answer advised that:

...the names, addresses and submission dates of the applicants submitting an application...on or near the constituency of Avalon are included in the attached list....

Later, the nuance was followed up with this line:

It should be noted that the Agency tracks RInC projects by geographic location, and not by electoral district.

Again, we have the exact same response that we do not track by electoral district.

Let us come forward to the present day and written Question No. 176, which asked:

...what applications have been received from the riding of Avalon...including (i) the specific projects that were approved or rejected in each fiscal year...?

In response, I answered, and this is at page 3580 of the *Debates*:

...with regard to applications received from the riding of Avalon...ACOA does not track projects by federal ridings. Information on projects approved by ACOA in Newfoundland and Labrador can be found on the agency's website.

As I said, nothing has changed. ACOA did not and does not track projects by riding.

The one-pager prepared in response to Question No. 92, probably because it was a more narrowly crafted question, seems to have been a courtesy extended to the hon. member for Avalon by doing a quick search of projects that were "on or near" his own riding. This is quite some distance from the four-year fishing expedition he presented in Question No.176.

*Private Members' Business*

This particular fishing expedition was even broader than the past one, because he was seeking information on all applications received, including those that were rejected. With respect to the latter category, I understand that answering it would have required the agency to figure out who might have been from Avalon and from there contact each one of them to see if they would agree to allow their personal information to be divulged in order to follow the Privacy Act and the principles of the Access to Information Act. There is simply no reasonable way of accomplishing this within the 45-day deadline he requested under the Standing Orders.

In my answer, the hon. member for Avalon is directed to the agency's website for a list of all approved projects in Newfoundland and Labrador. From there, the hon. member can generate a list, just like the one he would have had as part of the 600-page response he got in 2010, from the website.

Surely, the hon. member knows his constituency well enough to be able to assess from this comprehensive list which of the projects are located in his own riding and which fall into one of the six other ridings in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In conclusion, the hon. member for Avalon has not raised his issue in a timely manner. He has not given any indication as to how he has been impeded. He has not argued anything here other than dissatisfaction with the response provided. Finally, he has blurred the distinctions between the 2010 questions he cited and his most recent question.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I believe you can easily rule that there is no prima facie case of privilege to be found here.

• (1805)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I thank the hon. Minister of State for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency for this additional information. I am sure the Speaker will take it under advisement. I know he is taken up with the question at the moment, and I am sure he will be back to the House relatively soon in terms of where that would stand.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### PAN-CANADIAN PALLIATIVE AND END-OF-LIFE CARE STRATEGY

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP)** moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should establish a Pan-Canadian Palliative and End-of-life Care Strategy by working with provinces and territories on a flexible, integrated model of palliative care that: (a) takes into account the geographic, regional, and cultural diversity of urban and rural Canada; (b) respects the cultural, spiritual and familial needs of Canada's First Nation, Inuit and Métis people; and (c) has the goal of (i) ensuring all Canadians have access to high quality home-based and hospice palliative end-of-life care, (ii) providing more support for caregivers, (iii) improving the quality and consistency of home and hospice palliative end-of-life care in Canada, (iv) encouraging Canadians to discuss and plan for end-of-life care.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is always a great honour to rise in this House representing the people of Timmins—James Bay. Tonight I am particularly proud to represent the New Democratic Party as we bring forward a motion that we believe is essential for the

development of long-term planning for health in this country, which is a pan-Canadian strategy for palliative care.

[Translation]

I am very proud to be here this evening to move this motion on behalf of the New Democratic Party. We are asking the federal government and Canada's Parliament to establish a pan-Canadian strategy, ensure access to palliative care, and work with the provinces and territories so that all levels of government can develop a standard of care that ensures access to quality palliative care.

[English]

To begin, I would like to make note of a few things for the people watching across Canada.

I would like to thank the medical leaders, medical organizations, front-line service providers who are serving people in need, and the social workers, pharmacists, nurses and doctors, for the support that we received. I would also like to thank members of the various spiritual communities of Canada who have supported the New Democrats in this motion.

On a personal note, I would like to mention that my late brother-in-law John King, who was a close friend and a brilliant young man, lost his life much too early to cancer. After the 2008 election, I came home and spent the last few nights with John at Perram House, in Toronto.

Perram House was an extraordinary palliative care centre. At the time, I thought it was the norm. I thought that when Canadians became sick, there were Perram Houses everywhere. It was after Perram House closed, in the city of Toronto where my brother-in-law was dying, that I realized there was a lack of good quality palliative care beds.

Certainly there is good quality palliative care in hospitals. However, with regard to community-centred, spiritually centred, communal-familiar centred care, it made me realize that across this country we do not have a standard forum for ensuring that families and individuals have the support they need.

I would also like to thank the incredible work of the all-party committee. The Parliament of Canada is known as a relatively toxic place at most times, but members of all parties came together on this vital issue and worked hard. I would like to recognize the members of the Conservative, Liberal, and New Democratic parties who worked on the study and wanted to bring forward to Parliament the need for us to establish this pan-Canadian strategy on palliative care. I believe that the motion I am bringing forward on behalf of the New Democratic Party is carrying forward the work of this all-party committee.

One of its key recommendations is that the committee strongly urges that the federal government re-establish a palliative care secretariat for the sake of developing and implementing a national palliative and end-of-life care strategy. In honour of the work that my colleagues in the other parties and New Democrats did on that committee, we are bringing forward that motion tonight.

There has been much discussion lately in the media. Many terms are being used on the issue of dying with dignity and what it means. People are grappling with very complex and emotional issues that touch all of us.

Tonight I would like to use the definition of palliative care that has been offered by the Canadian Medical Association.

The Canadian Medical Association tells us the following:

Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems associated with a life-threatening illness. [It involves] the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification, assessment and treatment of pain and other physical, psychosocial, and spiritual symptoms.

We can see from the Canadian Medical Association's definition that palliative care is not just about dealing with someone in their final bleak hours. It is the notion of an integrated health strategy that is there for families in their homes. It is not just about the alleviation of suffering, but allowing the individual to have a higher quality of life than they might have otherwise had. It also assures support for the family, community members, and loved ones, who sometimes face an extremely traumatic time.

• (1810)

The fact that we are having this debate today at the end of the national health accord is very timely. The New Democrats believe, and have believed this since our founding and the days of Tommy Douglas, that the federal government has an important role to play, not in the delivery of service but in working with the provinces and territories to establish norms across this country.

If we look at the situation with an aging population and our increasingly frayed health care system, and with the end of the health accord and less and less money to be delivered to the regions, urban and rural, it becomes incredibly important to ensure that we have an integrated health care strategy.

What would the strategy look like? We know that Parliament played a role before. In 2007, the Conservative government cancelled the palliative care secretariat that had been established and was beginning to do work in terms of a national vision. We had an all-party committee that came back and said we needed a strategy.

However, what we are seeing across the country is a real patchwork of services. I believe there are only four provinces that even have a provincial strategy in place for palliative care. In some areas we see incredibly strong resources. For example, downtown Regina and Saskatoon have extraordinary services, but even in a city as big as the GTA or Montreal, we are dealing with a patchwork. In rural areas, sometimes it is almost non-existent.

There is a belief that somehow palliative care is done with volunteer money. That does not really understand its importance.

Let us look at the delivery of services in the rural regions. What I have seen in my own region is that when families do not have access to proper support, it causes immense stress to the patient. Many times I have dealt with this when people have come to my office. I have heard about an elderly woman trying to bathe her husband who is dying of cancer, but who has not been identified for palliative care. They are trying to get home support workers, who do extraordinary work.

### *Private Members' Business*

The overall vision is that this is a palliative issue as opposed to just someone who needs home support. Too often the person ends up in the emergency room waiting for a bed. It is the locum or the emergency room doctor who has to tell them that they are actually suffering from an incurable illness, which can be very traumatic.

I have seen families almost torn apart because of the pressure. Someone has to stay home with the loved one. We know that in at least a quarter of the cases, Canadians have said that they have had to miss upwards of a month of work or have used personal savings to look after a loved one who has an incurable condition.

In areas where we have good palliative care, we can actually save about \$8,000 to \$10,000 per patient because they are not then being cared for in emergency wards and there is not the struggle to find beds, because there has been a whole approach.

In the rural northern Ontario region that I represent, the provincial allocation for palliative care for a region of more than 100 kilometres with three hospitals and about 20 communities is \$70,000. What can \$70,000 buy when one is delivering health care, when one has to do the audits and to ensure travel? That is not to say it is the only money.

The province, through its LHINS, has a pain management program, but it is not under the palliative program but through someone else, another organization that could be 200 kilometres or 400 kilometres away. They do good work as well, but it is not integrated. We have personal support workers, but they are not necessarily working under the palliative network.

To get that \$70,000, the local organizations are supposed to raise \$25,000. So they are already having to bring forward about a quarter of the money themselves. Meanwhile, there are numerous other agencies, all delivering fragments of the service, but if those fragments were put together into a cohesive whole there would be a better health outcome.

• (1815)

We can learn from each other in different parts of the country. This is a really important opportunity. We need to talk to the medical front line, the social workers and the people who are dealing with the sick and the aging. They understand that if we work together and worked on the models that work, we could learn from each other and deliver better outcomes.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

There is clearly a need for this program across the country. Palliative care is excellent in some regions and virtually non-existent in others.

Quality palliative care means integrated care: home care, social services and medical care to help improve people's health, emotional and psychological support and support for families.

*Private Members' Business*

Currently, less than 30% of Canadians have access to quality palliative care. That is why New Democrats are asking the other parties to work with them to support this vision for a pan-Canadian strategy to help families and individuals facing this situation and to implement similar models in both rural and urban areas.

[*English*]

I believe this is a moment when all parliamentarians can come together in a positive way. We all have to face the death of a loved one. We have all faced it. We all have our own stories. These are moments in the life of a family that is at a crossroads, the closing of one chapter and the opening of another.

I remember when my grandfather died and the responsibilities that were transferred, the cultural roles, the leadership roles, and the spiritual roles that people play in a family when someone leaves and the next generation has to take those on. That is an extraordinary moment in the life of a family, but if it happens in a crisis unit, if it happens in an emergency ward, if it happens because some of the family members have to be out working in the oil patch and cannot get back to be there, the sense of guilt and anger can tear families apart or seriously damage the spiritual vitality of a family or community.

When there is a better model out there, one that saves money and that ensures better access for people, I think it is incumbent upon us to say, let us embrace this model and let us show what dying with dignity in 2014 should be about, to ensure that we have everything in place around the person, around the loved ones, around the families so that they can make that transition and so that we, as their family members and loved ones, will also be able to make that transition to the next level of our own communities.

I am hoping to get the full support of the members of Parliament. I am certainly counting on the members who did the extraordinary work on the palliative care committee. I think this is something on which we can all agree. I would ask my colleagues to work with us to support this motion and then begin to push for its full implementation.

From this Parliament, it is incumbent upon as well to begin this discussion in Canadian society. This is a common sense solution that is staring Canadians in the face. This is a discussion that we need as Canadians. It is a positive discussion. It is a discussion that brings people in to talk together, as opposed to leaving people on the outside.

I would like to think that out of this motion can begin a positive discussion across this country.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his eloquent speech in the debate we are having today.

I know first hand that working through private members' business can be a very positive thing. With these kinds of initiatives we draw influence and inspiration from many Canadians right across this country. The question, therefore, that I have for the member tonight is whether there is some group that particularly helped craft the bill or inspired the member bring this topic to debate. Is there a particular person that he would like to mention, because I do know these things do not happen by our own efforts, nor probably even by the efforts of

our staff alone? So I would like the member to answer in that capacity.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, I mentioned at the beginning my dear brother-in-law, John King, who died in his early forties. John was an economist, and he would say to me, "show me how this works". What we saw at Perram House, while it existed, was that it is a great model. We can show that these are the systems that work. We came through something that in our family could have been very traumatic, but we were there, and we were there together.

I have been at the death of other loved ones when we have been standing in a hallway in an emergency ward. People are trying to come together as a family. The nurses are doing their jobs and saying, "Shush, there are other patients here". People do not know where to go or where to sit, and they do not get to have their proper goodbyes.

There are phenomenal organizations across this country, grass-roots organizations, front-line people, who have been calling us and sharing their stories. I had an amazing meeting with the Jewish Family & Child service in Toronto, which has a wonderfully integrated model for helping families spiritually and financially. They make sure that the family is supported.

If all members go back and talk within our ridings, we are going to meet the front-line people who do this every day.

• (1825)

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for bringing forward this motion. It is a very important debate. I noticed that in the debate, he said that he hopes that all parliamentarians come together with this motion. I think that is really what we hope for.

I would like to ask more about the all-party committee. Canadians see in question period every day the partisanship, but there are many occasions when members of Parliament from all the parties in the House work together on an issue. This is a very good example of where that has happened.

I wonder if the member could tell us a bit about the all-party committee, why it came together, and the work they undertook.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, this is definitely a moment when we can praise the work of other parliamentarians who have led the way on this file. Certainly in the Conservative caucus, the member from Kitchener has done extraordinary work on this. In our caucus, the member from Windsor led the work on this committee.

I have to admit that I meant to attend that committee, and I did not. I was busy with ten thousand other things, but at that time, I thought palliative care was something that was good and that existed. It was when I saw that Perram House had shut down, and I began to look around and realized that there are huge gaps, that I went back and read the report that had been sitting on my desk. I saw that parliamentarians from all different parties had really looked at these issues.

*Private Members' Business*

This is one of the great things about being able to bring forward private member's initiatives. Sometimes in the hustle and bustle and the political back and forth, some of these very important issues that front-line people are calling for, are asking for, are dropped along the way. These are moments when, as parliamentarians, we can bring them back into the House and say that there are people who are looking to us to do something.

If we as the Parliament of Canada said that we believe in an integrated vision of palliative care, it would certainly set a conversation at the provincial level and at the communal level. We could actually build a better health care system, a better way of serving the population that is looking to us for leadership at this time.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Motion No. 456, sponsored by my colleague from Timmins—James Bay. Palliative and end-of-life care are important topics, and I would like to recognize the member for Timmins—James Bay for raising these concerns in his motion.

I would like to briefly share an experience from my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla that I believe is relevant to the motion we are discussing here today. Back in the early 1990s, Andy Moog, a citizen from Penticton and a former elite NHL Stanley Cup winning goalie, started up a unique charity golf tournament known as Moog and Friends. Each summer, some of the NHL's finest players, coaches, general managers, and media personalities gathered to raise funds for a very important cause. That cause was the Moog and Friends Hospice House, which provides palliative and end-of-life care for loved ones in my community.

Today, Mr. Moog and many of his friends are enjoying retirement, but the legacy of the Moog and Friends Hospice House lives on to serve the community. This hospice house, and the unique care it provides, was a first at the time for our region. It has made what can be some of life's most challenging moments more bearable, so that those we love can pass on with dignity and greater understanding. That is why Motion No. 456 is an important one and will become even more important as our population ages.

Indeed, we know that by 2020, Statistics Canada projects that there will be 330,000 deaths in Canada each year. By 2041, that number will rise to more than 432,000. These statistics demonstrate the need for palliative care services right across the country. We also have to recognize that providing these services will require significant resources. In fact, since 2006, our government has invested more than \$43 million to support palliative care research and has delivered \$3 million to the Pallium Foundation of Canada to support training in palliative care for front-line health care providers. Our government understands the very difficult challenges faced by Canadian families when they are caring for aging loved ones who need palliative care.

We must also recognize that ultimately it is our partners in the provincial and territorial governments who have the lion's share of responsibility for managing and delivering health care, including palliative care. That does not mean that as a federal government we cannot provide support to the provinces and territories in these efforts.

The question that is most often raised, and at times debated, is how best we can provide that support. One way to improve end-of-life care is to integrate palliative care through the health care system, in all settings where people spend the end of their lives. Integrated care systems, for which our government delivered \$3 million in economic action plan 2011 to support the development of this, has shown promise. This funding supports the development of community-integrated palliative care models, fostering collaboration among all jurisdictions and the health care community. The \$3-million investment to the Pallium Foundation of Canada announced recently by the Minister of Health will also support training in palliative care to front-line health care providers.

The motion before the House today highlights the need for integrative models of palliative care and the need to encourage Canadians to discuss their wishes for end-of-life care. It also focuses on taking into account the geographic, regional, and cultural diversity of Canada, both urban and rural. The federal initiatives from our government to date, implemented through non-governmental organizations with expertise in palliative care, align with a number of the components that the member for Timmins—James Bay raises in Motion No. 456.

• (1830)

We should also not overlook that to better support front-line health care providers and to improve the quality of life and consistency of palliative end-of-life care is to make available the best and most up-to-date evidence. Research provides that evidence.

[*Translation*]

Federal investments in research also help increase the depth and scope of our knowledge of issues related to end-of-life care and the best ways to address them.

Since 2006, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research has invested over \$43 million in the area of palliative care, including \$7.8 million in 2012-13 alone. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council are supporting the Technology Evaluation in the Elderly Network project, which is part of the Networks Centre of Excellence program, with an investment of \$23.9 million between 2012 and 2017.

• (1835)

[*English*]

This network aims at improving the care of seriously ill, elderly patients and their families through the development, rigorous evaluation, and ethical implementation of health care technologies.

While my comments earlier highlighted the responsibility of the provinces and territories, our government recognizes the federal role in providing health care services, including end-of-life care, to a number of groups including first nations and Inuit, members of the Canadian Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and veterans. These services are provided directly by the federal government or managed in conjunction with the provinces and territories.

*Private Members' Business*

This government's contributions, which I have just described, complement services provided by provinces and territories. In addition, the funding we have delivered for research serves to inform palliative program delivery and quality improvements at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels. Taken together, these federal actions help address the needs identified by the motion put forward by the member for Timmins—James Bay.

Indeed, this government agrees that palliative care is the best option for end-of-life care.

However, we would like to see this motion amended to instead seek the establishment of a federal framework instead of a pan-Canadian strategy as it is currently worded. This amendment would clarify the federal, provincial, and territorial roles in health care as I laid them out earlier. The development of this framework would engage provinces and territories, as well as key stakeholders, so that federal activities complement their emerging and ongoing activities; reducing the potential for duplication.

A federal framework could also provide opportunities to raise awareness, share information on federal palliative care activities, and support public awareness about advanced care planning, palliative care, and caregiving.

Without further ado, I would like to move that the motion be amended by first replacing all the words between the word “should” and paragraph (a) with the following: “develop a federal palliative and end-of-life care framework to guide the Government of Canada's efforts to improve palliative and end-of-life care. This framework will complement flexible, integrated approaches to palliative care developed by provinces and territories with relevant stakeholders; and,” and second, replacing paragraph (c) with the following: “aligns with the goals of improving access to high quality home-based and hospice palliative end-of-life care for all Canadians; supporting family caregivers, particularly those balancing paid work and caregiving responsibilities; improving the quality and consistency of home and hospice palliative end-of-life care in Canada; and encouraging Canadians to discuss and plan for end-of-life care”.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to stand in this House to speak to the member's motion, show our support, and bring forward an amendment that we think could allow us all to rally behind this cause.

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

I therefore ask the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay if he consents to this amendment being moved.

There is no consent.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could clarify. Because an amendment has been asked of me, am I able to respond?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Since the hon. member does not consent to the amendment, we do not have an occasion to debate it. It is therefore not moved, if one could suggest that be the status of it.

We will move to resuming debate.

The hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

• (1840)

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I applaud the hon. member for bringing forward this very important motion. I want to suggest, however, that we add one amendment to the motion. I know that we are not allowed to do that, but I would like to include after the word “integrated” the word “comprehensive”. It is because it is not only about integrating a system of care we are talking about. It is about looking at all the elements of care that are necessary. The hon. member, in putting forward what is a broad-based recommendation, leaves it open for some of us to talk about areas that we feel are missing. The word “comprehensive” would encompass all of this.

The whole concept of palliative care is not a simple thing that happens when one's life is ending or when one is dying and wants to die a good death, as the word *euthanatos* means. What we are talking about here is the issue of palliative care as part of a continuum of care that should be divided, actually, into three parts. The three parts we want to look at have to be divided into the different levels of the end of life.

First, there are seniors ending their lives with chronic diseases who need to or can live in their homes. While those chronic diseases may eventually speed up their deaths, the point is that they are able to take care of themselves in their homes with a system that facilitates good home care.

The second part is a diagnosis of impending end-of-life, when the patient needs assisted care but is not yet dying.

The third piece we need to look at is the final piece, which is when the person is dying, which is when palliative care fits in.

Currently, palliative care and any of these levels of care are not considered to be core, mandated levels of care under the Canada Health Act. Therefore, they are spotty at best. We have some places where there is a wonderful integrated, comprehensive system in place and some places where there is practically nothing at all. That is why the motion is important.

The thing to remember is that 26,000 seniors die each day in Canada. Only a small percentage of them have the ability to get the kind of care they need as they lead up to and eventually end up needing palliative care.

The parliamentary committee, in 2011, had some excellent recommendations. As we develop a model to implement this, we can look at them, because some were quite comprehensive.

*Private Members' Business*

We need to talk about an integrated, comprehensive system, because we need to look at some areas that are not mentioned in the motion. One of them is support for caregivers. It is not only support for caregivers to take time off work so that they can look after the chronically ill and/or diagnosed patient. We need to have respite in place for caregivers. If caregivers are the only people on whom the care falls within the family, and they do not have an opportunity to take some time off to deal with some of the stress and emotional pain they have while they are looking after a loved one, we will not have fitted the system out properly. We would only consider burdening the actual family member with all the care and compensating them for it. Respite and time off is an important part of any support for caregivers.

I also want to talk about a piece that is not fully mentioned but that is really important. That is the issue of housing. I think we have forgotten that housing is a determinant of health and that housing is a core part of any kind of comprehensive and integrated system. As we get to the home care part, for instance, when people may be able to stay at home when they reach a particular point in their chronic disease and can still take care of themselves with help, we need to ask if we can retrofit homes. Do we have a program that would retrofit and renovate homes so that it would be possible for the person to live that period of their time at home?

• (1845)

Are we looking at new housing strategies through which people, once they get to the assisted living part, can move into an assisted living centre with all of the higher-level care that they may need, and eventually move on to palliative care in a facility particularly dedicated to palliative care?

The important piece that I would like to add is the comprehensive piece. We must talk about housing if we are to achieve that full system, and we must talk about respite if we are going to achieve proper support.

Pieces are missing. I support the intent, but there are pieces missing. For instance, we know that only 10 out of 17 medical schools in the country have any teaching program at all to train physicians in palliative care. Most physicians get something like a 10-hour course in those 10 universities, so most physicians are not really equipped to deal with palliative care.

The important thing is to look at how we educate and train caregivers, whether they are nurses, physicians, or others, to deliver appropriate care and to understand all of the pieces involved in end-of-life care, including the spiritual pieces, the cultural pieces, the emotional pieces, and all of that. We do not yet have that kind of training in place. That is one of the pieces that would be needed as we look at a comprehensive, integrated model of care.

The idea of helping people to develop a plan is very important. I think of the Canadian Medical Association meeting last summer. The doctors all talked about the fact that they did not do this very well, that they needed to start reaching out to their patients to talk about some sort of plan, and that patients need to understand that they can reach out to their physicians, or, if they are in a community care setting, to the nurse practitioners, the home care nurses, or whoever is looking after them to be able to discuss this matter openly.

The ideas here are excellent. I just wanted to add some elements to it that I think would strengthen it. That is why I wanted the word “comprehensive” in it. The mover of the motion may not agree with me, but after the word “integrated”, I would add “comprehensive” so that we deal not only with the health care system but also with other systems that would support it with palliative care.

That is what I had to say. I support the motion.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Just for clarification, does the hon. member for Vancouver Centre wish to propose an amendment to the motion at this time?

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** I do.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Could she say state the amendment to the motion again?

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Mr. Speaker, the amendment to the motion would begin after “establish a Pan-Canadian Palliative and End-of-life Care Strategy by working with provinces and territories”. I would like add “and other groups” and then instead of “on a flexible, integrated model”, I would add “comprehensive” after “integrated”. I would like say “a flexible, integrated, comprehensive model”.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** We will need the amendment to be put in writing and submitted, and perhaps indicate the seconder.

Perhaps while we are under way with that, what we might do is seek consent, as we did in the last intervention, again subject to Standing Order 93(3). As members know, an amendment cannot be proposed to a private member's motion without the sponsor's consent. I therefore ask, based on what has been presented, whether the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay would consent to such an amendment.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** No, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** There being no consent, pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), the amendment proposed cannot be moved at this time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vancouver East.

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to support my colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay, and this great motion he has brought before the House.

It is a simple and straightforward motion, but it is incredibly important. As the member outlined, it is about establishing a pan-Canadian palliative care, end-of-life care strategy. It is about providing more support for caregivers, improving the quality and consistency of home and hospice, palliative, end-of-life care, and actually encouraging Canadians to discuss this issue.

When we look at our health care system, sometimes we think that things do not affect us. However, I think it is very true to say that we have all had experiences where a family member, a close friend, or maybe a neighbour, has been in the situation where they are approaching the end of their life, and it becomes a real struggle in terms of where they might be and what kind of care they might receive.

*Private Members' Business*

Palliative care and end-of-life care, whether in a hospice or at home, is something that is really very deep. It is very meaningful. For many years, we did not talk about these issues. We do not like to talk about death or think about what happens to us at the end.

However, we should talk about it. More than that, we need to have public policy around it. That is why this motion is so important. It shows us that across the country there are incredible examples of palliative care.

However, it is very patchy. For example, in my community in East Vancouver, the St. James Cottage Hospice, located in an historic building in Burrard View Park, is an amazing place. It is like a home. It is a place where people feel comfortable. It is where they have dignity. They do tremendous work there.

Every year in our community in East Vancouver, there is a festival of lights. The houses are dressed up with Christmas lights, and people vote and give donations in the street adjacent to the palliative care home. The money goes to palliative care. The whole community comes together to express itself. It is a wonderful initiative undertaken.

We need to state in this debate that, unfortunately, there are big gaps in the system. I was very proud last Monday when the NDP unveiled a very important document based on 18 months of consultation across the country about health care in Canada.

We went out and talked to Canadians. We did our homework about what needs to be done to improve and sustain our public health care system. It is a wonderful document, and I would certainly urge people to go check it out on the NDP website.

In the public forums and consultations we held across the country, one of the key issues people put forward, based on their own experience, their own need about what they know needs to happen, was that we need better home, long-term, and palliative care. That came through to us again and again.

I would like to quote from that document we put out a week ago.

Canadians want to see home care, long term care, and palliative care recognized as essential medical services just like treatment in the hospital. These services are not luxuries, and they need to be fully accessible, whatever a patient's income, and provided at the same high quality and standards wherever they live.

That quote has come to us in our document because of what people told us. We are very cognizant that palliative care is part of a bigger issue that needs to be critically addressed in this country, which is the issue of continuing care of which palliative care is a part.

We do need to have home care. We do need to have long-term care. Again, it is very spotty across the country. Some provinces do well, others do not. People who live in smaller and remote communities have very little access.

The reliance we have on acute care facilities, the over-reliance because there is nowhere else to go, people end up in hospital, as the member for Timmins—James Bay pointed out. For people to die with dignity, they need to be in an appropriate place where there is support, resources, the right kind of medication to relieve pain, and the right kind of guidance, whether spiritual or emotional, from their family.

● (1850)

These are probably the most important times in anyone's life, yet these services really do not exist across the country in the way they should.

I really want to make the point today that in debating this motion, let us recognize that it is linked to a bigger issue around our health care system and that we have to make sure that the federal government shows leadership on this issue.

There are many reforms needed in our health care system. This is one of them. Today, I met with a group, the Parkinson's Association. I have met with many other groups. They all say the same thing, which is that the burdens financially and sometimes emotionally of caregiving create enormous stress for the family where people have to leave work, quit their jobs, and take out loans.

This is not what should be happening. There are incredible groups out there who have been calling for this kind of pan-Canadian end-of-life care strategy for so long. I think it is fantastic that we had an all-party parliamentary committee working on this issue.

Now that we are actually having this debate, we have our own power here to vote, one by one. We have the power to say that this motion has merit, that it is legitimate and has all of this groundwork, all of this homework, behind it. It is non-partisan. It crosses all political lines. We have this opportunity in the House to vote for this motion and to say to the government that this is the will of Parliament.

It is based on what we hear from our constituents. It might be based on our own experience. I certainly have my own experience. My partner of 24 years died of cancer just before I was elected. We were very fortunate that we had palliative care at home under the B. C. health care system.

I cannot imagine what that experience, as hard as it was, would have been like if my partner had been in a hospital, just in a ward or maybe in the hallway. Being at home and having people around him who loved him and cared for him on a daily basis and having the professional help and support that we needed was critical to how we went through our own process of grieving and losing someone that we loved so much.

That is just my experience, and this is manifest in hundreds of thousands of people across the country every day, so I want to say, let us pay attention to the motion. Let us look at how it is putting something forward that is real and legitimate. Let us put aside partisanship. Let us recognize the good work that has been done on this issue by an all-party committee. Let us unite, come together, and say to the government that we want to pass this motion so that the Government of Canada will establish a pan-Canadian palliative care strategy.

I would also like to move an amendment.

I move that the motion be amended by replacing the words "Canada; (b) respects the cultural, spiritual and familial needs of Canada's first nation, Inuit and Métis people" with the words "Canada, as well as Canada's first nation, Inuit and Métis people; (b) respects the cultural, spiritual and familial needs of all Canadians".

*Private Members' Business*

•(1855)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** We have had some practice with this tonight. We are seeing consent from the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Resuming debate. We will go to the hon. member for Burlington.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure and honour to stand and speak tonight to Motion No. 456, and to draw attention to the palliative care needs and the end-of-life care needs of many Canadians.

I want to say to the mover of this motion that I appreciate that it is a motion and not a bill. I personally believe we can accomplish more in private members' time with motions than we do with small changes to legislation. This one is a bigger picture issue and it is very important that it has been brought forward.

As we know, the senior population in Canada is growing. In 2012, there were more than five million seniors in Canada, which is about 15% of the population. Based on what I have read, I believe that number may even double within the next 15 to 20 years. That is because of advancements in medicine and other factors that allow Canadians to live longer.

It is important for us to be ready for that aging population, even though many seniors today are very active in their older years, and that is very important. A few weeks ago I presented a bill on obesity, diabetes, and staying active, not just for youth but also for seniors.

Today's motion before the House draws some attention to the role of family caregivers. A Statistics Canada study revealed that family and friends provide 80% to 90% of the care for ill or disabled persons in our community. It is important to note that one-quarter of these caregivers are seniors themselves and are helping other seniors, whether their own spouses or family members. It can be expected that this will only increase with the increase in baby boomers.

At this point, I know other speakers have made this motion a bit of a personal piece, and I would like to take this time to do that on two fronts. One is that we are talking about hospice care. When I was on the council in the City of Burlington in 1999, it came to our attention that there was a need for palliative care and hospice care. Through the leadership of the mayor at the time, Mayor MacIsaac, and the Rotary Clubs of Burlington, they came up with a plan. By 2002, we had a 10-bed hospice, or maybe 12-bed, which was also able to exist because of the generosity of a number of Burlingtonians including the Carpenter family, which was the lead donor on the Carpenter Hospice, as we know it today. That was in 2002. As of last check, it has served over 1,600 individuals who lived there in palliative care since its inception. I have been very proud to be part of the council that developed that.

The other area that is very important to me and my family is that I am very fortunate to have relatively long life in my family. In fact, my grandmother Wallace will be celebrating her 97th birthday in a week and a half, or so. We are very proud of grandmother Wallace. Her mother, Granny Lasalle, lived to 100 years old; so I might be here for a while. In fact my Granny Lasalle worked on Parliament Hill. She was a housekeeping employee and, in a picture I have seen, she is cleaning the Prime Minister's offices.

We have been very fortunate. I want to wish my grandmother a very happy birthday. What is important is that she lives with my uncle and aunt. She has lived with a number of my dad's brothers over the years, and they are providing the care and support for her. We are very fortunate that Grandma Wallace is in really good health, but that is not the same for every family.

I lost another grandmother in the fall who was age 96. She was living with my parents for about five years. Therefore, I completely understand, from a personal perspective, the need for family members and the responsibility that goes along with end-of-life care and palliative care and care for seniors. The role that my Uncle Jack and Aunt Marilyn are playing for Grandma Wallace and that my Uncle Miles and his wife Cathy played for my grandmother Wallace in past years and that my own parents, Len and Cassie Wallace, played for my Grandma Gray make a big difference in the quality of life for them as the end of years come closer.

•(1900)

I am hoping, based on the 10% rule, that my Grandma Wallace will outlive her mother by about 10%. That will make her about 110 by the time she needs palliative care, and I am looking forward to that. That also means I will be the member of Parliament for Burlington until I am 120. Hopefully, I will have moved on before then.

Our government recognizes the critical role that many Canadians play in caring for family and friends with health conditions or disabilities, in addition to balancing their own work lives and family responsibilities. In 2012, over eight million individuals, or about 28% of Canadian adults, provided unpaid care to family members or friends with a long-term or terminal health condition, disability, or aging needs. Of these caregivers, about 67% provided care to a senior. Most often, family caregivers providing end-of-life care were caring for their own parents, as was happening in my own family. About one out of every 13 caregivers has provided this type of care in the last year alone.

Our government recognizes that while family caregiving is both beneficial and rewarding, it can also be very difficult. Take, for instance, the negative health impacts experienced by caregivers, particularly among seniors caring for other seniors, and those caring for individuals suffering from very difficult diseases like Alzheimer's and other related dementia. As these individuals become less capable of taking care of themselves, caregivers assume the responsibilities for their personal care. This gradual loss of independence often creates additional levels of stress and anxiety for the person with the disease, the caregiver, and the caregiver's family.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

We have also supported research that is helping inform decisions as to how best to help the families and caregivers of people with chronic and progressive conditions. Indeed, since 2006, we have invested more than \$650 million in research in areas related to aging, including more than \$100 million in 2012 alone. Ongoing research, supported by our government, is also filling gaps in knowledge about rates of neurological conditions in Canada, including Alzheimer's disease. It is also looking at the efforts of individuals with these conditions, their families, and other caregivers.

Supporting Canada's caregivers presents an increasingly complex challenge, in part because of the very needs of each recipient and because of the unique situation of each caregiver. Responding to such needs typically involves the engagement of several partners at all levels of government, with the support of community-based organizations and employers. In addition to the above-mentioned research, the Canadian government has provided a variety of supports for unpaid family caregivers. For instance, economic action plan 2014 announced our intention to launch the Canadian employers for caregivers plan. This plan would engage employers to identify and implement cost-effective and promising workplace practices that better support employed caregivers.

I appreciate the motion from the member opposite to highlight and bring attention to the issue of palliative and end-of-life care, the important role of family members and family care for those in need, for the other opportunities that need to be addressed in working with other partners, including the provinces, and making sure that we have these services for the growing senior population we will have over the next number of years.

• (1905)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

### RAIL TRANSPORTATION

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on January 28, CN announced it will terminate passenger services on the Algoma Central Railway because the government changed the subsidy that offset the losses incurred by providing the service. The last run is set for the end of April. The timing of the announcement was especially bad for tourist businesses such as lodges and outfitters, many of whom were attending trade shows and drumming up clients for the summer.

Shortly after that, I asked the Minister of Transport why the government would abandon the businesses, property owners, and communities along the line and was told the government is not in the business of giving money to profitable companies like CN.

While that statement could be challenged vigorously, time constraints will spare the government an itemized list that would surely begin with \$1.3 billion in subsidies for the profitable oil and gas sector.

What is missing from the hard line being taken is any recognition of the economic cascade this will create. This is not a clear-cut case of saving \$2.2 million. Every dollar invested in passenger rail creates economic activity along the line and supports a variety of business ventures.

Although there is no formal impact assessment, some of that work has been undertaken by the stakeholder group of communities, businesses, first nations, fur managers, property owners, outdoor enthusiasts, and passenger rail supporters who are working to save passenger services. They prepared a basic level of assessment that estimates the current regional economic impact of ACR passenger service at \$20 million a year. Put another way, every dollar invested by the government creates \$9 of economic activity.

These findings are consistent with an independent study undertaken by Tourism Ontario in 2013 on the economic impact of sport fishing in Algoma.

The subsidy was lost when the government removed the rural component from the former rural and remote passenger rail subsidy. The rationale for classifying the ACR as rural rests in the government's opinion that the communities and businesses along the line can be accessed by road. This is flawed thinking.

The government is assuming the industrial roads are safe and reliable for public use, but most of these are secondary roads and many are not even open during the winter. Also, people using them at their own risk may fall into an insurance vacuum should something happen while travelling on them.

The community of Oba is a good example. People there will be effectively isolated without passenger service. Oba has no access by public road. The only option is an industrial road that people can be denied access to at any time, and there is no guarantee that the road will be maintained either.

For those reasons alone, the ACR should receive the remote line subsidy, and if the government had done a proper assessment, we would not be having this discussion.

One thing this experience has done is to further shatter the myth of a seat at the table ensuring a constituency's good fortune under any government. This has a huge effect on the community of Sault Ste. Marie, which is represented by a member of the governing party. Many people in that community are having a difficult time believing the member has been working diligently behind the scenes on their behalf when he appeared to have been caught off guard by CN's announcement. He followed up by claiming "We didn't know how CN was going to respond" and indicated it would be his preference that CN continue the service at its own expense.

That amounts to wilful ignorance and wishful thinking. CN has no obligation to subsidize passenger services. It is far more appropriate for the government to maintain the subsidy, which is in keeping with other public transportation investments it is making.

It is also wishful thinking to believe that industrial road access is a guaranteed option as well. Those roads are maintained for the benefit of companies and can be abandoned at any time.

With that in mind, and with so many businesses, jobs, communities, and property owners left twisting in the wind, would the government do the right thing and find the money to support passenger services on the Algoma Central Railway?

• (1910)

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government's role in the discontinuation process of rail lines is to provide a legislative framework that encourage stakeholders to seek commercial solutions to address this discontinuation.

The Canada Transportation Act outlines the process railways must follow if they want to stop providing service. The line transfer and discontinuation provisions in the Canada Transportation Act are aimed at encouraging retention of rail lines, where it makes sense to do so, by giving other railways or other interested parties the opportunity to continue railway operations.

The decision to cancel the Algoma Central Railway passenger rail service between Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst was a business decision made by CN, the owner of the railway.

At one point in time, some communities along the Algoma Central Railway relied upon the rail line as their only means of access. However, other transportation options, including local highways, are now available on a year-round basis. As a result, the ridership on the service has declined by 37% in recent years, to less than 5,000 riders annually.

With regard to the situation in New Brunswick, CN will continue to be responsible for maintaining the rail line, to ensure that service is not disrupted while the discontinuation process is under way. If CN does not complete the discontinuation process for the portion of the track in New Brunswick, VIA Rail, an independent crown corporation, will be responsible for making decisions about its passenger rail services.

This government provides significant funding to support passenger rail services. In 2013-14 alone, the Government of Canada provided VIA Rail, a crown corporation that operates independently of the government, with \$305 million to provide passenger rail services to Canadians. Since 2007, the government has also provided VIA Rail with nearly \$1 billion in capital funding to support projects, such as station upgrades, railcar refurbishment, and track improvements.

The government will continue to monitor these two situations, but ultimately believes that railways are commercial enterprises and that its role is to encourage commercial solutions to address rail line discontinuance.

• (1915)

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Mr. Speaker, the government cannot wash its hands of this. Some \$2.2 million is how much the current government spends on advertising every 10 days to promote itself, but when the chips are down it claims it is broke. The irony is not lost on the people affected by this.

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

However, there is still a chance to do the right thing for the lodges and outfitters that will be most affected by the end of ACR passenger services. Unfortunately, it is expected that the loss of service will force some of these outfitters out of business altogether.

I have received a great many messages from tourists as well, who have travelled from all over the world to ride the rails to these remote destinations. They tell me that the train is a big part of the experience and that its loss will affect their desire to return.

[*Translation*]

I am sure that most members are aware that sport fishing is a multi-billion-dollar industry in North America. Although many outfitters are accessible by well-maintained public roads, there are unfortunately only a few that offer the unique experience of arriving by train.

Will the government do the right thing and come up with the funds to maintain this passenger service in order to protect businesses, which it appears to be abandoning?

[*English*]

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, the decision by CN to discontinue the passenger rail service between Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst is a business decision made by a private company. The Government of Canada has no direct role in owning or operating railways, and the member knows that.

Railway companies are private entities that make their own decisions concerning their operations and what services and routes to offer to their customers.

Those are the facts.

[*Translation*]

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on February 28, I asked the Minister of Agriculture whether the Conservatives intended to seriously consider the proposal put forward by cheese producers.

Since the free trade agreement was signed with Europe, cheese producers, particularly in Quebec, have been working hard to find an appropriate compensation formula.

According to the Dairy Farmers of Canada, the EU's additional access of 17,700 tonnes of cheese allowed under the agreement is equivalent to a 2.25% cut in farm quota, which represents a possible farm income loss of nearly \$150 million per year.

The Conseil des industriels laitiers du Québec developed a plan that would ensure that additional import quotas were run by producers and that would harmonize the standards. These adjustments would be phased in over seven years. This plan would provide appropriate compensation for cheese producers and would cost the federal government virtually nothing.

The Conservative government promised to compensate large and small Canadian cheese producers. It must therefore consider proposals that would allow it to keep that promise.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

However, to date, the government has not put forward any concrete proposals. My colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé moved a motion in this regard that the government was very quick to ignore.

The motion calls on the government to reveal details without delay related to the compensation that will be paid to dairy and cheese producers; provide for an implementation period for the agreement that is as long as possible to allow producers to adapt; put an end to the circumvention of tariff quotas and the misclassification of products at the border; maintain high quality standards by imposing the same production and processing requirements on imported products; and commit to provide support for commercialization. Nonetheless, there has been nothing but silence from the government.

Canadian cheese producers need to know immediately what compensation they can expect to get from the federal government, particularly since no money was set aside for this sector in the most recent budget, even though there was money set aside for other industries, such as the automotive industry and the fishery.

It goes without saying that Canadian fine cheeses already have a well-established reputation. There are hundreds of varieties of high-quality cheese available, particularly in Quebec. We need to quickly find ways to protect this key agri-food sector before the Canada-European Union comprehensive economic and trade agreement comes into force.

Will the Conservatives seriously consider the proposal by the Conseil des industriels laitiers du Québec?

The last time I asked this question, I got a response that I felt was unsatisfactory. I am therefore asking it again today to learn a little bit more about the government's take on this issue.

● (1920)

[*English*]

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for the question because it allows me to underline our government's support of Canada's dairy industry and supply management.

The dairy industry plays a vital role in Canada's economy. In 2012, the industry generated approximately \$20.6 billion in both farm gate and processor sales. That has translated into thousands of jobs for Canadians while helping to support a stable economy. Our government continues to support an innovative Canadian dairy industry.

Under Growing Forward 2, we have increased that investment to \$12 million to continue the cluster's great work over the next five years. The cluster will be led from a research centre in Sherbrooke, Quebec, home of a state-of-the-art dairy complex, supported by a \$12-million federal investment.

We underscored our support for the supply management in the Speech from the Throne. It states that in protecting and promoting Canada's traditional industries, the government will seek "to develop

new markets for Canadian products, while supporting supply management".

This government continues to make it very clear that it supports supply management. Every single one of the three pillars of supply management remains intact: one, production control; two, import controls; and, three, price controls. However, the member does not need to take my word for it. Wally Smith, president of the Dairy Farmers of Canada, said the following at the agriculture committee on this very subject: "Yes, the three pillars are still in place".

We are committed to monitoring any potential impacts from the implementation of this agreement on dairy producers' income and to provide compensation to address such impacts if they materialize.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Claude Morin:** Mr. Speaker, the government is singing the praises of dairy farmers and fine cheese producers in Canada and Quebec, but this is all a ruse, since there is not currently a serious offer on the table to compensate these producers, who will probably suffer as a result of the free trade agreement that was just signed.

I do not want to hear about the investments that have been made in the past. I want to know what the government plans to do in the future for these producers who work very hard and who will have a hard time competing as a result of this agreement. That is what people want to know.

[*English*]

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, throughout the negotiations, the government consulted closely with a full range of agriculture industry stakeholders. We will continue to work closely with the sector, including as the implementation of the free trade deal proceeds.

We need to remember that this agreement holds tremendous potential for Canadian farmers, including those in Quebec, and we believe in those farmers. When the agreement is fully implemented, over 95% of the EU's agricultural tariffs will be eliminated, including on our key agricultural exports, such as meats, grains and oil seeds, fruits and vegetables, maple syrup, and processed foods. There will be an estimated \$1 billion in new sales for the beef and pork industry.

We know that all of our farmers can compete, including our dairy farmers. Let me quote someone very knowledgeable, who said:

We have some of the finest and best artisanal cheese in the world, without a doubt, and we can compete with anyone in the world, without a doubt.

Who said that? It was Wally Smith, president of the Dairy Farmers of Canada. We agree with him.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:25 p.m.)





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