



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 147 • NUMBER 081 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, May 6, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 6, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[English]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the spring 2014 report of the Auditor General of Canada, with an addendum on environmental petitions from July 1 to December 31, 2013.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), this document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in relation to its study of the main estimates 2014-15.

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from constituents in Kingston and the Islands who have asked the House of Commons to undertake public consultations regarding proportional representation, in order to amend the Canada Elections Act.

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from thousands of Canadians who want the government to take measures to stop the global practice of shark finning, and to ensure the responsible conservation management of sharks. The petitioners call on the government to

immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fins to Canada.

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of a number of constituents and people from Prince Edward Island.

The petitioners state that they, the undersigned citizens of Canada, recognize the inherent rights of farmers. Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to refrain from making any change to the Seeds Act or to the Plant Breeders' Rights Act through Bill C-18, an act to amend certain acts relating to agriculture and agri-food, that would further restrict farmers' rights or add to farmers' costs. Further, they call upon Parliament to enshrine in the legislation the inalienable rights of farmers and other Canadians to save, reuse, select, exchange, and sell seeds.

The Speaker: I just remind the hon. member that it is the practice of the House not to read the actual petition, but just to provide a brief summary.

The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions.

The first petition is from members of my community in Parkdale—High Park who are concerned about unfair extra fees and getting ripped off as consumers. They are calling on the government to take measures to make life more affordable for average Canadians.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by people more broadly from the Toronto area. They are calling on the government to end its muzzling of scientists and to reverse the cuts to research programs at Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Library and Archives Canada, the National Research Council, Statistics Canada, and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada; and to cancel the closures of the National Council of Welfare and the First Nations Statistical Institute.

THE ENVIRONMENT

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

Routine Proceedings

The first petition is from residents of Abbotsford, Surrey, and Langley. They are all calling upon this House of Commons to ensure that the so-called northern gateway project does not proceed in the face of the significant risks to the British Columbia coastline.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of primarily my own riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands, North Saanich, Victoria, Salt Spring Island. The petitioners are calling on the government to reject the Canada-China investment treaty and to call upon the Privy Council to refuse to ratify a treaty that poses such a significant threat to Canada.

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from the appropriate number of Prince Edward Islanders, under Standing Order 36. They believe there is a gap in the Criminal Code of Canada, under which there is no separate offence of torture by a non-state actor. The petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to introduce legislation to amend the Criminal Code of Canada to include torture committed by non-state actors, private individuals, and organizations as a specific and distinct criminal offence.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today, signed by constituents in and around my riding of Beaches—East York.

The first petition refers to record levels of household debt, the scourge of payday lenders, and so on. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to take significant and concrete steps to make life more affordable for cash-strapped Canadian families.

CANADA POST

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition refers to Canada Post's plans to stop door-to-door mail delivery. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to reject that plan to cut mail services and increase prices, and instead to explore other options for modernizing our postal delivery system.

ROUGE NATIONAL PARK

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege to present a petition today on behalf of residents all across the greater Toronto area with respect to the Rouge national park. As we know, the current Rouge Park is home to the endangered Carolinian forest, mixed woodland, and plain life zones of Canada, which is home to one-third of the endangered species in Canada and the ancestral home of the Mississauga Huron-Wendat and Seneca First Nations that includes their sacred burial and village sites.

The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to protect the irreplaceable 100 square kilometres of public land assembly within a healthy and sustainable Rouge national park and to ensure that Rouge national park strengthens and implements the ecological vision, policies, and integrity of the approved Rouge Park plans and other plans that have already been approved for the area, including consultation with the community and local advocacy groups that are active in the community.

● (1010)

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a few petitions on two topics. The first topic is postal services in rural areas.

The petitioners are demanding that post offices remain public and that they not be privatized. They do not want to see more cuts to hours of service. They are also prepared to express their dissatisfaction. I assume that there will be many people in attendance on the weekend.

VIA RAIL

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also want to present some petitions regarding VIA Rail service in eastern Canada.

VIA Rail has experienced a lot of cuts lately, and service could be cut fully on July 1, when CN will abandon the line between Bathurst and Miramichi. This could have an effect on all VIA Rail service east of Quebec City.

I hope that the government is listening.

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to table a petition on behalf of Canadians who are calling for greater attention and a sense of urgency to be paid to the tragic fate of aboriginal women and girls who have been murdered or gone missing and whose cases remain unsolved. Indeed, the RCMP commissioner has recently confirmed 1,186 cases of police-recorded incidents of missing and murdered aboriginal women. I join with all concerned Canadians in calling for the establishment of a non-partisan national inquiry to examine this national tragedy.

[Translation]

BLOOD AND ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions in the House on the same topic.

Canadians, and especially Ontarians, are concerned about our country's rules regarding blood and organ donation. They think that a person's sexual preferences or the fact that they have a same-sex partner should not prevent them from donating an organ if something were to happen to them. I agree with these petitioners that this situation is unconstitutional and does not comply with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, I continue to receive hundreds of petitions from people from across Canada who are concerned about the Experimental Lakes Area, which is absolutely indispensable as a bastion of science, ecosystem, and fisheries research. They ask that funding to the ELA continue even though the ownership has been transferred.

PENSIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am putting forward what is a fairly common petition that quite a few residents of Winnipeg North have signed. This is with regard to the old age security program and the Prime Minister making the decision to increase the age of retirement eligibility from 65 to 67. They are asking the Prime Minister and the government to consider allowing people to continue to have the option of retiring at age 65 and not have to wait until they are 67. They are also asking that the Government of Canada reinforce the three solid senior pensionable incomes, the OAS, the GIS, and the CPP.

It is with pleasure that I table this petition today. It is, indeed, quite a popular petition in Winnipeg North.

BLOOD AND ORGAN DONATION

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a large group of Canadians calling upon the Government of Canada to review thoroughly and change the policy on blood and organ donation in Canada. The bottom line is that they ask that the Government of Canada return the right of any healthy Canadian to give the gift of blood, bone marrow, and organs to those in need no matter the race, religion, or sexual preference of a person. The right to give blood or donate organs is universal in any healthy man or woman.

The Speaker: I would just remind the hon. member from Malpeque that it is customary to present all the petitions that a member may have at the same time.

* * *

• (1015)

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 323, 324, 328, 331, 332, 333, 334, 336, and 337 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 323—**Hon. Gerry Byrne:**

With regard to the recognition of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band under the Indian Act, and the administration of the enrollment of applicants in the Founding Members list: (a) how many applications for enrollment in the Band were received by the Enrollment Clerks and by the Enrollment Committee, broken down by month from December 2008 to November 2012; (b) how many applications were accepted for membership by the Enrollment Committee, broken down by month from December 2008 to May 2013; (c) broken down by month from December 2008 to

May 2013, (i) how many applications were rejected for membership by the Enrollment Committee, and of these, (ii) how many were appealed by the applicant to the Appeals Master, (iii) how many were overturned by the Appeals Master, (iv) how many were confirmed by the Appeals Master; (d) how many applications that were approved by the Enrollment Committee were appealed by Canada to the Appeals Master, broken down by month from December 2008 to May 2013; (e) how many of the applications were rejected by Canada under the provisions of 4.2.16 of the 2008 Qalipu Mi'kmaq Recognition Agreement, broken down by month from December 2008 to May 2013; (f) broken down by month from December 2008 to May 2013, (i) how many of the applications who were rejected by Canada, under the provisions of 4.2.16 of the 2008 Qalipu Mi'kmaq Recognition Agreement concerning Canadian Aboriginal Ancestry, were appealed to the Appeals Master, (ii) how many of these rejections were overturned by the Appeals Master, (iii) how many were confirmed by the Appeals Master; (g) how many internal or external audits or reviews were conducted by the government that included matters of the enrollment process between December 2008 and March 2014, (i) what is the government's document reference number for each of these audits or reviews, (ii) when were these audits or reviews completed; (h) on what date did the government first make contact with the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band or the Federation of Newfoundland Indians to register or express concerns about the enrollment process; (i) what are the total expenses paid to, or on behalf of, Mr. Fred Caron in relation to his work on Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band enrollment process and other issues from December 2008 to March 2014, broken down by (i) professional fees, (ii) travel and related disbursements, (iii) support services, (iv) other expenses; (j) how many applicants were informed that their applications were deemed invalid by reason of failure to provide a long form birth certificate as part of the applicants' application package, broken down by month from December 2008 to March 2014; and (k) how many applications were deemed invalid by reason of the applicant's failure to sign the application in all required locations of the membership application form, broken down by month from December 2008 to March 2014?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 324—**Hon. Gerry Byrne:**

With regard to the administration of all government departments, crown corporations and agencies as well as other entities within federal jurisdiction that offer goods or services to parliamentarians, to parliamentarians' staff, to the spouses or dependents of parliamentarians, or more generally to the offices of parliamentarians, hereafter referred to as "eligible parliamentary persons", at either no cost or at a reduced cost compared to the rate normally charged to a member of the general public who might seek the provision of the same or a similar good or service from the government: without consideration or inclusion of any occasional discounts or promotions for fiscal years 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013, and not including those goods or services provided directly to any eligible parliamentary persons under the normal rules of the administration of the House of Commons, the Senate or by the Library of Parliament, (a) which federal entities provided goods or services to those eligible parliamentary persons at either no cost or at a reduced cost; (b) what is each respective good or service thus provided, and what is the rationale for offering such no-cost goods or services or discounts to eligible parliamentary persons; (c) broken down by each such individual product or service, what is the cost to each federal entity, as measured in revenue that would otherwise not have been lost, of providing such goods or services to eligible parliamentary persons, calculated for each fiscal year and using the undiscounted rate that would be normally charged to members of the general public as the comparative basis for such a calculation; (d) what was the net financial position of each federal crown corporation or operating agency providing such goods or services before the provision of federal subsidies are considered in each fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 328—**Hon. John McKay:**

With regard to any contracting paid for by the budgets of each Minister's Office since May 1, 2011, what are the details of all contracts over \$500 including (i) the name of the supplier, vendor or individual who received the contract, (ii) the date on which the contract was entered into, (iii) the date the contract terminated, (iv) a brief description of the good or service provided, (v) the amount of payment initially agreed upon for the contract, (vi) the final amount paid for the contract?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 331—Mr. Paul Dewar:

With regard to the purchase, sale and renovation of diplomatic properties by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development: (a) how many properties have been purchased in each of the last ten fiscal years; (b) how many properties have been sold in each of the last ten fiscal years; (c) what were the locations and prices of all properties valued over \$250 000 purchased in each of the last ten fiscal years; (d) what were the locations and prices of all properties valued over \$250 000 sold in each of the last ten fiscal years; (e) are property purchases or sales above a certain value subject to ministerial approval, and if so, what is the threshold; (f) for each of the properties in (c) and (d), what were (i) their respective cost at the time of purchase, (ii) the year in which they were purchased; (g) what proportion of properties are rented by the government and what is the average value of all rented properties; (h) what proportion of properties are owned by the government and what is the average value of all owned properties; and (i) how much has been spent on property renovations in each of the last ten years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 332—Mr. Scott Simms:

With regard to Elections Canada, what are the file numbers of all ministerial briefings or departmental correspondence between the government and Elections Canada since January 23, 2006, broken down by (i) minister or department, (ii) relevant file number, (iii) correspondence or file type, (iv) date, (v) purpose, (vi) origin, (vii) intended destination, (viii) other officials copied or involved?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 333—Hon. Irwin Cotler:

With regard to the government's consultations about prostitution-related offences: (a) what goals have been established for the consultations; (b) what goals have been established for the online consultation; (c) whose input did the government seek through online consultation; (d) which individuals wrote the discussion paper for the online consultation; (e) which individuals with expertise in prostitution-related offences participated in the development of the discussion paper in (d); (f) which individuals with expertise in prostitution-related offences reviewed the discussion paper in (d); (g) which individuals with legal expertise participated in the development of the discussion paper in (d); (h) which individuals with legal expertise reviewed the discussion paper in (d); (i) what experts in survey methodology, research methods, or statistics participated in the development of the discussion paper in (d); (j) what experts in survey methodology, research methods, or statistics reviewed the discussion paper in (d); (k) which individuals developed the online consultation questions; (l) which individuals with expertise in prostitution-related offences participated in the development of the online consultation questions;

(m) which individuals with expertise in prostitution-related offences reviewed the online consultation questions; (n) which individuals with legal expertise participated in the development of the online consultation questions; (o) which individuals with legal expertise reviewed the online consultation questions; (p) what experts in survey methodology, research methods, or statistics participated in the development of the online consultation questions; (q) what experts in survey methodology, research methods, or statistics reviewed the online consultation questions; (r) how many responses did the government receive through the online form; (s) how many responses were sent directly to consultations.prostitution@justice.gc.ca; (t) how many responses were sent directly to consultation-prostitution@justice.gc.ca; (u) what was or will be done with responses sent to consultations.prostitution@justice.gc.ca that are written in whole or in part in a language other than English; (v) what was or will be done with responses sent to consultation-prostitution@justice.gc.ca that are written in whole or in part in a language other than French; (w) why are answers in the online form limited to 500 words; (x) what is the limit to the length of submissions sent directly to consultations.prostitution@justice.gc.ca or consultation-prostitution@justice.gc.ca; (y) in what ways did the government make Canadians aware of the online consultation process; (z) how much money was allocated to advertise the online consultation process; (aa) how much money was spent to advertise the online consultation process; (bb) where did each advertisement of the online consultation process appear; (cc) when did each advertisement in (bb) appear; (dd) who has read the responses to the online consultation; (ee) who will read the responses to the online consultation;

(ff) will each response to the online consultation have been read by one or more employees of the Department of Justice (DOJ); (gg) which employees of the DOJ have read or will read the responses to the online consultation; (hh) will any responses to the online consultation have been seen in whole or in part by individuals

not in the employ of the DOJ; (ii) which individuals not in the employ of the DOJ have seen or will see responses to the online consultation, in whole or in part; (jj) will each response to the online consultation have been read by one or more individuals in the office of the Minister of Justice; (kk) which individuals in the office of the Minister of Justice have read or will read responses to the online consultation; (ll) has the Minister of Justice read any of the responses to the online consultation; (mm) will the Minister of Justice read any of the responses to the online consultation; (nn) what proportion of the responses to the online consultation does the Minister of Justice intend to read; (oo) will submissions sent directly to consultations.prostitution@justice.gc.ca or consultation-prostitution@justice.gc.ca be read in their entirety, regardless of length; (pp) by what means are submissions assessed; (qq) by what process or processes are responses to the online consultation reviewed; (rr) who has assessed or will assess the responses to the online consultation; (ss) what metrics have been or will be applied with respect to the online consultation as a whole; (tt) broken down by question for the online consultation, what scoring or metrics have been developed with respect to assessing responses; (uu) have responses to the online consultation been screened, evaluated, reviewed or monitored by computer in any way; (vv) will responses to the online consultation be screened, evaluated, reviewed or monitored by computer in any way; (ww) what keywords or standards have been or will be used in computer screening, evaluation, review, or monitoring of responses to the online consultation; (xx) what scoring mechanisms or criteria have been or will be applied with respect to the screening, evaluation, review or monitoring of responses to the online consultation;

(yy) how is the value of responses to the online consultation determined; (zz) by whom or by what is the value of responses to the online consultation determined; (aaa) what processes or guidelines have been established for determining the value of responses to the online consultations; (bbb) how is the relevance of responses to the online consultation determined; (ccc) by whom or by what is the relevance of responses to the online consultation determined; (ddd) what processes or guidelines have been established for determining the relevance of responses to the online consultations; (eee) how is the probative value of responses to the online consultation determined; (fff) by whom or by what is the probative value of responses to the online consultation determined; (ggg) what processes or guidelines have been established for determining the probative value of responses to the online consultations; (hhh) how is the legal validity of suggestions received through the online consultation process be assessed; (iii) how are responses to the online consultation evaluated for factual accuracy; (jjj) have any responses to the online consultation been discarded or ignored; (kkk) will any responses to the online consultation be discarded or ignored; (lll) based on what criteria are responses to the online consultation discarded or ignored; (mmm) are responses to the online form considered if not all of the questions are answered; (nnn) what processes, metrics, or other criteria are used to determine whether a response to the online consultation constitutes spam; (ooo) what process exists to verify the identity of an individual or group that has responded to the online consultation; (ppp) what process or measures exist to determine whether an individual or group that responds to the online consultation is Canadian; (qqq) in what way does the government consider responses to the online consultation by individuals or groups that are not Canadian; (rrr) by what date does the government intend to have reviewed all of the responses to the online consultation; (sss) will all of the responses to the online consultation be made available to the public in their entirety; (ttt) who determines whether certain responses or parts of responses to the online consultation will not be made available to the public; (uuu) based on what criteria are the determinations in (ttt) made; (vvv) how will the responses to the online consultation be made available to the public; (www) when will the responses to the online consultation be made available to the public; (xxx) since 2006, apart from this year's online consultations on the DOJ website, with what groups, government agencies, individuals, and other governments has the government consulted;

Routine Proceedings

(*yyy*) when did each of the consultations in (*xxx*) occur; (*zzz*) through what medium did each of the consultations in (*xxx*) occur; (*aaaa*) who within the government carried out each of the consultations in (*xxx*); (*bbbb*) apart from online consultations on the DOJ website, with what groups, government agencies, individuals, and other governments does the government intend to consult before introducing new legislation in response to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Bedford v. Attorney General of Canada*; (*cccc*) when will the government carry out the consultations in (*bbbb*); (*dddd*) through what medium will the government carry out each of the consultations in (*bbbb*); (*eeee*) who within the government will carry out the consultations in (*bbbb*); (*ffff*) based on what criteria does the government select the groups, government agencies, individuals, and other governments with which it consults; (*gggg*) since the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Bedford v. Attorney General of Canada*, which groups, government agencies, individuals, and other governments have asked to be consulted by the government; (*hhhh*) with which groups, government agencies, individuals or other governments in (*gggg*) has the government agreed to consult; (*iiii*) with which groups, government agencies, individuals or other governments in (*gggg*) has the government declined to consult; (*jjjj*) what studies has the government ordered; (*kkkk*) what studies does the government intend to order; (*llll*) what studies has the government consulted;

(*mmmm*) what studies does the government intend to consult; (*nnnn*) based on what criteria does the government determine whether to conduct online public consultations on a given subject; (*oooo*) does the government have the capacity to record the individual IP address of each user who visits the online consultation page; (*pppp*) has the government stored the IP address of each submission through the online consultation, and, if so (i) for what purpose, (ii) how long will such data be stored, (iii) who will have access to it, (iv) what privacy protections are in place, (v) how was the decision to track such data made, by whom, on what date, and with what authority; (*qqqq*) have any submissions been rejected on the basis of IP address; (*rrrr*) for what reasons were the submissions in (*qqqq*) rejected; (*ssss*) were multiple submissions received from any IP addresses; (*tttt*) is each submissions from a single IP address considered individually; (*uuuu*) what efforts did the government make, if any, to assist sex workers in participating in or completing the online consultation; (*vvvv*) is the government aware of any groups that assisted sex workers in participating in the online consultation; (*wwww*) in what way, if any, are submissions from groups considered differently than submissions from individuals; (*xxxx*) does the government have the capacity to track the number of individuals who visited the online consultation page each day; (*yyyy*) with respect to the online consultation page, (i) how many visits did the page receive during each day of the survey period, (ii) how many visits did the English version of the page receive during each day of the survey period, (iii) how many visits did the French version of the page receive during each day of the survey period, (iv) how many submissions were submitted on each of those days, (v) how does the government account for any fluctuation in visitation or participation rates; (*zzzz*) with respect to in-person consultations, (i) in which cities have such consultations occurred, (ii) on what dates did such consultations occur, (iii) in which cities will such consultations occur, (iv) on what dates will such consultations occur; (*aaaaa*) with respect to the consultations in (*zzzz*), broken down by city and date, (i) which groups and individuals were invited, (ii) which groups and individuals attended; (*bbbbb*) how are groups selected for participation in in-person consultations; (*ccccc*) for each consultation in (*zzzz*), who attended from the DOJ and on behalf of the Minister of Justice; (*ddddd*) what was the format of each in-person consultation; (*eeeee*) what specific questions were given to participants to discuss, if any; (*fffff*) how much time was allotted for each in-person consultation;

(*ggggg*) given the number of individuals and groups at each consultation, approximately how much time did each group have to speak (i) to each question, (ii) in total; (*hhhhh*) with respect to answers or submissions at in-person consultations, (i) how were they recorded, (ii) by whom, (iii) will they be made publicly available in their entirety; (*iiiiii*) what weight are comments from the in-person consultations given relative to responses from the online consultation; (*jjjjj*) how was the period of time for the online consultation determined; (*kkkkk*) on what basis was the length of time for the online consultation determined to be adequate; (*lllll*) how long does the government estimate that it will take to compile and analyze the results of (i) in-person consultations, (ii) the online consultation, (iii) the totality of its consultative efforts on this file; (*mmmmm*) will the government produce a final report on its consultative efforts; (*nnnnn*) when does the government expect that the report in (*mmmmm*) will be made publicly available; (*ooooo*) what will be included in the report in (*mmmmm*); (*ppppp*) by when will a bill be introduced in the House of Commons or Senate reflecting the result of consultations; (*qqqqq*) in what ways will the consultations influence the government's policy-making in this regard; (*rrrrr*) has any percent or measure been set as a threshold beyond which a particular approach, enjoying plurality favour by those consulted, will automatically be reflected in the government's legislative response to *Bedford v. Attorney General of Canada*; (*sssss*)

under what circumstances would the government's approach differ from that recommended by the plurality of consultation participants; (*ttttt*) what measures are in place to ensure that the government's legislative approach is reflective of the consultation results; (*uuuuu*) what is the total cost of consultations thus far, and what is the breakdown of this figure; (*vvvvv*) what is the projected total cost of consultations, and what is the breakdown of this figure; and (*wwwww*) what alternatives to online and in-person consultations were considered and why were these found inadequate?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 334—**Hon. Irwin Cotler:**

With regard to bijuralism and harmonization: (*a*) what measures are in place to ensure legislative bijuralism across all departments; (*b*) since the adoption of the "Policy on Legislative Bijuralism", how has the Department of Justice (i) ensured that all legal counsel in the Department are made aware of the requirements of legislative bijuralism in order for them to be able to take it into account when advising client departments on legislative reforms, (ii) enhanced the capacity of the Legislative Services Branch to draft bijural legislative texts, (iii) undertook, in drafting both versions of every bill and proposed regulation that touches on provincial or territorial private law, to take care to reflect the terminology, concepts, notions and institutions of both of Canada's private law systems; (*c*) since the adoption of the "Policy for Applying the Civil Code of Quebec to Federal Government Activities", what measures are in place to ensure (i) changes to Quebec's Civil Code are known and monitored by the government, (ii) assessment of federal legislation relative to changes to Quebec's Civil Code, (iii) federal legislation is introduced to reflect, where necessary, changes to the Civil Code of Quebec; (*d*) with respect to the "Index of Bijuralism and Harmonization Caselaw" found online and indicating its most recent update was June 12, 2012, (i) how often is this page updated, (ii) given that some cases thereupon are from 2013, when was this page last updated, (iii) whose responsibility is it to update this page, (iv) what cases are currently being monitored for potential addition to this page; (*e*) with respect to cases involving bijuralism and harmonization, (i) in what ways are these made known to the Department, (ii) whose responsibility it is to monitor these cases, (iii), what role does the Federal government play in these cases if a party, (iv) what role does the government play if not a party, (v) who makes the determination and as to when the government should intervene if not a party and how is this decision made; (*f*) with respect to Bijurilex, whose website at <http://www.bijurilex.gc.ca/> appeared not to function as of March 17, 2014, (i) is this website still available, (ii) if not, when was it taken off-line and why, (iii) where can its former contents be found; (*g*) what resources exist to provide information about the implications and challenges of bijuralism as it relates to legislation;

Routine Proceedings

(h) with respect to the bijuralism publication of the Department entitled “THE LINK”, (i) how often is it published, (ii) when is it next expected, (iii) what causes it to be published, (iv) who prepares it, (v) how is it disseminated and to whom; (i) what specialized consultative services are offered to the government with regard to bijuralism issues; (j) when were the most recent services in (i) sought and provided, and at what cost; (k) what studies have been undertaken within the last five years regarding (i) the relationship between federal law and the law of the provinces and territories, (ii) between the common law and civil law legal traditions, (iii) between these legal traditions and Aboriginal law; (l) what studies are presently being undertaken regarding (i) the relationship between federal law and the law of the provinces and territories, (ii) between the common law and civil law legal traditions, (iii) between these legal traditions and Aboriginal law; (m) what training courses on bijuralism and comparative law have been developed for Justice Canada’s legislative drafters, (i) how often are they offered, (ii) how many participate, (iii) are they open to individuals from other departments; (n) what bijural drafting notes and course material for training on bijuralism have been developed in the past five years and by what means are these accessible (i) within the Department of Justice, (ii) across the government, (iii) to the legal community, (iv) to the public; (o) what issues and challenges of legislative bijuralism has the government most recently identified and how does it seek to address these; (p) what issues and challenges of harmonization has the government most recently identified and how does it seek to address these; (q) what is the content of the departmental policy on the application of Quebec civil law to the government; (r) what was the mandate and role of the Civil Code Section upon its creation and how did the role and mandate change over time; (s) in what ways does the government review any situation in which legal rights are in issue or proceeding under Quebec civil law which concerns the government; (t) in what ways has the government ensured inclusion of Quebec civil law in the curriculum of the Departmental continuing education programs;

(u) with respect to the Department’s recognition that “si le bijuridisme vise d’abord le respect et la prise en compte du droit civil et de la common law dans le contexte fédéral, notamment en matière de rédaction et d’interprétation des textes législatifs fédéraux, il n’exclut aucunement le respect et l’intégration d’autres règles propres au droit fédéral, la prise en compte d’autres sources, notamment en matière de droit international, ni le respect d’autres cultures juridiques, plus particulièrement les cultures autochtones” (i) what other rules has the government found to apply to it, (ii) what sources of law has the government recognized other than civil, common, aboriginal, and international law, (iii) what other cultures has the government sought to respect in this regard and how; (v) with which international law sources has the government sought to harmonize its laws and how so; (w) with what aboriginal law sources has the government sought to harmonize its laws and how so; (x) how may the Bijural Terminology Records Research Index be accessed and how often is it updated; (y) of what cases is the government currently aware where the matter at issue is one of bijuralism or harmonization; (z) what statutes would benefit from modification to respect best practices with respect to bijuralism and harmonization; (aa) what statutes have been identified as having bijuralism issues and how have they been so identified; (bb) what statutes require amendment to conform with the solutions proposed in the Bijural Terminology Records Research Index; (cc) is a new Federal Law—Civil Law Harmonization Act being prepared; (dd) what efforts have been made to identify whether a new Federal Law—Civil Law Harmonization Act is necessary and what determines its necessity; (ee) how is proposed legislation vetted or otherwise checked to ensure conformity with bijuralism and harmonization best practices; (ff) in what ways are existing statutes checked to ensure conformity with bijuralism and harmonization best practices; (gg) what prompts the introduction of legislation to address an issue of bijuralism / harmonization; (hh) in what Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) meetings have bijuralism issues been raised and in what context; (ii) in what FPT meetings have harmonization issues been raised and in what context; (jj) in what ways is Quebec’s new Code of Civil Procedure being analysed by the government, (i) by whom, (ii) with what mandate, (iii) with what purpose; (kk) does Quebec’s new Code of Civil Procedure—fully coming into force in 2015—suggest any need for legislative response on the part of the Government of Canada to ensure federal law harmonization with civil law practice in Quebec; (ll) does the review of government legislation under the Department of Justice Act include in any way the review of legislation for any issues of bijuralism and, if so, how and to what extent; (mm) does the review of government legislation under the Department of Justice Act include in any way the review of legislation for any issues of harmonization and, if so how, how and to what extent; (nn) to what extent and in what ways are regulations reviewed to ensure conformity with bijuralism best practices; (oo) to what extent has cabinet been informed of the importance of bijuralism, by what means and on what dates; (pp) is bijuralism assessed in any way when filling vacancies at the Department of Justice and, if so, how; (qq) what grants and other programs exist to promote bijuralism (i) within the Department of Justice, (ii) across government, (iii) within the legal community, (iv) at law schools, (v) to the

broader public; (rr) what involvements and engagements are being undertaken with respect to bijuralism internationally;

(ss) in what ways and forums has Canada shared its bijuralism expertise and experience with other countries; (tt) does a review of legislation for harmonization issues include any consideration of provincial implementation cost; (uu) in what ways are coming into force provisions used, if any, to assist with harmonization; (vv) is there any federal legislation that has not been reviewed for bijuralism or harmonization issues in any way and, if so, how and why is this so; (ww) are private member’s bills reviewed for issues of bijuralism and harmonization and, if so (i) by whom, (ii) in what context, (iii) with what mandate, (iv) to what extent, (v) reporting to whom, (vi) with what work product, (vii) at what point or points in the Parliamentary process, (viii) with what consequence if an issue is spotted; (xx) with respect to the gap between publications dated 2006 and prior and the most recent publication in 2013 on the “Bijuralism and Harmonization” webpage at <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csj-sjc/harmonization/index.html>, (i) why does this gap exist, (ii) were any reports or studies conducted during this time, (iii) if so, were they published and if not, why not, (iv) what materials are being presently prepared or research that may be published on this page; (yy) in what ways does the Department seek to promote contact between the civil law and common law traditions; and (zz) with respect to Canada’s four legal audiences (anglophone common law lawyers, francophone common law lawyers, anglophone Quebec civilian lawyers and francophone Quebec civilian lawyers), in what ways does the department ensure it has the means and resources adequate to address the unique concerns of each with respect to bijuralism and harmonization, and what issues and challenges have been identified?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 336—Mr. David McGuinty:

With regard to the value and condition of real property held by the government and with respect to any and all built structures, including but not limited to, offices, military bases, armouries, laboratories, canals, depots, residences, garages, communication towers, storage facilities, lighthouses, bridges, hospitals, wharves, weather stations, warehouses, data centres, prisons, border crossings, etc., what are, for each department listed in Schedule I of the Financial Administration Act, and for Parks Canada, Revenue Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and Canada Border Services Agency, the following: (a) the number and current value of all built structures; (b) the number and percentage of the facilities referenced in (a), with building condition reports conducted in the past five years; (c) the number of building condition reports and the number of facilities they reference, by Treasury Board category (good, fair, poor, critical, unknown); (d) the list of, and addresses for, all facilities in “poor” or “critical” condition; (e) the annual departmental expenditures for real property repair and maintenance for fiscal years 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013; (f) the annual budgets for real property repair and maintenance for fiscal years 2013-2014, 2014-2015 and 2015-2016; and (g) estimates of costs to bring all facilities/built structures in each department’s inventory, to “good” condition within 5 years?

(Return tabled)

*Business of Supply***Question No. 337—Ms. Niki Ashton:**

With regard to women in Crown Corporations: (a) what is the total number of women currently serving as the head of a crown corporation appointed through a governor in council appointment, broken down by organization; (b) for each of the last five years, what is the total number of women appointed as the head of a crown corporation through a governor in council appointment, broken down by organization; (c) for each crown corporation, what is the total number of positions on the senior management team and how many of those positions are currently staffed by women; (d) what is the total number of women currently serving as the chairperson of the Board of Directors appointed through a governor in council appointment, broken down by organization; (e) for each of the last five years, what is the total number of governor in council appointments for chairperson and how many of those positions were filled by women; (f) for each crown corporation, what is the total current number of positions on the board of directors and how many of those positions are currently staffed by women; (g) for each of the last five years, how many vacancies on the board of directors were filled through governor in council appointments and how many vacancies were filled by women; (h) what is the total percentage of women currently serving on crown corporations appointed through governor in council appointments; and (i) what is the total percentage of women appointed through governor in council appointment for each year of the last five years?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.) moved:

That the House recognize that the current Temporary Foreign Worker Program is broken, and call on the government to implement measures to significantly reduce the intake of Temporary Foreign Workers over time and return the program back to its original purpose, which should include: (a) an immediate and full review of the program by the Auditor General; (b) the disclosure of Labour Market Opinion applications and approvals for Temporary Foreign Workers; (c) a tightening of the Labour Market Opinion approval process to ensure that only businesses with legitimate needs are able to access the program; and (d) the implementation of stronger rules requiring that employers applying to the program demonstrate unequivocally that they exhausted all avenues to fill job vacancies with Canadian workers, particularly young Canadians.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the leader of the Liberal Party, the hon. member for Papineau.

[English]

I liken the government's management of the temporary foreign worker program to a reckless driver because, starting in 2006, it continuously had the accelerator on the floor and mushroomed the number of temporary foreign workers to the point where they went from about 100,000 to 215,000, using methods I will describe briefly; and it did this deliberately. Conservatives deliberately put the accelerator to the floor and mushroomed the number of temporary foreign workers, and then a crisis broke out and it became apparent there were abuses, so they slammed on the brakes. That is why we have this moratorium. That is why we are debating this issue today.

Had the Conservatives driven more prudently, had they managed the numbers responsibly, we would not be where we are today. We would have no need for the moratorium because we would not have had this explosion of numbers and this proliferation of abuses. What one can say is this is an example of a grossly incompetently managed program. We are not content simply to say that. We also have a detailed plan we are proposing, which would allow the Conservatives to fix this mess they created.

I would like to spend a bit of time talking about how the Conservatives continuously loosened the rules on every front, which allowed this explosion to occur in the first place. It is true that when the crisis broke, when they slammed on the brakes, they had begun to tighten the rules and go back in part to where they started from; but the explosion of numbers occurred as a consequence of loosening rules in 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009. It is only more recently that they have acknowledged the loosening was wrong and are starting to retrace their steps.

What did the Conservatives do? First of all, they reduced the length of time for advertising from three weeks to one week in the case of 170 occupations; and instead of forcing companies to advertise in various local papers, which people actually read, they said that the companies had to only advertise on some government website, which nobody reads. Therefore, effectively they said employers do not have to advertise, because any advertising that was done was on a medium that nobody reads.

Second, they increased the length of time the temporary foreign workers could work in the country, first from one year to two years and then more recently, in 2013, from two years to four years. There are supposed to be temporary foreign workers filling needs that employers temporarily cannot satisfy. Now instead of being here one year, it is four years. The Conservatives reduced the time for certain sectors, 33 in all, for labour market opinions from five months to five days. How comprehensive was this review of the labour market situation if they could get it in five days?

In budget 2007, the Conservatives injected an additional \$50 million to speed up the labour market opinion process, this at a time when processing times for regular permanent immigrants were skyrocketing. Instead of addressing with some extra cash the problems for permanent immigrants, they allowed that to fester, and processing times soared. Instead, they injected \$50 million to speed up the process for temporary immigrants.

Then there was the Auditor General's report in 2009. The Auditor General made a number of points: one, the insufficient quality of decisions based on labour market opinions; two, the genuineness of job offers was not verified; and three, there were concerns about the integrity of the program and the protection of temporary foreign workers.

• (1020)

That was in 2009 and the Conservatives did nothing. We only have to look at stories we heard in the last few days about the exploitation of temporary foreign workers to understand that back in 2009 they ought to have paid attention to those recommendations, particularly the third one regarding the treatment of temporary foreign workers.

Business of Supply

I believe I have said enough to make the point that they loosened the rules in every conceivable way, to the point where there were effectively no rules. Now that the crisis has hit, they are making a virtue of tightening the rules, but they are tightening from the point of no rules and moving gradually back to where they started from. At this point, given this explosion of temporary foreign workers, one can say that the horse has already left the barn.

As if this direct evidence is not enough, another form of proof that this was deliberate is offered by quotes from the minister of the day. The minister of the day in 2007 said, “We’ve expanded the temporary foreign workers program significantly and very deliberately...”. Her words were “very deliberately”. They did not do it by mistake; they did it very deliberately through loosening every rule in the book.

The current employment minister appears to be onside, because the CEO of McDonald’s credited him with understanding how important this is “from a business...perspective”.

There we have it, a mushrooming of the numbers under a deliberate Conservative policy to loosen every rule.

What are the consequences? As we all know, this has had a negative effect on Canadians seeking work. No less an authority than the C.D. Howe Institute, which I think even the Conservatives would agree is not populated by socialist hordes, has argued that the unemployment rate in western Canada particularly is higher as a consequence of this program.

It is clear as well that there has been wage suppression. If there are all these huge job shortages, would one not expect to see some upward pressure on wages? Wages have been stagnant and that is partly because, rather than actively seek out Canadians, companies have been able simply to automatically import temporary foreign workers.

As I mentioned earlier, there is this issue of the exploitation of temporary foreign workers, of which we have seen a lot of evidence.

Perhaps the most fundamental point is that the Conservatives are in the process of changing the nature of immigration. We have a chart, which we released yesterday, showing the evolution of intake of permanent residents and temporary foreign workers since 2005. The permanent residents are relatively flat; they go up and down but are relatively flat at around 250,000 a year. The temporary foreign workers are on a strong upward trend, starting at 100,000 and going to 215,000 in 2012, I think. If we project those trends forward, then we get a situation where the number of temporary foreign workers will exceed the number of permanent residents.

This is fundamental because for decades—at least since Pierre Trudeau, and we could say from the beginning because all of us, except perhaps aboriginal people, were immigrants at some point through ourselves or our parents and grandparents—we have built this country on the basis of immigrants who come here permanently with their families and become full-fledged Canadians citizens in every sense of the term. The Conservatives are in the process of changing the system to one in which, rather than permanent immigrants, we have guest workers who come and then leave. This is fundamentally contrary to Canadian values.

• (1025)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his impassioned speech on the temporary foreign worker program, which was introduced in a very limited way; then the program was expanded in 2002 under my colleague’s government. Of course that has led to the floodgates being opened under the Conservative government. Now we are hearing in the media of the abuse, and the issue has become one that is galvanizing those living in Canada right now.

My question for my colleague across the way is this. What data should be used to determine the number of temporary foreign workers who are admitted into the country? What kind of data needs to be used to determine that number?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, we know that NDP members are frightened of the Liberals, which is why they try to blame Liberals for every conceivable bad situation that might occur.

May I remind the hon. member that, yes, the Liberals—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Newton—North Delta is rising on a question of privilege.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, we are in Parliament, and this is a parliamentary debate. I am not here to be called a young woman in this room. I am here as a parliamentarian, thanks very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I must admit I did not hear the exact wording. I go back to the hon. member for Markham—Unionville to reference and continue with his answer.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, you can check the record, or someone can check the record. I never used that term.

However, my point is that the NDP loves to blame the Liberals for everything.

May I remind the hon. member that, yes, the Liberals introduced the low-skilled program as a pilot project, and when the Liberals left office, there were fewer than 4,000 people. The Conservatives then made it permanent, and the numbers mushroomed to the point where there are now over 20,000 people.

Therefore, this problem is a Conservative mess. It is 100% a Conservative mess and not the mess of any other party in this country.

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to correct the record on a couple of things.

The member for Markham—Unionville talked about the fact that Conservatives have extended the period of temporary foreign workers to fill labour market shortages in the workplace. The member says that is a bad thing to do in all cases.

Business of Supply

In fact, the member was actually quoted as saying we should be allowing more temporary foreign workers and international students to become permanent residents. That would expand and extend temporary foreign workers in this country even more so. I find it a little odd. Certainly that is no longer temporary.

In the opposition motion, the member also talks about requiring a review by the Auditor General. In fact, that did take place in 2009, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada actually agreed with all of those recommendations and have implemented three-quarters of them despite being opposed by opposition members on all those things.

My question for the member is this. Was the program much better when the Liberals were in power and they used it to bring in 600 strippers to fill labour market shortages in this country?

• (1030)

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, had the government responded properly to the Auditor General in 2009, we would not be standing here having this debate today as we would have no crisis. Obviously the Conservatives' response was inadequate.

Perhaps the hon. member should come and join the Liberal Party because she enunciated Liberal policy.

Of course we want more temporary foreign workers to have pathways to permanent residence. That is the whole point of Canadian immigration. It should be made up with permanent residents who make their home here. Rather than having guest workers exclusively, we want to provide more of them with pathways to permanent residence.

I congratulate the member for her enlightened view on that topic.

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today on a topic that is of great concern to many Canadians: the almost complete failure of the temporary foreign worker program.

The program was a good idea in the beginning. It was supposed to help employers hire staff on a very limited basis when they were unable to find Canadian workers to fill positions. For foreign nationals, it created economic opportunities that were unavailable in their countries.

[English]

Under the current government's mismanagement, these promises have not only been broken; they have left employers demonized and uncertain, temporary foreign workers vulnerable, and Canadians alarmed, angry, and suspicious.

This is in a country that used to pride itself on its progressive immigration policies. The government all but gave up on building pathways to citizenship as it clamoured to make sure that drive-throughs could stay open 24/7.

The numbers are telling. Between 2005 and 2012, the number of short-term foreign workers in Canada more than doubled. In 2012, we admitted nearly as many temporary foreign workers as we did permanent residents. At that rate, by next year, temporary worker entries will outnumber immigrant arrivals.

[Translation]

That is not how a country is built or how an economy is managed.

That did not stop the Conservatives from continuing to mismanage the program and defend their mismanagement, despite the repeated warnings from the Liberal Party and Canadians across the country who were concerned about the impact of this program, which was spinning out of control.

[English]

At best, the program was always only a limited, Band-Aid solution. At its worst, and sadly, with every passing day we hear more and more of these worst-case scenarios, the program drives down wages and displaces Canadian workers, even in regions already facing high unemployment, while exploiting vulnerable people from abroad.

In many communities in southwestern Ontario, there is a disturbing connection between unemployment and program expansion. In Windsor, the number of unemployed workers has grown by 40%, while the number of foreign workers in the city is up 86%. In London, unemployment is up 27%, while the number of foreign workers has nearly doubled.

It was one year ago that Liberals first proposed a motion to conduct a full parliamentary investigation into the program. At that time, every single Conservative member stood and voted against the motion, saying that no review was necessary. That denial persisted until as recently as two weeks ago, when on the day before the government suspended the food services' access to the program, the jobs minister actually called program abuse rare. As news report after news report reveals, abuse is not rare. In fact, it is far too common.

Today we are proposing five ways to review and restructure the program and bring such abuse to an end.

First, the temporary foreign worker program needs to be scaled back dramatically and refocused on its original purpose: to fill jobs on a limited basis when no Canadian workers can be found.

Second, Canada needs to recommit itself to welcoming more permanent immigrants and providing them with legitimate and lasting paths to citizenship.

Third, we must introduce real transparency and accountability in the program, beginning with a full review of the program by the Auditor General. We must tighten the foreign worker approvals process and disclose applications and approvals more thoroughly.

• (1035)

[Translation]

Fourth, we must ensure that the employers who have access to the program have done everything they can to fill those jobs with Canadian workers, particularly young Canadian workers, who have an unemployment rate nearly twice as high as the national average.

Business of Supply

People who receive employment insurance benefits are required to show proof that they are looking for work. It seems to me that it is only logical that the same thing be required of employers who are looking for workers.

Finally, the government needs to tighten the labour market opinion approval process to ensure that only companies with legitimate needs have access to the program.

[English]

The time for denials and distraction has long passed. The government is in a tough spot, but it is one entirely of its own making. Canadians deserve to know why it took a series of high-profile abuses before the government recognized that its management of the program was deeply flawed. Why is it that so many Canadians were displaced from jobs they needed and loved, with no apparent recourse but to call the media? Why was the government so quick to reassure industry that it “gets it”, while the grievances of temporary foreign workers continued to be ignored?

In the end, this is a basic issue of fairness, fairness for Canadians who need work and fairness for the vulnerable people who come to Canada in search of a real opportunity to succeed. Through the program, the government has let down both Canadians and those who hope to someday become Canadians. We can do better than this. We must do better than this.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of his speech, the leader of the Liberal Party claimed that it was the government that demonized the employers, hard-working employers, employers in my riding. I have been defending the integrity of those employers through this entire debate. Unfortunately, the leader of the Liberal Party then went on to demonize people who work in my riding, hard-working people who are creating jobs and who require temporary foreign workers to fill positions.

He said that our government claims that abuse is rare. Then he went on to say that abuse is all too common. In fact, it is the Liberal leader who is demonizing hard-working employers.

He went on to say that temporary foreign workers are displacing too many Canadians. My question for the Liberal leader is this: How many Canadian jobs have been displaced by temporary foreign workers?

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, first of all, when the government jobs minister is himself being contradicted by the actions of the government, which has had to put a sudden moratorium on an entire sector, we can see that there are too many problems with abuse.

Second, C.D. Howe has talked about up to 4% of Canadian workers being displaced by this process. The issue becomes one of understanding southwestern Ontario, particularly in places like Sarnia, Hamilton, Windsor, and London. When the manufacturing business is losing so many jobs, why are foreign workers arriving to work in the manufacturing industry? I suggest that the government do its homework.

•(1040)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in January, my colleague in the Liberal Party mentioned

that the program was broken to only a certain degree. Today, of course, we have heard him say that it is a near total failure.

We are hearing too many contradictory messages. We have heard the leader of the official party saying that the program was only a Band-Aid solution, which contrasts with what the member for Kings—Hants has said, which is that it creates value-added jobs.

What does the Liberal Party really believe?

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, in the early seventies, the program was brought in as a way of drawing in highly skilled temporary workers to fill jobs that were not available to be filled by Canadians. There was a very specific, targeted way in sectors in terms of doing it. The examples that come to mind are advanced researchers applying to universities, which were drawing them in, but also certain industries, including caregiving and fruit picking, where there was a real need to fill jobs with people when Canadians were not able or willing to do that work. It was a limited program that was a success for close to 30 years.

In 2002, the Liberal Party brought in a pilot program for low-wage workers to try it out. About 2,000 people came in through that year. However, the Conservative government subsequently doubled the length of time those temporary, low-skilled workers were allowed to stay and has increased massively the deployment of that particular aspect of the program, which has led to the abuses we are discussing today.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Peace River talked about demonizing. The inconsistencies and the different messages we are hearing from the government are causing concern in the minds of the Canadian public.

We heard the former Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development that the government has taken the shackles off, is opening it up, and will allow employers to pay 15% less. Then the minister stood the other day and said that all they have done since 2002 is tighten it up.

Does my colleague from Papineau agree that it is the inconsistencies—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The hon. member for Papineau has the floor.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, this is yet another example of the government's complete failure to manage a program, to deliver the kinds of things, with vision and perspective, to help Canadians that Canadians deserve from a responsible government.

It has completely mismanaged this program, which yes, has a limited and positive impact on the economy when handled correctly. However, the Conservatives have opened the path to abuses and to the irresponsible pushing aside of Canadians who are seeing wages decrease at the same time as we are exploiting foreign nationals who want a chance to work and would very much like an opportunity to become Canadian, because that is what Canada used to be all about.

Business of Supply

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that the member for Papineau mentioned the economy and immigration, because this government has the best record on the economy, an economy that is absolutely unparalleled. When it comes to immigration, nobody has opened more pathways to immigration than this government.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today on the Liberal motion on the temporary foreign worker program. I will be splitting my time with the member for Huron—Bruce.

Frankly, I am surprised that the Liberals chose this motion for debate today, because their position on the temporary foreign worker program is confusing, to say the least. Let me try to lay out some of the Liberal views on this program.

On the one hand, the member for Markham—Unionville has said, “We”, meaning the Liberals, of course, “have always said that it is a good program”. On the other hand, the member for Winnipeg North, just last week in the House, said that literally tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of Canadians, have been displaced. Which is it? Is this a good program or a program that has displaced hundreds of thousands of Canadians?

The Liberals do have a talent for exaggeration. The member for Markham—Unionville commented that the NDP likes to blame them for many things. There is so much to blame them for.

Next they criticize the government for the swift action taken to place an immediate moratorium on the food services sector's access to the program when serious allegations were raised in the industry. I cannot understand why the Liberals have an objection to swift, decisive action and leadership. Why is it suddenly not good enough now?

Last week they supported an NDP motion to place a complete moratorium on the entire low-skills stream of the temporary foreign worker program, which would have impacted seasonal, agricultural, and many other streams.

What is so strange about this is that the member for Kings—Hants himself is on the record as saying “that reducing access to temporary foreign workers could actually threaten Canadian jobs...”, and that “Temporary foreign workers are an important part of the production chain and the value chain.” Which is it? The Liberals cannot decide.

The Liberals claim that this program is “hurting the middle class”. It seems as though as soon as all the academics and experts dispel their myth that the middle class is being squeezed here, they turn and blame temporary foreign workers. If policy was a chair, they would all be sitting on the floor.

The confusion from the opposition continues. After they alleged that this program displaces hundreds of thousands of Canadians, they went on to say that they are fine with this program, so long as these temporary foreign workers become permanent residents. Let me quote the member for Markham—Unionville: “allow more temporary foreign workers and international students to become permanent residents”. It seems to me that the Liberals want to take the “temporary” out of the temporary foreign worker program and do not care if Canadians are displaced in the process.

The hypocrisy continues. The Liberals in their motion are asking for stronger rules for employers on looking for Canadians. In fact, let me read off the list of stronger rules the Liberals have voted against. One is the authority to conduct on-site inspections to make sure employers are meeting the conditions of the program.

An hon. member: They voted against that?

Mr. Ted Opitz: They did, Mr. Speaker.

The Liberals also voted against introducing legislative authority to impose significant financial penalties on employers who break the rules, having the ability to ban non-compliant employers from the program for two years and to immediately add their names to a public blacklist, and requiring employers who legitimately rely on temporary foreign workers due to a lack of qualified Canadian applicants to have a plan to transition to a Canadian workforce over time. That sounds pretty reasonable to me.

They voted against requiring employers to pay temporary foreign workers at the prevailing wage by removing the existing wage flexibility, adding questions to LMO applications to ensure that the temporary foreign worker program is not used to facilitate the outsourcing of Canadian jobs, introducing fees for employers for LMO processing, and increasing the fees for work permits so that hard-working taxpayers are no longer subsidizing these costs. The Liberals do not care about taxpayers.

The Liberals voted against making English and French the only languages that can be used as a job requirement when hiring through the temporary foreign worker process and against suspending the accelerated labour market opinion process.

After all of this, Liberal MPs continue to ask the Minister of Employment to have denied labour market opinions approved and to have more temporary foreign workers in their ridings.

● (1045)

I guess that this should not be a surprise, because the only constant position the Liberals have on this issue is hypocrisy, or it may be simply that they are just very confused.

Let me recap what we have heard from the Liberals.

First, this is a good program, but it displaces hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

Second, the Liberals criticize our government's action to place a moratorium in the food services sector but vote with the NDP members, whom they criticize, to shut down the entire low-skill stream.

Business of Supply

Third, the Liberals say that reducing access to temporary foreign workers threatens Canadian jobs, but then they argue that the program is hurting the middle class.

Fourth, the Liberals say that they are okay with the program so long as the temporary foreign workers who come in can become Canadian citizens.

Fifth, the Liberals want the minister to overturn negative LMOs by independent public servants so that they can have more temporary foreign workers in their ridings.

Lastly, the Liberals ask for stronger rules, yet vote against every single one of the stronger rules that this government has put forward. I really would like them to decide.

It is quite clear that the only party with a plan to fix this program is our Conservative government. Under the leadership of this government and this Prime Minister, Canadians know that they will always be first in line for available jobs. That is why our government is committed to looking at even more reforms to the temporary foreign worker program to ensure that employers make great efforts to recruit and train Canadians and that the program is only used as a last and a limited resort when Canadians are not available.

Canadians can count on our government to fix this program. That is why we will be, and I will be, opposing this motion.

As a correction, I am going to be splitting my time with the member for Peace River instead.

I am now ready for questions.

• (1050)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was fascinated by the comment from my colleague across the way that the government has done more to open up immigration than any other government.

I do not know which planet he has been living on, but he has certainly not been paying too much attention to what his government has been doing. I have seen more doors being shut than at any other time during our history.

Specifically going back to the temporary foreign worker program, what does my colleague have to say to Canadians and to permanent residents living in Alberta and British Columbia, where unemployment has increased, especially among youth, by up to 4% owing to the increase in the number of temporary foreign workers in the lower-stream class?

By the way, these are not made-up numbers; these are numbers released by the C.D. Howe Institute after having researched this issue for a lengthy period.

What does my colleague have to say to those living in Canada who have lost jobs?

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Speaker, the member is living in an NDP haze.

She is not living in the same great country I live in, because when I travel the world, I listen to people from places other than Canada dreaming of becoming a Canadian citizen and dreaming of having the system of laws and governance that we have. I take great heart

and great pride in being a member of the Conservative Party of Canada.

The member herself, like many of her party, stands up and feigns outrage when there are allegations that Canadian workers in the oil sands, for example, are replaced by foreign workers. However, if the NDP had its way, it would shut down those same oil sands and throw all of those Canadians out of work.

How does the NDP square itself with its own hypocrisy? How do those members look at themselves in the morning? I really do not know.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way needs a bit of a reality check. When he talks about the government having a plan to fix the program, he needs to understand that it is the Conservative government, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and the Minister of Employment and Social Development who broke the program. The program was working well before the Conservative government took office. Therefore, the problem that they are trying to fix is a problem that they created.

The Liberal Party has always been supportive of an effective temporary foreign worker program. Liberals have always been supportive of trying to enhance the ways individuals can immigrate to Canada, after which both Canadian society and the immigrants themselves would benefit.

Will the member at the very least acknowledge the reality that there are in excess of 300,000 foreign workers in Canada today and that when the Conservatives took office, it was well under 200,000, closer to what I believe was 160,000?

The government needs to take responsibility. The Prime Minister needs to say the government messed up, and that is the reason a moratorium is necessary and why the program needs to be fixed. Will he admit that the program is broken and that it is broken because of mismanagement over the last few years?

• (1055)

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a delightful chap, but he is given to flights of fancy.

This government is accountable and responsible. It has created one of the strongest, best nations in the world and certainly within the G7, and I have tremendous confidence, faith, and pride in what we have done as a government to build up Canada, build pathways to immigration, and build the program.

The minister himself has acted very swiftly and decisively on a problem that was identified. That is the right thing to do. We were accountable and responsible to do that. We have stepped up and we are doing that.

Does the Liberal member himself believe that it was appropriate for his own leader to lobby the government to approve a temporary foreign worker for his father's favourite Montreal restaurant? Mr. Speaker, I ask you.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the Liberals are speaking out of both sides of their mouths on this program. It seems to be a usual practice of members of the Liberal Party, but it seems in the extreme in this circumstance.

Business of Supply

It is interesting that the Liberals have spent the better part of the day talking about the necessity for a permanent stream, or the ability for temporary foreign workers to move from a temporary status into a permanent status. It is interesting that the Liberals introduced this program some 30 years ago with no mechanism for individuals who came as temporary foreign workers to Canada to have any opportunity for a permanent stay. The changes that our government has undertaken over the last number of years have in fact provided a way for those temporary foreign workers who demonstrate that they have contributed to the Canadian economy and have a skill set that is necessary for the Canadian economy to remain here in Canada and become permanent residents and then citizens of Canada.

As a matter of fact, I would like to correct the record. When the opposition members say that there is no avenue for temporary foreign workers or people in a temporary state to become permanent residents and citizens of Canada, that is false. The programs in place today allow for over 62,000 people who are working here temporarily to become permanent residents and citizens of Canada this year alone.

This is because we understand that temporary foreign workers do come here to Canada, that many of them contribute, and that employers would like them to stay in the economy, depending on their contribution to Canada. It is important that the opposition members acknowledge the facts with regard to this debate, because until now the facts have not risen to the top.

The Liberals claim that under their provision of this program, it worked perfectly. Unfortunately, they had no permanent stream. That is something that this government has changed, allowing for over 62,000 people in a temporary status to become citizens this year.

It is important that we also reflect on what the Liberals did during their time with this program. We all recall Strippergate. I know that there are members on the Liberal benches right now who remember it well. Under Strippergate, the criteria that the Liberals put forward in terms of their program allowed for strippers to be brought into Canada. Those were the employees with special skills that the Liberals had designated as the prime skill set needed in Canada.

Our government does not believe that. Our government members believe that the type of skills needed in Canada are ones that actually contribute to the well-being of our local communities.

I can tell members that in the community of Grande Prairie, the community of the Peace Country, we have many employers who use temporary foreign workers, but let us talk about the types of work that they do. We are talking about work in the service sector. We are talking about work in the oil and gas sector. We are talking about work in engineering, in all kinds of construction jobs, and a whole host of others. Nobody is coming to Peace Country on the temporary foreign program as a stripper, as they did under the Liberal program.

What has happened in this debate is unfortunate. There are places like my riding in the Peace Country where unemployment is at the lowest point we have seen in history, where employers have followed the rules, where they have not been subjecting temporary foreign workers to abuse, and where they have not been taking jobs away from Canadians by hiring temporary foreign workers, yet what we have seen day in and day out is members from the Liberal Party,

specifically the leader of the Liberal Party, criticizing people who are employers in northern Alberta, both in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie, who have worked diligently to try to hire Canadians but have been unable to hire qualified Canadians to fill the job vacancies. In some cases, they have not found any Canadians who will fill the jobs under any circumstances.

As a matter of fact, this is the circumstance for the local McDonald's restaurants. Currently there are four restaurants in the city of Grande Prairie. The average number of employees needed for just one of those McDonald's restaurants would be 150. In the case of Grande Prairie, there are only 150 employees doing all of the work for the four restaurants. Currently, there are job vacancies for over 300 people in the McDonald's restaurants alone. These restaurants are paying far more than minimum wage and they are paying far in excess of the prevailing wage rate for our region.

• (1100)

If Canadians want a job in that particular industry, the requirement from the local management at McDonald's is that when they walk in to ask for a job or a job application, they are immediately given a uniform. There is no question, they will be hired on the spot. Therefore, there are circumstances in places like the Peace country where these conditions have prevailed. They have required temporary foreign workers to fill some of the job vacancies.

Unfortunately, the Liberal Party and the NDP have vilified the employers again and again, hard-working employers that play by the rules and contribute to our communities. They give generously, pay their taxes and do all the things we would expect them to do, as well as accommodate temporary foreign workers in a way that Canadians would be proud. Unfortunately the NDP and the Liberal Party specifically have targeted these employers and have vilified them as some kind of monsters. They are not monsters. They are people who are working hard, playing by the rules and contributing.

There are cases where abuses have been noted by the media. The minister has aggressively gone after those people who have broken the rules. Under the Liberal Party, there was no mechanism to blacklist employers if they were engaged in abuse. We know that because all kinds of shenanigans happened under the Liberals when the program was in existence.

If employers were found to have abused the system, they could be blacklisted for two years and would be unable to get temporary foreign workers if they broke the rules, if they abused a temporary foreign worker or if they took a job from a Canadian and gave it to a temporary foreign worker.

The government takes abuse very seriously. We believe it is reprehensible and it cannot be tolerated. That is why the minister has undertaken to put in safeguards to ensure abuses do not take place. However, if they do, because the world is not perfect, there are now penalties that were not in existence under the Liberal government when the Liberals claimed the program was running perfectly. During their time, they were bringing in a different type of worker. Specifically, they were bringing in strippers.

Business of Supply

Our government takes abuse seriously. We believe strongly that if temporary foreign workers have a skill set and will contribute to our economy, our country and our communities, there should be a pathway toward citizenship. That is why this year our government is allowing up to 62,000 people in temporary status to become permanent residents and then subsequently to become citizens of Canada.

We strongly believe that the mistakes of the Liberal Party of the past can be corrected, and have been corrected. We now have all kinds of things that are far better than what the Liberal Party had when it was in office. The pathway to citizenship, the accountability mechanism, the accountability for employers that break the rules and whole host of other things ensure that those people who are involved in abuse of the program are held accountable for their actions.

I mentioned at the beginning of my speech that the Liberals have been speaking out of both sides of their mouths on this issue. I would like to quote a couple of Liberals who believed the temporary foreign worker was important.

In May 2012 the member for Kings—Hants said, “Temporary foreign workers are an important part of the production chain and the value chain”. He also said on May 29, “The government has been promoting this idea that a temporary foreign worker takes a job from a Canadian, but what I’m being told is that in fact it creates a job for a Canadian at a different level”.

The member for Cape Breton—Canso said in October 2012, “Temporary foreign workers are an important part of our economy” and “some of the best workers are temporary foreign workers”.

It seems that the Liberals have been speaking out of both sides of their mouths on this issue. They can be reassured that we have corrected their past mistakes. Those employers that are abusing temporary foreign workers and the program are being held accountable.

• (1105)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member seems to be thrilled to defend his program. However, in January 2012, Alberta employers had 1,261 temporary worker positions. Meanwhile, 350 people made claims on EI for exactly the same positions. Furthermore, 2,200 general farm workers made EI claims that same month, while 1,500 temporary foreign workers were placed. In Prince Edward Island, there were 294 claims for EI. Meanwhile, for exactly the same positions, there were 60 temporary foreign workers.

Does the hon. member understand that this program is out of control, that it was at one point a small program necessary to meet specific employment needs?

The program has ballooned to the point where there are about to be more temporary foreign workers than there are actual immigrants to this country.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, I reject the stat that the Liberal member claims in terms of the temporary foreign workers outstripping the number of permanent residents. In fact, we have already demonstrated that—

Hon. John McKay: They are your own stats.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, the member is yelling that it is a government stat. In fact, it is a fabricated stat that the Liberal Party has come up with because we know that the current 62,000 temporary foreign workers have a pathway toward becoming permanent residents.

I would like members of the Liberal Party just once to demonstrate what number they believe is in excess of what it should be. They keep claiming that the program is not running well or that there should be fewer temporary workers.

I would like to know this. How many employers do the Liberals believe have abused the program and have taken Canadian jobs away by using the temporary foreign worker program?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Peace River for his speech.

It is clear that there is a problem. Employment and Social Development Canada seems to be looking for ways to change the rules on the fly. However, we need to be addressing the root of the problem.

By dismantling Statistics Canada, the Conservatives completely dismantled the system that provided an accurate picture of the economic and employment situation right across the country. That is why they are still fumbling and trying to fix the problem. There is obviously a very real problem here.

Does my colleague agree that it is time the government stopped playing games with the temporary foreign worker program and asked the Auditor General to conduct a full review?

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General, as the member knows, has the opportunity to review whatever program the Auditor General desires. In fact, the Auditor General did review the program and made some recommendations, of which the government implemented the vast majority, so that has happened.

The NDP and the Liberals claim there are cases of abuse, and I have no question there have been some. A very small number of employers have abused the program. Therefore, I would recommend that if there are cases of abuse, those people should be held fully accountable for their actions.

In fact, it is not the Auditor General who will hold those employers accountable. It will be CBSA, Immigration Canada or in some cases the RCMP that will hold them accountable for their abuses.

I would recommend that if opposition members know of individual employers that have broken the rules, that have committed fraud, that have employed temporary foreign workers rather than Canadians, they report those to the appropriate authorities. The mechanisms are in place today to hold those employers accountable.

• (1110)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the motion by my colleague, the member for Markham—Unionville. It is a lengthy motion, so I will not read it out. However, I am really pleased we are debating this in the House.

Business of Supply

There is no doubt that over the last number of months, Canadians right across the country, those who live in Canada as permanent residents and Canadian citizens, are really becoming very disturbed by how broken the temporary foreign worker program really is.

At this time, it behooves us not to blame the workers who come to our country. They only come because we have a government that grants them permission to enter the country. It is a government that should be basing the LMOs on real needs not made up needs, according to Kijiji and other such crazy information gathering.

We have to get away from the rhetoric that the temporary foreign workers are coming to our country to steal our jobs. They apply for jobs that are advertised. Often, they are the victims of unscrupulous agents and consultants and end up having to pay huge sums of money. They are coming to our country in good faith as workers. They do not steal our jobs. We bring them here and, as evidence has shown over the last number of weeks, when they are here, not all of them but many of them, are exposed to horrendous abuse. It is abuse that goes as far as threats to their lives, removal from the country and not getting the wages they should.

I am very proud to be a Canadian. Canadians I talk to across the country are very disturbed, as am I, when we hear of the kind of abuse happening. We are a nation that has been built by immigrants, except for the aboriginal people who were already here. Most of us in the House, and across Canada, are either first generation or descendants of immigrants who came here to build our amazing country. Therefore, it is very disturbing for Canadians to know that, first under the Liberal government and now under the Conservative government, there is a different notion of how we look at immigration and our workforce. It is a marked disrespect for the Canadian workforce and Canadians when the government has allowed this program to get out of control, as it has.

For the last three years, I have been raising concerns about the program. It is not just one stream, but we are hearing concerns from nearly all the streams of what is wrong with this pathway to work in Canada. It is not a pathway to citizenship. I heard my colleague say that some do get their citizenship, but when we look at the number of people who come here and the number who are converted into citizenship, the number is quite small.

When we criticize the program and ask for it to be fixed, we hear lots of comments that the NDP is opposed to it, for example, that it wants to shut down the oil sands and put employers out of business. At no time have the New Democrats taken a position that the program needs to be shut down totally. However, we do say that the program is so broken throughout that it needs an independent review so we can fix it and make it work. Yes, we did ask for a moratorium on the low-skilled category because the rationale for temporary foreign workers did not hold true. The stories and the numbers out there were just horrendous.

• (1115)

At the end of the day, we always have to go back to what the government does, which is blaming other people. Instead of answering the questions and dealing with a broken program, it wants to deflect and gets into this blaming and pointing fingers.

Nobody in the opposition, not one MP, has the authority to issue an LMO to get a worker here under any of the categories, let alone the low-skilled categories. There is only one group of people, one government, the Conservative Canadian government, and it rests with the portfolio of the Minister of Employment and Social Development. Only that department can issue an LMO.

I am hearing that due diligence is done, but I want to know what kind of due diligence was done when hundreds of LMOs were given to McDonald's in Victoria, which has high double-digit youth unemployment. What kind of an oversight is that when retail jobs once again are getting LMOs? This feigning of surprise every time we hear of this by the minister is wearing a bit thin. I say that it is time for the government to stand in the House to say it has a broken system, has failed in its oversight and needs to fix this program, and that in order to restore the confidence of Canadians in this program, it will have an independent review. It needs to have that moratorium for the whole low-skilled category. There is one simple reason for that, which is that the abuse and the overindulgence of LMOs is not just limited to the fast food industry. We have also heard of retail workers.

The government has said that as soon as it finds out there is abuse it is quick to act. Therefore, when a prominent national broadcaster broadcasts a teleconference call from the CEO of McDonald's, suddenly we get three employers being put on the blacklist. Once again, another story broke a couple of days ago and we are now finding out that the employer was hiring people in retail across this country to work in malls. The workers were very brave. They went to CBS and the RCMP. They were getting threats against their life. They were being forced to live in a place with the supervisor. They came and reported that their apartment was trashed.

Despite all of that, it is only when this came up in the media again that the employer is now on the blacklist but was not on it earlier. Surely, we cannot say that our enforcement strategy is, "Let's find out what the media does and when we're caught we'll say, 'Oh, my goodness, we didn't know this was happening. We're now going to punish that employer.'"

Let us be clear. At no time will we vilify employers who are playing by the rules the government has made. However, we will vilify and blame employers who are abusing the employees once they are here. We cannot blame the employers totally for the LMOs because that is in the hands of the government. If they are getting them wrongfully, it is also in the hands of the government to investigate, punish, and make sure that things happen. I know wonderful employers. I have been to their workplaces. I have seen that in some categories there is a need. However, I can say that when the program has come into the kind of disrepute that it has right now, there is no saving it without an independent review.

I will be moving an amendment a bit later, but right now I will read out what the amendment will be. I will take a moment to move it before I finish speaking.

Business of Supply

•(1120)

I will be making an amendment to the motion moved by my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for the imposition of an immediate moratorium on the stream for lower-skills occupations, which includes fast food services and restaurant jobs. I know my colleagues across the way are not going to have a problem with that because they just voted for it the other night. Really, it is to make sure that there is a constructive review of that program and, until that happens, that moratorium remains in place.

We have got to get to the stage when we have to start being proactive. We need to review and revise this program so that LMOs are issued not only when employers have satisfied the conditions but the government has data that it can rely on. Only the other day, the Kijiji data was removed from the government's website and now we are suddenly finding out that the labour crisis is not as the government has talked about for the last few years. What we need is data.

I know my colleagues across the way have an allergy to data, science, and informed opinion, but the numbers cannot be made up for labour market opinions by grabbing them from the air. We need sound data. Data was collected, by the way, by Statistics Canada that has gathered dust because the government did not think analyzing that data was a priority. This is a government that does not like to make decisions based on fact.

I really appreciated the minister admitting yesterday that there is no overall labour or skills shortage. I had the privilege of being at Cloverdale Kwantlen university campus on Friday. It was truly amazing. The room was packed as far as I could see of young people living in Canada, who are in the trades program, welding and other courses. They are worried because they have friends who are qualified welders and cannot get jobs. They are aware of the fact that they have finished their prerequisites and some of them cannot get placements. For them, it is horrendous to realize that while they are busy investing in their career paths, the doorway is being shut to them, and they see a very bleak future.

I met a wonderful young man who had a Bachelor of Science degree and really wanted to go into the science field, but seeing no jobs there, then chose to go into welding. Now he has a question to ask of us, which is this. Why is it, with skilled tradespeople right here in Canada, the doors seem to be wide open to temporary foreign workers?

As members know, New Democrats have asked for a moratorium on the lower-skilled category, but I want to make it clear that does not include seasonal agricultural workers, because that is a separate stream that has a completely separate application form and code, nor does it include the live-in caregivers program, though we want to include them in the independent audit because we are hearing of all kinds of abuses and difficulties that live-in caregivers are experiencing once they are here. We need to address the whole program, not just components of it.

These young men and women went to the microphone and made passionate pleas. They do not have anything against the temporary foreign workers who come here because they realize that they are coming here to make a living, but they are questioning the wisdom

of our legislature in this country right now of the current government as it gives away the jobs that they should have.

We have heard stories from Alberta and B.C. We are hearing stories from coast to coast to coast, not only from the low-skilled stream but from other categories as well. Sometimes I wince when I hear the term “low-skilled stream”, but that is the category in this program. It does not show any disrespect for the work done by people who work in these categories.

•(1125)

I have seen innumerable young people living in Canada who tell me “Mrs. Sims, we would love to be able to work at McDonald's. We would love to be able to work.” There was a time when we saw that as prime training grounds. I remember, as a high school counsellor, saying that to students who said they were going to work at McDonald's. I would say it is a great training ground. It did not matter whether they were going to go into the medical or engineer field or any other job, it was a starting place. Now many young people are telling me that those doors are shut to them. I am hearing from young people and not just young people. C.D. Howe, not a think tank I often agree with, recently produced some research. This is a think tank that normally supports the government. It has said that in Alberta and B.C. 4% unemployment could be attributed to the increase in the numbers for the lower-skilled category. That alone should force my colleagues across the way to stop and do some serious thinking about this.

It is time to stop pointing fingers. We are willing to sit down with the government and look for a way forward. We do not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater, so to speak. What we do want is something that works for Canada and works for everyone who lives here.

There are new Canadians who worked very hard, and some of them had to wait a very long time to get into Canada. Now they are here, whether they came through the refugee stream or through family reunification. The government has turned that stream into a lottery system and has basically shut the door on family reunification. Despite that, people have come to this country with hopes and dreams. They are often the people who would be going into these entry-level jobs. What they are now telling me, what they are telling us coast to coast to coast, is they do not have access to those entry-level jobs.

This is a very serious situation. What we are going to do is support this motion, but at this stage I am moving an amendment.

I move that the motion be amended by adding the following: “and the imposition of an immediate moratorium on the stream for lower-skilled occupations, which include fast food, service, and restaurant jobs.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Markham—Unionville if he consents to the amendment being moved.

Business of Supply

• (1130)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Liberals have presented today what we think is a thoughtful motion on which we are seeking debate. No, we will not accept that amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): There is no consent; therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Questions and comments.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I have not finished my speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): When the motion is moved, that is the end of the speech.

The hon. Minister of Employment and Social Development.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must admit to being confused by the position of my friends in the New Democratic Party. The member has yet again just pressed for a broader moratorium on the low-skilled stream of the temporary foreign worker program, and yet last Friday, she was holding a press conference with her provincial colleague in British Columbia, Mable Elmore, MLA, during which time they called for a lifting of the moratorium on the temporary foreign worker program for the food services sector.

She was at a press conference last week with her provincial counterpart saying that we should lift the moratorium we have put on the food services sector, and here she is in the House of Commons saying that we should broaden the moratorium.

Could the member explain the confusion? Second, I am confused about her position on immigration. The member claims she wants higher numbers for family reunification, refugees and now she wants to give permanent residency to all temporary foreign workers.

I think it is a responsibility of the NDP to tell us what the implications are for all of that with respect to the annual number for the admission of permanent residents. The NDP members say they want at least 1% of the population, 360,000, which would be a massive increase in immigration levels. How much higher do they want to go than 360,000, as permanent residents per year?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I want to correct my hon. colleague across the way. I was at that press conference, not being hosted by us, but hosted by our provincial counterparts. I made it very clear why we strongly support a moratorium. At no time did anybody hear from me about a lifting of the moratorium.

I want to get back to the amendment I moved today. I really want to make it very clear that what we are asking for is a moratorium on all low-skilled occupations for the simple reason that the program is so badly broken and we are hearing from so many Canadians and workers of the abuse that is taking place.

I also assure the minister across the way that we have never, at any time, advocated a total open door policy. We shared that with him a number of times on these categories, but we stand by the claim we are making that the government has turned family reunification into a lottery system where only 5,000 Canadians can apply.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think between the member for Newton—North Delta and me, we have put forward probably six motions, between the House and the committee, to undertake a review of this program.

This is not a new problem. The alarm bells have been ringing for quite some time. My colleague and I have tried to get this before the government to get it fixed. That is what the whole purpose was.

I want to ask her this specifically, because the government tries to muddy the waters when it responds to questions particularly from New Democrats when it says that the NDP writes more letters than anybody else in support of temporary foreign workers. It has been said in this House, and I contend, that this is an important program. It is not a bad program, but one that has been badly managed. Does she not agree with me that if this program continued to hold the confidence of the Canadian people, if it were better managed, there would be fewer letters being addressed to the minister from the NDP?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a hard-working member of Parliament, and I have got to know him really well, and I really appreciate his thoughtful intervention.

When I discuss the issue with him, I am always very clear about where he stands, but I get confused when I hear from the rest of his caucus or the leader who at one time says that the program is doing fine and then that it is totally broken.

We also have the same caucus, the third party, stand in this House and support our motion and amendment, a call for a moratorium. We only voted on that a short time ago, yet we have had the mover of the motion today not willing to add that to the motion we have before us.

At the end of the day, the LMOs are given out by government. The process is established by government, and MPs do their casework.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to second the motion moved by my colleague, the hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

I am very disappointed to see that the Liberals are refusing to support a very reasonable motion. I would also add that there are problems with the minister's outrageous remarks. His doom-and-gloom tone is completely uncalled for, especially given that he is mainly responsible for the current issues with the program.

I would like to hear my colleague from Newton—North Delta speak about unskilled workers. Perhaps she could talk about those who do janitorial work in schools and hospitals and so on. That is another sector that could be cause for concern. There may be serious problems for Canadians who want to do work that is equally honourable but more specialized.

[*English*]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, in the stream of temporary foreign workers that is the low-skilled occupation stream, we have seen a growth of 698% since 2006. That is huge. In the same category, when we are looking at Canadians' unemployment, we see that unemployment for Canadians has increased there.

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I am not just talking anecdotal data here. I am actually referring to the research done at Simon Fraser University by the C.D. Howe Institute. Once again, the C.D. Howe Institute pointed out how the increase in the temporary foreign worker program has actually added, in this category, up to 4% to the unemployment rate.

I have to also say that it is not just in the fast-food industry, which the minister just pulled out because of all the big news stories. We have now heard it is in retail and other areas as well; so it is time for a moratorium and an independent audit.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was heartened to hear the member for Newton—North Delta say that where a real need exists, and not a made-up need, we need to have the program operative, and that we should not vilify employers who are not abusing the system. In my riding I had some correspondence with a person who said he needs my help because he has lost all hope. His restaurant is located in Kenosee, the southeast corner of the province. Not enough cooks meant his service suffered and he spends much of his time on the line cooking; so he is at work 12 to 16 hours a day, seven days a week, to keep the doors from closing.

Another person writes that a town like Moosomin has a great economy, but it makes it extremely hard to attract staff to his industry. He is also looking at not developing or moving ahead with future locations because of what this will do to his staffing.

I want this member to make a comment. In southeast Saskatchewan, we have the lowest unemployment rate, at times, in all of the country of Canada. In the southeast part of the province, at times we have the lowest unemployment rate in Saskatchewan, with the highest employment participation rate. Would the member agree with me that the program should be continued, particularly in regard to those statistics, which are not unscientific, but are exact and precise?

● (1140)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague across the way for a very specific and thought-out question.

First, let me say that if we look at the purpose for the temporary foreign worker program, we see it is for where there is an acute skill set shortage. In the meantime, we were supposed to be growing those skill sets at home. However, when we look at some categories, I would say that, if we have that legitimate shortage, we should do what Canada has always done historically, and that shortage is addressed if it is long-term. We are not talking about temporary, one or two months or even a two-year shortage. If it is a long-term shortage, then surely we should be looking at it through the immigration lens. Remember that if they are good enough to work here, they are good enough to live here.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is like déjà vu all over again; we are back talking about the temporary foreign worker program. As I mentioned in my preamble to the question for the member for Newton—North Delta, this has been an issue that the opposition parties have brought forward on at least six different occasions, through motions in the House and through motions at the Standing Committee on Human Resources and Skills Development.

It is seen as a program that is important to the economy of this country and has served us very well over many years, but in recent years with the changes that have been made, independent of any kind of study or full reflection for those impacted, the shackles have been taken off and we see there have been outcomes that have had considerable negative impact and have reflected poorly on the program.

Right now in the minds of many Canadians, there is a great deal of concern around the program, and I think that is legitimate. The purpose of our opposition day motion is to have the government move to regain some of that credibility, that confidence in this program, so that the program will better serve Canadian business operators, Canadian workers, and those who want to come to this country for work opportunities and citizenship opportunities. That is the essence of the motion today.

The abuses have been well articulated. When we look at the HD Mining issue, the Royal Bank blowup from two years ago, and more recently what took place when two women who had worked in a restaurant in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, for 25 or 28 years—Sandy Nelson and Shauna Jennison-Yung—and been replaced by workers who had come in through the temporary foreign worker program, I do not think any Canadians would see that as being right.

We also hear anecdotal evidence that some employers are being subtle with their abuse of the program. They are saying they cannot get workers, but they have Canadian workers who they assign reduced numbers of hours, or the most inconvenient hours. We respect employers' right to manage their workforce as they see fit, but when those types of things are happening with scheduling and split shifts, they are chasing those Canadian workers out of the business and the workforce and creating this need to bring in temporary foreign workers.

We believe that an open audit, getting the true picture of what is going on with the program, would benefit all Canadians. We think it would certainly benefit Canadian workers and Canadian businesses.

We get mixed messages. In response to a question last week, the minister said it was 2002 when the Liberals came out with the low-skill stream for the temporary foreign worker program and all the Conservatives have done since is put in additional restraints and restrictions. He was half right on that. It was 2002 and the Liberals did bring that in, but I have a problem with what he said about the additional restraints and restrictions, the checks and balances, especially in light of the fact that the minister's predecessor, the current Minister of Public Works and Government Services, was boastful about what she did for the temporary foreign worker program in accelerating the LMOs and in providing an opportunity for employers to pay 15% less to temporary foreign workers. She was very proud of those.

● (1145)

The numbers skyrocketed. As my colleague for Markham—Unionville said, they mushroomed, so there is a different take on it.

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What would have motivated the current government to allow this, what would have driven it to take the shackles off this program, is something that I am sure the member for Vancouver Centre, who I am splitting my time with, will probably add this to her speech as well. What has driven the unshackling of the temporary foreign worker program has been the misinformation within the labour market, the misunderstanding of where we are in the labour market.

We heard the Prime Minister say two years ago that the skills gap that we have in this country is at a crisis and that Canadians should be seized with this gap. Well, we know that the Conservatives have sort of stepped back from that position. Now they are saying that, yes, there are sectors and parts of the country experiencing skills shortages. We understand that, but we also know that Donald Drummond, TD, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer have all put forward concerns about the government's take on the labour market information in this country.

It is what has driven the current government: they said they need these skills and they need them now. Meanwhile, we still wrestle with an unemployment rate for young Canadians of over 14%. We know that there are a number of Canadians who are still having trouble securing work.

When one does not have the appropriate information and tries to drive policy without factual evidence, that is when one gets into trouble. This is why we are asking for the Auditor General to be called in to give a full and transparent review.

I would think that my friend and colleague, the minister responsible, would be deemed an enabler. He has been a cheerleader for the unlocking of what has taken place here. He would have fired the starting gun.

When he was minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, he was one of the biggest supporters of the temporary foreign worker program. His department issued work permits for a record number of temporary foreign workers. In fact, it was his department that pushed one of the temporary foreign worker streams to be expanded to record levels, that being the International Experience Canada program.

The International Experience Canada program was a Liberal program that was set out to be a diplomatic program with the purpose of allowing Canadian and foreign youth to experience each other's cultures. It was very well intended. However, the Conservatives took it in a different direction, and it has become another access point for temporary foreign workers.

The International Experience Canada program 2005-2006 had approximately 50,000 participants. There were 20,000 Canadians and 30,000 foreign youth. In the past six years, the Conservative government has changed the program to focus more on labour market needs. The program has almost doubled the number of temporary foreign workers, who now number 60,000, yet Canadian participation in the program is down to about 18,000.

I know that my colleague has travelled abroad. When he was in Ireland on one of the television shows, he said that one of our biggest economic problems in Canada was skills shortage and that we encourage young people from Ireland to come to our country.

Meanwhile, young Canadians have lost about 200,000 jobs in this country since then.

In closing, the best time to have looked at the problem would have been three years ago, when it was first called upon. The next best time after that would have probably been two years ago, when it was called upon again, and then again last year. However, now is the next best opportunity.

Let us get this program fixed. Let us have the Auditor General come in with an independent study so that this program can work for Canadians and Canadian businesses.

• (1150)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that member's views vary depending on the context and time and audience. He said in 2012 at committee that "Temporary foreign workers are an important part of our economy..." and that "...some of the best workers are temporary foreign workers."

I am always perplexed by the Liberal Party's position on this issue. The member said that this government was responsible for increasing the number of temporary foreign workers by orders of magnitude. In point of fact, the admission of so-called temporary foreign workers admitted to Canada has gone from roughly 138,000 in 2005 to around 200,000 in the last couple of years. I say "so-called" because most of them are not employer-driven and LMO-based; many of them are high-skilled, intercompany transferees and others about which there is little or no controversy.

He is right in that there was a growth of about 70,000 in admissions, but half of that growth was through International Experience Canada. It means having grown from 0.7% of workforce to 1.1% of workforce. We have gone from effectively 1% of workforce to 1% of workforce in terms of admissions.

Is it really the member's position that that constitutes an increase by orders of magnitude? Does he also agree with his colleague from Markham—Unionville that all of these people are displacing Canadian jobs, but they should therefore be able to do so permanently by becoming permanent residents?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I agree with myself. If the minister is trying to shame me or embarrass me about a comment that I made in 2012, it will not work. I fully agree with that comment and I stand on that. The temporary foreign worker program is not a bad program. It is a program that has been managed badly.

We would not have an agricultural sector in many parts of this country if it were not for the temporary foreign worker program. There are real needs. They are not just perceived needs. When this program is working right, Canadian employers and Canadian jobs are supported by it.

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I have no problem with the program. My problem is with how it has been mismanaged over the last number of years. That is why I am calling for a full, complete, and independent audit in order to fix that problem. Let us get this program fixed for Canadians.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question for my colleague is fairly straightforward.

I have heard you clearly state that there is rampant abuse of the program right now, specifically among the low-skilled occupations class. Can you explain—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The hon. member on almost every occasion addresses comments directly to her colleagues. I will let her continue her question, but if this happens again, I will interrupt immediately and move on to the next question.

The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I stand corrected. I will try to remember.

Could my hon. colleague explain why the Liberals could vote for the amendment I moved today a couple of days ago, yet today they cannot accept it as part of the motion on the floor?

• (1155)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, let me first clarify that my position would never have been that there is rampant abuse. There has been abuse, and many of those abuses have been very much out in the media. Rather than rampant abuse, the abuses that have taken place are significant and substantial and deserve to be viewed, but there is no rampant abuse.

Other aspects have to be viewed as well. The C.D. Howe Institute has said there is an impact of about 4% on the unemployment rate in Alberta and B.C. as a result of the growing number of temporary foreign workers. We see the downward pressure on the minimum wage. The number of Canadians working for minimum wage has increased 68%. Those factors have to be looked at more so than rampant abuse. Abuses are going on in the system, but the impacts of the system and how they are playing out in the Canadian economy are just as important.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this opposition day motion from the Liberals.

I want to start off by saying if one reads the motion, it is very clear it does not ask for an end to the temporary foreign worker program. It does not ask for the temporary foreign worker program to be scrapped. It just asks that the program become transparent, that there be a review to see how it is working and what its flaws are currently, and that we set up a system in which there is transparency, accountability, and fairness in this particular program.

We all support the temporary foreign worker program. It began in 1973, and under three different sets of governments—Liberal, Progressive Conservative, and then Liberal again—the temporary foreign worker program worked, because what the program was meant to do was very clear.

It was a one-year program under which someone would come and spend one year as a temporary foreign worker. Before that person was accepted as a temporary foreign worker, a labour market opinion

was given. The employer advertised intensely, putting out enormous amounts of advertisements to make sure that there was not a Canadian who had the skills for the job or a Canadian who wished to do the job. Those checks and balances were in the program starting in 1973.

The program worked. Not only that, but the temporary foreign workers, because they brought in special skills that Canadians did not have, were sometimes paid more than the average Canadian. There was a complaint about that, but they were either paid more than or the same as a Canadian who would have done that job or who would have been able to do the job if they could find someone to do it.

Things worked well until this government came in, in 2006. Then, although I do not know why, the government decided to change things. In 2006 it increased the time a worker could be employed from one year to two years and it decreased the time for the labour market opinion. In other words, employers did not have to advertise as extensively as they were supposed to under the old temporary foreign worker program.

That was in 2006. In 2011, the government increased the length of time for a temporary foreign worker from the two years that it had put in place in 2006 to four years, and it decreased even further, to five months, the advertising process and labour market opinion.

In 2012, it decided it would change things even further and said that for employers with strong track records—I have no idea what that meant—it would speed up the application and advertising process to 10 days and allow employers to decrease the wages for temporary foreign workers by 15%. As a result, the Royal Bank of Canada was caught bringing in temporary foreign workers to replace its own IT workers. There was a big hue and cry, and the government said, “Oh, dear, look at this problem. Let us fix it”.

It was a problem caused by the government in 2006, 2011, and 2012, when the government watered down the responsibilities and the usual checks and balances for the temporary foreign worker program.

Now we see that again. We see what is happening in the food industry. The government tampered with a program that worked quite well by allowing it to have no checks and balances, no accountability, and no transparency. Ten days is not sufficient time to advertise, but the government was going on Kijiji numbers that said we had all these jobs going begging and no one to do them.

We have no choice but to agree with Kijiji, as the government did, because we no longer have Statistics Canada doing any kind of appropriate census and appropriate longitudinal surveys to tell us what is going on in our labour markets, so everyone gets screwed because the government says it knows what it is doing.

As a result of the changes, we had two problems: the food industry problem we recently had and the RBC or Royal Bank of Canada problems just prior to that.

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• (1200)

We now see that in December 2002, there were 182,000 temporary foreign workers, and by December 2012, there were 492,000. The program has escalated, because everyone was allowed to have less transparency and accountability and could bring in temporary foreign workers because they said they needed them. Again, the government removed transparency and accountability. When the government was caught, it suddenly said that it was changing the program, a program that worked very well from 1973 until the current government decided to fiddle around with it in 2006.

In my riding, there are many restaurants and hotels. There is agricultural land. Agricultural workers are needed in the Fraser Valley during certain seasons.

This program has a purpose, but if it is not advertised to ensure that a Canadian cannot do a job, we have defeated the purpose. When Canadians cannot be found to do jobs and temporary foreign workers are brought in, we should not be allowed to say that a temporary foreign worker can earn 15% less than a Canadian worker. Labour and others told the minister very clearly at the time that if he did that, it would depress wages generally and would create a problem. The government does not listen to anybody's opinion but its own, so the minister went ahead and did it, and we saw the problem.

We have a program that has a purpose. It requires good transparency to work. There are people in my riding who cook specialized foods and are trying to find a chef from India. There are people in various parts of the country who are trying to find workers for certain jobs in building.

When they were building the Canada Line, temporary foreign workers were brought in to do the tunneling under the streets, because there was nobody here who had the ability, the equipment, or the knowledge to do that kind of extensive work. People were brought in from Latin America. In fact, those people were paid 50% less by companies that have a strong track record but that decided to abuse the temporary foreign workers and pay them 50% less. The unions in British Columbia went to bat for these people and took the companies to court, and they were then paid the same as people with similar skills in Canada.

A bunch of people are saying that the system is a rip-off and takes jobs from Canadians, especially Canadian youth. Other people are saying that the terrible thing about this program is that it exploits people. It brings them in almost as indentured labourers and pays them a measly wage, much less than any Canadian would get. They say that Canada has become an exploitive country. These are things we have to think about. Many countries in the world have temporary foreign worker programs, but they work with clear checks and balances and accountability.

Liberals are not asking that this program be scrapped. What we are saying is fairly simple. We are saying that we want the program to go back to its original purpose. We want to be sure that the program is reviewed by the Auditor General so that he can see what has gone wrong with it and can give us ideas about how to fix it so that it achieves its goal of ensuring that we have workers to do the jobs

Canadians cannot or will not do. That was the original purpose of the program. We now know that there are many industries that need such workers and cannot find them.

When the minister stands in the House and says that some members have asked him to bring in foreign workers, he is being too cute for words. He knows that there are valid reasons when a temporary foreign worker is needed. To stand in the House and point fingers at everyone who asked him for temporary foreign workers really does not pay tribute.

Liberals want to change the process to ensure that the checks and balances exist, that the advertising time is increased, and that when temporary foreign workers come to this country, they are paid the wage a Canadian would get.

• (1205)

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the Liberals have a revisionist vision of what history says about the Liberal government. Unfortunately, she advocates for the program returning to its incarnation under the Liberal Party.

Under our government and minister, we have articulated very clearly that the roles temporary foreign workers are coming to fill are ones that will build our communities and local economies. Unfortunately, the Liberal government defended a program that allowed 600 permits for strippers, exotic dancers. The Liberal Party defended that program.

When the Liberal member opposite desires to see the program return to what it was under the Liberal Party, is she also asking that our government now overturn our decision not to allow strippers in through this program? Is she calling for granting 600 strippers temporary foreign worker permits, as it was under the Liberal government?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, sometimes members in this House stand and actually twist words.

I did not say that it should return to what it was under the Liberals, although it worked very well as a program under the Liberals, and the Progressive Conservatives, not just under the Liberals.

The point is that it needs to be clear. It needs to be transparent. It needs to be accountable. It needs to have a very clear labour market opinion on the kinds of people that are needed. It needs to be fair and not exploit temporary foreign workers.

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Finally, what it needs to do is what Minister Volpe did many years ago when he had the program, which is allow temporary foreign workers to be on a fast track so that they can become permanent residents and citizens of this country and actually start the nation-building process rather than a simple labour market process.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am finding it very difficult to see exactly what it is the Liberal Party really wants. We have had one member say that it is wishy-washy.

The Liberal Party position on this is really wishy-washy. They are for this and they are for that. The Liberal leader is saying that the program is a near total failure. The member for Kings—Hants is saying that the program creates jobs. Now the Liberal ESDC critic is saying that the program is not rampant with abuse. Which is it?

What is it the Liberal Party really wants? The Liberals voted not to accept the amendment the NDP put forward. They voted for it last Wednesday, and today they are opposed to that amendment.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, the text of the motion is pretty clear.

It asks for:

- (a) an immediate and full review of the program by the Auditor General; (b) the disclosure of Labour Market Opinion applications and approvals for Temporary Foreign Workers; (c) a tightening of the Labour Market Opinion approval process...and (d)...that employers...demonstrate unequivocally that they exhausted all avenues to fill job vacancies with Canadian workers, particularly young Canadians.

This is pretty clear. One just has to read it to see that it is pretty clear.

No one has said that the program is not a good program or that we do not need it. What we are saying is that under the Conservative government, the program has been changed so many times, as I showed, in 2006, 2011, and 2012, that the program no longer has the transparency and accountability it used to have. It is time for us to fix it again to ensure that it works the way it used to work under the Progressive Conservative Party and under the Liberal Party.

• (1210)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in debate, for the second time in a week, on this important subject. I believe it is important. I would like to commend all members who are participating in this debate on the basis of fact rather than on sentiment or fiction, because there is too much of that, I would submit, currently evident in this debate.

Let me say that the objective of the so-called temporary foreign worker program is really twofold. First, it is to permit Canadians to benefit from global labour mobility. We are a country that exports not just goods but also services. Those services are primarily exported by the presence of Canadians around the world. Hundreds of thousands of Canadian citizens work for various durations in countries around the world, typically in high-paying, high-skilled jobs from which they, their families, and the Canadian economy manifestly benefit. Their ability to work abroad is usually predicated on a series of international agreements, such as the General Agreement on Trade in Services, the North American Free Trade

Agreement, and various other multilateral agreements that permit the reciprocal movement of Canadians abroad.

While the debate on the temporary foreign worker program typically devolves into a focus on aspects of the low-skilled stream that is employer-driven and is based on the labour market opinion stream, the truth is that the majority of temporary foreign workers fall into the category I just addressed. They are higher-skilled people who have international labour mobility.

To give an example, the number of people admitted to Canada under this program through reciprocal employment agreements increased from 30,000 in 2005 to 63,000 in 2012. In fact, most of the growth in the program has been through reciprocal bilateral and multilateral agreements.

I will admit, without any apology, that one of the largest aspects of growth has been in the International Experience Canada program. The member for Vancouver Centre will know well that a number of young Aussies, French, and whatnot come and work for a few months, perhaps in the service industry in Vancouver or up in Whistler, for example. I do not think Canadians regard an Aussie taking a part-time job while living up in Whistler as a fundamental threat to our economy. We give a young Aussie in his or her gap year from university doing his or her walkabout in Canada, as they call it, an open work permit. A lot of them do not use the work permit. However, some of them, if they can find casual part-time jobs, will do them, at Canadian wage rates and so forth. We are talking about a tiny fraction of a percentage of the Canadian workforce, in reciprocity for which young Canadians can do the same abroad.

As the member for Cape Breton—Canso pointed out, there are fewer young Canadians who work abroad in this, the largest portion of the temporary foreign worker program, than there are young foreign nationals who come to Canada. That is true. However, that is a reflection of the vitality of our economy versus those of our friends around the world.

I saw a comment by the member for Markham—Unionville, the Liberal immigration critic, on Twitter last week saying that this program has “young foreigners taking Canadian jobs”. It is a sad day when the immigration critic for the Liberal Party of Canada would formulate such a sentiment as “foreigners taking Canadian jobs”.

We all have to be careful and responsible in this debate. That kind of formulation one would typically hear from spokespeople for the nativist anti-immigration parties of Europe. I am not suggesting for a moment that the member for Markham—Unionville shares such sentiments. I do not believe that he does. However, I believe he shares an obligation to speak carefully, prudently, and responsibly on this issue. To say that a reciprocal youth mobility program allows foreigners to take away Canadian jobs, I am sure my colleagues will agree, can set up an us-versus-them kind of nativist dynamic, which we should all avoid.

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●(1215)

I know all of us in politics misspeak from time to time, but on this debate let us just be a wee bit careful. We all know there are people who would like to set up divisions between Canadians and those from abroad, who would like to shut down labour mobility and would like to reduce permanent residency immigration. Let us not give them succour in this debate. That is a point I wanted to raise.

The government will be opposing the motion, although much of it is actually quite sensible. I will go through the motion point by point.

First, the motion calls for an immediate and full review of the program by the Auditor General. I believe the Auditor General should be master of his own agenda. The Auditor General's predecessor, Sheila Fraser, did a report in 2009, all of whose recommendations the government accepted and virtually all of which have implemented. However, if this Auditor General determines that this issue is worthy of his attention again and decides to come back and review the program, we would of course enthusiastically cooperate with his investigation. Let there be no doubt about that.

What I really do not want to do is to allow process to become a substitute for action, and this is the primary reason why I oppose the motion. We all recognize that this is an important program, that in principle we need to facilitate the admission of a limited number of foreign nationals to work in Canada, particularly to fill critical skills gaps where they may exist. However, all of us also recognize that there are problems with the program, that there are too many abuses and that there may be some aspects of the program leading to a distortion of our domestic labour market.

Therefore, I agree with my friends in both opposition parties that we need to vigorously address those shortcomings, as we have already begun to do. Where I disagree is that we should hit the pause button for heaven knows how many months, as an external review of the program is done, until we actually fix the problems that we know exist. To the contrary, we need to move to action.

In this respect, my predecessor in this ministry, who is now Minister of Public Works and Government Services, and I, when I was at immigration, launched national consultations on reforming the temporary foreign worker program in the fall of 2012.

[*Translation*]

That led to a whole series of reforms that we announced in March 2013. As part of that, we announced that we had tightened the rules on labour market opinions. We eliminated the accelerated labour market opinion process. We removed the existing wage flexibility. We added questions to the LMO applications. We extended the mandatory period; employers now have to publish available jobs. We introduced a requirement for those seeking foreign workers to submit, along with their LMO request, a transition plan indicating their strategy to employ more Canadians and reduce their dependence on the temporary foreign worker program.

We introduced those changes last spring and announced our intention to continue consultations regarding a second set of reforms. Frankly, I have to say that there will soon be an announcement about that second set of reforms. I think we need to focus on action, not on the process.

●(1220)

There is no need for further consultations. We have already studied the issue thoroughly. Now we have to take action.

[*English*]

That is really what we have to do.

Second, the motion calls for the disclosure of labour market opinion applications and approvals of temporary foreign workers. I am not quite sure what the member for Markham—Unionville means by this. I am all for transparency and I think that we could provide better statistical information. Quite frankly, the stats on this program are very hard for people to unpick and understand.

Under the Privacy Act, we cannot publish the names of applicants for government services or approvals, such as labour market opinions and work permits. Therefore, I would caution the opposition that if it is actually asking for the names of individual employers, companies or employers, we would have to grapple with the implications of that with respect to personal privacy.

I certainly agree with part (c) of the motion, which states, “a tightening of the labour market opinion approval process to ensure that only businesses with legitimate needs are able to access the program”. As I have already indicated, we have effectively already done that. We opposed the labour market opinion cost recovery fee of \$275. We are asking more questions on those LMO applications. We have extended the advertising requirement, not reduced it. As the member said, we have extended it to basically four weeks and perhaps further extension is a good idea. I am open to constructive suggestions in that regard.

As a result of the changes we announced a year ago, we have already seen roughly a 20% reduction in the overall number of labour market opinion applications, which I think is salutary.

Finally, part (d) of the motion reads, “the implementation of stronger rules requiring that employers applying to the program demonstrate unequivocally that they exhausted all avenues to fill job vacancies with Canadian workers, particularly young Canadians”. I wholeheartedly agree with that objective. That again is further reflected in the reforms we made last year, which include, by the way, legislative authority for Service Canada, which is the agency that administers labour market opinions, to enter workplaces unannounced to do inspections to ensure that the employers are actually complying with their undertakings under the LMOs, and also the ability to blacklist those employers that do not comply with the program. We have added a number of employers to that blacklist since it became effective in December of last year.

Business of Supply

Let me then turn to some of the errors or misconceptions expressed by the member for Markham—Unionville, speaking for his party on this issue. By the way, I say this in the spirit of comity, because the rules around the statistics are extremely dense, opaque and complex. I have been familiar with this program for several years and every day I see a misunderstanding of various aspects of the program, and that is entirely understandable.

First, the member says that the government has deliberately inflated the numbers of temporary foreign workers. This is not true. In fact, the basic architecture, design of the program, the basic policy that we inherited, is largely demand driven. It is driven by demonstrable demand by employers when they fill out these labour market opinions, or by demand from international mobility like the trade agreements I referred to earlier.

The one aspect that the government does control, and I will admit this, is the quotas for the international experience Canada category. There was a period, from 2006 to roughly 2011, when the Government of Canada, and the member might want to listen to this because I am giving him ammunition, actually signed a number of additional youth mobility agreements with foreign partners that increased effectively the quotas for the reciprocal international experience Canada program, youth mobility programs. It did that in good faith, because one of the priorities of this government is expanding our trade markets, expanding our exports. In principle, we think it is a good thing to have more people exposed to Canada to increase that kind of mobility and to give young Canadians a chance to work abroad.

• (1225)

However, it is clear that there is an imbalance in that while the quotas are reciprocal, the movements are not within that program. That is worthy of consideration. This is primarily because we have a much stronger economy than almost all of our partners, so younger people from abroad prefer to work here than vice versa.

However, it is a legitimate question and it is true that it is the one element of the program where the government has inflated numbers, but again, that is largely benign. I have not heard any Canadians say that they are terrified of 20-year old Aussies working serving beer part-time in Whistler who are, in the words of the member, taking away Canadian jobs.

Second, the member opposite has said that the program takes away jobs from Canadians, but he has also suggested that all temporary foreign workers should have access to permanent residency. I really have a hard time grasping the illogic of this position, which is shared by the NDP. If temporary foreign workers are displacing Canadians temporarily from jobs, why then do the Liberals and NDP want to displace them permanently from the same jobs by granting all of those temporary foreign workers permanent residency?

There is a further incoherence in the Liberal position vis-à-vis immigration. I want to remind the House that under this government's immigration reforms, such as the creation of the Canadian experience class and the massive expansion of the provincial nominee programs, we have seen the number of so-called temporary foreign workers, foreign nationals who work to transition

to permanent residency more than triple, going from about 13,000 a year to about 40,000 a year.

However, there is a limit to the number of immigrants we can admit. That is expressed in our annual immigration levels plan and currently that operates at about 260,000 permanent residents a year, which is a very large number. It represents 0.8% of our population. It is tied with New Zealand for the highest per capita level of immigration in the developed world, and in absolute terms, it is the highest level in our history. It is also at the outer limits of what Canadians believe is acceptable. Roughly 80% of Canadians say that they think immigration levels are high enough or too high. That is not because Canadians are nativist, but because they have a sense of the practical limits of our ability to integrate people.

Yet the member opposite said that we should grant permanent residency to all of the temporary foreign workers. He said that we should also increase family reunification, which is already at a record high level. He said that we should also increase the number of refugees admitted to Canada. I also infer from his desire to speed up even more the federal skilled worker program, a higher level of admissions there.

It is one thing for the opposition parties to say whatever they like without accountability, but he has an obligation to tell us what the implications of that are for immigration levels. Also, for example, the opposition seems to like the seasonal agriculture program. That program operates very well in part because the people who come here for seasonal work know they have an obligation to go home. They make good money here, they go home and return typically year after year.

If we adopt the member's position and start granting all of those people permanent residency, guess what? They will not come to work on the farms. Instead they will migrate to cities because they will not take that kind of work. Therefore, we would end up creating a revolving door. By the way, the challenge there is that one of the reasons Canada is considered as having something as a model of immigration policy in the world is because at least a significant portion of immigrants, about 20% of the primary economic immigrants selected, are selected based on their human capital, their official language proficiency, their level of education, professional experience, et cetera.

I submit that we do not want to replicate the sad experience of western European countries whose immigration policies were based almost exclusively on permanent admission of people with very limited levels of social mobility, lower levels of education, lower levels of official language proficiency and lower levels of social ability. Already 80% of our immigrants are not screened for human capital, including the large number of resettled refugees, spouses, family members and so forth. Therefore, all the underdogs already have a large access to our immigration system, but we need to preserve it. The data tells us that immigrants who succeed most and who end up contributing most to the Canadian economy are unsurprisingly those with higher levels of human capital. I would in all honesty suggest that the member and his party be cautious about this. We do not want to undermine those aspects of our immigration program which are actually producing the greatest economic results.

Business of Supply

•(1230)

Finally, I accept the motion largely in a spirit of comedy. I think most of it we support, but we disagree with point (a) because we think we need to move from study to action now and not wait several months to do so.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in terms of no Canadian losing their job because of this issue, I would suggest the minister speak to Sandy Nelson and Shauna Jennison-Yung of Weyburn, Saskatchewan and ask them for their point of view.

More generally, the minister talks a good line about tightening up the rules, but he was a cheerleader for many years in loosening all the rules. For example, allowing companies to advertise on government online sites, because nobody reads those and so it is like not advertising; for certain sectors, the LMO would take five days instead of five months; or going to Ireland to drum up youth to come to get jobs in Canada when our unemployment rate was 15%.

How can Canadians possibly believe the minister when he claims that he is all for protecting Canadian jobs when for years and years he has been a cheerleader by loosening rules, drumming up foreign workers to come here and doing the precisely the opposite?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the member alludes to my trip to Ireland. I admit, as minister of immigration, I proudly travelled all around the world, to over two dozen countries, to promote Canada as a destination for immigration. I spent over 20 days, for example, in South Asian countries doing just that.

For example, the member talks about Ireland. We opened up a new permanent residency program for skilled tradespeople because the Liberal point system in 1972 basically shut the door on blue-collar workers. We reopened the door, which is called the skilled trades stream, a year ago. Many Irish are applying for that, which is great, as are people from around the world as well.

The provincial nominee program is a permanent residency program. The premier of Saskatchewan took a delegation of employers to Ireland and Britain to meet folks who could come through the provincial nominee program. I did the same thing all around the world.

Yes, we want to attract the best and brightest through our immigration programs. I always thought the Liberal Party was pro-immigration, and I am sure those members would join us in encouraging bright people from countries all around the world to consider Canada one of the best places in the world in which to live, work, and raise their family.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as early as April 2013, we wrote to the minister asking for an independent audit as a result of what we saw happening with HD Mining in B.C., the temporary foreign workers used to outsource jobs at RBC, and wages being stolen from foreign workers. Now we have revelations that people living in Canada are either being fired or not being hired.

In 2007, the minister for HRSDC was bragging about opening up the floodgates. Would the minister admit that was a mistake and will he agree to an independent review so that Canadians can once again have confidence in a fixed program?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, again, I believe that calls for an independent review place process over substance.

I think there actually is a point of consensus here in that there is a need for a program like this that, on a limited basis, which facilitates the admission of foreign nationals to promote global labour mobility from which Canada benefits and to fill real, acute skill shortages for jobs that Canadians are not applying for. I think we agree on those basic objectives.

We also agree that there are problems in this program. There are serious problems, but we also agree that we should not exaggerate those. The number of cases of abuse, while they are serious and have clearly driven us to a vigorous response, should not be exaggerated because the number of cases of abuse that I am aware of probably constitute less than 1% of all cases.

I think we need to address those problems and any aspects of the program that are leading to a distortion of the labour market quickly. When I say “quickly”, I mean within a matter of weeks. However, if we delay this thing with some kind of a study, I doubt we will be able to make substantive policy changes until next year, and that is too late.

Let us fix the program now. That is what we are committed to doing. If members opposite have specific ideas on that, I am all ears.

•(1235)

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister for his work on this file and his dedication to improving it where necessary.

However, it is important that the misinformation about this program is corrected. I am hoping the minister will speak to the sanctions that could be levelled against employers who abuse the program, specifically if they hire in favour of temporary foreign workers rather than employing available Canadians. That is one part of the question.

The second part is with regard to those who abuse temporary foreign workers. Another part I think is important for the minister to clarify is the numbers that are allocated toward the provincial nominee program that allow for a permanent stream of those temporary foreign workers where employers can demonstrate they are necessary to continue to build our economy, who have demonstrated they have integrated within our communities. There has been an enlargement of that number. I wonder if the minister could speak to that.

Business of Supply

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right. This government has overseen about an eight-fold expansion in the number of permanent residents admitted through the provincial nominee program, most of whom are arriving in Canada initially on work permits through the temporary foreign worker program. That has, by the way, led to a much better geographic distribution of immigrants, a tripling of immigration in the prairies, in many rural communities where there are skills gaps. It has also permitted a certain number of low-skilled temporary foreign workers to transition to permanent residency. Specifically, we have gone from about 8,000 to about 40,000 permanent residents through those PN programs.

On the member's first question, in the package of reforms announced a year ago, it included a statutory power that was adopted by Parliament in the Budget Implementation Act that became effective in December to allow for the blacklisting of non-compliant employers. They cannot apply for labour market opinions in the future.

Second, we now have before Parliament in this year's BIA a proposal to create and impose administrative and monetary penalties for employers who abuse the program.

Third, I have essentially created a new policy direction, where we will refer any cases of apparent fraud in LMO applications to the Canada Border Services Agency for criminal investigation, because IRPA, the immigration act, allows for criminal sanctions of up to five years in prison and \$100,000 in fines for misrepresentation, fraud.

I met last week with the president of the Canada Border Services Agency. We have already referred several such cases to his agency. We look forward to vigorous enforcement of the criminal sanctions in IRPA for misrepresentation in LMO applications.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister had mentioned several times through his speech the importance of the principle of reciprocity.

One of the stated goals of the international experience Canada program is that it:

...strives to achieve a neutral effect on the Canadian labour market by maintaining a careful balance between the number of opportunities for Canadians to work abroad and the number of opportunities for non-Canadians to work in Canada.

We know that in 2012 there were 58,000 temporary youth working here in Canada, while there were 18,000 Canadians working abroad under this program. The difference is 40,000. A net loss of opportunities for young Canadians of 40,000.

How does that address the minister's commitment to reciprocity and fairness?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I already addressed that in my speech, where I said there is reciprocity in the quotas but there is not in the flows. That is primarily because Canada has a stronger economy than these other countries. Perhaps that is something we need to look at. I know the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is doing just that.

However, let us be careful here. First of all, a lot of these young people who get those work permits do not actually end up using them in Canada. They come and travel for a while. Maybe they take a bit of casual work, like the young person I met last July in Calgary

from the Czech Republic. For two months, he was mowing lawns in Calgary. By the way, the landscapers say there is a huge labour shortage.

For all the problems in this program, let us not exaggerate this element that I think is relatively benign. The member is right that we have to make sure there is a better balance in the flows between Canada and our friendly partner countries.

• (1240)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

I am pleased to speak to this opposition day motion. I will read part of it so we are clear what we are talking about. It states:

That the House recognize that the current Temporary Foreign Worker Program is broken, and call on the government to implement measures to significantly reduce the intake of Temporary Foreign Workers over time and return the program back to its original purpose...

There are five measures outlined in our opposition day motion. One is that there be a full review of the program by the Auditor General. The other extremely important area that I want to mention is a tightening of the labour market opinion approval process to ensure that only businesses with legitimate needs are able to access the program.

I have listed two of the important points, but there are five in the motion and all should be endorsed by the government side.

I would like to point out that I listened closely to the minister's remarks and I do appreciate the fact that the minister himself entered the debate. That is something we do not see enough of for many of the debates in this place. On the first point in our motion, a full review of the program by the Auditor General, the minister seemed to be quite reluctant to support that part of the motion by saying that we do not need study, that we really need action. The government can take action. It can take action immediately in a number of areas. It can follow through on the five points in the motion while the study of the Auditor General is taking place.

The review by the Auditor General should not be used, in my opinion, as an excuse not to support the motion because, as we all know, the Auditor General does very good investigations and thorough reports and possibly some other measures might come out of that kind of review. Therefore, I would encourage the minister to drop his opposition to that particular clause and go ahead with the measures. The Auditor General doing a review does not prevent the government from taking action now.

Business of Supply

There are a couple of key points I want to make with respect to the government's handling of the temporary foreign worker program. The Conservatives have completely mismanaged the program, basically allowing it to be used to replace, not complement, Canadian workers. We now admit to our country almost as many temporary workers as permanent residents, drastically shifting Canada's immigration system away from its long-standing tradition of welcoming new citizens from around the world.

The Conservatives are fabricating outrage about problems with the temporary foreign worker program. I found the minister's remarks interesting, especially during the question and answer period. Some of his statements previously were ones of outrage, and today he is encouraging balance, which we have long called for.

The fact of the matter is, the number of temporary foreign workers has increased 140% between 2005 and 2012, from 141,000 to 338,000. Our concern is, as the leader said when he spoke earlier this morning, used incorrectly, as a result of the Conservative government changes to the program, it really has the effect of, in some sectors, driving down wages and leaving some Canadians without jobs. That is what the leader said this morning and I think he is absolutely right in that assessment.

I certainly recognize that the temporary foreign worker program is important, but it has to be in balance.

●(1245)

It can be an extremely important element in terms of our economy and, if handled correctly, can enhance economic growth and create jobs through the total supply chain. This is especially important in the agriculture sector. I know that from time to time in this House, there is a response from the government side when an MP has gone across and asked for the minister to look into granting a temporary foreign worker. In some cases, it is necessary, and the agricultural sector is one of those areas. It is extremely important, and I want to give some examples.

This spring I have worked with the department to try to assist the tourism industry in granting a temporary worker, three of them in fact. It was for a tour company in Prince Edward Island that specializes in tours to Green Gables, and I would encourage members to come down and visit our tourism industry and do that tour as well. However, there is one thing about the Japanese; they are really impressed with the story of Anne by Lucy Maude Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*. They idolize that story. Because 2014 is the celebration of 150 years in P.E.I., there are lots of tours coming from Japan. The fact of the matter is that, because Lucy Maude Montgomery's story of *Anne of Green Gables* is taught in Japanese institutions, the Japanese often know more about the story than we do. The tourists speak Japanese, and we do not have a lot of Japanese-speaking tour guides in Prince Edward Island, although we have some. This company needed temporary foreign workers, and the process was slow. They needed them by May 1 and finally we got it done on April 29 and the tour guides are there.

What those three workers who came in really do is enhance our economic opportunity, because the buses are moving, the restaurants are open, the travel agents are creating economy, and the island's tourism industry thrives a little better as a result. In that instance, it

was necessary to be able to bring in those temporary foreign workers.

There are lots of examples in the agriculture industry in Ontario. For whatever reason, Canadians are not as willing to work in some of the horticulture labour-intensive industries. They do work throughout that agriculture industry, whether in the management side or in the processing and grading side, but there are cases in Ontario where foreign workers do come in April and work in the greenhouses. Then they switch to transplanting some of those horticultural crops. Then they may go to harvesting in the early stages, and they may go from farm to farm, and they have been doing this for 20 years. It works well when handled with balance. Those workers really enhance our fruit and vegetable industry within the province of Ontario. They add to the economy by ensuring that there is a farm sector and a processing sector operating effectively; that we are exporting some of those products; and that we are putting that food on store shelves for consumers in this country. They are important in that regard.

For my last point, I would come back again to the fact that action can occur. The Auditor General can do his review, and action can occur while that review is taking place. I would encourage the government to support this motion, and show where this place can come together to do the right thing.

●(1250)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member said, there is a need for foreign workers to help us out from time to time in particular regions and industries in Canada.

There is a lot of politics and rancour around this issue, but I am glad to hear there is some emerging consensus on the major objectives, and we agree with that. I agree with most of the motion. It is just that I think we should move from study to action.

The member alluded to the seasonal agriculture worker program. We all pretty much understand that without that program thousands of Canadian farms would shut down, frankly, because those are jobs that Canadians do not seem willing to do these days in large numbers.

The member's colleague from Markham—Unionville is calling for permanent residency for all temporary foreign workers. The experience has been that, if we give permanent residency to low-skilled workers like that, they very typically will not continue working on farms. Right? They will go into the cities and so on.

I am just wondering, honestly, how the member deals with that paradox. How do we give permanent residency to seasonal agriculture workers? How do we keep them down on the farm, so to speak?

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Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the minister has his wires crossed with respect to what the member for Markham—Unionville really said. The member did not say that temporary foreign workers should have permanent residence in this country. What he was talking about is the reality of the world. Some temporary foreign workers eventually do apply for permanent residence in the country, and that is their right, in most cases, and on this the minister and I would agree, I am sure.

I gave the example of the Ontario horticultural industry earlier. Foreign workers come in when the greenhouses are operating and leave when the final harvest is over in the fall. Those folks come here, do good work, enhance our economic growth, and leverage other jobs for Canadians in other sectors of that supply chain, if I can call it that. They come in March and probably go back to their home country in November. They leave some of their wages here in Canada, but they enhance their own economy and their own families' health at home.

I have one last point to make. The minister said we do not need a study but, rather, we need action. I emphasized before and I will emphasize again that both can happen at the same time. The Auditor General could do a good review, to enhance the program even better in the future, but action can be taken now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Prince Edward Island for his speech.

This morning, the Liberals did an about-face, unfortunately. As we all know, I seconded the motion by my colleague from Newton—North Delta to amend the Liberal motion to reflect last week's debate. At the time, the Liberals voted to impose a moratorium on the low-skilled category. That is what is causing the biggest problem with the temporary foreign worker program.

I would like my colleague to explain to me why he supported the motion last week and is now saying the exact opposite.

•(1255)

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, no, we are not saying the opposite. What we are doing is in the typical Liberal way. We believe in taking a broader approach that would have a positive result in many more areas. To just go with a moratorium in one sector could cause unforeseen consequences. Our motion would basically provide the action and the review. It would enhance the program. At the end of the day, it should enhance the Canadian economy and ensure there are more jobs and more spinoffs for Canadians who so rightly need those jobs.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, way more years ago than I care to think about, when I first came here, I had the privilege of travelling with the then minister of immigration, Elinor Caplan, to the Netherlands. We were on a trip to see how other systems worked, and when we stopped in the Netherlands, we were somewhat surprised to learn that it actually had no immigration system. In its history, it was a producer of immigrants. Its experience was entirely with emigration and those who went to the Netherlands entered as temporary foreign workers.

It had no concept that these people would actually want to move there and become citizens of the Netherlands.

The emphasis was on temporary foreign workers. Sometimes “temporary” meant several generations in the same country, “foreign” definitely meant foreign, that these folks would live in their own little enclave, and “workers” were the workers in job areas that no person from the Netherlands really wanted. It was an exposure, which I did not appreciate at the time, to how a temporary foreign worker program can actually run amok.

Here we are, 15 years later, and we are in a situation where we have a program that has kind of run out of control. I take it from the minister's remarks that about 80% of the Liberal motion is acceptable to him because it is a recognition that there are anomalies and difficulties in the system for which the program was not intended.

Liberals' understanding of how a temporary foreign worker program should work is that “temporary” should be temporary and “foreign” may well be foreign, but we ultimately want people to come to this country so that “temporary” becomes permanent, “foreign” becomes domestic, and “worker” becomes career. That is a good element of this potential program.

Every nation in the world needs a temporary foreign worker program. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about that. There are work shortages in specific areas and we need a well-designed program. We do not need a program that has these kinds of difficulties.

I wind forward 14 or 15 years, and I was in my office at this time last year when a woman came in to visit me. Members may or may not know, but Scarborough is home to a lot of back-office functions for financial services. Many financial institutions that members would recognize are located in Scarborough and have a number of back-office functions, which are good jobs. This woman was describing her situation to me. Her situation was that her particular financial institution had brought in a number of temporary foreign workers to work with her and her colleagues, and her job was to train these temporary foreign workers so that, after a period of time, they would return to their own home, in this particular case India. Then, at that point, she and her colleagues would turn out the lights and transfer all of those jobs to where the temporary foreign workers were. After hearing that, one would ask why we would design a program along those lines. It was not as if this was an isolated incident.

I will read from a news article:

Another source, who claims to have worked at TD for more than 15 years, wrote in to say the company recently announced the employee's position redundant. In order to receive a severance package, the employee claims he or she had to spend four months training the people the company hired to fill the so-called redundant position. “This has been happening for months at TD,” the email read, adding the company is in a trial phase for such shifts.

Business of Supply

•(1300)

This issue blew up at this time last year. Several CEOs of large financial institutions had to go on television to say that it was true and that they were trying to find jobs for the Canadians who were “redundant”. Indeed, some of them did get placed. Under media and possibly even government pressure, they found they had jobs in that institution. However, had there not been that light exposing this temporary foreign worker program, I do not think anything would have happened.

How does it make any sense for a Canadian government program to bring in temporary foreign workers in order that Canadians will no longer have jobs, leaving taxpayers to pay the employment insurance? That does not seem to be a sensible program. If this motion does nothing more than stimulate the government to review that particular anomaly, I think it will be worthwhile.

One issue that keeps coming up is the difficulty with the data, particularly the LMOs and these various acronyms that indicate what the labour market need is in the area. Statistics Canada is in real difficulty these days, which is entirely due to the decisions made in 2010-2011 to degrade its own data. Media reports a while back said that the minister was relying on Kijiji; now he says that he is no longer relying on Kijiji, but we do not know quite what he is relying on. Possibly he has gone from a Kijiji board to a Ouija board, but we are not entirely sure about that.

The problem is that the data quoted by both the government and the opposition are somewhat flawed. What we can say is that the temporary foreign worker program has gone from about 120,000 up to 220,000. At any given time there are about 338,000 temporary foreign workers in this country.

If we look at the data, we start to ask some serious questions. The minister's predecessor was warned about this situation. This is not some issue that has just dropped out of the sky. I will quote:

Evidence suggests that, in some instances, employers are hiring temporary foreign workers in the same occupation and location as Canadians who are collecting EI regular benefits.

How does that possibly make any sense?

It goes on to say, “In January 2012, Albertan employers received positive confirmation”—i.e., they received permission to hire—“1,261 TFW positions for food counter attendants”.

Meanwhile, nearly 350 people made claims for EI in exactly the same category that very year.

It continues:

Furthermore, over 2,200 general farm workers submitted claims for EI in the same month, while employers received approval to hire over 1,500 foreign nationals for the same occupation.

This kind of stuff stops making sense. I do not think any right-thinking Canadian can say why we are using taxpayers' money to have a program to make sure that Canadians cease to have jobs and we in turn pay for it out of our own EI.

I was encouraged by the openness of the minister to many of the proposals in the opposition day motion. I think he is 80% there and I think he could get to 100% by the end of the day if he invited the Auditor General to conduct a review.

I join with my colleague from Malpeque, who said we can walk and chew gum at the same time: we can ask the Auditor General to conduct an audit while we address the problems the minister agrees are in the program in the first place.

•(1305)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Scarborough—Guildwood for what I think were broadly constructive comments on the debate.

Let me just correct two things that his Liberal colleagues have been saying in the debate.

First, they claim that we have lowered the advertising requirements for employers to obtain positive labour market opinions. I have confirmed with my officials that there is no corporate memory in my ministry of that having happened. In fact, we have recently increased the requirements for the duration of advertising. This is a period during which employers have to advertise for Canadians at the prevailing regional wage rate for the job before they can apply for an LMO.

Second, Liberal members have suggested that we have extended the work permits to four years. This is a misapprehension. In fact, we put in place a new limit stipulating that a temporary foreign worker can only renew his or her work permit to a maximum of four years and then has to leave Canada for four years. That is actually a restrictive measure that we brought into effect, and it has upset a lot of employers, to be honest.

I think we all agree that we have inadequate labour market information. That is an issue we need to get to, but I want to say one thing about the notion that the Auditor General or somebody can solve this and have a perfect insight into this program, and it is this: sitting here in Ottawa reading data tables does not tell us what the real, lived reality is on the ground in certain regions with full employment, where employers are metaphorically pulling their hair out over these issues of not having enough local labour.

Would the member agree with me that we need to get a bit more of a tactile, local, on-the-ground, real-world view of what is happening in our labour market, and not just a kind of Ottawa-knows-best centralized view of the complexity of our country's labour market?

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, let me go through the questions or issues that the hon. member raised in order.

On the time duration of the LMOs, my colleague from Markham says that the actual timeframe for advertising has shrunk. The media say the same.

Business of Supply

As to the four years, I have not heard any Liberal member say that. Possibly the hon. member has been here when I have not been, but I do not think I have heard anyone say it.

As to the quality of the data, I actually agree with him. The quality of the data is limited, both at the macro level and in the on-the-ground, lived experience, because for whatever reason and with the greatest respect to the minister, that is a management issue. That is in the management of the program. When we run a program up from 120,000 to 220,000, we have to ramp up both our data and our on-the-ground management or we will get these anomalies. I do not get how 350 people are on EI while there are 1,200 people getting temporary foreign worker permits. It does not make sense.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since this morning, we have been talking about the temporary foreign worker program, a very important issue for Canadians and especially for temporary foreign workers.

When the Liberals were in power, they had begun to lose control by opening the program to jobs for which Canadians could be quickly trained. Today, things have spun completely out of control under the Conservative watch.

My Liberal colleague said that this was how the Liberals operated, yet people, even former Liberal Party supporters, tell me that they realized that the Liberals talk left and act right.

Why does my colleague think the Liberals have changed their minds today? They had supported our motion on this very important issue. Today, they are rejecting the motion moved by my colleague. The NDP is here to condemn and act immediately.

Why are we going on and on about this and waiting to see what will happen later?

• (1310)

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I actually agree with my colleague that NDP members do denounce. They are very good at denouncing. They denounce morning, noon, and night, but that is not the point. This is a program that has merit. This is a program that fills needs, but it is a program that is running amok, and there is a serious mismanagement problem here. That means that Liberals can chew gum and walk at the same time.

If the member reads the motion, she will see that we are not advocating that we throw the program out. However, we are advocating that in certain sectoral areas the program needs a serious hard-nosed review, and because the government may or may not be as enthusiastic about a hard-nosed review as an auditor general, we are suggesting that the AG do the hard-nosed review and then advise the government of the findings.

Meanwhile, we are encouraged to hear that the minister, who was at 80% at the beginning of my speech, is up to 90% of the way there to accepting the motion.

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased join this debate on an important issue.

I am joining it at a point when the inconsistency for which the Liberal Party has been renowned is on spectacular display, not just on the question of temporary foreign workers but with regard to immigration policy.

We have just heard the member for Scarborough—Guildwood say that this is a program that has merit. A couple of hours ago his leader said that at best it was a limited Band-Aid solution and at worst it was a program that was driving down wages, putting Canadians out of work, and something that was extremely undesirable for the Canadian economy and for Canadian immigration policy.

Which is it? Even after having put forward an opposition day motion, the Liberal Party cannot make up its mind whether it wants a temporary foreign worker program or not and whether it has merit or is a Band-Aid solution that is driving down wages. This again reminds us that the Liberal Party gave us an immigration program that was rampant with abuse. It gave us a temporary foreign worker program that was only that, where there was almost no pathway to permanent residence and where people were expected to be here, be quiet for a short period of time and then go home.

We are in a very different world today. We, in this party and in this government, are delighted to have the opportunity to highlight our reforms, to highlight the improvements we have made to the immigration system generally and to highlight the reforms my colleague, the Minister of Employment and Social Development, has made to the temporary foreign worker program as recently as the beginning of this year and more recent with this moratorium, which shuts down a stream of temporary foreign workers coming into our country and began with the Liberal Party.

If there is abuse in this stream, I would love to hear all the opposition members who have spoken and who have asked question to at least take responsibility for the fact that this stream, which led to the moratorium in recent weeks, a painful decision, because it is always painful to see abuse being committed, was created by a Liberal government, not subject to oversight from the very beginning because of its predilection for avoiding these forms of accountability.

Even on the fundamentals of today's motion that concern my portfolio, we are not sure where the Liberal government stands. The plan that the member for Papineau mentioned has five points. One of them is to increase pathways for immigration for temporary foreign workers to Canada. That is exactly what our government has been doing for eight years.

The motion does not even mention immigration. The motion talks about tightening up the temporary foreign worker program, turning back the clock to an era when we did not let accurate labour market signals, as the Minister of Employment and Social Development was just saying they should do, determine how we built up and formed our labour market, first and foremost, on the basis of Canadian workers, second, on the basis of immigrants and only as a last resort on the basis of temporary foreign workers.

The motion does not even talk about permanent resident as a status to which temporary foreign workers could graduate if they met the criteria. It is not in the motion.

Business of Supply

We do not know whether to believe the Liberal leader, who may have made a desperate attempt to change the motion or change the emphasis of the motion. We have not heard an amendment from the Liberals that would bring the word “immigration” into the motion. Do we believe the member for Markham—Unionville, who has been spectacularly inconsistent in discussing the temporary foreign worker program?

We do not know where the Liberals want to go. That is not unusual. It has been their *modus operandi* for decades. Let us just remind ourselves of some of these stations along the way.

● (1315)

The member for Papineau mentioned that his father had brought in the temporary foreign worker program in the early 1970s. That was at a time when there really was not a pathway for these workers to become immigrants. There was not a program dedicated to making temporary workers and temporary residents permanent. That dead-end pathway was extended to low-skilled workers by the Chrétien government in 2002.

I can speak from personal experience, having worked in our embassy in Moscow in the mid-1990s and the early part of this century, that there was a particularly shocking sub-stream of the temporary foreign worker program that came across my desk because, in the minds of those of us in the embassy in Moscow, it was often linked to organized crime. That was the exotic dancer stream of temporary foreign workers brought in by a Liberal government, scaled up to include hundreds of people who not only populated certain establishments, which the members across the way are smiling about because they take this lightly—

Hon. John McKay: How did you do the approvals?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Did you flag that back then?

Hon. Chris Alexander: I absolutely flagged that as an issue within the embassy and recommended that it be stopped henceforth. It would have been stopped had the public servants of that time had their way. However, they were told by the political level that this was absolutely a legitimate form of employment that was required for political purposes, presumably by members of the Liberal Party at that time in the greater Toronto area and elsewhere who benefited from the support of certain establishments where those poor women went. We all know that stream was linked to criminality and human smuggling. We are all proud on this side of the House, and I hope at least all women in this place are proud, of the fact that it has been ended, and ended as long as we are in office, for good.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Who ended it?

Hon. Chris Alexander: It was ended by this government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: It was not.

Hon. Chris Alexander: It was absolutely ended by this government, finally.

● (1320)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the minister that his comments should be directed to the Chair and there should not be an exchange going on between the opposition parties and the minister while he is speaking.

The hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to remind the members of the opposition that we listened respectfully to their speeches and that they would do well, on a serious subject, not to interrupt ours.

There has been inconsistency from the Liberal Party. There have been low standards and, most important, there were no pathways. There were precious few and, in many cases, zero pathways for temporary foreign workers to become immigrants to our country.

Our government is proud to have taken action to change that. We have scaled up the provincial nominee program, mostly thanks to my colleague, now the Minister of Employment and Social Development, from a program that brought a paltry 5,000 or 6,000 people to our country 10 years ago to one that is on track to bringing 47,000 people to our country as permanent residents this year. Most of those people are already here. Most of those people are the temporary foreign workers that serve us in high demand occupations in western Canada. Some of them have served in the seasonal agricultural worker program, very successfully, in southern Ontario and other parts of the country. They serve us in trades where we cannot, honestly, in good faith, find Canadians. No employer can find enough Canadians to do the job, so we bring these people to Canada temporarily at first, then give them the opportunity to become Canadian permanent residents and Canadian citizens. That is an opportunity afforded to temporary foreign workers by our government. That is in addition to the dignity of temporary foreign workers and indeed to the motivation of temporary foreign workers by our government.

This is not the end of the story. The Canadian experience class, a new stream of immigration, is bringing 15,000 permanent residents this year. It is targeting both students who have work experience and temporary foreign workers. It is a creation of our Conservative government in 2008, when my colleague, the Minister of Employment and Social Development, was in this portfolio. It started small. We wanted to ensure that it worked, but it has grown faster and further than any new program in recent history. It essentially brings us to a point where our economic immigration has two sources. One of them is through the new and improved federal skilled worker program with higher language requirements and higher skills requirements. Because of the attractiveness of Canada in this day and age, we can afford to be selective about who comes here as immigrants. We are getting an unprecedented quality of economic immigrants to the country, thank goodness, and thanks to years of effort on this side of the House. We have added to that the federal skilled trades program and the start-up visa, all targeting the best and brightest from beyond our shores.

Business of Supply

However, the other source, almost equal in size and volume to the programs that target skilled workers, tradespeople and skilled citizens of other countries to come from beyond Canada's borders, targets those who are already here, the highly skilled people here as temporary workers in a wide variety of capacities across the country. Some of them are here on LMOs, others without, having just finished their studies, proven themselves as able to adapt to the Canadian job market by having studied here and having received a diploma or degree here. That is a pathway. That is a vast stream of immigration to our country that simply did not exist under the previous Liberal government.

We are proud of that innovation. We are proud that we are able to promote temporary foreign workers, when they want it and when they meet the criteria, to permanent residents and to citizenship in a growing number of cases. We have seen the results that this gives in terms of not only the satisfaction of those new Canadians, but also in terms of the satisfaction of employers and labour market demand that would otherwise go unfulfilled in the country.

• (1325)

We are all aware that, starting in 2006, there was abuse in the system. There was abuse in the asylum system, the immigration system, the citizenship program, and yes, in the temporary foreign worker program, that needed to be addressed. We have striven, at every stage, to balance our strong immigration programs—20,000 people per year, on average, higher than under the previous Liberal government—with integrity measures that have sought to close the door to those who would take our generosity for granted, abuse the welcome mat Canadians put out, cut the queue, misrepresent the facts, or engage in other forms of fraud.

We have made huge progress on this. The compliance measures introduced by my colleague, the Minister of Employment and Social Development, came into effect at the beginning of this year: the blacklist, administrative and financial penalties, and the possibility of criminal investigation for those who abuse the temporary foreign worker program. Those measures are unprecedented, and we are prepared to use them.

We have taken similar steps in the live-in caregiver program to give these potentially vulnerable but very hard-working temporary foreign workers, who in the vast majority of cases go on to become permanent residents and citizens, the ability to phone hotlines if they are in trouble and to have more of their expenses defrayed by their employers so that they make a proper living.

Of course, the current moratorium in response to demonstrated cases of abuse in the low-skilled end of the food industry we felt was absolutely necessary. It will help us frame a temporary foreign worker program for the future that serves Canada's interests and the integrity of the Canadian labour market. It is a last resort. It is to be used only after we have exhausted our domestic possibilities, after we have exhausted the talent of our young people, who are increasingly getting the skills and work experience they need to handle the jobs of today in a changing labour market, and after we have exhausted the potential of the immigration system.

Express entry, our new approach to delivering economic immigration, which will come on stream on January 1, 2015, is going to result in a six-month processing time for all of our

economic immigration programs. We have never had that, not under a Liberal or a Conservative government. It is going to be a very attractive new initiative in immigration that will help make it a good habit for provinces, territories, and employers themselves to have recourse to the permanent immigration system instead of the temporary foreign worker program, in a large number of cases.

Let me be clear about what has really been happening. Our temporary foreign worker program is long standing. We have had temporary foreign workers in this country at every stage of our development. Most of them have ultimately stayed as immigrants, whether they were first building railways, were in the construction industry in our cities, or were in the natural resource sector.

Let us be clear about what has happened since the 1990s around the world. There has been an explosion of this particular stream of economically driven migration around the world, and the larger number of temporary foreign workers we have in Canada is by no means out of step. In many ways, because of our immigration system, it is less, proportionally, than what other countries have. The difference is that we know how many temporary foreign workers there are in Canada, whereas many of our European, North American, and Asian partners cannot even report how many temporary foreign workers they have and what the impact of those workers is on their labour markets. We at least have data, and we are using it.

A lot of this analysis is done by the OECD, and I recommend to all members the comparisons between an increasingly well-managed Canadian system and systems in other parts of the world, in other advanced economies, which, in many cases, are out of control.

What lies behind the increase in Canada's temporary foreign worker population, in spite of our efforts to increase integrity and in spite of our efforts to tighten, scrutinize, and penalize those who would abuse the system? Why is it still growing?

Well, we should not go too far down the road in this debate without talking about the performance of the Canadian economy.

• (1330)

There are simply no other G7 economies or even OECD economies that have the sectoral and regional labour needs of northern British Columbia, most of Alberta, southeastern Saskatchewan, the manufacturing towns and cities of Winnipeg, or the mining towns and manufacturing towns in southern and northern Ontario and northern Quebec, where there is growth but not enough people.

We see this in the shipbuilding program in eastern Canada. We see it in Newfoundland and Labrador, where the mining industry is forging ahead and the offshore industry is strong. Newfoundland and Labrador had not really talked about immigration for decades, and maybe even a century or more, and it is now at the front of the queue asking Canadians to move there. It is also asking immigrants with the right skills to come. When those two sources fail, and only when they fail, foreign temporary workers fill the gap. Our economic performance has driven these numbers upward.

Business of Supply

The International Experience Canada program was, again, created by a Liberal government. It was expanded dramatically by a Liberal government. There was more balance between Canadians leaving and foreign students coming here under Liberal governments. What is the difference between today and that time? Canada's economic performance was not so dramatically better than that of our IEC partners. That is why fewer Canadians choose to go to some of these European jurisdictions today. There are no jobs there. We hope that in two or three years, as we continue these excellent initiatives aimed at building long-term bridges and long-term economic relationships around the world, there will be jobs, and Canadians will go. We are obliging our partners to promote the jobs that are there to Canadians.

In the meantime, we will be proud of our superior economic performance. We will be proud of the integrity measures we have taken and that my colleague, in particular, has taken in recent days to ensure that our temporary foreign worker program works as planned, as a last resort in support of a skilled labour market in Canada and in support of economic immigration that is increasingly on target to meet the needs of the Canadian economy.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister made a lot of allegations, saying that it was his government that brought in the idea of temporary foreign workers becoming permanent residents and citizens.

I want to remind the minister that former minister of immigration Joe Volpe, in 2005, created a new class of immigrants. It was called the in-Canada class of immigrants. This process allowed Canadian-experienced workers, such as temporary foreign workers, and Canadian-educated international students who came to Canada for an education, to apply for landed immigrant status from within Canada. In the past, they had to leave Canada to apply. Mr. Volpe put \$700 million over five years toward that end, because he felt that these were experienced people with Canadian experience and language, and if they wished to, they would be able to fast-forward that. The objective was to have a more responsive and proactive immigration system for skilled workers.

I wonder if the minister could tell me why he did not know that, when he is the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It would obviously be part of the information in his department.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, there is not enough time to go into everything we know about the Liberal record on immigration. If the member would care to have another debate about the Liberal legacy on immigration, we would be happy to have it.

Joe Volpe did not implement a five-year plan with x million dollars, because he was not the minister for very long. Canadians saw quickly enough what gross abuses a late-term government with a Liberal label was capable of, and that government was turned out of office, with a positive impact on our immigration system.

Let us be clear. The numbers are here. In 2005, the last full year of a Liberal government, we had 13,800 immigrants with some background of having worked in Canada or having been temporary foreign workers here. In 2012, that number rose to 38,000. That is almost four times the Liberal number. I guarantee that when we have the 2013-14 statistics, the number will be dramatically higher again.

● (1335)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, whether we are looking at the outsourcing of jobs at HD Mining in B.C. or RBC, which was the only one identified, but I am sure other organizations are doing the same, it is very clear now that wages are being stolen from workers. We have seen all over the media revelation after revelation that employers are firing or not hiring Canadian workers and people living in Canada.

Would the minister agree that to restore Canadian confidence in the temporary foreign worker program, it is time for an independent review while the government carries on with the tinkering fixes it is doing?

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I will agree that this moratorium was absolutely necessary to make sure that the integrity of the temporary foreign worker program is respected with regard to those going into the food industry.

I will also agree that the reforms the minister and this government have undertaken are wide-ranging and are having a positive impact on integrity and compliance. It is absolutely unacceptable for employers to let Canadians go, when they are available and have the skills and qualifications necessary, to turn to temporary foreign workers as a first choice. That is an abuse. Our government has been clear. When we have found those abuses, we have taken action.

What is not clear is where the Liberal Party is going on this issue. The member for Markham—Unionville outlined his plan, then halfway through his press conference called for some cooks to be admitted to a restaurant in his riding. For the Liberals, it is fine to have rules, but when they know someone who is a supporter, and they want to help out, the rules do not need to be followed. That is their record.

On the NDP, we have also heard of some in B.C. calling for a complete moratorium, a complete end, and others in B.C. calling for a broadening of the temporary foreign worker program to allow all temporary foreign workers to become immigrants. We do not know from either of the opposition parties which way they want to go. We will go in the direction of Canada's economic interests and the integrity of our immigration programs.

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been in the House listening to speeches and some of the questions coming from the Liberal Party. Time after time, I hear the Liberals talk about their progressive immigration policies. As a Conservative and a woman, I cannot believe that they would consider bringing in 600 strippers as temporary foreign workers very progressive.

Business of Supply

However, I have a question for the minister. Part of what was brought forward by the Liberals is to have another review and report done by the Auditor General. In fact, that has already been done. In 2009, the Auditor General reviewed the program, and Employment and Social Development Canada and Citizenship and Immigration actually agreed with many of the recommendations, and virtually all have been done. Those that were completed, and the ongoing changes to this program, the opposition parties have continued to vote against.

I would like to ask the minister if now is the time for another study or if now is the time for the opposition parties to get on board and begin supporting some of the measures to actually improve this program.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, obviously it is long past time for studies. We have systems in both the Department of Employment and Social Development and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration that are continuously reviewing the data. The data in Canada for temporary foreign workers, even when the programs are implemented in partnership with the provinces and territories, is high-fidelity, high-quality data.

When we see abuses taking place and trends that are not justified by economic circumstances, we take action. That is why as the member well knows, we have expanded access to Canada, the pathway for temporary foreign workers to become permanent residents, fourfold since the ill-fated last Liberal minister, Joe Volpe, made a late, desperate attempt to try to do something about this in 2005. It was far too late, after so many abuses had multiplied and gotten out of control, to do anything that would have redressed the situation.

It has taken us eight years to get there, but we are proud to have 40,000-plus temporary foreign workers becoming permanent residents of Canada every year. That is very close to four times what happened in the last year of the Liberal government, when the temporary foreign worker program was already huge and growing quickly but when the door was still shut to immigration to Canada for people who really deserved it.

• (1340)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the minister on the brilliance of his speech on a subject matter that is not in front of the House and his talent for setting up straw men, particularly Liberal straw men, and vigorously knocking them over.

However, the opposition day motion is on the subject of the problems with the temporary foreign worker program. Which part of the motion does the member not agree with: the disclosure of labour market opinion, the tightening of labour market opinion, the implementation of stronger rules, or the Auditor General part?

It appears that his colleague, the Minister of Employment, thinks this is mostly a good motion. He is a little bent out of shape about the Auditor General. Any minister does not want the Auditor General poking around in his department. What part of the motion does the hon. member not accept?

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I do agree with my colleague, the Minister of Employment and Social Development, that most of the motion goes in the same direction we have been

travelling as a government with a view to ensuring compliance, with a view to ensuring accountability, with a view to ensuring that Canadians get first crack at jobs. However, we will not direct the Auditor General with regard to the work that he or his office does. Liberals might do that, but we actually take the independence of officers of Parliament seriously on this side of the House, and we will continue to do so.

For my part, my main concern about the motion is that it does not address the issue we have been trying to address for a year, which continues to be central to our strategy for immigration, of creating pathways for temporary foreign workers to become permanent residents of this country, when they meet the criteria and when they are needed in Canada.

The leader of the Liberal Party seemed to want that. Then sometimes he seems to want a lot of things. The motion that is before us—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not really sure of where one could actually start to try to deal with the spin that is coming from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I am astounded by how he is trying to mislead Canadians not only inside the chamber but outside the chamber. Maybe if we try to stick to a few facts it might assist, but I would really encourage the minister to put on his reality hat and try to get a better understanding of actually what has been taking place.

The motion before us today is of critical importance for all Canadians, because it does deal with the economy and how important the economy is for each and every one of us from coast to coast to coast. The unfortunate reality is that the government just does not get it, or it chooses not to get it.

The issue before us today with the temporary foreign worker program is entirely of the government's making, 100%. It created the problem. This was not something that was created years and years ago under a Liberal administration. This is something that was 100% created by the current Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the former minister. Those are the two individuals who created the problem we have today.

The first thing they need to do is go to the Prime Minister's Office and maybe apologize for the mess they have made of this program, as opposed to trying to pass the buck to the former Liberal administration. There were no problems with the temporary foreign worker program before the Conservatives took office. The program was in fact effective. This is a program that served Canadians exceptionally well for many years until the current government took office. That is when we started to see the real abuse. That is when we started to see the displacement of thousands of Canadians who could be working today but are not working today because of mismanagement and incompetence that comes from the minister today and yesterday's minister with regard to immigration. That is the reality.

Yes, the truth does hurt and I am passionate about the issue because at the end of the day, you are hurting the middle class by the government's inaction on this issue.

Business of Supply

• (1345)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member knows to address his comments to the Chair, not to the other side of the chamber.

I would also direct the other side of the chamber to lower the tone. It is way too loud in here, coming from both sides of the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I see the former minister of immigration is hurting. The reality is that sometimes it does hurt. The reality is that the current government has to take responsibility for its actions. That is why we are suggesting, first and foremost, to ensure that this program continues into the future, we need to get the Auditor General of Canada involved in the program in terms of looking into it and coming up with the recommendations that are critically important to preserve the integrity of the program.

We must remember that this is a program that started during the 1970s with Pierre Elliott Trudeau. He is the individual who created the program. It is interesting to hear the comments from the government side in regard to immigration, that it was just a skilled program and had no pathways to immigration. That is not true. There were complementary immigration programs like the live-in caregiver program, which had a direct link for every live-in caregiver to ultimately be able to land and become a permanent resident. The difference is that the Liberal Party recognizes the valuable contributions that immigrants make to our country, today and in the past. It is important to us that, as much as possible, we have pathways that lead toward immigration for a worker possibly landing here in Canada.

That is one of the reasons why the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration was taking credit and glowing about how wonderful the provincial nominee program is and how the current government has been expanding the numbers. Let me remind the minister that it was Jean Chrétien who created the provincial nominee program in the late 1990s, and it continued to evolve to today, where it is one of the most successful immigration programs we have. As a direct result of that program, members will find, if they take a look at the province of Manitoba, that the need for temporary workers is actually significantly stagnant compared to other regions of the country for one reason. It is because, through the provincial nominee program, they have been able to address the labour needs and at the same time allow people to have a pathway to immigration. The statistics will show that.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Government in Manitoba?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Do not go there.

Mr. Speaker, the numbers will clearly demonstrate that we have had huge increases in temporary foreign workers. We are talking about 140,000 or 150,000 at the time when they took office. Then last year, when I was critic on immigration, it was 338,000. That is a significant increase. We know the government has dropped the ball on that particular file, and this resolution goes a long way in saying to the government that it needs to recognize that action is necessary today.

It is interesting that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration says that there is conflict within the Liberal Party. He says that some people want to see temporary workers immigrate and some want to

close it down. He tries to portray that there are inconsistencies within the Liberal Party. In reality, there are no inconsistencies whatsoever within the Liberal Party. We have said that at the end of the day, once all things are said and done, we believe in a temporary foreign worker program. If it is managed properly, it will have a complementary effect on the Canadian economy and society as a whole. If the government had been doing what it was supposed to be doing, there would not be a need for this particular resolution.

Let me give a specific example. The former minister of immigration—I think it was on CTV or inside the House—and the current minister to a certain degree, when he tries to emulate the former minister, said that there are members of the opposition who requested foreign workers, and they ask how hypocritical those opposition members can be, when after all, opposition members are saying to limit the numbers and then a member is requesting a foreign worker in his own riding.

• (1350)

I must confess, I am one of those individuals. I did write one letter. A company from China is establishing a business in Winnipeg. There is substantial machinery, multi-million dollars' worth, coming to Winnipeg. The owner approached me to say that they would like to have the people who disassembled the machinery in China come to Canada to reassemble it, and to assist in training Canadians for those jobs.

Whether it is that particular example, or the agricultural industry here in Canada, which is so very dependent on the program, that is what the program was designed for. Members of Parliament are doing their job if they are approaching the government to try to assist companies in getting those temporary worker permits where there is economic benefit for Canadians.

What would the alternative be? If the government were doing its job, maybe there would not be as much of a need for members of Parliament to do so. That is not what is happening.

The government has been closing its eyes and has allowed the temporary foreign worker program to expand at a rapid rate. The result of that expansion has had a significant impact on the economy here in Canada when it comes to those individuals who are unemployed and want to find work.

The leader of the Liberal Party cited specific examples where the numbers of work permits have gone up in a riding, as has the level of unemployment. This is something that frustrates a lot of people when they are watching the 10 o'clock news, or whenever they see it. The government is taking action that ultimately hurts the economy. People, their siblings or children, who are trying to find employment, are finding that the government, through its policies, is actually undermining their ability to obtain employment.

There is a valid argument to be made that the government is using the program to suppress wages. There is a very strong argument for that.

Members should ask what the motion is hoping to accomplish. It is a very reasonable motion. I do not understand why the government would oppose the motion. We are talking about an immediate and full review of the program by the Auditor General. The government seems to have the most resistance to that particular clause.

Statements by Members

Let us go to the rest of the clauses:

(b) the disclosure of Labour Market Opinion applications and approvals for Temporary Foreign Workers; (c) a tightening of the Labour Market Opinion approval process to ensure that only businesses with legitimate needs are able to access the program; and (d) the implementation of stronger rules requiring that employers applying to the program demonstrate unequivocally that they exhausted all avenues to fill job vacancies with Canadian workers, particularly young Canadians.

From his seat, I hear the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration saying “done that, done that”. Why does the government not agree that this is a worthy motion that the members could actually vote in favour of?

•(1355)

I have heard the government, even before the current minister was Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, pretend how mad it can get. We have had other complaints with respect to the temporary foreign worker program. The former minister would huff and puff and say, “We’re going to take tough action on this; it’s not acceptable to see this abuse; we’re going to ensure that Canadians are in fact being given the first opportunity”, to no avail. A few months go by, the issue comes up again and the Conservatives once again pretend how outraged and surprised they are by the program.

This is not the first time the Liberal Party has raised this issue inside the House of Commons. We have raised this issue on several occasions. I can say that the Conservatives have been consistent by doing nothing in terms of resolving the issue.

Having said that, for the first time they are being a little more sensitive and have taken some action. To a certain degree, I will applaud some of the actions they have taken. However, they are missing one of the most important aspects. If they believe in the program as the Liberals do, and believe that if the program is managed properly it has so much to contribute to our economy and our society, then they will recognize that it is important that the Auditor General of Canada needs to get involved in the program.

They say that the Auditor General has the power. The Prime Minister also has the power to release the opinion from his office that there is nothing wrong and he does not have any objection with the Auditor General getting engaged and encourage it. That is what we are arguing for. It would be wonderful to see unanimous support that the Auditor General of Canada be asked to investigate the program. If they believe that there is merit in the program, instead of doing a little here and a little there and try to give the impression that they are doing a whole lot, why do they not allow the independent office of Canada’s Auditor General to get engaged on the issue so at the end of the day we would have a healthier program, which will ensure that our economy and our society will prosper that much more under a healthy temporary foreign worker program? That is what the Liberal Party of Canada wants.

•(1400)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It is now time for statements by members. The hon. member for Winnipeg North will have about four minutes to complete his speech after the resumption of the debate.

Statements by members. The hon. member for Brant.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

BEST BUDDIES

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is exciting to see organizations in Brantford seeking out new, innovative strategies to support persons with disabilities and promote their social and economic inclusion. One of these strategies involves a unique collaboration between Assumption College and the Best Buddies program. Best Buddies creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, and leadership development. The program helps prepare persons with disabilities to secure rewarding jobs, live on their own, become inspirational leaders, and make lifelong friendships.

Thanks to local teachers like Lisa MacDonald, the program continues to grow in Brantford to pair up high school students with their school-age peers who have intellectual disabilities.

At the recent Hooping It Up event, enthusiastic faces packed the gym at Assumption College for a fundraising basketball game to support the program. The incredible atmosphere and the enthusiasm of those supporting the program showcased that Best Buddies provides inspiration to many in my community.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, environmental issues surrounding the Alberta oil sands are some of the most controversial pollution problems in Canada. First nations in the region are concerned about health issues, environmental degradation, and the impacts on wildlife and plants. Nationally and internationally, these pollution concerns have had a negative impact on Canada’s reputation.

Recently I had the opportunity to visit Fort McMurray’s Wood Buffalo Environmental Association, a multi-stakeholder air monitoring agency. It operates 15 state-of-the-art monitoring stations that provide data to make informed decisions on environmental protection. It is vital to have the best possible data so that politicians of all stripes, federally and provincially, can take appropriate action to create an effective environmental management regime through regulatory measures.

Unfortunately, the failure of Conservative governments, federally and provincially, to create new environmental regulations to protect the people of northern Alberta is both foolish and short-sighted. In 2015, an NDP government will do much better.

*Statements by Members***FAMILY FIRST RADIOTHON**

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, the generous folks of Moose Jaw and area rallied together. I am proud to announce that they raised more than \$688,000 for the eighth annual 800 CHAB Family First Radiothon. The major donors included Golden West, via the Orange Benevolent Society and 800 CHAB Kids Fund, the Mosaic Company, the Fox family, and the Moose Jaw Union Hospital Auxiliary.

All funds raised will be used to purchase life-saving medical equipment for the future universal care unit at the Moose Jaw Regional Hospital.

Thanks to all organizers with a special mention to Ken Hawkes, the volunteer coordinator. Beyond the Radiothon, Ken has been an integral part of the volunteer community in Moose Jaw for decades. I am proud to be part of this community that recognizes the importance of giving back, and did just that.

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MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May is Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month.

Over 100,000 Canadians live with MS. Twice as many women as men contract the disease. The first signs of MS can show up between 20 and 30 years of age, but can be observed in small children, although difficult to diagnose. The cause of MS is unknown. Incidence is higher in northern countries, which gives rise to a new theory of vitamin D deficiencies. Persons with MS have a lower life expectancy by about five to ten years than the average Canadian.

Great strides have been made in MS research and treatment but more needs to be done, so it is imperative that we continue to fund research and clinical trials, and improve supports for patients and their caregivers.

Tomorrow the MS Society will be on the Hill with carnations, a symbol of hope for those with MS. Please wear one and donate generously to the cause.

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RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Friday through Saturday, more than 700 students, staff, and community members from Waterloo-Oxford, my alma mater, will join together from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.

I will be privileged to join them at their fifth biennial Relay for Life, raising awareness and much-needed funds to fight cancer. They take the opportunity to remember those who lost a battle to cancer, celebrate those who have won their battle, and support those whose fight is ongoing.

Through the four previous relays, W-O has raised more than \$360,000. Those numbers make this rural high school one of the top fundraisers across Canada. The last two relays each raised more than \$100,000 in a community of little more than 20,000 people. Imagine if a high school in Toronto was able to raise \$5 from each resident to fight cancer. There is no greater sense of co-operation than we find in our small communities.

I am proud of the students and teachers of Waterloo-Oxford for their efforts. I am grateful to the broader W-O community for supporting these efforts so generously. Cancer can be beaten. We just need a little more of that W-O spirit.

* * *

● (1405)

GLOBAL ACTION WEEK ON EDUCATION FOR ALL

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are horrified by the abduction of hundreds of girls in Nigeria, many of them while at school. Meanwhile, over 10 million Nigerian children, including 6 million girls, cannot attend school at all.

This week is Global Action Week on Education for All. On this occasion, I want to acknowledge the work of the Global Partnership for Education, which has helped get nearly 22 million more children in school. The stakes cannot be higher. If all children in low-income countries completed school with basic reading skills, over 170 million people could escape poverty. The GPE is asking donor partners to contribute \$3.5 billion between 2015 and 2018 to give a good education to 29 million children in 66 countries. I urge the government to at least double our current commitment to the GPE before its replenishment conference this June.

Education should be a right enjoyed by all children, regardless of geography. Let us work to make that happen.

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2014 ESSO CUP

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Weyburn Southern Range Gold Wings, who won the 2014 Esso Cup, Canada's national female AAA midget championship, on April 26, 2014, in Hamilton, Ontario. The Gold Wings defeated the Edmonton Thunder with a 2-1 victory in the gold medal game to become the national champions.

Statements by Members

The 2014 Esso Cup was presented in partnership with Hockey Canada, the Ontario Women's Hockey Association, Tourism Hamilton, and the Stoney Creek Girls Hockey Association. The win was a high honour for Weyburn and area, and indeed all of Saskatchewan, as well as for all players, coaches, parents, and all who participated.

My congratulations on an exceptionally well-played tournament and a most exciting national championship win. To all the players especially, we are all proud of them.

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KATYN MASSACRE

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for Poles around the world, April and May is a time of mourning for Polish victims of the Katyn massacre. As a result of Stalin's direct order, over 28,000 Polish prisoners of war lost their lives in a series of mass executions carried out by the Soviet secret police during the Second World War. The remains of over 20,000 victims were found in the Katyn forest, located in the eastern part of then-occupied Poland. The remains of another 8,000 victims were never found.

Victims and their families have received little justice, as the Katyn massacre is yet to be defined as a war crime. The Soviet, and now Russian, governments refused for many years to admit committing this crime and now refuse to release information about the missing victims.

I ask all members of Parliament to take a moment to remember all the victims and families of this terrible act of Soviet genocide.

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KOMAGATA MARU

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, May 23 will mark the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the *Komagata Maru* into Vancouver's Burrard Inlet. With 376 passengers on board, the *Komagata Maru* ended its long Pacific journey to Canada, only to be met with rejection.

Due to the discriminatory continuous journey regulation, passengers were prevented from disembarking while the ship remained in Burrard Inlet for two months. Passengers were denied basic necessities, such as food and water. The tragedy of the *Komagata Maru* marks a dark chapter in Canadian history, one that must be honoured by recognition of the failures of our past and inspire us to pursue a more equal Canada for future generations.

Along with my NDP colleagues, I will continue to pursue a formal official apology on the floor of the House of Commons for this tragedy. An apology is long overdue and a necessary part of the healing and reconciliation process.

* * *

● (1410)

WAR MEMORIALS

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to condemn the vandalism of our nation's war memorials and cenotaphs that commemorate the sacrifices of our veterans. The memories of our brave veterans should be remembered, honoured,

and cherished, not disgraced. That is why I am pleased that the member for Dufferin—Caledon introduced a piece of legislation that proposes harsher punishment for delinquents who vandalize war memorials and cenotaphs.

It is shameful the Senate Liberals are stalling this legislation. This demonstrates they do not value the importance of preserving the memories of our veterans.

I encourage the swift passage of this legislation to ensure these criminals are held accountable.

* * *

HUNGER AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is Hunger Awareness Week. Yesterday at 7:30 a.m., I started fasting in solidarity with dedicated food bank volunteers and staff from across this country and in support of Canadians for whom hunger is a sad daily reality.

There is no more precise measure that too little is being done to help Canadian families who have fallen on challenging economic times than the persistent demand for food bank services. Hunger is a significant problem from coast to coast to coast. Each month, close to 850,000 Canadians are assisted by food banks, and more than a third of those are children. In a country as wealthy as Canada, there is no excuse for letting our most vulnerable citizens go hungry. Hunger can be solved by addressing the root of the problem, which is poverty.

Today I am urging the Conservative government to acknowledge the urgency of the matter and commit to a national food strategy. One hungry Canadian is one too many.

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2014 CHAMPIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my caucus colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga, who last night was recognized by the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health as a champion of mental health for 2014. The alliance, known as CAMIMH, is a coalition of more than 20 national mental health organizations representing Canadians who have lived experience with mental illness and their care providers.

Champions are selected through a national nomination campaign that takes place every year and generates dozens of nominations. CAMIMH then narrows the list down to six champions, one of whom is our colleague, the MP for Kitchener—Conestoga. His work on suicide prevention and reducing the stigma associated with mental illness has been truly inspiring. I am very proud of him today as we celebrate Mental Health Week across Canada.

I ask all colleagues to join me in congratulating our colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga and all 2014 champions of mental health.

*Statements by Members***YOM HA'ATZMAUT**

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we commemorate the 66th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel, which comes one week after the commemoration of the Shoah, which I observed last week on the March of the Living in Budapest and at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp.

It is sometimes said that if there had not been a Holocaust, there would not have been a state of Israel, as if the establishment of a state can ever compensate for the murder of six million Jews, but the reality is the other way around. If there had been an Israel, there might well not have been a Holocaust or the horrors of Jewish and human history.

Israel, at its core, is the embodiment of Jewish survival and self-determination, the reconstitution of an ancient people in its ancestral and aboriginal homeland.

May I conclude with the age-old Hebrew prayer for peace:

[Member spoke in Hebrew as follows:]

Oseh Shalom Bimromov, Who Yaaseh Shalom Alenu V'al Kol Israel, V'imeru.

Amen.

[English]

May God, who establishes peace on high, grant peace for us all. Amen.

May the 66th anniversary usher in a real, just, and lasting peace for Israel and all peoples of the Middle East.

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REGINA BYPASS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, infrastructure, especially roads, is a pivotal part of any community.

Yesterday the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food announced our government's investment of \$200 million for the public-private partnership to support the construction of the Regina overpass. The bypass plan will feature new roads, service roads, and overpasses that will relieve pressure on Regina's overburdened rush-hour and trucking routes.

The use of a public-private partnership model means the Regina bypass is anticipated to take only three and a half years to construct. The use of this model will also improve cost-effectiveness, ensure timely completion, and provide budget certainty.

Our government is proud to support the Regina bypass, which will provide local residents with a safer, more efficient route around the city of Regina.

● (1415)

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the Prime Minister's lack of judgment as he undermines public appointments with pork barrel and patronage.

Step forward, Dr. Don Meredith, sitting in the Senate until he is 75, and nobody can fire him. He may be a loyal Conservative, but he is no doctor. He boasts academic credentials from a so-called university that is unaccredited, unregulated, and apparently unable to provide a real phone number. If one calls the unelected Dr. Don's number, well, we do not want to go there.

It would be funny if it were not such a sad commentary on Canadian political life under the Prime Minister. Canadians are tired of the way the Prime Minister has undermined public office. He surrounds himself with dodgy characters and fills patronage appointments while trashing public officials who stand in his way.

Canadians know they can trust a New Democratic government to clean up the mess left behind by Conservative and Liberal patronage appointments.

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YOM HA'ATZMAUT

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today Israel is celebrating *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, the 66th year of the state's independence.

The story of Israel is a great example to the world. It is a story of a people who have overcome great suffering, from the Spanish Inquisition in 1492 to the Khmelnytsky massacres of 1648-1650 to the countless number of pogroms, all culminating just 70 years ago in the Shoah, when six million Jewish men, women, and children, including my father's entire family, were brutally murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators.

Born out of the ashes of the ghettos and concentration camps, Israel serves as a beacon of hope, and our government stands with Israel.

Just this past January, our Prime Minister stood in the Israeli Knesset and said, "Our view that Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state is absolute and non-negotiable".

The current relationship between Canada and Israel is based on the shared values of democracy, freedom, human rights, and the rule of law.

To all celebrating this historic day, I wish a *Yom Ha'atzmaut Sameach*.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[Translation]***JUSTICE**

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Attorney General said in this House that the Prime Minister refused to take a call from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court because it was not necessary. However, on Friday, the Prime Minister said that that call was inappropriate.

Which is it?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, last week, it was suggested that I had not been made aware of a legal issue involving eligibility to the Supreme Court before the government made its appointment.

On the contrary, I was well aware of that and that is why I consulted legal and constitutional experts. We acted according to their advice.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the call was so inappropriate, then why did the Prime Minister not say anything about it at the time? In fact, why not say anything after the ruling on Justice Nadon's appointment? Why did he wait almost a year if the call was such a problem?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not the one who brought up this call. On the contrary, as I said, I was aware that a legal issue might come before the court. For that reason, I consulted independent counsel. As I just said, we acted according to their advice.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's personal attack against the chief justice is absolutely unprecedented in the history of Canada.

It forces us to ask why. Why go to all this trouble over an appointment that has already been rejected?

I would like to give the Prime Minister one more opportunity to categorically rule out reappointing Marc Nadon to the Supreme Court. Will the Prime Minister rule that out, once and for all?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have already been clear on that. We will act according to the letter and spirit of the Supreme Court decision.

Now, on the matter at hand, as I have said before, last week it was suggested that the government, before making its appointment, had not been aware of the eligibility question. On the contrary, I and the government were well aware of that. We felt that this question might come before the court, and for that reason we consulted with independent legal and constitutional experts and acted according to their advice.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, letter and spirit are already in the talking points we have heard in the past.

The question was whether he will rule out naming Marc Nadon, and he will not.

[Translation]

I will ask the question in French.

Will the Prime Minister tell us in no uncertain terms that he is ruling out ever reappointing Marc Nadon to the Supreme Court, regardless the circumstances?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have already answered that question. It is clear. The Supreme Court decision on Mr. Nadon is clear. As I said, unfortunately there are consequences to that decision.

They are now saying that Federal Court judges from Quebec are second class judges and are ineligible to sit on the Supreme Court like their counterparts from the other provinces do. This will make it hard to recruit Quebec judges to the Supreme Court and it will limit the national character of this important federal institution.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 11 former presidents of the Canadian Bar Association have just written an open letter in which they say that the Prime Minister's disrespect for the Supreme Court harms the very workings of our constitutional system of government. It is also unprecedented.

Will the Prime Minister apologize to the Chief Justice and to Canadians for this unprecedented and indeed inexplicable attack on one of our most respected democratic institutions, the Supreme Court of Canada?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I categorically reject the premise of that question.

The fact is this. In terms of the eligibility question, it was my understanding that this was a matter that could go before the court. In fact, the government later referred the matter to the court. For that reason, I chose not to have a discussion with the court on that question, but instead to discuss it with independent legal experts, and we acted on their advice.

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has again shown his contempt and even scorn for all the institutions that protect democracy and the rule of law in Canada.

I cannot believe that I must ask this question in this chamber, but here it is: will the Prime Minister of Canada withdraw his unfair personal accusations against the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is all wrong. It is out of respect for the independence of the courts that the prime minister does not discuss an issue if he believes that it may go before the courts in the future. For that reason, we consulted independent experts and we acted on their advice.

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout our history, Canada's immigration policy has brought people here on a path to citizenship, yet because of the government, we are now on track to bringing in more temporary foreign workers next year than immigrants.

Will the Prime Minister fix his mismanaged program and finally commit to significantly reducing the number of temporary foreign workers admitted into Canada?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is an enormous change for the Liberal Party, which has been urging us to bring in more temporary foreign workers and has been rejecting all of the government's proposals to limit the intake.

It is my strong view that it is always preferable that jobs be filled by Canadians. That is essential. If Canadians are available for work, then Canadians should get those jobs. On the other hand, if there are jobs that cannot be filled by Canadians, I believe strongly that we should try to bring people to Canada so they can become, in most cases, permanent residents. That is what the government seeks.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, given the Prime Minister's answer, I expect him to support the Liberal Party's opposition motion, which offers a reasonable plan to return the program to its original purpose, to treat newcomers as nation-builders not guest workers, to bring in real transparency and accountability, to tighten the labour market opinion process and to implement greater efforts to hire Canadians for job vacancies.

Will the Prime Minister therefore support these straightforward solutions to fix the mess of his own making?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is passing strange that the Liberal Party would ask us to support its own flip-flop on the temporary foreign worker program.

I notice the first line is to order the Auditor General to do something. Of course, we do not order the Auditor General to do things. The Auditor General has in the past audited the temporary foreign worker program. The government accepted all of those recommendations and has been acting on them.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General is sounding the alarm on serious mismanagement following the Conservatives elimination of the long form census. The Conservatives attack on the census, their attack on facts, has left Statistics Canada unable to publish accurate data on fully one-fourth of all geographic areas in Canada. That includes labour force data used in the temporary foreign worker program. Maybe that is why the minister has been getting his unemployment numbers from Kijiji.

After this latest debacle, will the Prime Minister finally mandate the Auditor General to investigate the temporary foreign worker program?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has been consistent and clear. There are no

Oral Questions

general labour shortages in Canada, but there are particular skills gaps in certain regions and industries.

As the Prime Minister said, we have sought to reform our immigration program, for example, to align the selection and intake of permanent residents with the jobs that are available. For example, our eightfold increase in the provincial nominee program has led to a tripling of immigration on the Canadian Prairies, in rural communities, where jobs were going unfilled.

We are making the immigration program and our employment programs work for Canada's economy.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we did not actually expect the minister to order an audit of himself. That is why the question was for the Prime Minister.

[Translation]

The Auditor General also found serious gaps in the Canada Revenue Agency's ability to go after tax evaders. Even worse, the Auditor General was unable to assess the inspectors' recommendations regarding tax evasion because the Prime Minister refused to provide him with the documents he requested.

Why is the Prime Minister holding back information about CRA recommendations on tax evasion? Who is he protecting?

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased the Auditor General confirmed that "...the Canada Revenue Agency's Aggressive Tax Planning program has tools to detect, correct, and deter non-compliance". The CRA has accepted and is already acting on all the audit recommendations to improve administrative aspects of the aggressive tax planning program, which will strengthen its capacity.

Our government is committed to ensuring the fairness and integrity of the tax system and that everyone pays the correct amount and their fair share. Since 2006, our government has introduced over 85 measures to improve the integrity.

*Oral Questions***NORTHERN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is another area of mismanagement, and that is the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency. It is just another example of the government's mismanagement. The Auditor General reported it failed to assess the project eligibility, failed to require reports from recipients, and even failed to measure its own performance, like the receipt for a \$31,000 truck, oops, missing. Yet is anyone held to account? No, not in the least.

Is the minister aware that CanNor is being used as a potential slush fund in northern Canada?

• (1430)

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 Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency accepts the Auditor General's recommendations. I have given the agency clear instructions to immediately improve its administrative procedures.

We will continue to make record investments in the north so that northerners can foster a strong economic northern economy to create jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity for the benefit of all northerners and Canada.

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CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, report after report continues to pile up, documenting how the Conservative approach to prisons is making them increasingly unsafe and ineffective at rehabilitation, yet another example of Conservative mismanagement. Half our prisons are at or over capacity and the Auditor General has found this will still be true when the Conservatives finish their current construction plan.

Ashley Smith died in custody because the correctional system was so overcrowded and mismanaged it could not help her. When will the minister come up with an effective plan to deal with the emerging crisis in our prisons?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is it not the apocalyptic projection of the NDP that has not materialized? That is what the Auditor General has said today and that is why we welcome the recommendation of the Office of the Auditor General.

[Translation]

The NDP members were sorely mistaken because their apocalyptic projections have not materialized. Our government has ensured that there are enough measures and cells to keep criminals behind bars.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the management of the prison population in our penitentiaries does not take into account the consequences of Conservative policies.

The Auditor General was quite blunt about it. The Conservatives have failed in long-term planning. Therein lies the problem with the lack of logic of the Conservatives who govern according to whatever makes the headlines. Prisons are overcrowded, which is dangerous for staff and counterproductive for reintegration.

Aside from accepting the recommendations, what is their plan to solve the problem?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's excellent report gives me an opportunity to thank correctional services for handing back \$1.5 billion to taxpayers, because the projected increases did not materialize. In addition, the closure of two prisons dating back to the time of Charles Dickens has made it possible to give back \$86 million to taxpayers.

Our policies are working, and our prisons are there to keep prisoners behind bars. We will continue to make our streets safer.

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CENSUS

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about how badly the Conservatives are failing when it comes to statistics. The Auditor General pointed out that the data on small communities is of poor quality. Labour market information is crucial, particularly for the small and medium-sized business in those small municipalities.

We know that the statistics the Conservatives are using, which were pulled from Kijiji, simply mean that more temporary foreign workers are being hired, paid low wages, and exploited by employers. When will the Conservatives correct the monumental mistake that led them to abolish the long form census?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we abolished was the criminal offence for people who do not want to fill out the long form census. We are still getting labour market information from Statistics Canada. The long form census had nothing to do with labour market data.

We know that there is no general labour shortage, but there are certain specific shortages in certain industries and sectors.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Employment is failing to clean up the mess the Conservatives have made of the temporary foreign worker program. Briefing notes prepared for the minister, uncovered by *The Huffington Post*, show the Conservatives were warned two years ago about employers hiring temporary foreign workers when Canadians were available. Only a Conservative minister could argue that waiting two years is immediate action to end these abuses.

Why is the minister refusing to call an independent review? Is he afraid of what it might find?

Oral Questions

• (1435)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP is as far behind the news as *The Huffington Post*. The briefing note that was sent to my predecessor she cited publicly multiple times to point out the paradox of employers saying that Canadians were not applying for jobs where there were a large number of people collecting employment insurance, which is one of the reasons we led reforms to the EI system. In some regions we see, inexplicably, people not applying for jobs, while they collect EI benefits. That makes no sense, which is why we are trying to better connect the unemployed with available jobs. It would be nice to have the NDP's support for that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are trying to explain away their mismanagement of the temporary foreign worker program by claiming that there is a labour shortage. That is false.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer and job market data, when Kijiji job offers are removed, tell a very different story. What is worse, according to the C.D. Howe Institute the program is creating unemployment in certain regions. When will this government open its books for the Auditor General?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the hundredth time, there is no general labour shortage in Canada, but there are particular skill gaps in certain industries and regions.

However, the NDP's position is completely incoherent. Last Friday, the NDP employment critic was in Vancouver at a press conference with his NDP counterpart in British Columbia to say that the moratorium on the food services sector had to be lifted. However, the federal NDP wants to extend this moratorium. That makes no sense.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the example of southern Ontario shows just how out of touch the Conservatives are with the reality of the labour market. Over the past 10 years, there has been a serious downturn in the labour market in Windsor, Hamilton and London because of the Liberals' and Conservatives' inability to revive the manufacturing sector. It would be disingenuous to claim that there is a labour shortage there.

Nevertheless, since 2003 the number of temporary foreign workers has doubled in this region. How can the minister deny that it is his program, together with employers' greed, that is responsible for this situation?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member should perhaps talk to some of her colleagues. In fact, an NDP MP for a community in southern Ontario with high unemployment asked me to facilitate the entry to Canada of a number of temporary foreign workers from China so that they could install machinery in an Ontario factory because it was necessary. A manufacturer often needs overseas workers to do things that are necessary for its operations.

[English]

JUSTICE

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a simple question: does the Minister of Justice believe that the Chief Justice should flag the issue of a Supreme Court candidate's eligibility when consulted? If yes, why malign the Chief Justice? If no, why consult the nation's highest jurist if the government did not value her counsel and advice?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would not be surprised at all if there were times on occasion when the member, as a former justice minister himself, did not agree with what a judgment might have been.

What our government did, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice, was to seek independent legal advice on an issue that actually lined up exactly with the position that we had taken and that we put forward. We then consulted with the Supreme Court and received its view.

That is what happened, and I am surprised the hon. member would not accept that fact.

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EMPLOYMENT

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the fact that the temporary foreign workers program costs Canadian jobs, the government has ignored not only Liberal warnings but also warnings from its own members.

On April 23, 2012, the current Minister of Labour wrote to share the concerns of a constituent that temporary foreign workers were "contributing to the unemployment of Canadian pilots" and are "driving down the salaries". Why did the government ignore this warning from its own Minister of Labour?

• (1440)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not ignore such warnings.

Let me commend members of the Conservative caucus. I received complaints from them about alleged abuses in that program, which allowed us then to launch investigations. With one exception, no members of the opposition have brought such specific abuses to my attention. I want to thank members of the Conservative caucus, including one just today who told me about a case of alleged abuse in his constituency.

We will not tolerate such abuse. If employers lie when applying for the use of this program, they could face criminal sanctions, including jail time.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, so he did ignore that warning from the Minister of Labour. Let us try another.

Oral Questions

In November 2009, the member for Wild Rose wrote to the minister, saying, “At a time when many people are having difficulties finding employment, I am sure you can appreciate why some pilots would be upset that their colleagues have been overlooked [for employment]”.

Why, once again, did the minister ignore this timely warning from one of his own members?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not, and we did not. We appreciate such input. That has helped to inform our tightening up of this program, which has resulted, for example, in the \$275 cost replacement fee for LMO applications on new questions, on longer advertising periods; in more media and the elimination of the accelerated process; in the new powers for on-site inspections; the new transition plans where employers must indicate how they will increase the percentage of Canadians in their workforce.

All of these measures were taken by this government and opposed in the last two budgets by the opposition, and all of them were informed by members of the Conservative government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, by opening the temporary foreign worker program to unskilled workers, the Conservatives are putting downward pressure on wages and creating unemployment for certain categories of workers. Take young workers, for example: they are losing job opportunities to foreign workers, who are paid less and are often exploited. The unemployment rate among young people under 25 is already twice as high as that for other workers; we do not need to make it any worse.

When will the minister finally launch an independent investigation into the temporary foreign worker program?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, if the Auditor General wants to do a second analysis of the program, obviously, we will support such a study, but a study was done in 2009. We accepted all the recommendations from it.

What needs to be done now is to fix the problems with the program and respond without delay. We need to act. We need to take action on these studies. That is what we are going to do shortly.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not just the low-skilled program that is a problem. The minister has yet to reply to my letter to him on the series of layoffs of Canadian ironworkers and their replacement by temporary foreign worker at the oil sands operations.

Concerns remain about a lack of government surveillance and enforcement of the program. Based on calls from other skilled workers, including pipefitters, boilermakers, and concrete workers, it is clear these are not just isolated cases of abuse. Will the minister finally deliver the requested independent audit of the program and step up his surveillance?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have stepped up surveillance.

In fact, last year we created a specific program integrity division at Service Canada, precisely to survey use of the program, including with new legislative powers, which came into effect last December. That permits on-site inspections of employers without notice, and indeed audits of a number of employers, who either we suspect of wrongdoing, or on a random basis are selected by Service Canada for audits by our highly trained public servants.

If we find non-compliance, the employers are added to the blacklist. If they have lied in the program, then it is referred for criminal investigation.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservative neglect of the manufacturing sector has hollowed out our communities, yet their Kijiji economics said that we had a labour shortage in southwest Ontario.

Windsor: unemployment rate, 14%, and yet the government declared a labour shortage. It brought in over 1,500 temporary foreign workers. London: unemployment rate, 8.6%, and 1,800 were let in.

Will the government now launch an independent review and finally put a stop to this bungling?

• (1445)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the thousandth time, there are not general labour shortages in Canada. However, even members of the NDP have acknowledged in this debate that there are sectoral shortages in particular regions and industries.

Just down the road from the member—and I am not going to name the member; I do not want to embarrass him—in a riding in southern Ontario with high unemployment, there is a member of her front bench who approached me to facilitate the entry of over ten Chinese temporary foreign workers. Why? To install equipment so that a factory could operate. That is very typical of the manufacturing stream in that program.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have here a list of 35 carpenters and labourers who were denied work at the Women's Hospital, in Winnipeg, simply because they were union members. Instead, all of those jobs went to temporary foreign workers from Russia, India, and Ireland.

The member for Saint Boniface knew about this case for 14 months and did nothing about it, as did two successive ministers of employment. I know Conservatives hate unions, but the last time I checked it is against the law to discriminate against somebody based on union membership.

I want to ask, how could the Minister of Canadian Heritage possibly stand by and do nothing about workers in her own backyard?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, in 45 minutes I will be speaking to my brothers and sisters in the Building Trades Unions about this government's trade training agenda.

We are working closely with them to ensure that Canadians have the skills to fill the jobs of the future.

If the NDP talks to the Building Trades Unions, they will learn that in fact they endorse limited use of the temporary foreign worker program to bring in skilled tradespeople where there are skills shortages. If they are good union dues-paying members, that makes me happy too.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on April 14, more than 200 young girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram, a terrorist group, who cowardly abducted these girls from a school in northern Nigeria.

Today we learned that eight more girls have been kidnapped. Latest reports have indicated that Boko Haram intends to sell these girls, which is simply despicable.

Our government supports Nigeria's fight against terrorism and its efforts to secure the well-being of these girls. Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs please update this House on this appalling situation?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think I speak for all members of the House who strongly stand up and condemn these actions by Boko Haram.

Quite simply, their actions are repugnant. Our hearts go out to these young girls and to their families. My colleague, the Minister of International Development, recently offered Canada's full assistance to Nigerian authorities as they work to secure the release of these young girls.

Boko Haram's actions are despicable, and they only serve to strengthen our collective desire to fight international terrorism.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the minister seems to think the Champlain Bridge is nothing more than a slogan, the Government of Quebec has studied how a toll will affect the future bridge.

The study concluded that it will create chaos, since there could be anywhere from 15% to 25% more traffic on the other south shore bridges and wait times could double.

Why does the minister insist on imposing a toll without conducting any studies or consultations with Quebec and the municipalities to develop an integrated transportation plan?

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, there would be chaos if the government did not take responsibility. We have taken responsibility.

We have taken responsibility, and we will build a new bridge over the St. Lawrence. While the member is trying to turn this issue into a political one, we are focused on the economy. We will build the new bridge over the St. Lawrence. The public-private partnership was announced on October 5, 2011. There will be public transit and yes, there will be a toll.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, approximately 25% of Quebec workers deal with traffic problems. This costs \$80 million a week in lost productivity, for a total of \$4.2 billion a year. The minister's solution is to clog the road system even more. Way to go.

When will the minister stop being so stubborn and start listening to the public and business people, and when will he work with Quebec City and Montreal to develop an integrated transportation plan for the greater Montreal area?

• (1450)

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, it would be very bad if there was no plan to build a new bridge. We will build a new bridge, which is what is most important here. We will do so with our partners. Yesterday I met with Quebec's new transportation minister. We are working together. We do not need any lectures. We will build the bridge and do it quickly.

* * *

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Infrastructure loves simple formulas, so he will appreciate this: no stable funding means no decent content for Radio-Canada.

Support for Radio-Canada comes from all walks of life: the public, artists, journalists, the CEO, who yesterday launched a conversation with Canadians, and even the former president of Québecor and Sun Media, none other than Pierre Karl Péladeau.

Is the Minister of Canadian Heritage the only one who does not see that there is a real problem? Since 2009, \$520 million has been cut from the public broadcasters.

Will the minister agree to testify at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage regarding the consequences of the cuts to Radio-Canada?

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as in the past, I am always prepared to serve the committee when I am called on to do so. However, when it comes to the recent decision, it was Radio-Canada's decision, not the government's. On behalf of taxpayers, we provide significant funding to Radio-Canada. It has enough money to fulfill its mandate under the Broadcasting Act. Again, this is a matter for CBC/Radio-Canada, not for the government.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we never thought we would see the day when Pierre Karl Péladeau would be defending our national public broadcaster.

Now that even the former head of the Sun news chain has come out in support of public broadcasting, will the Conservatives give up their war on culture?

Will the government agree to invest in CBC and Radio-Canada, so they can continue to tell the inspiring stories of our families, of our communities, and of our country?

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one more time, as I have said before, the decision that was made recently was made by CBC, not by the government.

The president of CBC has said very clearly that the cuts they are facing are as a result of declining viewership in key demographics, 25 to 54 years of age, declining ad revenues, and of course the loss of Hockey Night in Canada.

It is up to the CBC to provide programming that Canadians want to watch. We give significant funds to the CBC. In fact, we created the Canadian media fund on top of all of this, to assist the CBC, and the NDP voted against it.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Friday's day of honour should be a day to put a spotlight on our troops, present and fallen, who have served in Afghanistan.

They should not be an afterthought: families told to pay their own way, commanders not invited, Legions left out in the cold.

Now we have learned the last Canadian flag in Kabul will not be received in Ottawa by a Canadian Forces member, nor even the commander-in-chief, our Governor General. No. The Prime Minister is taking that honour for himself.

Will the government please put the spotlight back on our troops, where it belongs?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am really quite surprised at the hon. member. The Prime Minister announced this national day of honour to take place on May 9. Canadians from across this country have come together to make this a wonderful success, and so they should.

Yes, the last flag is coming back here, presented to the Chief of the Defence Staff, who will present it to the Prime Minister, and I am proud of that.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it takes a special kind of self-serving narcissism and arrogance in planning a day of honour for the brave men and women who served Canada in Afghanistan and then not inviting most of them, telling the families of fallen soldiers to pay their own way, and then choreographing the event into a photo-op. For who? The Prime Minister.

I have heard one veteran say, "He may have us on parade, but we're not happy."

Disrespect of this magnitude is simply wrong.

Again, will the Prime Minister put the spotlight back on the troops where it belongs?

● (1455)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this day is all about respect for our military and the men and women who gave their lives in support of the mission in Afghanistan.

The Prime Minister represents all Canadians, and he will accept that on behalf of Canada.

* * *

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives claim credit for the CRTC's wireless code of conduct as their policy, Canadians continue to be hit in the pocketbook waiting for action.

The NDP has been pushing for this code since the beginning, but now, as the code of conduct is being challenged by the big three in court, the current government has simply walked away from it.

The Conservatives keep spending millions in advertisement to tell Canadians how great their not-so-original idea is. Why are the Conservatives not putting their efforts into defending the code of conduct instead of boasting about it while it is being struck down?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, this government has done extraordinary work with respect to our telecom policy. In fact, competition has increased. At the same time, wireless rates have come down by 20% while employment in this sector has actually increased by some 25%. That is good news for all Canadians. It is something that has been a priority for us.

Putting more money back in the pockets of hard-working Canadians will remain a priority of this government, and we are proud of that.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives spent \$9 million on promoting a code that they are now refusing to defend.

The court ruling in favour of the big three telecommunications companies is a total failure for consumer protection. The government spent millions of dollars on ads to try to reassure consumers. Today, those same Conservatives will pay the price for this ruling.

Why is the government refusing to stand up for consumers in court against wireless service providers?

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, it is just the opposite.

This government, of course, has made it a policy to make sure that we do everything we can to actually bring down the cost of wireless to Canadian consumers. We have done that since we have been elected. Unfortunately, the opposition is constantly voting against those measures.

As I just said, it is our government's policies that have brought down the wireless rates for Canadian consumers, while at the same time employment in that sector has increased by 25%. That is good news.

We will continue to do that and we will continue to put the focus on putting more money back in the pockets of hard-working Canadians.

* * *

MULTICULTURALISM

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today on Parliament Hill we celebrate Vaisakhi, one of the most important observances in Sikhism. Vaisakhi marks the founding of the Khalsa in 1699 by Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the 10th Sikh guru.

As Canada is home to over half a million Sikhs, one of the largest Sikh population outside of India, would the Minister of State for Multiculturalism please inform this House as to how our government is honouring Vaisakhi?

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Multiculturalism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, May is Asian Heritage Month, and as part of this, today our Conservative government is celebrating Vaisakhi on the Hill.

For over 100 years, Sikh Canadians have contributed significantly to Canada in all areas of endeavour, whether it is business, as professionals, in the public service, or in our Canadian Armed Forces. Sikh Canadians have played a large part in building and strengthening our country's economy, heritage, and our rich diversity.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I extend my best wishes to everyone celebrating Vaisakhi.

Vaisakhi diyan lakh lakh Vadhaiyan.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage about the financial crunch that CBC/Radio-Canada is facing, she claimed that she had nothing to do with it: "CBC/Radio-Canada's cuts have nothing to do with government measures".

Could CBC/Radio-Canada really have undergone cuts of \$350 million since 2009, as budget allocations have dropped, the Canada media fund has been reduced and the local programming improvement fund has been eliminated, all without the knowledge of the minister?

● (1500)

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague clearly said, it was not the government's decision. CBC/Radio-Canada made the recent decisions itself.

Let us talk about the local programming improvement fund for a minute. Once again, it was CRTC that created and eliminated the fund. Once again, I suggest that my colleague check who is really responsible for those decisions before asking such questions in the House of Commons.

* * *

[English]

TRANSPORT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the new Windsor-Detroit border process is a perfect example of the Conservatives' mismanagement and incompetence. They signed a one-sided agreement with no commitment for the U.S. to ante up. On February 13, the member for Essex stated, "We're not building a U.S. inspection plaza", yet yesterday the Minister of Transport suggested the exact opposite.

Could the minister explain how her government failed to secure even a single nickel from the U.S. on a multibillion-dollar bilateral project?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the government has done is ensure that there is going to be growth in trade, there is going to be growth in jobs, and there is going to be growth in economic prosperity in the member's region. He should be grateful to the government for doing what we are doing in order to ensure that our trade continues to foster.

We have not only talked about, specifically, what we plan to do, we have committed to that in the budget this year. We will continue to move forward on this project and we will get it done.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like many Canadians, I have read with concern the World Health Organization's recent warning with respect to the devastating illness of polio. My constituents are concerned about this epidemic and would appreciate an update on Canada's action.

I have noted recently that Bill Gates offered that, "Canada has been a long-time leader in achieving a polio-free world and making sure children get the vaccines they need no matter where they live. The impact of its leadership is a powerful example...".

Could the parliamentary secretary please tell the House what the government is doing to help address the issue of polio?

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada remains concerned about the recent polio outbreaks and will continue to monitor the situation. However, we remain confident that they will be contained.

Points of Order

Vaccinations are a key element of Canada's leadership on maternal, newborn, and child health, and Canada, through the Prime Minister's Muskoka initiative, works to ensure every child is reached. Later this month, Canada will host a high-level summit on maternal, newborn, and child health, at which the Prime Minister will seek to accelerate efforts on critical health issues that affect mothers and children.

Working with our partners, Canada will lead the way to eradicate polio.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, a Boeing owned by Pratt & Whitney was forced to dump 20,000 litres of fuel over La Macaza region before making an emergency landing.

Obviously, I am happy that the plane was able to land without incident, and I understand that standard procedures were followed. However, the effects of this fuel drop are still unknown.

Can the Minister of Transport tell us if this has had an impact on the environment or on public health?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the topic of airline safety, I am glad the member brought up the fact that our Canadian pilots and airlines do follow all the rules that they are supposed to be following. They are there to protect the safety of the passengers, as well as the communities underneath them.

I will find out the information for the hon. member and I will refer back to him when I have that from my department.

* * *

PARKS CANADA

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, Cons. Ind.): Mr. Speaker, flood waters along the Trent-Severn Waterway are now receding, but not before many communities and residents along its banks were threatened or flooded. Many of my constituents have questions about how Parks Canada responded to the spring thaw and whether all necessary actions were undertaken.

Could the Minister of the Environment please indicate if she has discussed this matter with officials and if so, what has she been able to determine in this regard?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have gone above and beyond the call of duty to respond quickly to the flooding this year along the canals. Extra staff from Parks Canada assisted in dam operations, inspections, and communications with emergency services units, public, media, and elected officials.

Last year, an independent study was conducted on Parks Canada's management of the floodings. It stated, "The management staff at the Trent-Severn Waterway did an exemplary job".

● (1505)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable David Alward, Premier of New Brunswick.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

NATIONAL DAY OF HONOUR

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties, keeping in mind that this Friday, May 9, will be the National Day of Honour. To facilitate the attendance of members at events across the country and to facilitate the observations of that day here on Parliament Hill, the following motion, I believe, shall receive unanimous consent from the House.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, when the House adjourns on Thursday, May 8, 2014, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, May 12, 2014, provided that, for the purposes of Standing Order 28, it shall be deemed to have sat on Friday, May 9, 2014.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise at this time on a point of order to address and advance my rights at report stage under Bill C-23, the fair elections act.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall this is a narrative that has come up a few times in terms of the rights of members of Parliament in positions like mine, members of Parliament of a smaller party that does not yet have 12 members and has not yet become recognized in that sense, and the rights of independent members of Parliament. We know the principles here: that in theory all members of Parliament are equal and that we are here as members of Parliament, as many of your rulings have attested, Mr. Speaker, with the right and responsibility to turn our attention to every single piece of legislation that goes through this place and to have a meaningful opportunity to present amendments to improve legislation.

My intention with this point of order is not to draw it out. I will be as succinct as I possibly can be. I would like to review the factual situation in which I find myself and then distinguish for you the current situation from the normal situation within committees.

Points of Order

The situation in which I find myself is that owing to the rules of parliamentary procedure, members of Parliament in my position—either members of smaller parties or independents—on the face of it have a right to present substantive amendments at report stage because we are not allowed to be full members, or members at all, of parliamentary committees.

Mr. Speaker, since you will recall it, I will not drag out with precedents and reminders of citations the occasion on which the hon. government House leader attempted in November 2012 to suggest that persons such as me—and in fact he referred to the member of Parliament for Saanich—Gulf Islands as the impetus for his efforts—should not be allowed to present substantive amendments at report stage but should put forward a test amendment, and if that one failed, none of the rest of the amendments would be heard at all.

Mr. Speaker, you ruled in December 2012 that this would not be sufficient. You cited with approval the words of former Speaker John Fraser, who on October 10, 1989, said that “...we are a parliamentary democracy, not a so-called executive democracy, nor a so-called administrative democracy.”

You went on to say, Mr. Speaker, that since I did not have the right to present any amendments at committee, I must have the right to present them at report stage. Then your ruling went on to create something of a crack in the door that said that if a “satisfactory mechanism” can be found for a member in a position such as mine to have amendments considered at committee, then I would not have a double ability to come back at report stage.

Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives in the House used that crack in the door from your December 2012 ruling to great effect. They created identical motions that were presented by Conservative members of Parliament in every committee right after the Speech from the Throne in the fall of 2013, and I have been living under that new set of rules.

Since my point of order at the moment deals specifically with the House committee on procedure and House affairs, I can refer to its motion, although in point of fact all the motions passed by every committee were identical. This was a motion put forward and approved by the committee on October 29, 2013. I will not read all of it. I will just summarize it.

If I and other members in my position want to have amendments considered for legislation, we must present them to the committee 48 hours ahead of when the committee begins clause-by-clause study, and the committee process will deem that the motions were moved, because not being a member of the committee, I of course cannot move them. As well, I cannot debate them and I cannot participate fully before the committee during testimony of witnesses.

I do not believe that this process is satisfactory at all. Mr. Speaker, the intent of your decision in the fall of 2012 was clear: that the process should be satisfactory to both the committee and to members in my situation.

However, I have lived with this set of rules. I am doing my best to live with this set of rules. I have endeavoured to present amendments 48 hours ahead of clause by clause and to participate, even within the very tight strictures of the rules.

However, here is the key one. At paragraph (c):

(c) during the clause-by-clause consideration of a Bill, the Chair shall allow a Member who filed suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them.

● (1510)

Forgive me for taking a moment to say the following. The chair of the procedure and House affairs committee dealing with Bill C-23 did an exemplary job. He was fair to a fault and did an extraordinary job in terms of his personal efforts to maintain an amicable atmosphere among all parties in a very controversial and highly charged bill. I do not for one moment blame the chair for the fact that he was prevented from fulfilling a condition, a condition precedent to anything that then occurred with my involvement in committee.

I presented my amendments. They were deemed to be put forward, but I was denied in the case of the surviving 11 amendments, which were past the point of 5:00 p.m. last Thursday. There was no debate allowed on my amendments, and I was prevented from making any representation, brief or otherwise, on my amendments.

I want to go back for a moment to the normal situation. I think that many in this place, particularly some who want to deny me my rights at this point, will go back to the default position that a committee is the master of its own affairs. A committee made the decision; the committee decided it had to finish its work by five o'clock by debate so that by midnight all the clause by clause could be through. It really does not matter that democracy in this place is diminished by such a rule. The idea is that the committee made the rule and the Speaker cannot interfere.

This condition, this situation, is remarkably different. It is completely distinguished from and different from the ruling that, for instance, you gave in relation to the member for Kings—Hants, who complained of a similar process. Your ruling of November 29, 2012, deals with that particular set of parameters, a committee process in which the Speaker is not engaged. The Speaker, as I know is the usual wisdom, has no business interfering with the business of committee, because the committees are the masters of their own affairs—except in this instance.

It is only owing to your ruling that my rights at report stage can be infringed, my rights at report stage can be reduced, my rights at report stage can be essentially eliminated if a process, pursuant to your ruling, is found to be satisfactory. Only due to your ruling was this new process invented. The new process states unequivocally that the chair shall allow a member with diminished rights, no ability to participate fully, no ability to vote, no ability to even move my own amendments, no ability to ask the witnesses questions. It is a very circumscribed, limited, and I think in some ways fraudulent opportunity.

Points of Order

However, there is a minimum thing that this motion passed in every committee insists upon for every amendment that I have put forward for clause-by-clause consideration as a member of Parliament, with rights equal to everyone in this place. The same applies for the other independents, whether Edmonton—St. Albert, Peterborough, the members who represent the Bloc Québécois, other members within the Green Party, or the member for Ahuntsic: we have the right to work on every bill in this place, whether we are members of committee or not.

This new construct has been created. We have put ourselves within it. Many of us, not just myself, have worked very hard to present amendments during clause by clause, knowing that we will have at a minimum 60 seconds per amendment to describe our amendments and argue for them.

In this instance, I submit to you that the Conservative majority is hoist by its own petard. It cannot shut down debate at five o'clock on a Thursday and gavel through everything, thus precluding independents and smaller parties from presenting their amendments later at report stage. It can have one or the other; it cannot have both.

It forced us into this process of running from committee to committee for clause-by-clause study. At a minimum we must be allowed to present our amendments in the committee. If that right is removed unilaterally, then I submit to you that there is no question but that we revert to the general rules of parliamentary procedure, those found in O'Brien and Bosc, which are very clear that members of Parliament in my position and others in smaller parties and independents have a right to present substantive amendments at report stage. That is what I intend to do tomorrow.

I urge and I hope that you will rule that because the committee failed to live up to its own motion, it is no longer a situation of the committee making its own rules.

• (1515)

The committee has constructed this fake opportunity and herded members of Parliament from smaller parties and independents. We are exhorted—not just encouraged and invited, but in a sense coerced—into a process not of our choosing.

Mr. Speaker, since it was owing to your ruling that this fake process was invented, at a minimum they have to live up to it. If they fail to, then it reverts to our normal rule that we have the right to present amendments at report stage in clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-23.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I am rising to say that I personally support the intervention and that we could reserve the right to speak a little further to this tomorrow in greater detail. Allow me to simply say that I believe the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has a point. The motion of Tuesday, October 29, 2013, is very specific in its wording. It says:

During the clause-by-clause consideration of a Bill, the Chair shall allow a Member who filed suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them.

Now it may be the case that the committee was shut down from debate after 5:00 p.m. on Thursday. That affected all of us: the NDP and the Liberals in opposition and if there had been any, Conservative members who wanted to debate and move further

amendments. We simply were voting on amendments. That was already a problematic process, but in the specific situation of members who are not represented on the committee, what goes on at committee is intended to be a full substitute for their right to come to the House and present amendments.

As such, I think that clause has to be read in their favour, to mean that even after a cut-off such as occurred at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, they and they alone have the right to make brief representations for one-minute periods in order to make sure their amendments are at least considered to that extent. If that did not happen, I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that you should kindly give consideration to the request from the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands to be allowed to table those amendments that occurred after 5:00 p.m. for the reasons that she gave.

Given the kind of bargain, although bargain is the wrong word, after your ruling and then what happened at the various committees, I think the motions in each committee have to be read as much as possible in favour of the rights of the members whose rights are affected because they do not have regular membership on the committees. Reading clause (c) where it says “an opportunity to make brief representations” in favour of the members who otherwise will not be able to fully present amendments would be in order.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to the point of order that has been raised.

I want to go back to the very start where the hon. member misapprehends the basis that existed previously, and still continues to exist, for the making of amendments at report stage.

The right to make an amendment at report stage exists using the test of whether it possible to make that amendment at committee. It is only possible to propose such an amendment if it were not possible to do so at committee. That is the test. For independent members, because they were not members of the committee, that was what gave them the right to make any amendment whatsoever at report stage previously, and that was what led us into these voteathons. It was not because there was some rule somewhere that said independent members had rights over and above those of all other members of the House. That was never the case. It was because of the application of the test of whether the amendment could be made at committee.

After a series of rulings and voteathons, Mr. Speaker, you essentially provided to the House, through your rulings, a road map on which committees have since acted to empower independent members to propose such amendments at committee itself. Committees do not have to, but they have in many cases chosen to create that ability in independent members to allow them to make amendments at committee, and that is the situation in which we are commencing.

It should be understood that this is not some right that independent members have that was taken away through a fake process. That is rather insulting to the realities of what occurred here. What occurred here is the application of the rules of the House and the positive encouragement of the Speaker for how those rules could facilitate the full participation of members.

Points of Order

In terms of the particular context of the proceedings at procedure and House affairs committee on Bill C-23, the member is making a request for rights at that committee that no other member of the House has, no other member of the committee would have, no other member of a political party that does not sit on the committee would have. She is saying essentially that she should have a right over and above all of them.

Many members made amendments. They spoke to those amendments at committee, the committee dealt with them, and the clause-by-clause consideration, as I understood it, went on over days. Not at one time in the committee in order to meet its deadlines and manage the bill to achieve the deadlines it had set for itself, did it set up a process wherein the committee would then proceed finally to votes on any remaining not considered clauses at that 5 p.m. deadline.

Before that deadline, I understand the member spoke to dozens of amendments that she had proposed. She was not denied an opportunity to do that at committee. She was afforded an opportunity to speak to literally dozens of amendments she had proposed, so were other members. However, when the period of time ran out, it applied equally to all members, members of the government who were proposing amendments, members of the opposition who were proposing amendments, members of any other political party who were proposing amendments, and to herself. She was treated on an equal basis, the same basis, fairly, as every other member.

What you are being asked to do, Mr. Speaker, is not defend the rights of the minority, but rather impose extra rights over top of those enjoyed by all other members of this place in favour of just that member or of independent members of the House to give them magical powers that nobody else should have. That, of course, is not the intent. That is not the role of the Speaker. That is not the effect of these rules. I put it to you that this is not something that you should accept in this case.

There is not an argument for treating and giving special additional rights. The approach as it has evolved and the process in which it has evolved has shown great wisdom in an iterative process. Obviously, you did not accede in some of my requests previously as to how this matter should be dealt with, Mr. Speaker, and we accepted those rulings and took the good advice and came up with a process that achieved those balanced objectives.

Now we are hearing a request to upset that balance, to say that everyone else, members of the government, members of the official opposition, by virtue of being members of a party will have to adhere to these rules that are established at a committee and that she, as an independent, member should have additional rights to speak to debate over and above those that everyone else has. That is simply not the case.

• (1520)

The fact is that there are many members in the House who do not sit on the committee and do not get to speak at all. Therefore, she already sits in a privileged position compared with them and now she seeks an even more privileged position with regard to the proceedings of the committee over and above every other member of the House. I simply do not think that is appropriate.

The committee is master of its own process, and it did that. She acknowledged herself that the chair did so in a very fair and even-handed manner, and that is how it should be seen. It should be respected. That is why I submit, Mr. Speaker, that you should not accept the proposition that has been put forward in the point of order by the member.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a few moments to say that I support the views of the Green Party leader.

I understood your decision when you made it, Mr. Speaker. Things got bogged down at report stage because all members from unrecognized parties could present amendments, which could lead to us spending several evenings voting. To avoid that, we were given permission to present them in committee. If the committee eliminates them because it runs out of time, that contradicts your intention to foster democracy in the House.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that the best way to proceed, Mr. Speaker, would be for you to ask all political parties to think about this, to take their cue from provincial legislation, which allows for the full participation of independent members and unrecognized parties. For example, in Quebec's National Assembly, Option nationale, Mr. Aussant's party, had just one member, but he received a proportional research budget, just like all the other parties. The member also had permission to sit on the committee of his choice.

The same applied to Québec solidaire, which had only two members. They had a research budget and the right to sit on committees. I myself have been here for 30 years. I would have chosen a committee, and I think I should have had the same right to speak and the same rights as other members of the committee. I am not saying all committees, but in my chosen committee.

I think that independents and unrecognized parties should have that chance, should have the right to do it. We are seeing an ever-increasing number of political parties. In the years to come, there may be several political parties in the House. Someday, we will have to come to a consensus like that to ensure that this House remains the country's stronghold of democracy.

[*English*]

The Speaker: I see two more members rising to speak to the point. I want to tell the House that I seem to have a good grasp of the arguments on both sides. I will hear them, but I hope they have something further to add and not just merely repeat the points that have been made.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat sympathetic to what the Green Party leader has put in the form of a point of order today and the concerns she raises.

Business of Supply

Having said that, it is really important we recognize that the reason this is an issue today is because of time allocation and the restrictions that were placed on all the committee members. The government House leader seems to be of the opinion that it is okay for the Green Party because it applies to all the parties in committee. That does not make it right. For example, the Liberal Party, through its critic, introduced 56 amendments, of which only 34 were commented on before the time restrictions kicked in, meaning that a good number of the Liberal amendments were not addressed.

I am very sympathetic with the importance of being able to comment and ask questions on amendments. However, the government House leader in particular and the government as a whole need to recognize this. When time restrictions are placed on committees so there is a drop-dead time and when five o'clock comes around all questions are put, we do a disservice in the terms of the principle of democracy at the committee level by not allowing for debate and questions and answers. What the member from the Green Party is trying to achieve is something that can be applied to Liberal amendments, New Democratic amendments, and so forth. The government needs to rethink its position with regard to that time restriction.

We would like to reserve the right for follow-up on this very important issue.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. As my colleague and hon. member for Toronto—Danforth just said, we also want the opportunity to come back to these issues.

I would like to respond briefly to the comment made by the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons to the effect that the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands wanted to expand her rights beyond those of other members in the House.

Mr. Speaker, you are well aware that independent members do not have the right to be on committees, unless by unanimous consent. They are not given the opportunity to question witnesses, unless the committee allows them to do so. This is a category of presence and rights that is lesser than that of members from recognized parties.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Conservatives tried to make their sales pitch by saying that if they made amendments to bills, they would have an opportunity to make representations in support of those amendments. Once again, the government created the problem. A number of bills have been rejected by the Supreme Court. Moreover, you have questioned the procedure involved in some other bills. Therein lies the problem.

The government tried to make its sales pitch and put a process in place. However, the process is not being followed. This is an important issue that you have ruled on, Mr. Speaker. As others have mentioned, we might be coming back to these issues shortly.

[*English*]

The Speaker: I thank hon. members for their contributions. I would just remind those members who have reserved the right to come back to this point of order that the bill is now out of committee. Therefore, if they do wish to speak to it before the bill is called, they

would be wise to act as soon as possible. Of course, I will come back to the House at that time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North has four minutes remaining to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue of temporary foreign workers, as we have seen today and for a number of days, is very important. We have been trying to get the government to understand that we need to get the Auditor General of Canada engaged on the issue. We believe that at the end of the day, we will have an improved program. This program has done wonders for Canada's economy over the years, prior to the government's mismanagement of the file.

If I were to highlight some of the differences, the most significant one would probably be the sheer number. Prior to taking office, the government had an estimated 140,000 or 150,000 temporary foreign workers coming into Canada. Today there are well over 300,000. In fact, last year, when I was the critic for immigration, I reported that there were 338,000 temporary foreign workers. The problem we have today was created by the Conservative government. It created the crisis. As opposed to trying to pass on the blame to someone else, it should first and foremost take responsibility for its mistakes and then try to overcome those mistakes by putting in a process that would ultimately allow us to get the program back on the right track.

A good example of that today was when the leader of the Liberal Party posed a question, and the minister and the government responded with answers that did not make any sense. The government wants to continue to spin the propaganda wheel to try to give the impression that it has been very effective in managing this program. Nothing could be further from the truth. The reality is that the government has, in fact, mismanaged the program.

It was interesting that the former minister of immigration, in addressing the issue, made the statement that the government is forcing employers to advertise much longer, as if it is trying to get tougher on employers.

Back on December 8, 2006, the former minister responsible for human resources stated:

For occupations found on these lists, employers will not be required to undertake lengthy or comprehensive advertising efforts before being eligible to apply to hire a foreign worker. Employers will still be required to first advertise for Canadian workers to ensure that Canadians and permanent residents are given the opportunity to apply for available positions. However—

This is what is important.

—employers will only need to advertise on the Job Bank, Canada's national job website for at least seven days....

The point is that the government has made modifications to the program. The government has relaxed the rules, and that is the primary reason we find ourselves in the situation we are today. It is a crisis situation. It is the actions that have been taken by the current government that have led us to this particular point.

The Liberal Party's motion is to address the issues in a tangible fashion. We are requesting the support of the government in recognizing that the Auditor General of Canada has a role and should have a role in ensuring that we restore public confidence in the program. We in the Liberal Party have recognized the valuable potential of the program and would like to see it continue, but managed so that Canadians as a whole will benefit both from a societal and economic point of view.

• (1535)

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of questions for the hon. member across the way.

First, the finance critic for the Liberal Party said in 2012 that reducing access to temporary foreign workers could actually threaten Canadian jobs and that if we lower the number of temporary foreign workers, we would threaten Canadian jobs. There are also several Liberal members of Parliament who continually ask the Minister of Employment and Social Development to approve temporary foreign workers in their ridings, including the member across the way. Liberals want to lessen the number of temporary foreign workers across the country, it seems, except when it takes place in their ridings, because they constantly ask the minister to approve LMOs or overturn LMOs that have been rejected by public servants in their professional activities so that they can have temporary foreign workers in their ridings.

Which way do the Liberals want it? Do they want to lower the number of temporary foreign workers even in their own ridings? What exactly is the member asking the government to do?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that question is somewhat lacking in truth and completeness.

When one makes reference to the finance critic for the Liberal Party, one should recognize the reality that there are certain industries, such as our agricultural industry, that are dependent on temporary foreign workers. It is a positive thing for Canada and our economy. Members should not twist the facts to try to distort the reality.

I was one of those individuals who wrote a letter, because there was capital infrastructure that needed to be set up in Winnipeg that originated in China, and the people who took apart the machinery wanted to come to Canada to set it up and train so that Canadians would have jobs here. That is positive. That would add value to Canada's economy and provide opportunities for Canadians. That is the type of thing we are supposed to be doing.

That is the issue with the government with respect to the temporary foreign worker program. It is distorting the truth as opposed to recognizing that it messed up. It is its mismanagement that led to the crisis we are talking about here.

Business of Supply

The reality is that there is a good, solid reason to have a temporary foreign worker program. If we had unanimous support for Canada's Auditor General to look into the program, we would find that to be the case. We would have a sounder program if we could get the Auditor General involved in coming up with recommendations on how we could improve the program.

• (1540)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have heard a lot of toing and froing today by my colleagues in the Liberal Party. In January, the leader of the Liberal Party said that the temporary foreign worker program is getting out of control to a certain degree. Today we heard him say that it is totally mismanaged. I want to know what it is the Liberals really believe and whether the Liberals will put their partisan games aside and work with us on this important issue.

Last Wednesday the Liberals voted for our amendment. Today they refuse to accept that same amendment to a motion that is lacking real teeth. That is my question. When will the member put the partisan games aside?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member should realize that we voted in favour of their motion last week. It failed. It did not pass. The reason it did not pass is that the Conservatives have a majority and they made the decision to vote against the motion.

I believe that the motion we have today has a great deal of merit, and I would love to see it pass. We have brought forward motions in the past and had them passed in the House with unanimous support. The most recent one was on proactive disclosure. The NDP had to be dragged kicking and screaming to comply with proactive disclosure, but we were successful in doing that through an opposition day motion.

We are hoping that the government will see the difference between our motion and the motion that failed last week and get it passed. That is what we want. It cannot blame us for trying to get the issue resolved in a more positive way.

Having said that, I will again challenge the government. It does not seem to object if the Auditor General wants to be engaged with the issue. Why would it not go a little bit further, as the Liberal Party has done, with, I believe, the support of the New Democrats, and acknowledge that there is value in unanimously supporting this motion and guaranteeing the involvement of the Auditor General?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just want to congratulate my colleague on his wonderful speech.

Earlier he referred to the provincial nominee program. It is an item we had looked at when I was on the immigration committee during the Liberal years. It was a huge success. We do not have that program in Quebec, but I know that in the province he comes from, Manitoba, it was a huge success. I would like to hear some comments from my colleague.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, to draw a comparison between a Liberal government and a Conservative government on immigration, all one needs to do is look at the provincial nominee program. That program was instituted when Jean Chrétien was the prime minister.

Business of Supply

It was a phenomenal program, one of the most successful immigration programs tied to the economy in the last 25 or 30 years.

We can use Manitoba as an example. The number of temporary foreign workers going into the province of Manitoba has been relatively stagnant. The reason is that Manitoba has been very successful in using the nominee program to allow workers to come to the province, not just as temporary workers but as immigrants.

Families have been able to take advantage of that program in a positive way. It is a win-win for everyone. The provincial nominee program, a creation of the 1990s, is one of the programs that is growing, if not the program that is growing the most, in the immigration department. It is a way for a worker to ultimately land.

Let us contrast that with what the Conservatives are doing. In essence, they are saying, "Here is a temporary worker permit. Come to Canada, put in your time, work, and then go." It is a different way of dealing with what is a very important issue here in Canada.

I would suggest to the government that it look at ways it can allow a pathway for individuals to land through immigration programs that will assist our economy.

When the government and the former minister of immigration hit the delete button, for example, it caused a great deal of concern from coast to coast to coast. That was for the worker experience program.

The government has not done well on the immigration file. I would challenge it to look at it in a more fair fashion that will ultimately see good quality jobs being filled by Canadians, first and foremost, and where we have gaps, by temporary foreign workers.

If we do it right, the people who will benefit the most will be Canada's middle class and in fact all communities. That is if we can get it done right. We want to see the Auditor General of Canada—

• (1545)

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration.

Before I get into the substance of the Liberals' opposition day motion, I want to speak on the strong action taken by the Minister of Employment and Social Development on this issue. We have been concerned that the number of workers coming through the low-skilled pilot system, created by the Liberals, has increased significantly. For that reason, for over a year, our government has been engaged in a thorough policy review of this program to ensure it functions as it was intended. We need to ensure the program functions only as a last and limited resort for employers when Canadians are unavailable to fill these jobs.

In pursuit of that goal, we have announced a number of important reforms over the past year. Let me detail some of these reforms.

We now have the authority to conduct on-site inspections of employers to ensure they are meeting the conditions of the program. We have before Parliament right now a bill that would give us the authority to impose significant financial penalties for employers who

break the rules. We have the authority to ban employers who break the rules from accessing the program for two years and the authority to add their names to a public blacklist. Employers who legitimately rely on temporary foreign workers due to a lack of qualified Canadian applications are required to have a transition plan to transition to a 100% Canadian workforce. We ended wage flexibility to ensure that the temporary foreign workers are paid in Canada at the prevailing wage. We added questions to the labour market opinion application form to ensure that the program is not used to facilitate outsourcing of Canadian jobs. We introduced a \$275 per position fee for employers, to ensure they are covering the cost of administering this program, not leaving the burden to Canadian taxpayers. The fee acts as a disincentive by imposing costs on employers to hire foreign nationals on work permits. We ensure that English or French are the only languages that can be used as a job requirement when hiring through the temporary foreign worker process. We also suspended the accelerated labour market opinion process. These reforms are just the start of our thorough policy review to ensure the program will operate as it was intended.

In recent weeks, there is no doubt that there has been a lot of concern and many allegations made about the temporary foreign worker program. On April 3, 2014, the minister became aware of very serious allegations that a McDonald's franchise owner in Victoria, British Columbia, broke the rules of the temporary foreign worker program. The minister immediately ordered his officials to begin an urgent investigation to determine the facts in this case. Within 24 hours of becoming aware of these allegations, inspectors from the department did an on-site inspection of the location in Victoria, and the minister suspended all labour market opinions and work permits in process for the franchise, pending the outcome of the investigation. The franchisee was then placed, along with two other employers, on a public blacklist, shaming them for all to see.

Despite this swift and unprecedented action, there remain serious concerns regarding the use of temporary foreign workers in the food services sector. That is why the minister has announced an immediate moratorium on the food services sector's access to the temporary foreign worker program. Accordingly, ESDC will not process any new or pending LMO applications related to the food services sector. In addition, any unfilled positions tied to a previously approved LMO will be suspended. This moratorium will remain in effect until the completion of the ongoing policy review of the temporary foreign worker program.

Business of Supply

I know this moratorium is going to hit employers hard, especially those employers in tight labour markets in western Canada, so let me explain the rationale behind the decision. In recent weeks we learned of a number of allegations of abuse of the temporary foreign worker program. Some of these cases were reported in the media, and some were not, as they were received through Service Canada's confidential tip line.

What is clear from these allegations is that there is a particularly concentrated level of allegations within the food services sector. Our government is planning on announcing further reforms to the temporary foreign worker program in the future. What has become clear to us, given the number and concentration of allegations, was a need to put a pause on this sector's access to the program immediately and to have that pause stay until such time as our review is complete and further reforms are announced.

• (1550)

This moratorium must also serve as a stark wake-up call to employers, not just employers in this sector but employers in all sectors of our economy. When our government says that the temporary foreign worker program must only be used as a last and limited resort, when Canadians are not available, we mean what we say.

We expect employers to obey not just the letter of the law but also the spirit of the law. Employers need to convince us that they are not advertising job opportunities for the purpose of checking a box in their LMO application. They should be advertising to try to encourage Canadians to apply for the jobs they have available. Employers also need to do more to make jobs attractive to Canadians, including increasing wage rates and improving working conditions.

As the minister has said many times, we are distressed that wage rates have barely kept pace with inflation since the global downturn. This is not indicative of a tight labour market like the ones we are experiencing in many regions of Canada. We were also disappointed that Canadian employers invest less in training than virtually any other developed country. These are points that the minister has been making to employers for a long time. With this moratorium, we are putting employers on notice that we expect them to do better.

In conclusion, our government is firmly committed to ensuring that Canadians have the skills in demand today and into the future and that they are always going to get the first crack at available jobs within Canada. As we demonstrated last week, we will not hesitate to act if we believe this is being compromised.

Unlike members opposite, the government will take a thoughtful, fact-based approach to the temporary foreign worker program. We will conclude our policy review of the program and make the reforms necessary to ensure that it operates in the best interests of all Canadians.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives keep saying that they want to take measures to prevent abuse, yet they have made cuts to Employment and Social Development Canada's budget. They have cut jobs, thereby reducing

staff. I fail to see how the employees who are left can do even more work since there is an increasing number of temporary foreign workers.

Does the government intend to send out a document and ask employers to self-regulate? If so, I have to say that it will not work.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, in fact, as I mentioned during my remarks, one of the changes we have made to better police this program is that we now have the ability to have on-site inspectors go into employers' workplaces unannounced to ensure that they are following the rules and procedures within the temporary foreign worker program.

This is an ability we did not have before, so now for the first time, we can have inspectors go on-site and make sure employers are keeping up their end of the bargain: one, they are treating temporary foreign workers properly and not abusing them; and two, they gave all Canadians first crack at those jobs when they were available.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a little over a year ago, my colleague the member for Cape Breton—Canso raised the issue in the form of an opposition day motion. I must say he is a very hard-working member of the House of Commons. When he brought this issue to the House on behalf of the Liberal Party, he argued that the government needed to take action. Had the government taken action when we raised the issue in a very formal way, in the form of a motion to the House, the government chose not to take action for whatever reasons. That was not the first time we have heard about issues within the program.

When does the member believe the government actually came to the realization that there was a problem that required the government to take action? We on the opposition benches have been talking about it for quite a while.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Of course, Mr. Speaker, as long as there has been a temporary foreign worker program and as long as we have had the low-skill stream in that program, which was started by the Liberal Party, there have been accusations of abuse from time to time.

We started this review almost a year ago. We have continuously brought forward changes to try to tighten up the program, to make sure it reflects the values Canadians support, which are that we can have a temporary foreign worker program but we first must ensure that all Canadians have access to available jobs before an employer has the ability to bring in a temporary foreign worker. As I just mentioned, one of those steps was, of course, allowing on-site inspectors to investigate this. We have extended the period of time that employers have to advertise. We want to make sure employers do a robust search for Canadian employees.

On top of that, this is indicative of a larger problem within the labour market, that we need to have employers have more engagement in training.

Business of Supply

Canada has the lowest amount of participation by employers in training employees. We need employers to engage and invest in this. This is why we brought forward, as part of the 2013 budget, the Canada job grant. This will leverage private sector investment, use that in conjunction with the public sector investment in the literally billions of dollars we currently transfer to the provinces—the \$500 million program we transferred in the former labour market agreements, now the Canada job fund—to encourage employers to participate actively on the training side and make sure that, when employees are trained, they will have a job waiting for them at the other end.

We have been working on this for years now, and we will continue to ensure that, when jobs are available, Canadians have first crack at those jobs; but we are also taking steps to make sure that employers are now engaged, to make sure there are training methods in place, so workers will be trained to take these jobs when they come up.

• (1600)

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on the topic of the temporary foreign worker program. I know this topic has been of great public concern in recent weeks. Because of this, I think it is especially important that we try to put the topic into perspective.

I will begin by reminding my hon. colleagues that the temporary foreign worker program, which certainly plays a role in serving Canada's economy, our country's employers, and the Canadian labour force, is not a new program. Indeed, it has been in existence for more than four decades. I would also like to take this opportunity to remind my hon. members that it was a Liberal government that expanded the temporary foreign worker program for low-skilled workers in 2002. It was the Liberal Party members who voted time and time again against our changes to reform the program and who constantly lobby the government to bring in more temporary foreign workers.

The temporary foreign worker program serves a very important purpose by helping address skill labour shortages across Canada, which we all know exist. However, it is our responsibility to ensure that this program is protected from abuse and that we take action against anyone who is found to bend the rules.

I would like to describe how our government is doing just that, but before I do, in the interest of context, I will describe the economic role played by the temporary foreign worker program.

In every region of the country and throughout many different industrial sectors, Canadian employers are grappling with challenges that have roots in a number of long-term trends, namely Canada's aging population, our growing economy, and acute labour market shortages in a number of our industrial sectors. Of course, all of these trends are interrelated. With a growing percentage of Canadians hitting retirement age at the same time as the economy is expanding, it stands to reason that some sectors of the economy would subsequently experience skills shortages. When employers use the temporary foreign worker program as intended, it can help this challenge of labour market shortages. That is why the program was created back in the early 1970s and why it continues to exist today. The program is designed to support economic growth in

Canada by allowing for the hiring of foreign workers on a temporary basis to fill short-term labour needs.

In the fall, I had the opportunity to travel to Newfoundland to speak at the Newfoundland and Labrador Employers' Council. I heard from industry leaders and employers that they genuinely require temporary foreign workers to fill various labour needs in the region. They conveyed that while Canadians always come first, there are short-term labour needs that could not be filled by Canadian workers. These employers use the program honestly and sincerely.

Do not get me wrong, when employers abuse the program, that can certainly do damage. However, that does not mean that the program at its core does not fill much-needed and real labour market needs. When a global company headquartered in Canada needs to bring some of their workers here for a short period of time, it may be through the use of the temporary foreign worker program. When a major piece of new high-tech equipment is purchased from the United States and the business that bought it needs to bring in an expert to train its employees, it may use the temporary foreign worker program.

The temporary foreign worker program responds uniquely to offers of employment from Canadian employers, and they know well that they should only use it as a last resort when it is impossible to fill positions with Canadian workers. We will not tolerate any other use of the program. The rules are very clear.

In no way is the program designed to take jobs away from Canadians. The government is obliged to ensure that the program is not abused in this way, and the government has been proactive in fulfilling this obligation.

• (1605)

A comprehensive review of all aspects of the program has been under way for some time now, well before any recent media reports about specific allegations of abuse. Our government embarked upon this review to ensure that the temporary foreign worker program is still meeting its intended purpose of addressing acute labour shortages and that whenever possible, Canadians get first crack at available jobs.

The opposition is once again misleading the public by not mentioning the specific changes we have made to improve the program. Canadians should also be aware of the many reforms that the government has made to the program in recent years.

I see the member opposite laughing; this is not a laughing matter.

In 2012, the government announced its intention to better align the temporary foreign worker program with labour market needs and to ensure that businesses look to the domestic labour force before accessing the program.

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Last year, the government announced further changes to strengthen and improve the program. These changes are to ensure that temporary foreign workers are relied upon only when Canadians genuinely cannot fill the job, require employers to increase their recruitment efforts to hire Canadians before they will be eligible to apply for temporary foreign workers, and help employers who legitimately need to make use of temporary foreign workers to formulate plans to transition to the Canadian workforce over time.

At the end of 2013, improvements to the temporary foreign worker program took effect that enhanced the government's ability to ensure employers are using the program as intended. That increased protection for foreign workers as well. These included: imposing conditions on employers who hire temporary foreign workers to demonstrate they are paying proper wages, and providing safe and healthy working conditions; giving government officials the authority to conduct on-site inspections to make sure employers meet the conditions of the program; introducing legislative authority to impose significant penalties on employers who break the rules; and facilitating the banning of non-compliant employers from the program for two years and adding their names to a public blacklist.

I could go on with the many positive changes our government has made in the past few years but I do not want to use all of my time. I do want to highlight the quick action that we saw our government take when the Minister of Employment and Social Development put in place a moratorium on the food services sector's access to the temporary foreign worker program pending the government's ongoing policy review of the program.

This was a definitive response on the minister's part to serious allegations of abuse in this particular sector. The minister's actions demonstrated our government's vigilance against such abuse and its determination to ensure that employers always make an effort to hire Canadians first before making use of the temporary foreign worker program.

All of the actions I have described thus far clearly demonstrate our government's determination that the temporary foreign worker program complements and does not undercut the recruitment of unemployed skilled Canadians or permanent residents into the workforce.

I hope that my contribution today to this debate has served to assure all hon. members of the House that the government is very eager to make sure that the temporary foreign worker program serves Canadians well, that it complements the domestic job market, that it is not abused or misused in order to deny jobs to qualified Canadians, and that any potential changes to the program will help it best meet labour market demands.

•(1610)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been talking a great deal about the temporary foreign worker program. I would like my colleague to talk about the important changes that we have made in terms of ensuring that the program is used diligently and what happens to employers if they do not follow the rules.

This program is for employers who cannot find a Canadian who is able to fill a job. I would like to hear more from my colleague as to how we deal with an employer who abuses the system.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, we have made reforms to the temporary foreign worker program to ensure that Canadians are first in line for available jobs.

Unfortunately, members of the opposition voted against all of our measures to strengthen the program, particularly the members from the NDP, I might add.

These measures include: the authority to conduct on-line inspections to make sure employers are meeting the conditions of the program; introducing legislative authority to impose significant financial penalties for employers who break the rules, and that may include jail time; the ability to ban non-compliant employers from the program for two years, and immediately add their names to a public blacklist; requiring employers who legitimately rely on temporary foreign workers, due to a lack of qualified Canadian applicants, to have a plan to transition to a Canadian workforce over time; requiring employers to pay temporary foreign workers at the prevailing wage by removing existing wage flexibility; adding questions to employer labour market opinion applications to ensure that the temporary foreign worker program is not used to facilitate the outsourcing of Canadian jobs; introducing fees for employers for LMO processing and increasing the fees for work permits, so that hardworking taxpayers are no longer subsidizing these costs; making English and French the only languages that can be used as a job requirement when hiring through the temporary foreign worker program, and this is a must; and suspending the accelerated labour market opinion process.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for my colleague opposite is, why did his government not conduct reviews of this program a year ago?

When the Liberal opposition raised it in the House of Commons, asked the government to conduct a review of the temporary foreign worker program, it did not act at that time. It only chooses to act now because Canadians who have been losing their jobs to temporary foreign workers have had the courage to come forward in the public media and to tell their story of how they have been impacted. That was when the government really chose to act.

The measure by which the Conservatives chose to act was to implement a moratorium. That only tells me that this program was so far off the tracks, they could not pull it back and they had to look at a way to shut it down in order to have any kind of a response mechanism.

I ask the member to explain why his government chose that kind of action.

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Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, that question is fraught with untruths. In fact, we have done a review of the program and we have done it for a number of years.

I would ask the member to review economic action plan, our budget in 2012, 2013, and 2014. It is an ongoing review of the program.

I will not stop there. This is a little bit of disingenuous comment on behalf of the member of the Liberal Party when we have members from her party on a regular basis ask us for temporary foreign workers, including the Liberal leader, the Liberal House leader, the deputy House leader, the member for Random—Burin—St. George's, the member for Cape Breton—Canso, the member for Mount Royal, and the member for Sydney—Victoria.

We cannot have it both ways. This is an important program. It has been going through ongoing review of late. As we saw in the month of April, the Minister of Employment and Social Development introduced some very strong measures to ensure that those companies that hire temporary foreign workers instead of Canadian workers, when Canadian workers are available for jobs, will pay the price, will pay the penalty, will be sanctioned, and their company names will be made public for all Canadians to see.

• (1615)

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on an important issue.

The temporary foreign worker program is important because it was originally a solution to a problem that was bedeviling employers in Canada and was costing potential economic opportunities and productivity for our economy. It is a program that, managed well, is very important, not just for employers but also for the entire economy, while providing some benefit to businesses that can otherwise not fill jobs with the skilled people they need to have their businesses be a success.

The program is important to the business community as well, especially small businesses and seasonal businesses.

I want to highlight that, as well as the importance to the people who have come as temporary foreign workers. They are filling a real need that cannot be filled by Canadians. It is a win-win because they develop skills or bring their skills to Canada, and are able to support families. In a way, it is a form of helping countries that are less fortunate than Canada to help with their economy and support families in those countries. It is essentially a positive program.

I will be sharing my time, Mr. Speaker, with the member for Toronto Centre.

This has an important purpose for Canada and for businesses, but unfortunately it has begun to go off the rails. That is simply through mismanagement. It is through sheer incompetence. It is not because this program is not needed. It is not because there are not many businesses that need to partake of it. There are. It is because it has simply been mismanaged.

Unfortunately, this situation has led to a crisis. The government has had to make a heavy-handed response that in some cases exacerbates the situation, rather than actually reviewing the program

when the original criticism came out and figuring out how to manage it properly.

To work, the temporary foreign worker program has to be targeted where there really is a need. To do that, the government clearly needs to have information about where there is need. As the minister has said, in broad brush strokes, we do not have a shortage of workers to fill jobs, but in specific areas we do. In specific talents and in the specific pockets of the country there are shortages. That is what the temporary foreign worker program is intended to fill.

How do we know where there are those shortages? That is one of the points of mismanagement. The government simply does not have that data. It has not figured out how it can collect that data. The government has not provided that data as a basis under which the temporary foreign worker program can be targeted where there is a need.

The government, as we have heard a number of times today, was using Kijiji to produce facts and figures as to where there were vacancies. Most economists would say that is a pretty woeful substitution for actual facts and figures. The government's latest labour market report points to a job vacancy rate of 1.5%, dramatically less than the 4% vacancy rate that was mentioned on budget day in February, based on scrolling through Kijiji sites and using that as a basis for analysis. It is a very flawed approach.

As the assistant parliamentary budget officer, Mostafa Askari, has said, Canada lacks reliable job data. Statistics Canada could do this work, but it needs to be made a priority. It needs the resources to do it. It could improve its research on job vacancies normally based on surveys of employers rather than website postings that are completely unreliable. By using false data, it is fumbling blindly to really figure out where this program is needed and how to target it. Therefore, it really has not been targeted. In fact, it has been abused.

• (1620)

The numbers of temporary foreign workers have gone up radically since 2005, from 141,000 to 338,000 in 2012. This program, abused this way, has been costly to employers, to workers, to the temporary foreign workers themselves and to the Canadian unemployed. The bottom line is that the businesses that need these workers pay as well.

To give an example of this ballooning, I have gone to the C.D. Howe Institute report, which is also highly critical of this program for having actually driven up unemployment in my province of British Columbia. According to the C.D. Howe report, unemployment in British Columbia has been driven up by more than 4% based on the flood of temporary foreign workers taking jobs that Canadians would otherwise have taken.

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This is the example in the C.D. Howe Institute report. In the pilot project for occupations requiring lower levels of formal training, in British Columbia and Alberta the number in 2005 of those workers was 2,041, but by 2008 it had ballooned to 56,540 workers. Clearly, this has been a program completely out of control. Those were for lower skilled people requiring lower levels of training. Therefore, this program has gone off the rails.

One of the long-term consequences of beginning to replace immigration with temporary foreign workers has been seen in Europe in the years after the guest worker program in Germany, a program that was started because the unemployment rate was very low. However, with the flood of temporary workers beginning to create a two-tier worker system in Germany, that led to other problems, such as entrepreneurs and small businesses being driven out of business because of the competition from lower-priced workers in the temporary worker program and also pressures on social services. Therefore, countries like Germany reversed course and went back toward the kind of targeted, high-skilled workers or a very carefully managed program, like we used to have in Canada and no longer have.

There are many examples, and others have given some, of the kind of abuses of this program, whether it is HD Mining Limited in British Columbia, which required Mandarin as a condition for work and when it was not fulfilled by local very capable miners, temporary foreign workers were brought in to fill those jobs, or a number of other instances. This is simply unacceptable, driving unemployment up and based on faulty information statistically.

The cost to the businesses now is that the allegations of abuse have led to some blanket moratorium by the minister to bring a sledgehammer to this problem, which should have been fixed before, could have been fixed before and was just ignored. Of course, that costs the employers and the businesses that really need these temporary foreign workers.

That is not to speak of the impact of this moratorium on the foreign workers themselves right now. For people who are already in Canada, who are in these jobs and are trying to renew their permits, suddenly there is a great deal of uncertainty. It is creating some chaos in the industry.

All of this was unnecessary had the government listened to the Liberals a year ago when we called for a review of this program. The government has known about the program, because its own reports and HRDC have pointed it out. Therefore, it is now time to no longer procrastinate, support the Liberal Party motion, bring in the Auditor General to review the program, make the other improvements and restore it to the program it used to be and can once again be.

• (1625)

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Auditor General has done a review of this program, and we have implemented the recommendations that the Auditor General put forward upon that review. As we said before, we do not pretend to try to create a work plan for the Auditor General. I know the Liberals are asking for the Auditor General to review this program, but the Auditor General already has reviewed it. We will not venture into the realm of the Auditor General.

The Liberals are concerned that we are exploding, which is the word they use, in terms of numbers. However, I want to ensure that the member is aware that this is a demand-driven program, that the number of temporary foreign workers in Canada is the result of employers who cannot find Canadians who are trained to do the job. There is no quota. There is no limit to the number of temporary foreign workers who come in. It is all based on the fact that we have certain sectors in certain regions with acute labour shortages.

What does the member across the way believe we should do as a government to try to address this? We need to ensure that all Canadians have first crack at the job. We agree with that. We also have to ensure that the temporary foreign workers who are in the country are not abused. What would the member across the way have us do concerning numbers to do with this program?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that question from the member opposite because the answers are right in the motion, and I appreciate his openness to these ideas for which the Liberals are calling. These include the disclosure of labour market opinion applications and approvals for the TFW program, which are not currently disclosed; a tightening of the labour market opinion approval process to ensure that only businesses with legitimate needs are able to access, the program because we have seen how the program has been abused in the enthusiasm to open it up that the current government has had; and implementation of stronger rules requiring that employers applying for the program demonstrate unequivocally that they have exhausted all other avenues to fill the job vacancies.

The member should be aware that even though it has become so much easier to get a permit for temporary foreign workers, the waiting times for actually coming as a potential permanent resident or immigrant have been extended to many times what they used to be. The path to citizenship can take up to eight years. To be reunited with a family member from outside Canada now averages 40 months, up from 5 months just 5 years ago, and on and on. The average processing time for federal skilled workers has gone to up to 34 months whereas in Australia it is 2 months.

Let us focus on opening up those channels, rather than opening up the channels for temporary foreign workers so that it becomes a replacement for immigration.

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for some of the points that she made in her speech. I wrote some of them down.

She mentioned how Canada lacked reliable job data, and so it does. She also mentioned how the temporary foreign worker program was completely out of control and how the program was “off the rails”. Could the hon. member elaborate on how to stop the flood, as she put it, of temporary foreign workers. How do we fix the program?

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I know the hon. member has mentioned bringing in the Auditor General of Canada, which is what my party, the New Democratic Party, called for last week. However, we also called for a moratorium on low-skilled occupations. Why will the hon. member not go that far?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, again, with respect for the member, we have outlined a number of actions in our motion, and I hope his party will support this motion.

Essentially, this is a matter of competence and management. This is an important program. There needs to be a review of the problems inherent in the program. We have laid out in our motion some very specific fixes. There has already been a blanket moratorium on some of the low-skilled worker categories. However, a blanket moratorium is not the ultimate solution for this.

The solution is taking seriously that we do not want temporary foreign workers to replace permanent residents and citizens and the pathway to citizenship in our country. It was tried in Europe 20 years ago. It created a generation of problems. We cannot go down the road again. We can learn from European countries that fixed that problem and returned to an appropriate level of temporary foreign workers for their true needs.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Québec, Consumer Protection; the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, Infrastructure; and the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, National Defence.

[*English*]

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking my colleague, the member for Vancouver Quadra for the excellent points she made. In particular as she began her presentation, she spoke of the ways in which this program, properly administered and properly managed, can be of great benefit to the Canadian economy and to Canadian business. We strongly believe that, and that is the direction in which our motion is going, to say this is a program that can work but needs to be managed very carefully with very good data and very good oversight.

I am going to speak later, as my colleagues already have, about some of the dangerous economic consequences of the mismanagement, which Canada is suffering right now. However, I would like to start with something a little bit bigger, which is the devastating and really dangerous social, political, and even moral impact of allowing this program to go out of control.

One of the things of which I am proudest as a Canadian, and I think we all are, is the way in which our society has succeeded in being a proudly diverse immigrant society. One of the things that Canada does really well, that is a key to our success as a country, that the rest of the world looks to us for, is the way in which we welcome and integrate immigrants into our society.

The temporary foreign worker program, if abused as it is now, really threatens to erode and tear apart that social consensus around

immigration. We have that social consensus partly because the Canadians who are already here really believe, see, and experience that new Canadians, immigrants coming to our country, strengthen our economy and strengthen our society, that they add, not subtract. That is one really essential piece of Canada's success, and it is something we are seeing fall apart in a lot of societies, particularly in Europe.

The second reason that Canada has succeeded so spectacularly as a diverse immigrant society is that new Canadians are fully integrated when they come here. New Canadians have the path to permanent residency, to citizenship. They become part of our society. There are no tiers, no classes of Canadian citizenship, no classes of belonging.

It is those two pillars that have made Canada successful as a diverse immigrant society—really one of the key Canadian values, one of our most important national successes in the past and going forward.

The reason we are focusing so much on the abuse of the temporary foreign worker program and the reason it has attracted so much national attention is that it very seriously undermines and threatens this core Canadian value and core Canadian accomplishment.

One data point, which I think has shocked us all and which really underscores the extent to which this program is truly being abused, is what we have seen happening in southwestern Ontario. As we know, that is a part of the country where the economy is particularly weak, and yet it is a part of the country where we have seen numbers of temporary foreign workers soar. In Windsor, even as unemployment has gone up by 40%, the number of temporary foreign workers rose by 86%. In London, Ontario, unemployment is up by 27%; meanwhile the number of temporary foreign workers is up by 87%.

Mike Moffatt, who is a professor at the University of Western Ontario, at the business school—someone who is sensitive to the needs of business—says about this program and what is happening in southwestern Ontario:

We're bringing in more and more workers into the worst labour markets in the country. People see that and think this doesn't make sense.

It certainly does not, and that is really an example of a program that is not being run carefully.

Professor Moffatt points to something else, and my colleague from Vancouver has pointed to this as well, that part of the problem with this program, part of the reason it is clearly being mismanaged, and part of the reason it is hard to manage properly, is we just do not have the data. We believe in evidence-based, pragmatic government, and we can only have evidence-based, pragmatic government if we actually know what is going on.

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●(1635)

When scholars like Professor Moffatt looked at southwestern Ontario and tried to figure out what the heck is going on and why more temporary foreign workers are going to cities like Windsor and London, they found the data does not exist. There is no breakdown of where those workers are going. Part of the motion is designed to say that we need good data to make good policy. I think everyone in the House must agree with that. I really cannot see how anyone could fail to support the motion.

Another data point—which I think needs to worry us all and should be absolutely irrefutable evidence that, as it is being currently managed, the temporary foreign worker program simply is not working—is what reputed scholars from independent think tanks, even think tanks that perhaps lean a little to the right, have found about the effect of the temporary foreign worker program on unemployment. A study published last month by the C.D. Howe Institute stated that the temporary foreign worker program “...eased hiring conditions [that] accelerated the rise in unemployment rates in Alberta and British Columbia”.

Again, this is an independent study that found that unemployment rates are rising through a mismanaged program, and that does not speak about the downward pressure on wages for people in these occupations.

I have been focusing on unemployment concerns and downward pressure on wages for people who were already in this country when we let the temporary foreign worker program to run amok. We also need to be concerned about the threat that misuse of the temporary foreign worker program transforms the idea of immigration, integration, and diversity in our society. There is a very real danger that this program can start to create a permanent underclass of people in our country, people who are not citizens, people who do not have rights, people who are not fully integrated into our society and yet are working alongside us. That is a profound threat to the idea of Canada and social cohesion, and it is another reason that this program must be handled very delicately and managed very carefully. It is just not the Canadian way.

I have a data point, which really shows we are risking losing that balance. In 2012, 213,573 temporary foreign workers came to Canada. In that year, 257,887 people became permanent residents of the country. As we can see from those numbers, there were nearly as many temporary foreign workers as permanent residents. Liberals are a pro-immigration, pro-diversity party to the tips of our fingers and toes. Creating this underclass of workers whom we import, whom we treat differently, and to whom we do not grant the rights of other Canadians or a path to citizenship is simply wrong.

There is huge national interest in this issue, and that is for a very good reason. Canadians understand that, properly managed with good reliable data, the temporary foreign worker program is a useful and important contributor to our economy and Canadian business, but run badly, as is the case today, it is a threat not just to employment and wages but to Canada's most central values.

●(1640)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague on her speech.

She mentioned the effects that the large number of temporary foreign workers is having on unemployment in certain provinces. With every passing day, we are getting more information confirming that the program truly was mismanaged.

In her opinion, are there other areas that we have not yet heard about that are also feeling the negative effects of the program's mismanagement? Does she think this is a widespread problem?

[*English*]

Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned quite prominently the importance of good granular data and the need to get much better labour market data. I did that because we just do not know.

I do not think my beliefs are the key issue. What matters is what is really going on in the country. Where are temporary foreign workers going, into which sectors and in which regions? What are the actual labour market conditions and shortages?

Because of underfunding, because of a lack of belief in the importance of data for good policy, which I believe is absolutely fundamental, we simply do not have the data to give a good answer to that question.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it shocks me that the member across the way accuses the government of mismanaging the program. Back when her party was in charge of the temporary foreign worker program, it used it to bring exotic dancers into Canada. I do not think that is an appropriate use of this program.

The member also talked about labour market information. We know we need to have better labour market information in Canada. We have had discussions on this across Canada with our provincial colleagues. It is something we have engaged in, and we will continue to work toward getting better labour market information.

In Canada today, we have a skills mismatch in many sectors and regions of the country. We do not have the information for parents and educators, and many of them are making decisions on what they could be going into—for example, the skilled trades—but they are not making those decisions. We need to make sure we have labour market information in place so that families can make educational decisions with their young people moving forward and make sure we can match the jobs that are available, and will be available, with the education and training we have in place.

I would ask the member across the way if she agrees that we need to have better labour market information, but we have to use that information to make sure people are aware of what jobs are available, so they can get the training they need to take the jobs that are going to be available in Canada.

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Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to hear that the hon. member agrees with me that we need more data to make better decisions, and I have a very specific decision that the government can act on right away to help us get that better data.

According to a *Globe and Mail* story published last month, Statistics Canada surveyed 25,000 employers, in a survey that cost \$4.6 million to conduct, on the skills gap, employment, and future skill shortages. However, it has not actually analyzed that data because Statistics Canada, our premier statistical agency, does not have the money to do it.

Therefore, since we are in such glorious agreement about the need for better data, let us get the funding in place to actually get it, so we are making these decisions based on what is really happening in the Canadian economy, not based on Kijiji.

• (1645)

[Translation]

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

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak for the second time in a week about the scandal involving the temporary foreign workers program. Before I get started, I would like to point something out. Since the NDP moved its motion last week, people have begun to speak out.

On Saturday, we learned that immigration consultants specialized in matching employers and temporary foreign workers. They went so far as to run ads offering potential temporary foreign workers help finding a Canadian employer. Such practices are against the rules of the program and are totally illegal.

On Sunday, CBC's *Go Public* revealed even more unacceptable practices in Canada: illegal payroll deductions, threats and bullying by unscrupulous employers.

Does anyone find these abuses surprising given that the Conservatives opened Pandora's box?

This program has a history of scandals. In 2012, there were problems with HD Mining and RBC. It took the minister two years to do something other than slap them on the wrist. How efficient. How diligent.

However, while the Conservatives must bear the greatest responsibility for the scandal, they are not the only ones responsible. The Liberals must also take part of the blame. It was the Liberals who, in 2002, created a pilot project for low-skilled workers as part of the temporary foreign worker program, which paved the way for all of the Conservative government's errors.

The Liberals also faced some scandals in this file. They were the ones who brought in 600 exotic dancers through this program.

However, what is done is done. We need to establish who was responsible for what so that everyone knows who truly has Canadians' interests at heart. Then we can move forward.

Now the Liberals are acknowledging the flaws in the program they created. That is good. They are adopting the NDP's proposals to

fix those flaws. That is even better. We are not protective of our ideas if they serve Canadians.

However, that will not be enough to repair the damage caused by the abusive use of temporary foreign workers.

Canadians across the country are increasingly concerned about the employment situation. A total of 300,000 people have not been able to find work since the 2008 recession. The Conservatives' employment policy has been a disaster.

This series of scandals is proof of the real objective behind the Conservatives' talk about the so-called labour shortage. They want to reduce workers' wages and benefits, which is disgraceful.

This ideology is at the heart of the Conservatives' employment policy. It explains why they see labour shortages where there is unemployment. It explains the current irregularities in the temporary foreign worker program.

This program was originally created to fill occasional labour shortages when employers were unable to find Canadian workers or permanent residents to fill those positions. The Conservatives expanded the list of jobs that are eligible for the program. They expanded it to include lower-skilled jobs. Then, they made the rules of the program more flexible and reduced oversight. Even though there was a recession, they did not tighten the rules for recruiting foreign workers.

Each time, the Conservatives justify their lax management of this program by saying that there is a labour shortage. The Conservatives do not listen when the NDP shows that there is no labour shortage and that 300,000 Canadians have not been able to find work since the recession.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has produced a report indicating that the Conservatives' labour shortage claims are based on false data, but the minister continues to insist that there is a labour shortage. It is no use. The Conservatives continue to insist that the temporary foreign worker program needs to be even more flexible and to better respond to business needs.

This government has pushed this logic to the point of allowing companies to pay temporary foreign workers 15% less than Canadian workers. It is therefore not surprising that the number of temporary foreign workers in Canada has skyrocketed.

The number went up from 100,000 workers in 2002 to nearly 340,000 in 2012. Low-skilled occupations account for the most significant increase. Since 2006, the number of low-skilled temporary foreign workers has exploded by more than 700%.

We are talking about cashiers at Tim Hortons and employees at McDonald's, not highly specialized jobs requiring skills that are in short supply. We also have to take into account the experiences of these temporary foreign workers to understand the problems with this program.

They come here hoping to create better lives for themselves and their families—a laudable goal. They know nothing about normal working conditions here.

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•(1650)

They know nothing about their rights, their employer's obligations toward them, or their options for recourse against their employer. There have certainly been scandalous and shocking revelations lately, but let us also bear in mind that the Conservatives' lack of concern about the temporary foreign worker program is having significant repercussions on the labour market. These repercussions are described in a C.D. Howe Institute report. The report shows that the use of temporary workers has resulted in a 4% increase in the unemployment rate in Alberta and British Columbia. The unemployment rate for low-skilled workers is 13.4% in Alberta and 15.5% in B.C., which is twice the average.

In Canada, there are six workers for every available job, so how can there be a general labour shortage? Why is there any need to resort to temporary workers to work in restaurants when the unemployment rate in that field is twice the national average? If restaurant chains are having trouble hiring employees, they should increase wages to attract people.

Instead, the Conservative government is encouraging temporary workers to come, because they are easier to manipulate than Canadian workers. If they ask for anything, starting with a wage increase, the employer can easily get rid of them. The Conservative government's sloppy management of the temporary foreign worker program and its determination to see a labour shortage where there clearly is none say a lot about its ideological motives.

The Conservatives want a society in which corporations can freely exploit workers, where wage increases slow down, businesses pay lower taxes and people receive fewer services. The Conservatives' plan for Canada is a society of injustice and inequality. This vision of our society is unbearable for Canadians and unacceptable for the NDP. Our constituents and temporary workers are suffering under this policy.

We need to take action before the feelings of frustration grow. They have no place here. That is why the NDP's position on this is one of common sense. Canadians, temporary foreign workers and honest employers should not have to pay for fraudsters. The moratorium on the food services sector must therefore be extended to all low-skilled occupations. That is the only way the Auditor General can have the time he needs to conduct an independent evaluation of the program. We are asking for the results to be made public so that we can fix the program in the best way possible.

Unlike the Conservatives, the NDP wants to build an inclusive society where everyone can find his or her place. In order to do that, we must make every effort to stimulate the labour market and integrate the immigrants we need.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am confused by the hon. NDP member's speech.

She keeps saying that the government's position is that there is a general labour shortage, when I keep saying the contrary several times a day, not just here in the House, but also to employers. I have long been saying that there is a shortage of specific skills in certain sectors and in certain industries. I think the NDP shares that position.

The NDP critic clearly said that we need the temporary foreign worker program to deal with some labour shortages. More specifically, the NDP is also of the opinion that there is a labour shortage in the seasonal agricultural industry.

Does my colleague agree that there is a shortage of certain skills and that there are jobs that Canadians do not want to fill, such as basic jobs in the agricultural sector?

Does she agree with her counterpart that we need some help from a minimum number of foreign workers when there are sectoral or regional labour shortages?

•(1655)

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his question. I would like to simply remind hon. members that, when it came to somehow supporting the use of temporary foreign workers, this same minister did not hesitate to talk about a general labour shortage. He used this leitmotif to support the fact that we needed more and more temporary foreign workers.

That being said, I think it is also time that, as the Minister of Employment and Social Development, he recognized his responsibility in this fiasco, because this is really and truly a fiasco. In 2012, we had already sounded the alarm, but the government did not pay any attention. We saw this program getting out of control. The government let companies and business people use this program appropriately and abuse it, without setting any guidelines. It is important that the minister recognize his responsibility in this fiasco.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the New Democratic Party will be supporting our motion, from what I understand.

I think it is important, as we get closer to winding down the debate, that we recognize the temporary foreign workers program has traditionally done a service to Canadians as a whole, but it has actually only been in recent years that the management of the program has generated the crisis we have today. One of the ways of getting out of this crisis situation is to have Canada's Auditor General look into the program with the idea of coming back with recommendations.

I would ask the member to affirm if she too believes that having the Auditor General look into the program, with the idea of coming up with recommendations to improve it, would restore public confidence in the program itself, because there has been, through this crisis and mismanagement by the Conservatives, a general need to restore public confidence in the program itself.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, we are certainly moving in that direction. We moved our motion a few days ago calling for an independent investigation by the Auditor General of the program and how it is being abused.

Business of Supply

It is also important to note that the Liberals fully supported our motion at that time, meaning that even when we proposed a moratorium in the motion, the Liberals supported it. Today, when my colleague from Newton—North Delta proposed an amendment to impose a moratorium, those same Liberals refused to support it.

I think that members need to be consistent. When we talk about really auditing this program, it is necessary to take the time to conduct that audit, which is why it is important to impose this moratorium. I want to point that out. We think a moratorium is essential to truly do what is necessary with regard to this program.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I share with my colleagues the delight that the third party in the House is sharing our concern about the way the temporary foreign worker program is being handled and is coming forward with a motion that very closely resembles the one we debated, and we appreciated that they supported, a week back.

I would like to point out that, regrettably, the motion is missing a couple of critical factors that I have been raising in the House over the last month. I am pleased that the Liberal motion calls for, of course, the “immediate and full review of the program by the Auditor General”, which the NDP has already called for.

The motion speaks about the need for the “disclosure of Labour Market Opinion applications and approvals” and “a tightening of the Labour Market Opinion”, but what is of concern, particularly to the workers in my province of Alberta, is the fact that the government has actually exempted the need for an LMO at all for the oil sands sector and a lot of other sectors. I think that is what is causing the greatest problem for that sector.

Second, in addition to the fact that we need to have a return of the requirement to state whether or not there has been an effort to even find Canadian workers, and whether there is a shortage of workers, there is still a complete absence of surveillance and enforcement in many sectors in Alberta.

We are awaiting, the ironworkers and I, a reply to the letter that we sent to the minister. We are looking forward to a reply forthwith.

As I have shared with the minister and with this place, the displacement of available, highly qualified Canadian workers with temporary foreign workers has been reported to be a recurring problem in the oil sands sector. I would advise that since I raised these issues, I am receiving letter after letter and phone call after phone call from other skilled Canadian workers who are fully qualified and who are also being displaced by temporary workers. I will deal with that shortly.

First of all, I want to reiterate the problems that have been brought to my attention and that I have shared with this place, raised by Canadian ironworkers. As I previously shared, 65 Canadian ironworkers were laid off by Imperial Oil at their Kearl project and were replaced by temporary foreign workers.

Second, prior to that, approximately 300 Canadian ironworkers were laid off by Husky at their Sunrise oil sands project in northern Alberta.

Clearly we have a pattern here. It is important to point out that it was not just the case that Canadian qualified ironworkers were potentially available to be hired. In both of those cases, not only were they qualified, willing, and able, they were on the job site, working and under contract to deliver the services to those two respective companies.

If that is not reprehensible enough, included within those layoffs were aboriginal apprentices, who were then replaced by lesser qualified individuals who were temporary foreign workers. That is of deep concern. We hear, time after time, the government of the day stating its strong support for getting our aboriginal peoples educated and into the trades, giving them opportunities to earn a decent income so that they can care for their families. Here we have an example where a young first nations gentleman took the time to get educated and get the trade and was in the course of being apprenticed, and was laid off. He has informed me directly that it took him a while to find another job. He has managed to find another job. This is completely reprehensible.

In a second instance, I was contacted by a female single-parent ironworker who was also laid off. She and many women have been encouraged to go back to school and become qualified in a trade to gain well-paying employment to provide for their families. This is precisely what she did, and then she was laid off surreptitiously and replaced by a temporary foreign worker.

I have been working closely with the ironworkers to try to find out for them what the problem is that is persisting in the oil sands sector, and what the minister is going to do to intervene to make sure this does not happen again, and to make sure that enforcement action is taken against the employers who appear to have violated the rules.

Regrettably, there has still been no response from the minister. I attempted to get a reply today, and he deflected the question.

● (1700)

What the minister has told us today is that last year he created a specific program integrity division in Service Canada. For those of us who might have worked in the enforcement world we usually simply call those an inspectorate. They are basically understood to be specifically trained and qualified personnel. They are trained to go out and collect evidence, ask questions, approach witnesses, and then take appropriate enforcement action based on the circumstances. Usually there is a prescribed enforcement compliance strategy, which to be credible would be developed in consultation with workers, potentially unions, non-union workers, and employers.

I keep persisting in asking this question and thus far we are not hearing if that has occurred. We are not sure exactly who is in this program integrity division. However, the obvious question is, have any of these program integrity workers been deployed to the oil sands? Have they been specifically deployed to look into these instances of alleged abuses of the temporary foreign worker program? We are still waiting for a response and the ironworkers regularly contact me and, as I understand, contact the minister's office to find out if their concerns are being addressed.

Business of Supply

I would like to reiterate, very clearly, that the Canadian ironworkers hold no grudge against temporary foreign workers. They understand that people in other countries are desperate for work and want to look after their own families. They have no objection whatsoever for those workers coming to Canada. They, like us, would prefer they come to Canada through the usual immigration route, bring their families, have the opportunity to upgrade their standards, and potentially join the unions even. Even if they do come as temporary foreign workers, the unions do not begrudge them whatsoever and they are happy to work with them, so long as the employers do not try to displace them in their duly qualified work, or pay these workers less, which will bring down the salary rate.

A number of questions were put to the minister and I want to share with this place the questions we are asking the minister to respond to. How is it that Imperial Oil and Husky were allowed to replace qualified, willing, and available Canadian ironworkers with temporary foreign workers? That is a simple question.

Second, are federal officers specifically mandated to inspect and enforce the temporary foreign worker program on oil sands operations? That is another very straightforward question.

Third, more specifically, which federal officers and what numbers are mandated to inspect and enforce this program in the oil sands, in particular because of the fact that in Alberta there is a "pilot" program, which has been further extended in time to allow oil sands operations to bring on board temporary foreign workers without the need for an LMO? There is absolutely no obligation on the employers to even show cause that there is a need to bring in temporary foreign workers, that there is a shortage of skilled workers. That is a very critical issue.

If federal officers are posted in the oil sands, why did they not identify these egregious abuses of the temporary foreign worker program? In both instances, these abuses of the displacement of Canadian skilled workers with temporary foreign workers were identified by the Canadian workers themselves. Even today, we noted that the minister said he is pleased that even his own colleagues have brought to his attention some cases that need to be investigated. We need clarity. Is this an actual surveillance and enforcement program run by the government, or is it simply the government sitting back and waiting to see if someone is brave enough to file a complaint and hope that there is going to be some kind of response?

An additional concern that we have raised is what is the role being played by these labour brokers, or headhunters? What is the situation where these brokers are bringing in both Canadian workers and temporary foreign workers, in this situation, where a broker has displaced Canadian workers with temporary foreign workers? It is very important that these issues be addressed so that we can make sure that we have a steady supply of qualified Canadians.

In closing, I would just like again to share that I am hearing case after case. I am now hearing from pipefitters, boilermakers, concrete workers, and more ironworkers who are being laid off and displaced by temporary foreign workers. It is time to have a thorough review of the program. However, I would add to that, very strongly, it is not

an excuse for the government to sit back and not deploy an effective surveillance and enforcement program.

● (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, given the hour and in anticipation of the vote, we want to make it perfectly clear that we within the Liberal Party want to ensure that Canadians are first and foremost given the opportunity to get the jobs that are so critically important to them. We want to recognize the importance of the temporary worker program and how it has been of great benefit to our communities across our country, if, and I underline the word "if", it is managed properly. It is because of the mismanagement of the program that we find ourselves in the situation we are in today, where we need to have, among other things, Canada's Auditor General engaged in this whole process so we can attempt to restore or establish more public confidence that we are moving in the right direction.

My question for the member is this. Would she join with us in acknowledging that it is important that we get recommendations coming from Canada's Auditor General in order to be able to preserve what would be a program that will then continue to ultimately enhance the quality of life for all Canadians?

● (1710)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it would be more appropriate to say it in reverse. I and my colleagues are pleased that the Liberal Party has come on board in endorsing our previous call for a review of this program by Canada's Auditor General. However, additionally, it is incumbent upon that review that there also be close scrutiny of the efficacy of the surveillance and enforcement aspects of that program.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to know if the hon. member would acknowledge some of the steps the government has taken over the past months to try to tighten up this program and ensure that Canadians are always offered any job before it is offered to a temporary foreign worker. Those include steps like, as she mentioned, the integrity of the program whereby we now have the ability to have integrity officers do on-site inspections of any employers of temporary foreign workers to ensure those employers have obeyed the regulations that they agreed to when they applied for the program; expanding the amount of time that employers have to advertise before they have a temporary foreign worker; other initiatives we have taken to try to ensure that the program has tight regulations that all Canadians are offered the jobs first; and also regulations that support temporary foreign workers so that they are not abused once they get here.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the last part of the question. I fully agree that we need to have in place stronger provisions to ensure that temporary foreign workers are not being abused. It was quite some time ago that a number of us raised those issues in the House. I have organized meetings with local churches and local business people who are deeply concerned about the abuses that they are finding of temporary foreign workers.

Business of Supply

On the matter of whether the government has stepped up to ensure that there are no more abuses, I wish that I could speak to that but we are still waiting for the reply from the hon. minister. Frankly, at this point in time, I have no idea if there is going to be better enforcement. The problem is they are not going to be able to scrutinize the LMOs for the oil sands because there are not any.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing the government members saying that they believe it is important that Canadians be offered jobs first before TFWs are used. However, the problem is that there has been massive manipulation of this program all across this country.

Ironworkers remain unemployed while we bring in temporary foreign workers. I just read in an article today that the current government allowed companies to bring in foreign pilots to fly aircraft in this country when there are pilots in this country who can work. We have plumbers and pipefitters across this country who remain unemployed. I have met with people from building trades organizations in British Columbia who tell me they have members who are ready, willing, and able to do work. There were miners in British Columbia who sat idle while miners were brought in from outside the country.

The problem is that employers are manipulating and misusing this program to get sources of cheap labour, when there are Canadians here in this country who are ready and willing to do that work. Instead of those employers raising their wages and conditions to attract Canadians, they do not want to do that and they are using cheap foreign labour.

I just want to ask a quick question. I notice that the leader of the Liberal Party has said there should be a path to permanent residency for temporary foreign workers, but when the Liberals were in government they brought in no such thing. The New Democrats have been the only party calling for there to be a path to permanent residency for TFWs on the principle that if they are good enough to work here, they are good enough to live here. I wonder if my hon. colleague will comment on that.

• (1715)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, there is a lot I would like to comment on.

First of all, the Alberta Federation of Labour has documented hundreds of cases where temporary foreign workers are being paid less. In the case of the oil sands, the jobs were offered first to Canadians, but then they were displaced by temporary foreign workers.

We have been clear, on this side of the House, that we would prefer that these workers be brought to Canada as actual immigrants.

Yes, we should be looking to those temporary foreign workers who have been offered that path toward citizenship. A lot of them are expressing great distress right now, because they do not know the fate of their applications because of this blanket shutdown of their employment.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[English]

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, I request that the vote be deferred to Wednesday, May 7, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, the recorded division stands deferred until tomorrow at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I think you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

OPPOSITION MOTION—SAFEGUARDING OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

The House resumed from May 5 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Terrebonne—Blainville relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1800)

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

(Division No. 111)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brisson
Byrne
Casey
Chisholm
Christopherson
Comartin

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélanger
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brosseau
Caron
Chicoine
Choquette
Cleary
Côté

Cotler
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Del Mastro
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau
Eyking
Freeland
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Hyer
Jones
Kellway
Larose
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Péclet
Plamondon
Rafferty
Rathgeber
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Valeriote — 131

Crowder
Cuzner
Day
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Fortin
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Julian
Lamoureux
Latendresse
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Pilon
Quach
Rankin
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Turnel

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Dreeschen
Dykstra
Fantino
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau

Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gallant

Business of the House

Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
James
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Poilievre
Raiitt
Reid
Richards
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Trost
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Nicholson
Ohrai
Oliver
Opitz
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Rempel
Ritz
Seeback
Shiple
Smith
Sorenson
Strahl
Toet
Trotter
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson

Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 148

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

The hon. government House leader is rising on a point of order.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I believe that you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, during the debate on May 7, 2014, on the business of supply pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair and, within each 15-minute period, each party may allocate time to one or more of its members for speeches or for questions and answers, provided that, in the case of questions and answers, the minister's answer approximately reflects the time taken by the question, and provided that, in the case of speeches, members of the party to which the period is allocated may speak one after the other.

[English]

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Private Members' Business

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.
(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: It being 6:01 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

HOMELESSNESS

The House resumed from March 24 consideration of the motion.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to stand today in support of Motion No. 455, which is the motion of my colleague from Edmonton East.

His motion is calling for a nationally standardized point-in-time counting of the homeless, but before I get into specifics around the motion, I think it is really important to provide some general context.

First I need to reaffirm that creating jobs and securing economic growth is, and will remain, our government's top priority. We made it through the global recession and continue to lead the G7 in job creation and income growth. Moreover, we are on our way to a balanced budget.

Our government helped create over one million new full-time well-paying jobs in the private sector. We have introduced landmark working income tax benefits to support low-income Canadians who work, and I am very proud to say that we have removed one million low-income Canadians from the tax rolls.

All of these efforts stem from a desire to equip and empower people to lift themselves out of poverty and participate fully in society. We are making a real difference in the lives of Canadians, but of course there is still work to be done to help our homeless population.

Since the launch of the homelessness partnering strategy in April 2007, nearly 25,000 Canadians who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless have benefited from education and training opportunities. Over 27,000 have received help to find work, and more than 4,800 new shelter beds have been created. In budget 2013, we committed nearly \$600 million in new funding over five years to renew the homelessness partnering strategy, and it is making a real difference in communities such as mine in Kamloops.

This time the funding will focus primarily on a housing first approach.

Housing first means providing a permanent place to live and then offering support services to help individuals maintain housing. This strategy recognizes that housing stability is necessary for the success of other interventions, such as education and training, life skills development, management of mental health challenges, and treatment for substance abuse. This means moving away from the

short-term quick-fix tactics to long-term sustainable solutions for vulnerable Canadians who are sporadically or chronically homeless.

While this group of homeless people only makes up about 16% of the homeless population, they consume more than half of the resources and services provided through the system. It is really important for us to ask ourselves why, because these people end up becoming dependent on our emergency shelter system and become trapped in a cycle of poverty for years.

The longer a person is homeless, the worse his or her situation will be. Research shows that their overall health and mental health decline, and they are more at risk of becoming victims of crime. It constantly seems to be one step up and two steps back.

This is not the purpose of our emergency shelters and support networks. They are supposed to be a temporary solutions. Our current efforts to address the situation are costing us billions of dollars a year. It is about time we welcome a new way to tackle homelessness.

The good news is that a housing first approach has been proven to be an effective way to reduce homelessness. Thanks to funding from the federal government, the Mental Health Commission of Canada ran a housing first pilot project in five major cities across the country. Over the course of the two-year pilot, an average of 73% of participants in the housing first group remained in stable housing, compared to 32% receiving the usual care. Those are very important numbers that really will guide our direction.

Additionally, for participants who were the highest users of emergency and social services when they entered the study, every \$10 invested led to an average savings to government of \$21.72. Again, those are very important numbers.

That leads me to why Motion No. 455 is so important. It is really about research. It is really about data and about having the critical information we will need. It will provide us with strong evidence for solutions, as seen through the housing first pilot project.

My hon. colleague from Edmonton East understands that the only way to really measure the state of homelessness in our cities is to establish reliable baseline data. In order to successfully implement housing first initiatives across the country, or any other initiative to address homelessness, we need to know the size and composition of the homeless population. We need the right tools to properly measure the impact of programs, identify best practices, and demonstrate effective results. Motion No. 455 can help achieve this goal.

● (1805)

The motion aims to provide a standardized point-in-time counting of homelessness and is recommended for use by municipalities carrying out the counts. This would include a nationally accepted methodology on how the counts would take place. I know some of the provinces have done very good work in this area, but it is important to look at the differences between, for example, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver and have the provinces focus on it all together.

Private Members' Business

A well-developed methodology would provide communities with a cost-effective way to do a count if they have not established one already. Motion No. 455 would help us know where to provide and allocate resources. We know, of course, that what happens in British Columbia in the winter is very different than what happens in the winter in Ottawa, for example, so again we need to be very cognizant of the different variations across the country.

In conclusion, it is time that we start responding to the needs of the homeless more effectively and efficiently. I ask members to please join me and my colleagues in supporting this motion.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to talk about the motion by the member for Edmonton East, which is essentially to pick a place and a point in time in order to define homelessness. Unfortunately, if that is truly the definition of homelessness, it will not actually capture those who are in housing need. That is the nature of what I hope to talk a bit about tonight.

I appreciate his interest in moving the motion. I appreciate any time the government opposite wants to rely on statistical analysis or actual real figures and data. That is a good thing. As we have found over the past, that is not something that is usually in the government tool box.

It is difficult to try to be so prescribed and so rigid with the solution. The solution, for example, suggests that the counts only be done in January in order to avoid people who may be outdoors in the summertime. It then limits the ability of municipalities and others to actually measure the true ebb and flow of homelessness.

It also suggests that there be a very rigid definition of homelessness. In fact, different cities have different meanings, different resources, and that difference needs to be reflected somehow.

Finally, the suggestion is that this is a way of allowing various governments, municipal, provincial, and federal, mostly municipal, to allocate scarce resources where they are needed most. We are always appreciative of allocating scarce resources where they are needed most, but one has to turn back and look at the root causes of homelessness and the overarching problems to determine that, in fact, we are spending scarce resources in, perhaps, the wrong way by limiting our scope to just those who are actually on the street on any given day.

In Toronto, the most recent statistics that I can find suggest that as of the end of 2013, there were 5,218 individuals who were on the street, who were homeless. There were 3,970 additional individuals living in city-administered shelters. That is amplified by the fact that there are 95,000 public housing units in the city of Toronto. Of course, under the Liberal government of Paul Martin, we stopped building public housing in the city of Toronto and many other places when the federal government got out of the business of building and administering public housing, giving it back to the cities to do, which the cities cannot afford to do.

That abandonment of the housing issue has caused there to be an ever-increasing number of people on waiting lists for public housing in the city of Toronto. As of the end of last year, there were 87,000 families waiting to get into public housing, to get into affordable

housing. There are only 94,000 units. Some of those wait-lists are 11 years long.

In a family of four looking to find suitable accommodation, the children will have grown up and left before they find that accommodation. They will be living in a tiny bachelor or one-bedroom apartment for their entire youth. That kind of problem is missed in the discussion on this motion.

The Homeless Hub, which is a research organization in the city of Toronto, supported by hospitals and others, has done several groundbreaking studies on homelessness. I would like to read their definition of what they used for one of their studies. Their study was on health and housing in transition. This was to determine whether or not being in substandard housing actually has an effect on the health of the individuals, and whether or not we are actually spending a whole lot more health care dollars because in Canada we have, and are proud of, our single-payer universal health care system.

When we misguidedly spend that money after causing the illness or the disability to take place as a result of not spending money on housing, we can often spend a whole lot more money in the health care world than we should have in the housing world.

● (1810)

It has been suggested many times by many studies that by not spending money on proper, efficient, affordable and reliable housing, we end up driving our health care costs up. The federal government has said that it is not its problem; it is the provinces' problem. What we are suggesting to the federal government is that if it invested in the housing stock in the first place, that would then avoid the health care costs down the road and the province would not need as much health care dollars and perhaps it would be willing to give some back to the federal government.

Homelessness has been defined as living in a shelter, on the street or in other places not intended for human habitation. People who are couch surfing, or staying temporarily with family or friends, people who are vulnerably housed, so the next level up I guess, if they had their own place but at some point in the past year have either been homeless or have moved at least twice are also considered homeless.

The results of the study showed that these two populations were interchangeable, that they were all homeless to some measure and the division between them was false. The people it identified as vulnerably housed were not just at risk of homelessness, but in the past 2 years they had spent almost as much time homeless, at just under five months per year, as the homeless group did at 6.5 months per year. Therefore, instead of two distinct groups this is one large severely disadvantaged group that transitions between the two housing states.

Therefore, if the limitation of defining homelessness is those who on a particular day happen to be on a street corner or living on a street grate, my hon. colleague from Edmonton East misses a huge and growing number of individuals who, for whatever reason, on that particular day are not necessarily on the street. Therefore, we run the risk of limiting our scarce resources into a population that is much smaller than would be defined by another definition of what is homelessness perhaps even the day that it is sampled.

Private Members' Business

This study on the issue of health and housing discovered that people who did not have a healthy place to live were not healthy. They had chronic health conditions, such as arthritis, hepatitis B, asthma, high blood pressure and mental health issues. More than half of them reported a past diagnosis of mental health problems and 61% had a traumatic brain injury at some point in their lives. The top reported mental health issues were depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. When they do not have a good place to eat, they also do not get enough food, they do not get quality food and they do not have a diet that is nutritious.

They also have barriers to getting the health care they need. They report having unmet health care needs, so if something gets worse, because they are unable to find or acquire health care, it then results in more costs to the health care system down the road. They are reported as not having a health card, having to wait too long for an appointment and not knowing where to go.

Of these people who are reporting as homeless or vulnerably housed, 55% have been hospitalized or have been to the emergency department at least once in the past year. Imagine if everyone in this room were to say that over half of us had been to an emergency department in the past year, the costs of our medical system would skyrocket astronomically. Individuals who are poorly housed are also a much greater cost to our health care system. I think there is a chicken and egg thing here. We are treating the health care problem, but we are not dealing with the root cause, which is the substandard housing.

I want to refer to another study because it dealt with individuals in my riding of York South—Weston. Probably the number two reason for people coming to my office is because of problems with housing. Toronto is a difficult place to live if people do not have a lot of money. These individuals who do not have a lot of money are substandardly housed and are coming to me for help, although I cannot provide a lot of help.

● (1815)

What the study discovered was that 90% of individuals who live in the apartment block style of housing, which half of Toronto's renters live in—and more than half of my riding is in rental accommodations—are at risk of being homeless, and 33% are at critical risk. In other words, one thing can happen to them and they will then be homeless. Those individuals need to be part of whatever analysis we do.

I appreciate the efforts of my friend, the member for Edmonton East, but I think we need to be a little wider in scope in determining just what we are sorting and what we are sampling in terms of the nature of homelessness.

● (1820)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to speak to the ongoing debate on the floor of the House right now with regard to homelessness in Canada and how it is reported, how the data is collected, the methodology that is used, and the definition of homelessness in the country.

This is an issue that I have come in contact with quite frequently since I was elected a member of Parliament. In fact, I actually opened my eyes quite a bit to what was happening within

populations, not only in my own riding but in other parts of the country as well, and the numbers of people who are actually struggling with trying to find adequate housing and, therefore, adequate care.

Sometimes we look at homelessness as being the person we see on the street, the person who is sleeping outside and is wandering on a day-to-day basis, but there is a lot of homelessness that goes on that we often do not see. Unfortunately, I got to experience some of that close up in my own riding since becoming a member of Parliament. That was when I started getting reports from different groups and individuals of people who were homeless, who were actually sleeping in the woods outside of communities, who were sleeping in abandoned vehicles and cars, who were sleeping in abandoned houses and properties. These were not always people we would see wandering the streets every day, but homelessness existed and it was there.

Then there were the reports of people who were couch surfing. One day I went to an aboriginal centre to meet with a group of women. I sat down with these women to find out that they were all homeless. Some of them were couch surfers and some were living in tents in the woods. What was more alarming about all of this was the fact that they were aboriginal. They had moved out of small communities to come to a larger town where they could not afford housing and therefore they ended up on the streets, or in their case I guess, wherever they could find a place. Then there was the fact that many of them had come from abusive relationships and they had to escape for their own sanity. They came to a place to find housing where it was not affordable, not available, and therefore, they ended up in the circumstance they were in. A number of them had already suffered through very traumatic experiences in their lives. A lot of them were suffering from mental illness, addictions, and so on.

It was the combination of all these factors they were dealing with. The most important factor, the very foundation of it all, was the fact that they were homeless. It goes without saying that if people do not have basic stability in their lives, if they do not have the basic services they need, it is very difficult to try to tackle all the other problems that come along with it.

Only a few weeks ago, actually over the last break, I got a call one day, on a Sunday afternoon, to tell me that one of the boarding houses in my riding was going to close. There were 33 individuals who were being housed in this facility. All of them were suffering from either mental illness, addictions, or other problems. All of a sudden, they were going to be left with nowhere to go.

Due to the great work of people in the riding, through Advanced Education and Skills, the work of the Salvation Army Church, the Red Cross, and many others, within 24 hours they were able to find appropriate housing for many of these individuals. What was noteworthy about it is that they were all aboriginal people. Again, this brings me to a point that I really feel that homelessness in our northern regions is not always looked at or measured in a way that it needs to be measured, and we often find out that a lot of the people who are coming into the larger centres from the smaller aboriginal communities find themselves tackling those issues, especially around homelessness.

Private Members' Business

• (1825)

Now these people have been put into a more appropriate facility, so while it was a traumatizing experience for them seeing this boarding house close, they are now in better, more suitable accommodations. They were never looked at as being homeless, but then again, they were never looked at in terms of whether their needs were being met.

The data has to be accurate in terms of how it reflects the lives of people and defines whether some particular housing is having a positive impact on their lives. Many of these individuals have shared stories of how they were lodging in boarding rooms with no doors. They were in facilities with no water. They were not able to take showers, because the facilities did not work. Then we start questioning other things. Were they getting medications on time? These are the real issues that exist in our country that people are dealing with on a regular basis.

I have often made cases and claims with regard to homelessness when I have had others throw statistics back at me. They say that these are the numbers, and this is what they are saying. Oftentimes, the reality of what is happening in many communities and towns in our country is not always what is reflected in data, unfortunately. Sometimes when people are reaching out for help, we should be reaching back with solutions, not just saying that the numbers say this, that, or something else. We are already seeing today, with motions like this being brought to the House of Commons, that quite often the data is not reflective of what the real need is in the country.

I really feel that in addition to brushing up on our data and redefining homelessness, there is a lot more that needs to be done. That includes looking at the reality of the situation we face, region by region, across this country, and looking at the impacts in certain sectors, whether it be situations where people are immigrating to this country or situations where people have been long-term citizens in this country. It includes other areas, such as what women face if they are going through traumatizing experiences in their lives that often leave them homeless. There are people who suffer from mental illness and do not always have appropriate care.

In first nations and northern aboriginal societies we see this quite often.

Homelessness is also defined, in my mind, by the fact that there is not appropriate and adequate housing. I was actually in communities in northern Labrador last week where there was inadequate housing. Not only that, there was not enough housing to even come close to meeting the need. There were houses where up to 18 or 20 people were living in one house just so they could have a roof over their heads in a very cold, northern region of the country.

There is a lot that can be done. There needs to be more focus put on homelessness in this country. There needs to be more investment to ensure that all Canadians have a safety network and access not only to good housing but to good health care and longevity in their lives. It takes a lot more pressure off our health care system and off our country when we know that its citizens are being cared for and looked after appropriately.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I

appreciate the opportunity to speak to the motion. I am glad to add my voice to the debate on Motion No. 455, which has been introduced by the hon. member for Edmonton East. I strongly support the motion, which calls for one nationally standardized point-in-time approach for municipalities to use in carrying out counts of homeless people. This is not as it might first appear, a trivial matter of bookkeeping. It goes to the heart of our problem with homelessness. Very simply, we cannot solve a problem until we have accurate information about it.

We are all aware of homeless people on the streets, but can any of us say with certainty just how many homeless people there are in our villages, our towns, our cities, our provinces, our territories, or across the country? This may surprise my fellow members, but there is no agreement on the number of homeless people in Canada. That is largely because there is no nationally standardized way to collect data. Even the definition of homeless varies from place to place and province to province.

Depending on what definition we use or what methods are used to survey the homeless population, we can get significantly different numbers. This makes it hard to measure our progress in fighting homelessness. Motion No. 455, if adopted, would give us an important tool to make our homeless programs more effective.

Homelessness is a complex problem. Factors include the effects of mental illness, addiction, family breakdown, physical disabilities, chronic unemployment, and so on. Many homeless people need long-term help from social agencies as well as a secure place to live while they try to get their lives back on track.

In 2007, our government introduced the homeless partnering strategy, also known as the HPS. This strategy involves working directly with communities to prevent and reduce homelessness across the country. HPS funding is delivered to 61 designated communities. In action plan 2013, we announced that we would invest almost \$600 million over five years to renew the HPS. Thanks to this and its community partners, thousands of homeless people have been helped.

Through the HPS and starting April 1 of this year, we have introduced the housing first approach. In the past, homeless people were often expected to solve their personal problems, to beat their addictions for example, before they were allowed to have a permanent home of their own. The intention was to motivate them to make good choices and good changes in their lives, but this did not always work.

Under housing first, the homeless get a permanent, secure, and safe home right away, at the front end. Then they get the support that they need from a team of professionals to help them meet the other challenges they face. Housing first has been proven to work. It is an evidence-based program and the economic impact is clear.

Preliminary results from the pilot project indicate that for every \$2 spent on housing first participants, the system saves \$1 by reducing the cost of public services such as police detentions, hospital treatment, and shelter stays. In the case of high-service users, the results are even more compelling with a savings of over \$3 for that same \$2 spent.

Private Members' Business

Over a 12-month period, housing first participants spent an average of 73% of their time in stable housing. Compare that to 30% for homeless people in a control group. This is significant evidence-based success. The success of this program gives us hope that we can not only significantly reduce the extent of homelessness in Canada, but possibly eventually eliminate it. Is that not a worthy goal, one all members in the House would support?

How will we know if we are making progress toward a goal unless we have a consistent and reliable way of counting the homeless?

Just before I close I want to address one of the NDP's comments from the first hour of debate on this private member's legislation.

I can assure all members of the House that the implementation of a standard point-in-time method would not change or reduce the amount of monies available to fight homelessness in Canada. Funding has been renewed, not cut, and there is no interruption of service as we transition to housing first.

● (1830)

Simply put, if a standard point-in-time method was used, it would give us a snapshot of homelessness on that particular day. It would also provide a baseline that would allow us to measure change from year to year. This would help communities direct their resources more efficiently and more effectively.

We owe it to Canadians to use public funds wisely, and we owe it to the homeless to adapt more effective approaches, like housing first. The point-in-time method proposed in Motion No. 455 would make it easier to meet these goals.

Therefore, I ask the House to please support this motion. It is what is best for the homeless in our country.

● (1835)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand in support of Motion No. 455, standardized point-in-time homelessness. I am very pleased we are debating it today.

As a person who has been calling for more data, and more consistent data, I am pleased to see that my colleagues across the way, at least on this motion, are beginning to realize the importance of having data to make informed decisions on long-term planning.

Whether it is homelessness, planning for old age, planning schools, university population, or a topic that has been on everybody's mind, employment and what our real labour needs are, data is what gives us the scientific evidence. However, we have recently seen the government using Kijiji economics to bolster its data to justify a growth in the temporary foreign worker program.

To get back to the subject of homelessness, as much as I am pleased that this motion is here before us, I believe it is missing something, which I hope will get addressed.

As much as the motion calls for a count of those who are homeless, it misses some of the categories. Members should think about the fact that the data being called for would not give us a complete picture because some groups would be overlooked, specifically women, children and those who are invisible. There is a whole segment of our society, through no fault of its own, that is invisible to us, which is very sad.

However, we are going to support the motion because it is at least the beginning of an acknowledgement that we do need data.

Collecting data is not easy. I recognize that even though we need homeless action plans to combat homelessness which are regional and specific to different parts of the country, I believe that when we are collecting data, it is good to have some definitions of what we mean by homelessness and who is covered. However, I do not see that in the motion.

I live in one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada, Surrey, where population growth is happening at a fast rate and there are incredible pressures on our city when it comes to investment in transit, for which it did not get much support from the federal government, and for other infrastructures. I am a little concerned that this could be another one of those moments when we see more costs being downloaded onto municipalities. I am concerned about that and I would be remiss if I did not raise it today.

The motion is silent on where the funds for training and data collection would come from. There has to be training for those who are doing the data collection. Therefore, we need to work on the methodology a bit and also on who will end up paying for this.

In municipalities like mine, we are very concerned about homelessness, as are people across Canada. It is good to have data because it will help to drive future policy. However, at the same time, we have to look at the root causes of homelessness.

For example, in my beautiful province of British Columbia, many people ended up on the streets once some of our facilities were closed for those who had mental health challenges. These people were unable to manage without the kind of supervision they had in the facility.

● (1840)

I also know that child poverty is on the rise and that my province of British Columbia has a very high child poverty rate. As well, the reports I have read recently have validated what seniors in my riding are telling me, which is that they now have to choose between medication and eating, and sometimes they fall behind with their rent. With the growth in senior poverty, we have some major concerns.

We should be looking at the high unemployment among youth, which has driven many youth into the homeless sphere. We should be taking a look at the rise in seniors' poverty and at the number of women living in poverty. We must not ignore children living in poverty or the high number of families in aboriginal communities who are living well below the poverty line. Collecting data is a good start.

I heard my colleague say that the government is not going to renege on its commitment. In the 2013-14 budget, the government announced that it would renew the homelessness partnering strategy, known as HPS—we are all so fond of acronyms—for five years, by investing \$119 million per year starting in March 2014. Between 2011 and 2014, the total budget for the HPS was \$134.8 million per year. The HPS budget for 2014 to 2018, therefore, has a net loss of \$15.8 million per year. That is a huge hit to an area that absolutely needs to be addressed.

There are many reasons people are homeless, such as unemployment, inability to make an income, or mental health issues, yet at a time when poverty is on the increase and more people than ever are struggling and a growing number of homeless are on the streets, the government is going to be reducing the budget by almost \$16 million per year. That causes me great concern, as it does to those who are out there.

Another key point I want to make at this stage is that we cannot solve problems by collecting data alone. We need a national housing strategy, and we need it now. We have waited too long. When I am back in my riding, it is very hard to explain that in a country as wealthy as ours, in one of the top G7 countries around the world, we have these kinds of homelessness and poverty levels, and now we have a government that is cutting money to address homelessness in a very serious way. A budget of \$135 million per year, approximately, is not huge. If we take \$16 million out of that, it is a huge hit, and that is a major concern.

We have to remember that when people are homeless, a certain amount of depression sets in and mental health issues grow, but it also adds to some of the petty crimes that we hear about. In my neighbourhood in Surrey, every time I have coffee with my constituents at a local coffee shop, the number one issue that comes up over and over again involves break-ins and petty crimes such as people snatching purses, and it is the people who do not have anywhere to live.

I am not saying all crimes are being done by the homeless; I am saying that it drives people into crime when there is no infrastructure in place. As I said, if the government wants to leave a mark, it would produce and implement a national housing strategy and introduce a poverty reduction plan for children.

• (1845)

I always live in hope that one of these days my colleagues across the way, who do such great speeches about being caring about their communities, will pay attention to some of the most vulnerable who do not have a voice for themselves and who need parliamentarians to be their advocates.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Edmonton East for bringing this motion forward. We know that every city has its own method of calculating the number of homeless, but this can lead to varying results that make it rather difficult to plan adequately and to meet the needs of the homeless.

What the motion does is to recommend a standardized point-in-time approach for use in communities across the country to measure homelessness. The goal is to provide communities with the tools they need to implement a consistent homeless count.

Private Members' Business

As my colleagues also pointed out, under the renewed homelessness partnering strategy, the government is adopting a housing first approach to homelessness. Housing first gives people who are homeless a place to live immediately and permanently, and then gives them the necessary supports to improve the other aspects of their lives.

In many cases, this means getting them help, whether for addiction or a mental or a physical illness, so that they can get back on their feet and lead productive lives.

The recent Mental Health Commission of Canada's pilot project, the at home/chez soi project, demonstrated that the housing first approach rapidly reduces homelessness while alleviating pressure on shelter, health, police, and judicial services. We are incredibly proud of this policy shift.

Through the pilot project, we now know that housing first rapidly ends homelessness and leads to other positive outcomes for quality of life. We also know that it is a sound financial investment that can lead to significant cost savings.

For those participants who were in the highest need, every \$10 invested led to an average savings of \$21.72. We also know that it works over a length of time. For the housing first group, an average of 73% of participants were in stable housing, in comparison to 32% for the usual care group over the course of the study. As I said before, we are very proud of this policy shift because these are the strongest results we have ever seen in an attempt to reduce homelessness.

Communities with housing first funding targets, under the homelessness partnering strategy, will be required to implement an initial point-in-time count, but the standardized point-in-time approach can be used by any community wishing to do such a count. The count will determine baseline levels of homelessness.

This standard point-in-time method will allow us to track changes in the Canadian homeless population and allow local communities to adjust their programs to prevent and reduce homelessness.

The point-in-time approach is widely used in the United States and Australia to track changes in levels of homelessness and to measure the success of efforts to reduce it. In a recent report to Congress, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development used national point-in-time results to demonstrate its efforts to reduce homelessness since 2010.

Also, the count will give us a much clearer idea of the overall extent of the problem. When communities use a point-in-time approach to better understand the demographics of their homeless population—for example, how many veterans, aboriginals, seniors, or young people are homeless—they will be better able to reach out to these groups and to provide the support they need to get stable housing.

Since 2006, our government has worked with communities across Canada to develop local solutions to homelessness. Whereas the approach to the problem was once fragmented, our leadership has helped mobilize a more cohesive and effective response.

Adjournment Proceedings

With the launch of the point-in-time initiative, the federal government will help communities shift away from a focus on emergency aid to the homeless, toward longer term solutions. This approach is an integral part of the national homelessness strategy, which acknowledges that communities are best placed to address local homelessness issues and that the federal government's role is to support them in finding local solutions.

The point-in-time initiative simply makes sense. That is why I urge all members to support this motion.

• (1850)

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank all my colleagues for their interventions today and on the previous day as well.

I would close by simply stating a couple of things that I do not want to be misconstrued. There is nothing simple about homelessness. There is nothing simple about the difficulty in analyzing and assessing what the true needs really are.

Doing a point-in-time count and coming up with certain specific definitions would bring it in line with the United States. They have been doing this throughout the United States for a number of years.

I believe what epitomizes the necessity of doing this is the last two counts that were down, one in Calgary and one in Edmonton. Calgary counted in January, and in the Calgary count, they came up with something like 60 people. They were counted by still being out on the street. The Edmonton count, done in October, counted something like 1,100 people who were out on the street.

We can see that the difference in the number of people had largely to do with weather. As a young person, I used to do a lot of camping out. There are a good number of people who will be visiting the cities, and they will camp out in the parks in the River Valley area. They would be like me. I had a home. I just was away from my home, because I preferred to visit Montreal, Toronto, and different parts of the country.

We have to be careful of statistical analysis. In the tent city set up in Edmonton, there would have been a substantial number who really were visiting the city and camping out there while they are visiting.

It is a very complex issue. Certainly there is no one simple answer. I think we can get to the bottom of the issue statistically by doing a thorough definition of who we want to count. I believe that January would be a common point in time to be counting across the country to come up with statistics.

This does not mean that the count methodology cannot include other local conditions and issues, such as health issues or other things they may wish to include in their particular counts. However, the national count that is turned over to the federal authorities should have the statistical information that is done throughout the United States. It should be done across Canada so that we can have some basic formulated statistics to work from.

I have been following this issue for 14 or 15 years and have visited some 120 or 130 homeless shelters in Canada and the United States. I have been to the shelters in January, late at night. Certainly cities like Edmonton can do far better in their planning for

emergency shelter than opening the floors of LRT stations and putting out Red Cross blankets to emergency house people because it is January and they desperately need a place to go for their safety. Surely we can do better than that.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 7, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as you know, Canada's major banks made huge profits once again in 2013, in particular as a result of increased bank fees. These fees are a hot topic in my riding, but I think this issue concerns everyone. All Canadians are affected by bank fees. This issue affects business people, small business owners, the middle class, and the least fortunate. Everyone is affected by the fact that the major banks impose surcharge after surcharge. We need to take action.

I want to share some figures. In total, Canada's six major banks earned more than \$30 billion in profit. I am sharing these figures because when we take a close look at them we can see that each of these banks made huge profits. Here are the annual profits of Canadian banks: the Royal Bank of Canada, for example, made \$8.4 billion in profit; Scotiabank made \$6.7 billion; TD Canada Trust made \$6.1 billion; BMO made \$4.2 billion; CIBC made \$3.4 billion and National Bank; of Canada made \$1.5 billion.

Adjournment Proceedings

Every year, we see the same thing: the banks continue to rack up billions of dollars in bank fees. We cannot help but think that these banks are making profits at someone else's expense. It is at the expense of all Canadian consumers who use their services. It is time that this Conservative government restored order.

On the other side, we also see that Canadian household debt has reached an all-time high. In 1980, for instance, the ratio of household debt to personal disposable income was 66% whereas it is now 164%. That is unbelievable. The Governor of the Bank of Canada, Stephen Poloz, described household debt as a major threat to the Canadian economy.

More than ever, the Canadian government must act, show leadership, and address the problem of bank fees if it wants to demonstrate that the Canadian economy is really one of its priorities. If that is the case, it must act and show leadership to save the Canadian economy from these bank fees, which are threatening and increasingly crushing the most disadvantaged and the middle class.

Credit card interest rates can be as high as 18.9% for cards issued by financial institutions and 24% to 28.8% for cards issued by department stores and gas companies. That is huge.

We in the NDP have practical solutions that demonstrate our ability to help consumers in 2015. We urge the Conservative government to act, to take note of the issue and to restore balance in the banking sector, because banks are making disproportionate profits, probably on the backs of consumers.

That is the major distinction that needs to be made. We understand that banks can make profits, but when they are making billions of dollars in profits, there is clearly a need to act and stop subsidizing them as the Conservatives are doing.

My question is simple: do the Conservatives intend to act on this issue?

• (1900)

[*English*]

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to once again educate the hon. member as to the many measures our government has taken to empower consumers struggling with financial products and services that are becoming more and more sophisticated. With the financial markets innovating constantly, it can be difficult for Canadians to manage the exceedingly complicated financial decisions that they must make throughout their lives. This is an issue our government takes seriously. That is why we have taken action on it.

We introduced regulations relating to credit agreements, including lines of credit and credit cards, which came into force in 2010. These regulations limit business practices that are not beneficial to consumers. These measures require the provision of clear and timely information to Canadians about credit products with a particular emphasis on credit cards. Specifically, the regulations mandate an effective 21-day interest-free grace period on all new credit card purchases when a customer pays the outstanding balance in full.

The regulations also lower interest costs by mandating allocations of payments in favour of the consumer. They allow consumers to keep better track of their personal finances by requiring express consent for credit limit increases. They limit debt collection practices that financial institutions use in contacting a consumer to collect on a debt. They provide clear information in credit contracts and application forms through a summary box that sets out key features such as interest rates and fees. They help consumers manage their credit card obligations by providing information on the time it would take to fully repay the balance if only the minimum payment is made every month. Finally, they mandate advanced disclosure of interest rate increases prior to their taking effect, even if this information had been included in the credit contract.

In addition, the regulations require that any disclosure be made by a federally regulated financial institution in a language and presented in a manner that is clear, simple and not misleading.

These measures empower and protect Canadian consumers and increase their financial literacy by providing them with the right information at the right time so they can make financial decisions that best suit their needs.

Let me also remind the hon. member that our government's policy is not to impose undue restrictions on banks but rather to ensure customer complaints are handled effectively through two key elements: an internal dispute resolution mechanism and an independent complaint handling body.

In the time remaining, let me describe very quickly how the complaint handling process works and how the two elements of the process work together.

The financial sector third-party dispute resolution currently requires consumers to first attempt to resolve the issue with the bank's internal ombudsman. Consumers have the right to request a written copy of the bank ombudsman's final decision. Should consumers want to pursue their complaint further, the dispute resolution providers operate as parallel systems to the traditional courts. However, individuals always retain the right to seek redress through the courts should they feel that the independent third-party dispute resolution body does not address the matter to their satisfaction.

The institutions are also required to disclose their specific dispute resolution process to the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, the FCAC, and to the public. In carrying out its responsibilities, the agency ensures that federally regulated financial institutions adhere to the consumer provisions of the legislation governing financial institutions and to their commitments to the public. In addition, the FCAC assists individual consumers with inquiries about financial services and undertakes consumer education activities to help ensure that consumers are well informed.

Adjournment Proceedings

Finally, our government believes Canadian consumers deserve accessible and effective financial services that meet the needs of consumers and operate in the public interest. We will continue to ensure their interests are well served.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, clearly the Conservatives are not doing enough since more than one out of every two Canadians lives paycheque to paycheque and is struggling with the rising cost of rent, food and electricity. The cost of everything is going up.

My colleague was saying that the Conservatives are not going to impose restrictions on banks but instead are going to give them free reign. Of course, the banks have to make billions more in profit and continue to see that profit grow exponentially. I know that everyone is thinking that this does not make sense. Clearly, these billions of dollars in profit were earned on the backs of Canadian consumers. It makes no sense whatsoever.

On the other hand, the NDP is constructive. We propose sound, practical, effective solutions that demonstrate our incredible leadership. For example, we are proposing to limit ATM fees to 50¢ per transaction. We are proposing to put an end to prohibitive credit card interest rates and set a prime rate of 5% so that Canadians can access credit without the banks making enormous profits.

It seems to me that there are solutions out there. The Conservative government just needs to have the balls to implement them.

• (1905)

[*English*]

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Mr. Speaker, let me reassure the hon. member that ensuring consumers are protected in their dealings with financial institutions is an essential commitment of our government.

As we announced in economic action plan 2013, we are working to develop a comprehensive financial consumer code to better protect consumers of financial products and ensure that they have the necessary tools to make responsible financial decisions.

To make the framework even more relevant to rapid technological innovation, the code would be adapted to suit the needs of consumers today and well into the future. For instance, it would respond to the realities of a digital and remote banking environment as well as to the needs of vulnerable Canadians, including people with disabilities and seniors at risk of financial abuse.

We will continue to remain vigilant to ensure that our financial system remains a competitive Canadian advantage and that consumers receive the highest possible standards of service.

[*Translation*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have risen in the House several times to support the people of Grenville, its heritage committee and the RCM of Argenteuil in their attempts to save the Grenville Canal, a heritage gem in my region.

Hundreds of people from the region came on board to launch our campaign to save the canal, and thousands of people signed the petition that I brought to Ottawa on their behalf.

Since then, I have repeatedly asked the government to take immediate action. I have followed up to see whether any action will be taken.

I am still working with local stakeholders to prevent this regional gem from deteriorating. Unfortunately, it is gradually falling to pieces.

We have received no response from the government, just empty promises. On February 4, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment tried to reassure me by saying that:

...our government is strongly committed to supporting communities and to the preservation of Canada's built heritage....Our government will continue to be proud stewards of the Rideau Canal and work to ensure that it is protected in order to provide personal moments of inspiring discovery for Canadians and for people from around the world.

That is great for the Rideau Canal.

On February 14, the Minister of the Environment answered with the following:

Budget 2014 is investing a significant amount of money in urgent areas, including nearly \$400 million to fix dams, bridges, and highways through national parks that are in urgent need of repair.

I am not talking about the Rideau Canal or bridges, highways and dams.

I would like the government to stop answering questions that are really important to my constituents with snippets of their economic action plan, which really does nothing for my region.

I have seen the deterioration of the canal up close. With support from the RCM, the municipality has done an excellent job of limiting access along the canal because of the risk of collapse. Efforts have been made to rebuild some of the collapsed portions. However, that is just a temporary solution because the canal continues to deteriorate. In fact, in the past few weeks, there has been another collapse.

What the municipality of Grenville, the RCM of Argenteuil and the NDP are proposing is to have heritage infrastructure in good condition that benefits everyone both economically and culturally. Unfortunately, the government seems to forget the important leadership role it must play when it comes to Canadian history.

I will therefore repeat my question on behalf of the people of Grenville, Argenteuil and my entire riding of Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel and all Canadians who want to protect Canada's built heritage.

Will the federal government do its job and commit to saving the Grenville Canal?

• (1910)

[*English*]

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after decades of neglect on behalf of the Liberals, our government has made record investments in the infrastructure and maintenance of our national historic sites and national parks.

Adjournment Proceedings

NATIONAL DEFENCE

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the member opposite for highlighting our 2014 budget commitment of nearly \$400 million for improving highways, bridges and dams.

The Grenville Canal land and its management are, and have been, the responsibility of the municipality of Grenville since 1990. On the advice of the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, the creation of the Grenville Canal, and its significance following the War of 1812, was designated as a national historic event in 1929. In 1931, a large stone cairn was constructed to hold a bronze commemorative plaque. That original 1930s cairn and plaque are still in place today, proudly sharing with Canadians the historical significance of the Grenville Canal.

A review of the designation was undertaken in October 2005 at the request of the municipality. The status of designations committee, a subcommittee of the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, reaffirmed the 1929 board decision.

In Canada, protection of heritage property that is not owned by the federal government is the responsibility of each provincial and territorial government under its respective legislation. While a national historic designation helps to focus public attention on a particular site, it does not affect ownership of the site or provide protection.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, despite all the excuses given by my colleague, the federal government has a moral responsibility when it comes to the Grenville Canal.

Significant work is required to reopen the canal. The municipality and the residents of Grenville, barely 1,000 people, cannot take on the cost of this work alone.

The federal government, which owned and managed the canal for 160 years, is responsible for Canada's historic sites and the Ottawa River waterway, where the canal is located.

Given that the municipality is seeking assistance from the federal government to protect its canal, which is very important to it for tourism and economic reasons, will the Conservatives continue to avoid this responsibility, or will they finally act in a proactive way for this canal and my region?

[*English*]

Mr. Bernard Trotter: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, budget 2014 provides nearly \$400 million over five years to make further improvements to our highways, bridges and dams located in our national parks and along our heritage canals. These improvements are required after years of neglect on behalf of the Liberals and will facilitate better access to these national treasures.

Through our government's record investments, we will ensure the continued safe and efficient movement of people and goods, create employment opportunities in many communities and support economic growth.

Our government is proud of these investments and will continue to promote and preserve our national parks and national historic sites so Canadians can enjoy them for years to come.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to speak about a question I asked in the House concerning the options report for the F-35 jets. This relates to the government's effort two years ago to essentially prorogue the program of the F-35 purchases.

Why did the government want to prorogue that program? It was because the heat got pretty hot. This has been a systemic failure of a procurement project for military equipment of essentially massive proportions, and the government was caught out. It provided information that according to the Auditor General and the Parliamentary Budget Officer was not true and in fact represented a government that was keeping two sets of books, one for internal consumption and one for the public.

To avoid the scrutiny of the House and the media, the government did what it called a reset to re-examine the options for replacing the CF-18s.

This has been an incredible failure to deliver by the government, with example after example in the area of military equipment causing a growing lack of confidence by industry in the government's ability to manage military equipment procurement. It is causing troops to have to use aging equipment, which can be dangerous, as we saw with the *Protecteur*, a supply ship on the Pacific coast that burst into flames in mid-sea.

Let us go back to the F-35 purchase decision.

First, the government never addressed the question of "Why jets?", not just what jets. It went right to a particular product and went full bore ahead to purchase it. "Why jets?" would be an appropriate question to address and to consult on. What is government's predicted need for defence equipment 10, 20, 30, and 40 years from now, and what kind of equipment would serve that need?

These questions were never asked. There was no statement of requirements that would determine what the replacement for the CF-18s would be required to accomplish. Instead, there was a sole source of a very expensive product called the F-35, which was still under development.

Second, this was based on the misinformation that we, being Canada, were already committed to a contract for the F-35. That was simply not true, even though that was the justification put forward by the Prime Minister himself and the Minister of National Defence.

Third, there was no competition, so there was no opportunity for other providers of potential replacements for the F-35 to demonstrate that their products could meet those requirements that had not actually been articulated.

Last, the cost of this particular program has been zooming into the stratosphere. First it was to be \$9 billion, then \$16 billion, then \$29 billion, then \$46 billion, and now two think tanks are telling us that this is still underestimating the true cost.

Why not at least start being transparent and put the report forward, as I asked in my question?

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1915)

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss our government's actions related to the replacement of Canada's fighter fleet.

Let me start by saying that after a decade of darkness for the men and women in uniform under the Liberal government, it is the Conservative government that made the decision to make the single largest investment in Canada's troops.

When our government established the seven-point plan for CF-18 replacement, it embarked on the most independent and transparent procurement review in the history of Canada. Through the seven-point plan, we are committed to ensuring that due diligence, oversight, and transparency are applied in every respect.

[*Translation*]

To summarize, we established a National Fighter Procurement Secretariat and the Deputy Minister Governance Committee, which have primary responsibility for decision-making, coordination, and oversight of the plan.

We also appointed two eminent Canadians—former auditor general Denis Desautels and economist Kenneth Norrie—as independent members of the Deputy Minister Governance Committee in order to enhance the impartiality of the decision-making process.

[*English*]

One of the most important aspects of the seven-point plan is the evaluation of options. The Royal Canadian Air Force has undertaken an extensive assessment of the aircraft against the missions of the Canada first defence strategy. An independent panel consisting of people who have the technical know-how, strong financial backgrounds, and detailed knowledge of Canada's military and procurement systems has overseen the evaluation of options. We even put an open critic of the procurement on the panel. The independent panel ensured that the evaluation of options was rigorous and impartial and that the results to be made public are comprehensive and understandable.

This independent panel is made up of four external experts: Mr. Keith Coulter, a former fighter pilot and chief of the Communications Security Establishment; Mr. Philippe Lagassé, a noted expert on procurement and an assistant professor of public and international affairs at the University of Ottawa; Mr. James Mitchell, a former senior public servant who currently sits on the audit committees of two government departments; and Mr. Rod Monette, a former comptroller general of Canada.

We have been very clear from the outset of this plan that we would make the results public. We have reiterated this on several occasions. The Liberals did not invent this plan for disclosure, and their demands for it are pure theatrics.

•(1920)

[*Translation*]

In fact, the public can already access information about much of the work carried out under the seven-point plan. To keep Canadians

up to date on progress made under this plan, the secretariat frequently posts information on its website.

For example, the Department of National Defence has published two of its annual updates. Canadians should know that the lifecycle costs in the 2012 and 2013 National Defence annual reports were subject to an independent audit by outside experts KPMG and Raymond Chabot respectively.

[*English*]

Again, I want to repeat that when the government established the independent panel to oversee the evaluation of options, one of its very important roles was to make the findings of the evaluation of options understandable. It was our clear intention from the outset to make this report public. Of course, in exchange for their agreement to participate in the evaluation of options, companies and governments involved requested that commercially sensitive and classified information related to the aircraft not be made public.

[*Translation*]

In the coming weeks, the ministers will carefully study many reports that evaluate the options for maintaining the capabilities of the Canadian Forces' fighter jets. The reports also include industrial spinoffs, costs, and other factors to be considered in making the decision.

Our government is looking closely at the cost and risks associated with the design of the aircraft as part of the decision-making process.

[*English*]

While the Liberals are politicking and grandstanding, we must not lose sight of the key point. We must ensure that the Canadian Forces have the equipment that they need to do the work that we ask of them. This is not a small request. It requires great and unimaginable sacrifice, and, in return, we owe them no less than to ensure that we get them the right equipment to do the job that we ask of them.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, with respect to military equipment procurement, the government has not one shred of credibility left. There have been eight lost years in which the government has not only made an enormous set of promises without prioritizing them, but it has failed to deliver on any procurement that was a competitive bid at this point. Therefore, we are seeing a failure, whether it is land, sea, or air, in terms of the government providing equipment for troops that they deserve.

In conclusion, this is not a recoverable situation for the government. It has compounded matters by making stealth cuts to National Defence, including \$14 billion in lapsed funding, and other budget cuts that are causing the armed forces to scramble just to take care of ill and injured soldiers and veterans. It is failing on that.

I invite the member opposite to consider the eight lost years under the Conservative government that have been all promise and no delivery.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate for the member that when our government established the seven-point plan for CF-18 replacement, it embarked on the most independent and transparent review in the history of Canada in order to replace Canada's fighter jets. We have an independent panel of experts that is overseeing the evaluation of options.

Over the next few weeks, ministers will be carefully reviewing a number of reports on the evaluation of options, including fighter capabilities, industrial benefits, costs, and other factors related to the decision to replace our CF-18 fleet.

[*Translation*]

I can assure the members of the House and the Canadian public that we are continuing to carry out the comprehensive plan we have put in place.

I would ask all parties to remember that respected independent third-party examiners are actively involved and that they feel the process is appropriately thorough and impartial.

[*English*]

Our government remains committed to respecting taxpayers' dollars while providing our brave men and women in uniform with the fighter aircraft they need to carry out the missions that will be required of them.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:24 p.m.)

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