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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, May 28, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 28, 2014

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[*English*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS CONVENTION

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, over three days last weekend, some 500 delegates from across Quebec met in the beautiful town of Rimouski, making this Bloc Québécois convention the biggest gathering of its kind in Quebec in 2014.

The delegates demonstrated how important Quebec's regions are to the Bloc Québécois and how much the party values their development and enhancement. Men and women of all ages worked hard to define the 20 basic principles that will guide the Bloc Québécois through to the 2015 election.

Unlike the other parties in the House, the Bloc Québécois reaffirmed that it will never sacrifice Quebec's interests in the hopes of catering to the other Canadian provinces. The delegates were able to attend an important debate between the two leadership candidates, and they used the event as an opportunity to put a spotlight on issues that are of concern to them.

They are calling for a reversal of the decision to eliminate door-to-door mail delivery and demanding that no oil or gas transportation or development projects be approved at the expense of the environment or community safety.

They are saying that the Quebec consensus must be vigorously defended.

We will do it.

[*English*]

REMEMBER NOVEMBER 11 ASSOCIATION

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2008 a group of Londoners came together to establish the Remember November 11 Association, dedicated to help honour our heroes by promoting more remembrance events and further strengthen our nation's commitment to remember our fallen heroes.

Led by director Sean Wilson, the Remember November 11 Association has purchased 1.2 million poppies, which have been distributed to Legions and elementary and secondary schools across London-Middlesex.

This Saturday I, along with members of our community, will come together to plant poppies to pay tribute to our brave men and women, past and present, of the Canadian Armed Forces. Local companies have donated materials and equipment, and generous Londoners have given monetary donations to make this event possible.

I encourage all Canadians to visit remembernovember11.com to learn more about this great initiative and to make a donation.

Lest we forget.

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VANCOUVER COASTAL HEALTH

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Vancouver Coastal Health is eliminating a number of primary care services at public health facilities in Vancouver, including several in my riding. These provide some of the most essential elements of care delivered by health professionals at places like the Evergreen and Mid-Main clinics.

The services being shut down are models of preventive community-based health care. We know that multidisciplinary clinics promote better health outcomes and, when properly supported, provide the most efficient care. This misguided and short-sighted decision will leave thousands of patients without regular access to a primary health care provider. It will cost us more in the long run and hurt patient health.

It is a direct result of cuts to the Canada health transfer by Conservatives in Ottawa and poor management of our health care system by Liberals in British Columbia.

Statements by Members

Canadians want national and provincial governments that will support primary care and prevention and a strong public health care system.

I call on the Conservative government to immediately restore the funding necessary to keep these vital services available to citizens in Vancouver.

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HIGHBURY CANCO CORPORATION

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 20 I received news that the H.J. Heinz Company had completed a business deal with the Highbury Canco Corporation to purchase the Heinz Company facility in Leamington.

It only makes sense to have a co-packer in Canada, as Leamington is the tomato capital of Canada and our American counterparts are looking to the Canadian market for tomato juice.

Effective June 27, Highbury Canco will take over all aspects of the operation at the Leamington factory and will continue to manufacture some of Canada's favourite products, including Heinz Tomato juice, Heinz beans and Heinz canned pastas.

Highbury Canco will keep the Leamington plant globally competitive and also looks to build the business by seeking out new opportunities to create or pack new products. Already, approximately 10 farmers have signed on to grow tomatoes for Highbury Canco, and it plans to hire 250 employees before resuming operations in June.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Highbury Canco and wish it every success in this endeavour. It is great for Canada and it is great for Leamington.

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[Translation]

CANADA POST

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the constant cuts to postal services in New Brunswick's rural areas are unacceptable.

The Saint-Paul post office and, as councillor Gilles Cormier tells me, the one in Haute-Aboujagane will have reduced hours. The Conservatives keep attacking the rural areas and treating the people who live there like second-class citizens.

By reducing these services, the government is not only hurting local businesses but also limiting access to an essential service for many Canadians.

[English]

Cuts in places such as the Cape Tormentine post office are not only detrimental to the communities, which depend on postal service, but also to local employees who have seen their hours cut or, worse, eliminated.

I call upon the Conservative government to not only reverse these cuts but to find other and better ways to modernize Canada Post.

[Translation]

The government must stop punishing people who live in rural areas across Canada.

* * *

[English]

TROY'S RUN FOUNDATION

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 27-year-old Troy Adams is the founder of Troy's Run Foundation, a volunteer-based organization focused upon creating a better lifestyle for brain injury survivors and their loved ones.

Eleven years ago, Troy was in a serious car accident that resulted in brain injury. Among his many therapies, he found that running cleared his mind best, which motivated him to run across Canada in 2012 in establishing the Troy's Run Foundation.

It was an honour for me to meet with him when got to Ottawa.

Troy is a role model and an inspiration for brain injury survivors. He speaks at schools, services groups, and charities. His focus is on hope, prevention, and education, which led to his Helmets for All campaign promoting bicycle and sports helmet safety.

As June 1 is National Brain Injury Awareness Month, please join me in congratulating Troy because of the part he is doing to make life better for brain injury survivors.

* * *

● (1410)

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this month Montreal and the borough of Little Burgundy celebrated 75 years of the gift of music, a gift from their native son Oliver Jones.

On May 11 I had the pleasure of presiding as master of ceremonies over a tribute to Dr. Jones given by the historic Union United Church for his years of devotion to the community of Little Burgundy. On May 20, Dr. Jones was named an honorary citizen of Montreal.

He holds four honorary doctorates, has multiple Juno wins, and was named a Chevalier du Québec and to the Order of Canada. He is an inspiration of musicians of all genres. He is a gifted man, a humble man and a man who demonstrates the power of music to bring people together. He is respected and adored throughout Quebec, Canada and, indeed, the world.

On behalf of the House, I congratulate Oliver Jones on 75 years of bringing pride to the people of Little Burgundy and to Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was 96 years ago today that the Republic of Azerbaijan was established as the first democratic and secular republic in the Muslim world.

Statements by Members

Among the most important accomplishments of that first republic was granting suffrage to women in 1919, making Azerbaijan the first Muslim nation to grant women political rights equal to men. Interestingly, that was the same year Canadian women got the vote, and years before British and American women gained the same.

Alas, this independent Azerbaijani state did not last long. Less than two years later, the Soviet Red Army rolled into Baku, and a free and democratic Republic of Azerbaijan was no more.

This story does, however, ultimately have a happy ending. Shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Republic of Azerbaijan was re-established in 1991.

Recently, Azerbaijan took the courageous step of joining Canada in support of UN resolution 262 that called on all nations, including Russia, to recognize the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

As chair of the Canada-Azerbaijan Friendship Group, I congratulate the Azeri people on this special day and wish the Republic of Azerbaijan a bright future.

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WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, imagine how many work accidents could be avoided each year if people would just stop to ask for help instead of rushing ahead with the task at hand. That was the message of a work safety video entitled *Just Ask*, which placed first both in Saskatchewan and also nationally in a national safety video contest.

Just Ask was produced by Humboldt Collegiate Institute students Dylan Pappenfoot, Logan Seipp, and Dylan Stadnyk.

In the video, Stadnyk plays a worker crushed to death under a stack of heavy boxes he is trying to move down a staircase. This video shows his worried mother hearing the bad news from a trauma surgeon and then cuts to Dylan safely moving the dolly down the same stairs after asking a co-worker for help.

The Humboldt Collegiate Institute won double honours because its *Just Ask* video got the most votes nationally in the Fan Favourite category.

By engaging high school youth in the production of this workplace safety video, the second annual “It’s your Job!” video contest encourages students to think about safety in their workplace.

Congratulations to the Humboldt Collegiate Institute and its creative students.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last December Canada Post announced that it was going to eliminate home mail delivery for millions of people. I have received thousands of letters and emails from unhappy people in my riding of Brome—Missisquoi, as well as several petitions.

On May 10, almost 200 people took to the streets of Farnham to support postal workers.

The people of Brome—Missisquoi are all telling me the same thing: they support the NDP, which is calling on the government to reject the plan to reduce services. Other avenues must be explored in order to modernize our crown corporation.

Canada Post, we want to keep our services.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

MATERNAL, NEWBORN, AND CHILD HEALTH

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I was happy to announce that our government is contributing \$20 million to UNICEF for a birth registration project in sub-Saharan Africa. With our support, UNICEF will use innovative information and communication technologies to record births and deaths, ensuring that children can have access to basic services such as education and health care and are less susceptible to violence, exploitation, and trafficking.

Maternal, newborn, and child health is our government's top development priority, and the Prime Minister is opening a conference on this issue today in Toronto. We are providing \$2.85 billion in funding between 2010 and 2015 under the Muskoka initiative to save the lives of women and children in developing countries. I am proud of our government's commitment to protecting the future of the children of sub-Saharan Africa.

* * *

MATERNAL, NEWBORN, AND CHILD HEALTH

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week while the Prime Minister and his Conservative government host an international summit entitled Saving Every Woman, Every Child in Toronto, they are letting down women around the world and here at home.

Aboriginal women in Canada face the highest levels of health insecurity in our country. This reality is linked to the higher levels of poverty and ever-present impacts of colonization. While indigenous communities try to effect change, the current government works against them. In Manitoba, the strengthening families maternal child health initiative at the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs has made a difference. In 2010, a health director stated that it is “...the first program that has effectively addressed the damage of residential schools and child welfare policies of the past”. It has trained nurses and home visitors. In 2011, it was acknowledged by the Health Council of Canada as a partnership model of best practice.

Statements by Members

First nations like War Lake, Pimicikamak, and others have seen a difference, yet a few short weeks ago, Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch announced it is cutting the funding. Today I ask the Prime Minister to take leadership here at home and support programs like the SF-MCH in Manitoba.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the leadership of our Prime Minister, Canadians have more money in their wallets, where it belongs. With the federal tax burden at its lowest level in 50 years, our historic tax relief has especially benefited Canada's middle-income earners.

A new report just released by the Parliamentary Budget Officer says that our tax cuts "...greatly impact low-middle income earners... effectively resulting in a 4.0 per cent increase in after-tax income". Thanks to our government, the average family of four will save nearly \$3,400 in taxes this year. The net worth of families is up over 44%, and even *The New York Times* says we have the richest middle class in the world.

Unfortunately, the Liberal leader has no idea what it is like to be a middle-income earner. In fact, he even claims that a budget can balance itself. Despite what Liberal members call their own leader's "bozo eruption", our Conservative government continues to take action that actually helps middle-income families and puts more money in their pockets, where it belongs.

* * *

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like all Canadians, I was deeply saddened by the death of a Canadian doctor, Mehdi Ali Qamar, who was murdered in Pakistan this past Monday. This murder happened as a result of religious intolerance.

Dr. Qamar was an Ahmadi, and he is among a growing number of Ahmadi's killed every year, for nothing more than their faith, at the hands of intolerant regimes and closed-minded dictators. In fact, violence against religious communities in places like Pakistan is on the rise, and too often peaceful and devout individuals such as those in the Ahmadi community are subjects of the violence.

Religious intolerance is cowardly and must never be tolerated. The Liberals stand against intolerance and are united in calls for acceptance of diversity and the establishment of human rights globally. Let us offer more than our prayers to Dr. Qamar's family. Now is the time for renewed pressure on world governments that tyrannize the faithful. Let that—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale.

* * *

● (1420)

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague just said, earlier this week a Canadian doctor, Mehdi Ali Qamar, was gunned down in Pakistan. It is believed that Mr. Qamar was murdered over his Ahmadi faith.

This incident is a continuance of a pattern of violence and persecution against religious minorities in Pakistan.

We all remember the assassination of Pakistan's minister of minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti. Religious freedom is an inherent right that must be protected. Individuals everywhere should have the right to practise their faith in peace and security. The government of Pakistan must do more to ensure these religious minorities are protected and bring those who infringe upon this universal right to justice.

On behalf of our government, I would like to express our deepest condolences to the friends and family of Mr. Qamar and assure them that Canadian consular officials will continue to provide assistance during this difficult time.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SUPREME COURT OF CANADA

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fiasco surrounding the appointment of Justice Nadon to the Supreme Court illustrates the Conservatives' contempt for Quebec.

The Prime Minister thinks that judges from Quebec would be too progressive or too soft on criminals to sit on the country's highest court.

By stubbornly appointing a federal judge and, moreover, one with little experience in civil law, the Prime Minister is telling us that he could not care less about Quebec's civil law tradition. We already suspected this, though, since the Prime Minister once appointed a judge who was not fluent in French, which is another one of Quebec's fundamental characteristics.

Yesterday Quebec's premier took the Conservative government to task. He does not like how Quebec is being treated. This morning, the Minister of Justice, looking pitiful, said that he would honour Quebec's wishes. He could have saved face if he had just listened to Quebec's advice from the beginning.

Quebec has three seats on the country's highest court to ensure that its fundamental character is represented there.

Every time the Prime Minister tries to get around his obligations to Quebec and wipe away our differences, the NDP will stand in his way.

*Oral Questions**[English]***VANESSA'S LAW**

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-17, Vanessa's law, would help identify potentially dangerous drugs and ensure the quick recall of unsafe drugs. It would require reporting of serious adverse drug reactions, so doctors and patients are aware of new risks, and it would introduce tough new fines for companies that put Canadians at risk.

The Minister of Health has even declared that she is open to amendments to further strengthen this bill. I cannot believe that New Democrats have chosen to stonewall its passage. They wasted hours yesterday talking about how important this bill is, but when asked to fast-track it, they simply refused. I pleaded with six NDP members yesterday in the House to request their House leader to get Bill C-17 to committee as soon as possible. Every one of them refused or ignored me entirely.

This legislation would save lives. We need to get it passed. The NDP will have to answer to Canadian patients for this inexcusable delay. The NDP should stop playing political games with patient safety.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[English]***INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is too bad that his House leader never called it in six months.

[Translation]

In developing countries, 800 women die every day from causes related to pregnancy, childbirth and unsafe abortions. Funding for reproductive medicine is key to putting an end to this tragedy. Nevertheless, the Conservatives refuse to give funding to groups that provide safe and legal medical procedures, even when those procedures are required because of war rape.

Why are the Conservatives refusing to fund these basic health care services for women, when they know that 800 women are dying every day?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important, and the Prime Minister deserves a significant amount of praise for the leadership he has demonstrated. We have got many other countries off the bench and into the game, providing a substantial amount of funding to support these mothers and support their young babies. Canadians can be very proud of our leadership initiatives.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, even in their commitment to end forced marriages, the Conservatives have refused to help finance the United Nations population fund. Why? The UN population fund has long been the target of anti-choice activists for its efforts to provide family planning and promote reproductive health.

Why are the Conservatives putting anti-choice politics ahead of promoting women's health in the poorest countries in the world, where 800 women a day die for lack of proper care?

● (1425)

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, under the Muskoka initiative on maternal, newborn, and child health, will save the lives of 1.3 million children and newborns, as well as more than 60,000 young mothers, so I do not know what the Leader of the Opposition is talking about. This is one of the best initiatives that has come from Canada. We are saving lives. We want the NDP to support us instead of stopping us—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

* * *

*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT**

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the Liberal Party expanded the program in 2002, the number of temporary foreign workers in Canada has risen steadily, by 13% per year, under both the Liberal and Conservative governments.

Today, as soon as an employer is unable to find a Canadian who will work for minimum wage, the Conservatives send him a temporary foreign worker. What message are the Conservatives sending to the 1.3 million unemployed Canadians?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear from his question that the Leader of the Opposition is mistaken as usual. Employers are required to offer any jobs that are available to Canadians first, and they must advertise those jobs at the average wage in Canada. If qualified Canadians do not respond to the ad, then employers can apply to the temporary foreign worker program.

We are going to make changes to the program to ensure that Canadians are given priority in the labour market and that the jobs are there for them when they want to apply.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have approved the use of temporary foreign workers at hotels, restaurants, gas stations, convenience stores, nurseries, truck stops, casinos, and ski lifts, all at minimum wage.

If a company can hire temporary foreign workers at minimum wage for any job it wants, why would it ever pay a Canadian more than minimum wage? This is a massive interference in the free market. Is that not in fact what the temporary foreign worker program is all about: keeping wages artificially low?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to see that the Leader of the Opposition has been converted to free-market theory. I congratulate him. Who knows? He might actually change his position and start supporting tax cuts instead of tax increases.

Of the temporary foreign workers who are paid at minimum wage, 99% were in the seasonal agriculture worker program, which the NDP wants to keep, and the live-in caregiver program, for which we have since raised the prevailing wage rate. For the other 1%, the prevailing wage rate, the median, was actually at the minimum level in each province, but the vast majority are well above that.

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PRIVACY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he should tell that to the 1.3 million Canadians looking for a job.

Today Ontario's Privacy Commissioner added her voice to that of the Canadian Bar Association in accusing Conservatives of chipping away at Canadians' charter right to be secure against unreasonable search and seizure.

The commissioner is clear. Conservatives are trying to use new legislation on cyberbullying to push through a host of measures that would "invade the privacy of every Canadian".

How can Conservatives possibly justify using a bill meant to protect children as political cover to pass vast new powers to spy on honest Canadians?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition has just said is not true. What we are doing is in fact passing laws that will enable police and law enforcement to protect children against online predators, to protect children from the type of abuse and humiliation and bullying we saw in the Rehtaeh Parsons case, the Amanda Todd case, and others.

When we heard from their parents, interestingly, what those parents said was "Pass this law. Protect our children." That is what our government is doing.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Immigration. I have a blacklist issued by his department of employers who have maltreated temporary foreign workers. However, the list is empty.

Can the Minister of Immigration explain why his department has been missing in action on this and why it is doing nothing to deal with the exploitation of temporary foreign workers?

• (1430)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as soon as an employer ends up on the list,

it no longer has access to the temporary foreign worker program. It is as simple as that.

The department of employment established this list in 2011 and began adding employers to it in December 2013. There are investigations currently under way. There is a moratorium, and we are taking measures to ensure that employers that end up on the list no longer receive labour market opinions.

[English]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he just said that as soon as the employer does something bad to employees, he is on the list. He should know that there is no one on the list. That is the point. There is no one on the list. That is why the real immigration minister usually answers the questions.

If that minister wants to answer the question, will he tell us, given that there are zero employers on the list who have maltreated employees, why this is? Is this not blanket evidence that they do not care when employees are maltreated?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is plain wrong. There are employers on the list. Both departments are taking action to ensure that LMOs are denied to those employers. There are new investigations under way. There is a moratorium in place for a large number of LMOs under the low-skilled class, and we are proud of that record, because we take the rules seriously. We are cleaning up the Liberal mess started by them in 2002 when there was not even any ability to inquire or—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. There are some members whose names appear later down on my list, but I am worried that they are going to run out of breath by then. I would ask them to come to order lest they be too tired to be recognized by the Speaker later on.

The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he is addicted to this silly Conservative line about cleaning up a Liberal mess, which did not exist in those days.

If we want to be more serious, this guy talks about employers on the list. There are zero employers on any list for abuse of employees, so I would ask this minister, or if he does not know I will ask the real minister, can he name one employer on the list for abusing employee rights? Can either of the ministers answer that question?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows perfectly well that there are employers on the list who do not have access to the program. He knows that there are further investigations under way, and he also knows that there was no list in their time in government, because they were indifferent to abuse. They brought exotic dancers to this country in the hundreds and thousands, without any scrutiny of what happened to them. It was atrocious, and we are going to continue cleaning up that mess.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in response to a question on the order paper, the NDP has obtained the most up-to-date information on the use of the government's Challenger aircraft by Conservative ministers. We can conclude that they use these aircraft—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please.

We have moved on to the next question. I will ask members to give the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île their attention. The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we see that the Conservative ministers make rather liberal use of government aircraft.

Over the past five years, such flights have cost us more than \$4 million. The Minister of Justice, who returned from vacation on a military Challenger, has a \$330,000 bill.

When will they finally decide to limit their travel and to take commercial flights like everyone else?

• (1435)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has the greatest respect for Canadian taxpayers and has reduced use of the Challenger jet by 80%.

[English]

It is because we have the utmost respect for taxpayers that we reduced the use of Challenger jets by 80%. I contrast that to the NDP, which still has not accounted for some \$3 million worth of taxpayers' money it used to open up illegal offices. It could make a start by returning that money to Canadian taxpayers.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to happily fly at taxpayers' expense, as did the Liberals before them.

The other problem is that they are refusing to give us information about the identity of those travelling with the Prime Minister and his ministers.

For example, previously we could find out that the Prime Minister regularly gave lifts to an important Conservative Party fundraiser. Now the rules seem to have changed suddenly, and we are no longer given that information. They obviously believe that those paying the bills may be asking too many questions.

Does the government have something to hide?

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, this government has the utmost respect for Canadians taxpayers. That is why we have reduced the use of Challengers by 80% since we have come into office.

The only people we are having trouble finding are the people who supposedly work in the NDP offices. We are not sure if they work in Quebec, in Montreal, or in Saskatchewan. Apparently the Leader of the Opposition says they actually work in Ottawa, and apparently it is all the Clerk's fault.

New Democrats should repay taxpayers the millions of dollars they use for illegal offices across this country to further their party's agenda.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): We enjoyed the fiction show over there, Mr. Speaker, but let us talk about how the Conservatives preach belt-tightening for others while we find more evidence of Conservative ministers flying their friends around the country on the Challenger.

At least before, they used to declare who was flying on these trips, but now they say it is a state secret. When they hide the flight manifest, it means Canadians cannot tell whether it is government officials or cronies of the Conservative Party who are along for the ride.

We know the Prime Minister's buddy, Mark Kihn, used to ride shotgun on these airborne Cadillacs. Who else? What are they trying to hide?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have reduced the use of Challenger jets by some 80% since we took office in 2006. It is because we have the utmost respect for Canadian taxpayers that we have done that, because we understand on this side of the House that leaving money in the pockets of hard-working Canadians is better than putting it in the hands of government.

At the same time, New Democrats have to account for the fact that they wasted millions of taxpayers' dollars on potentially illegal offices across this country. They should show some leadership and return that money to Canadian taxpayers.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would advise my hon. colleague from Markham that if he was worried about taxpayers, he would be talking to the Minister of Justice, who uses a Challenger jet as his own personal taxi service to Halifax on the weekend.

Oral Questions

Speaking of poor judgment, remember Bruce Carson, the convicted fraud artist who is now up on influence peddling charges? Canadians tried to figure out how this guy ever slipped through security checks. Mr. Carson tells us that the Prime Minister knew about his criminal record and invited him into the inner office anyway.

A simple question: why would the Prime Minister hire a convicted criminal to be his chief adviser?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only people who are in trouble right now are New Democrats, who have to account for the fact that they took millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to fund partisan political offices across this country.

It is not just one person implicated in the NDP; it is the entire caucus, who actually participated in the scheme to rip off Canadian taxpayers.

They should account for that. They should stop blaming the Clerk of the House of Commons, whose reputation is the highest reputation, and be honest with Canadians. Repay the millions of dollars they took from Canadians illegally.

[Translation]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the Charbonneau commission found that SNC-Lavalin's upper echelons are plagued by a culture of corruption and non-compliance.

Arthur Porter and Senator Angus's schemes led to the biggest corruption fraud in the history of Canada. However, the federal government continues to do business with SNC-Lavalin, awarding the company military and building maintenance contracts.

When will the government look into the contracts awarded to SNC-Lavalin in the past?

• (1440)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those are problems with municipal and provincial contracts. At the same time, it is very important that the commission continue its work.

[English]

If the Leader of the Opposition, 20 years ago, had had the courage to come forward with the fact that he was offered a bribe and had not actually hidden it for 17 years, I can only imagine the corruption we could have put a stop to if he had just had the courage, 20 years ago, to come forward, instead of hiding it for 17 years.

We will continue to put taxpayers first in everything we do on this side.

[Translation]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, give me a break. We are talking about contracts between SNC-Lavalin and the federal government.

Last March, Public Works and Government Services Canada changed its procurement policies to avoid doing business with companies that have been found guilty of fraud or bribery. However,

SNC-Lavalin executives and police told the Charbonneau commission that SNC-Lavalin had defrauded Quebec taxpayers and paid bribes to win the contract to build the McGill hospital centre.

SNC-Lavalin is now famous for its role in the biggest corruption fraud in the history of Canada.

Can the government confirm that the new rules will apply to SNC-Lavalin?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, these problems do not involve the federal government. This commission is investigating provincial and municipal affairs.

[English]

At the same time, anybody who is found guilty should face the full force of the law. As you know, Mr. Speaker, one of the first acts this government brought forward when it was elected was the Federal Accountability Act, which removed the influence of big money and big unions from federal contracting.

We will continue to put taxpayers first by bringing in laws like that, which protect Canadian taxpayers.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, former Supreme Court justice John Major is shaking his head at the Conservative kerfuffle over the appointment of Justice Nadon.

He is especially critical of the politicization of the process and the direct attack against the Chief Justice, who was only doing her job in warning the Prime Minister. Instead of attacking the Chief Justice, the Prime Minister should do some soul-searching.

When will he admit that he alone is responsible for this fiasco?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I notice that former Supreme Court Justice, Mr. Justice Major, has added his name to other former justices from the Supreme Court, Justice Binnie and Justice Charron, in disagreeing with the Supreme Court on eligibility.

Of course, we also know that constitutional expert Peter Hogg disagreed. We sought advice and followed that advice, in fact. Of course, of all Federal Court judges themselves who had applied, some were listed on the eligibility list. The member opposite was part of that process.

We will support and follow the letter and the spirit of the Supreme Court.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to former justice Major, the Conservative kerfuffle is compounded by the fact that the Prime Minister once again has the wrong people around him.

Oral Questions

Justice Major says that the current Minister of Justice is a lightweight when it comes to justice. That explains why this appointment is such a fiasco. That is not very flattering.

Why did the Conservatives not listen to Quebec's recommendations before appointing Justice Nadon?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recently had a productive meeting with Quebec's justice minister, Ms. Vallée, and representatives of Quebec's legal community.

As usual, we are consulting a wide range of stakeholders. We will not comment on rumours, speculation or comments made by former Supreme Court justices. We have been very clear: we will respect the spirit and the letter of the Supreme Court decision.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they do not listen to anyone, and that is the problem.

[English]

We have ever-changing stories from the Prime Minister and his Minister of Justice.

When the decision of the Supreme Court came down, the Prime Minister claimed he was "very surprised" but this week he tells us he knew all along.

The Conservatives have targeted Kevin Page, Sheila Fraser, Marc Mayrand and now even the Chief Justice. In short, any eminent Canadian who disagrees with them.

Why has the Prime Minister gone so far out of his way to pick a fight with the Supreme Court of Canada?

•(1445)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is patently false. We have nothing but the utmost respect for the Supreme Court as well as all of the institutions of the country. That is why we want people with merit, people with judicial excellence, to fill the positions, particularly at the Supreme Court of Canada.

We acted on the advice of legal experts, including former justices of the Supreme Court. We have listened to the Supreme Court's ruling with respect to eligibility specific to the province of Quebec. That is a new interpretation from the original act.

As the Prime Minister has said, we will respect the spirit and the letter of the Supreme Court's decision.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-24 opens a Pandora's box. It will give foreign courts the right to put the citizenship of Canadians in jeopardy, with no legislative guarantee that the process is fair. For example, how can the minister justify to members of Canada's Tamil community that their citizenship would be in jeopardy if they were found guilty in a Sri Lankan court?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely wrong.

Our citizenship and immigration bill will strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship by tightening requirements. This means that new Canadians must reside in Canada, fulfill the citizenship criteria and live in accordance with Canada's values and laws.

[English]

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has a problem getting his facts right. It was his—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Vancouver Centre has the floor.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, it was his party that opposed every piece of LGBTTTQ equality legislation brought forward by the last Liberal government, from amending the Canadian Human Rights Act all the way to gay marriage.

Despite his assurances to use his power to make the WorldPride Human Rights Conference in Toronto a success, he still will not say if he will okay visitor visas for 10 Ugandan gay rights activists—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): It is astonishing, Mr. Speaker, that former ministers would stand in this place and ask the Minister of Immigration to give a decision in this place about individual immigration cases. That member knows very well that the authority is delegated to highly trained professionals around the world. She knew that when her party was in government. It is not a surprise that her party is not in government now, given that those members deny these things.

We will continue to stand up for human rights around the world. We will continue to insist that governments in Uganda and elsewhere respect human rights regardless of sexual orientation. We will use our immigration laws to make this conference a success.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for years the Ontario Liberal government has made it clear that it needs the federal government to raise the targets on the provincial nominee program. Unfortunately, the Conservative government continues to undermine Ontario's economic potential by limiting it to 2,500 applicants per year. Even Tim Hudak now says that Canada's immigration minister is being grossly unfair to Ontario.

Is the minister just incompetent, or can he explain why he has so stubbornly refused to help Ontario's economy?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to answer that question because it gives me a chance to remind voters in Ontario that under the Liberal government before 2006, the number for the provincial nominee program from Ontario was zero. The program when we came into office brought 6,000 new Canadians to this country. This year it is bringing 46,000. We doubled the number for Ontario.

What shows disrespect to the taxpayers of Ontario is spending Ontario taxpayers' hard-earned dollars on failed and bogus refugee claimants. That is what is driving us crazy in Ontario. That is why we need a new—

The Speaker: Order. We will move on to the hon. member for St. John's East.

* * *

• (1450)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, members of the Canadian Armed Forces who have faced sexual assault know that this issue requires an admission that we have a problem and an urgent response. So far, we have neither.

Reports to the minister are three years behind, even though they are required by law, and they bury the numbers for sexual assault. The Chief of the Defence Staff, General Tom Lawson, said it will take one to two months even to find someone to lead an investigation.

When will the minister stop washing his hands and passing the buck to the military, take responsibility, and appoint an independent judicial inquiry?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during our eight years, we have always taken responsibility in this area. Any of these allegations are truly disturbing. No member of the armed forces should ever be subject to this kind of disgusting behaviour.

The Chief of the Defence Staff is going to be conducting a study of this, an investigation into this. This government has zero tolerance for that kind of behaviour.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is even more worrisome about the management of the allegations of sexual assault in the armed forces is the lack of leadership shown by successive Conservative defence ministers.

The situation is even worse than we thought. The Department of National Defence is three years behind in reporting its crime statistics to Parliament. An external audit will not do.

The minister needs to step up and stop passing the buck to the Chief of the Defence Staff. When will he appear before the committee and appoint a judicial inquiry to look into these serious allegations?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as soon as we have the reports from the Judge Advocate General, of course, we will table them.

This has been a priority throughout our years. We have stood up for those who have been victims of sexual assault. We never got support from the NDP. If the member and her party have changed their minds, let them stand up and start supporting our efforts to protect the innocent.

* * *

*[Translation]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives will stop at nothing to hide the impacts of climate change. After trying to muzzle scientists, now the Conservatives are saying that meteorologists at Environment Canada are not qualified to talk about climate change.

If those who study weather patterns are not qualified to talk about climate change, then who is?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our priority is to protect the environment while keeping the economy strong. We have made significant investments to begin Canada's transition to a clean energy economy and advance our climate change objectives. We have also recently launched a national conservation plan that promotes our government's strong legacy of conservation work and includes new investments to secure ecologically sensitive lands, and conserve marine and coastal areas.

I am very proud to be part of a government that is getting results.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, well, if the minister followed the news on her file, she would not have been caught off guard by that question.

Here is something else that is in the news: climate change is real. While media cannot contact most government scientists, it does have 24-hour-a-day access to meteorologists, yet draconian government rules and fear of losing their jobs puts a gag on these meteorologists. They are avoiding talking about the crucial and scientific connection between weather patterns and climate change.

When will the Prime Minister acknowledge that climate change is real and stop muzzling scientists?

Oral Questions

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely ridiculous. Unlike the other side, I have chosen not to play politics with this when it comes to protecting the environment. I regularly meet with Canadians across the country to speak to them about the priorities of our government, which are important to them as well. On the other hand, the opposition will continue to play politics with this issue.

We will continue to meet with Canadians to discuss important issues of the environment.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-17 has the support of every party in this House. When passed, it would empower the Minister of Health to, among other things, order dangerous drugs off the market without delay and require reporting of serious adverse drug reactions.

This bill is, without exaggeration, a matter of life and death for Canadians who may suffer serious adverse drug reactions in the coming months. The minister has stated that she is open to amendments to further strengthen the bill.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs please tell us why this legislation has not yet been referred to the health committee?

• (1455)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take just a moment to recognize and thank the member for Oakville for his tireless efforts on this and the obvious passion that he brings to this file.

He is absolutely right, Bill C-17 has the support of all members of this House. Yesterday, shamefully, the NDP played partisan political games in delaying this before it could go to the health committee.

The NDP members need to answer to those Canadians, the millions of Canadians who are waiting for this bill to be passed. They have to stop playing partisan political games and work with us to make sure this bill gets passed.

Let me assure the member, his family, and the millions of Canadians who are relying on this that this side of the House will do everything in our power to make sure this gets passed.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives were accused of stacking Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, or ECBC, with their friends, they got rid of former CEO John Lynn. However, that still does not explain why Mr. Lynn hired four former Conservative candidates to work at ECBC. One of the people who was hired is the former chief of staff to the current Minister of Justice.

Will the Minister of Justice agree to appear before the parliamentary committee with John Lynn regarding the hiring of Nancy Baker?

[English]

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring we have a professional, independent, non-partisan public service.

I can confirm that Mr. Lynn's appointment as CEO of ECBC was terminated as of yesterday. As standard practice, the Government of Canada does not provide a severance when an individual's appointment is terminated with cause.

We take action on issues of accountability. The question is, when is his party going to take action for its abuse of taxpayers' dollars in running House of Commons offices as partisan units?

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see that the minister has finally come clean on severance for John Lynn, there will not be any. It will be interesting to see if he actually qualifies for EI.

No severance still does not answer the question of why John Lynn got the job in the first place. How about the Minister of Justice's former chief of staff, Allan Murphy? How about Nancy Baker, who worked for the Minister of Justice before and after her sweet appointment?

Will the Minister of Justice's friends continue to sit in their comfy positions, or will these jobs finally be open to a fair and competitive process?

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. members cannot seem to take yes for an answer.

Mr. Lynn's appointment as CEO of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation was terminated as of yesterday. There is no severance because there was termination with cause. This is as a result of the findings of an independent investigation undertaken by the board of directors of that corporation.

Why does the hon. member not talk to his own colleagues about accountability in repaying taxpayers' dollars that were misspent in a partisan nature?

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have grossly mismanaged the Canada-EU trade deal. The only thing they have done well is hide the details from Canadians. They promised \$280 million for Newfoundland and Labrador in compensation.

I asked the minister some simple questions on the order paper, simple questions like What was the purpose of the money? What was it to be spent on? What conditions are on the funding? However, the President of the Treasury Board claimed cabinet secrecy, and he refused to answer the questions.

Canadians deserve transparency when it comes to trade deals. My question is simple. What are Conservatives trying to hide?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our trade agreement with the European Union is a remarkable opportunity for Canadians to enjoy unprecedented market access to 500 million affluent consumers. It opens up a fish and seafood market worth \$25 billion a year. It is the largest market of its kind in the world. We know that Atlantic Canadians will be major beneficiaries of these new market opportunities.

In the meantime, our discussions with Newfoundland and Labrador to assist them in transitioning out of minimum processing requirements are ongoing.

• (1500)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade yet again refuses to come clean with Canadians about CETA.

Since the staged signing ceremony last October, details have been hidden from Canadians, and the minister's timeline for an actual deal has been a moving target. Last November he said we would have a deal in two to three months. Again in February he said he expected a deal in one or two months. Now, the U.S.-EU talks are in full swing, and the Europeans have a new Parliament.

Given these factors, does the minister have a new CETA timeline he would like to share with the Canadian public?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we do not emphasize the speed of the deal, we emphasize the quality of the deal.

This agreement is an historic win for Canadians. It is expected to increase bilateral trade by over 20%. It is going to increase the number of jobs in Canada alone by somewhere in the order of 80,000. It is pretty rich for the NDP members to get up in the House to talk about trade when they have never once stood in the House to support any of the trade deals Canada has signed. They have no credibility on trade.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is increasingly evident that the Minister of Justice in his current and previous portfolios has left a trail of incompetence wherever he goes, including the disastrous F-35 procurement, using a search-and-rescue helicopter to winch himself out of a fishing camp, the botched appointment of Justice Nadon, and the smear job on the Chief Justice, but taking the cake is his hand-picked choice of his friend to lead ECBC, now fired for hiring the minister's lackeys without competition.

I ask the Prime Minister this: whatever happened to ministerial accountability in the government?

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a former minister. He should know that ministers are not involved in the day-to-day hiring of staff, yet the members ask each day for us to engage in that.

This is the same member who was asked to repay expenses on the house he claimed was his own which was not his own. I assume it

was a glass house. He had to repay the money a couple of years ago. We take no lessons on accountability from that member.

The Speaker: The hon. member for York West—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. Members of the government will be able to answer the question once the member is finished putting it. We will allow her to do so.

The hon. member for York West.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Conservatives heard and accepted yet another excuse for systemic sexual harassment within the RCMP and national defence, a very serious issue. This makes years of Conservative foot-dragging, and in that time, thousands in uniform have been victimized. Worse yet, only a fraction were reported and fewer still were punished.

The men and women of our forces and the RCMP have sworn to protect us, but today they are asking for our help. If the minister is not up to the job, may I suggest that he move over and get someone else who will take over this very serious issue and deal with the men and women who are there to protect us who need our help?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is coming from a party that completely ignored our military throughout its term. It was called a “decade of darkness”.

We take any of these allegations very seriously. Our government ended house arrest for serious sexual assaults. We toughened the sentences for trafficking and importation of date-rape drugs. We brought in mandatory sentencing for sexual offences against children. All of these were opposed by the Liberal Party.

We need no lessons from the Liberal Party. This is our priority.

*Oral Questions***INFRASTRUCTURE**

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have removed the requirement that the gas tax funds be used for sustainable infrastructure, one of the few remaining federal programs fighting climate change. This is at a time when the mayor of Vancouver has said we need more, not less, federal funding to deal with climate change.

Why are the Conservatives excluding basic necessities like roads from the Building Canada fund and turning a \$21 billion program for green infrastructure into one that can be used to fill potholes or build gazebos?

• (1505)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the gas tax fund is totally dedicated to municipalities. The example the member gave is totally wrong. We are continuing to support the provinces and municipalities. We have signed agreements with many provinces and we hope the money will flow very quickly to the municipalities and the provinces and will continue to do so. That is the biggest plan ever made in this country, and it is because of this great Prime Minister.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives changed the eligibility criteria for the Building Canada fund without consulting the municipalities. Now, they are asking the municipalities to do more with less and forcing them to choose between green projects and basic infrastructure needs.

Jack Layton worked hard on the federal gas tax fund in order to contribute to sustainable development.

Will the minister make sure that the municipalities do not lose funding for green projects by restoring the eligibility criteria so that road and bridge projects once again fall under the Building Canada fund rather than the federal gas tax fund?

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, this party should not mislead people. It has voted against the country's infrastructure plans every time. People do not believe the NDP.

The excise tax on gasoline has been in place since 2006. As a former municipal politician, I know what I am talking about. We doubled the excise tax, indexed it and made it permanent. The NDP voted against that. We will take no lessons from the NDP.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives pride themselves in cutting taxes. Indeed, our strong record of tax relief is saving the average family \$3,400 a year.

Recently the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that our government has delivered significant tax relief for Canadians. While we are focused on creating savings for Canadians, the opposition is

proposing risky, high-tax schemes that will threaten jobs and set working families back.

Could the Minister of Finance update the House on what the Parliamentary Budget Officer said?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Prince Albert for that very relevant question.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer confirms that our government reduced taxes by \$30 billion last year, benefiting low and middle-income families the most. Indeed, all families have benefited from our tax reduction program, increasing net worth by 44%.

Unlike the opposition, we believe that Canadians should keep more of their own hard-earned money, and that is why we intend to introduce even more tax relief next year when the budget is balanced. Canadians can count on that.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I met with the Chicken Farmers of Canada, and they are very concerned that the government is undermining supply management. Last year, 97 million kilograms of chicken came in from the United States. The impact is 8,900 jobs and over \$600 million lost. The chicken is coming in because the Conservatives changed the rules at the border.

Why are the Conservatives not standing up for supply management?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a very positive record working with farmers of all calibre across this great country, including the supply-managed sector. We continue to work with them on people who cheat at the border, cheese compositional standards, pizza kits, milk protein concentrates, and of course now we are working on spent fowl, issues that the Liberals never attacked when they were in government.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis in this country is severe, and according to a new Royal Bank report, it is only getting worse. In Toronto alone, over 90,000 families are on the waiting list for affordable housing. Thousands more are added every month. Liberals killed the national housing program and then Conservatives buried—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Points of Order

The Speaker: Order. I am sitting right beside the member for Toronto—Danforth and I can barely hear him. I am going to ask members to come to order.

The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Speaker, Liberals killed the national housing program and then Conservatives buried it, and it is Toronto families who are paying the price.

Will the government reject the Liberal approach, stand with the NDP, and adopt the national housing program and strategy that Canada so badly needs?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians do not need are more bureaucrats sitting around in Ottawa telling them what they need and how to invest.

What we have done is provide funding for the provinces through our investment in affordable housing. Together with the provinces, together with municipalities, together with our partners, we have provided support to almost a million families and individuals.

Every time we provide that support, New Democrats vote against it, so no, we are not interested in their strategy. We are interested in action.

* * *

● (1510)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the courts slammed the door closed on two convicted murderers' attempts to get rich at the expense of taxpayers. These individuals were involved in the desecration of the Canadian flag as part of the so-called prisoner justice day. They even went so far as to accuse the former minister of public safety of misfeasance for saying that the actions of these prisoners were offensive, unacceptable, and dishonourable.

Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness tell the House what our government's position is on this matter?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Don Valley West, who told us that the court has slammed the door shut on those who want to abuse taxpayers' money.

[English]

Of course we are pleased with this sensible decision made by the Ontario Superior Court yesterday. Our correctional system is about correcting criminal behaviour and rehabilitation. It should not tolerate the desecration of Canadian symbols such as the maple leaf. We will continue to put criminals behind bars.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Zamudio family has been living in Saint-Jérôme for

almost four years and will be deported to Mexico by June 25 despite receiving repeated death threats from the drug cartel.

A claim for refugee protection on humanitarian grounds was submitted to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration last October. As the safety of the four family members is at issue, can the minister tell us whether he has made a decision or can he commit to making a decision before the Zamudio family is deported?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I understood the question correctly, we are talking about Mr. Figueroa, who admitted to being a member of the Front Farabundo Martí de libération nationale. He fought against the government of El Salvador during that country's civil war. Although it is now the political party in power in El Salvador, the FMLN carried out terrorist acts when Mr. Figueroa was a member.

Consequently, Mr. Figueroa cannot remain in Canada and he has been slapped with a deportation order. Everyone has the right to due process and Mr. Figueroa made many applications and requests for judicial review. Once all avenues—

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the week of June 4 will begin with the 25th anniversary of one of the most horrific crackdowns on democracy and human rights in recent memory at Tiananmen Square. That same week ends, June 10, with an appeal by the very courageous small first nations band on Vancouver Island, the Hupacasath First Nation, challenging the Canada—China investment treaty.

I wonder if the Prime Minister would be willing to return the Canada—China investment treaty to hearings in this place, and particularly the very draconian 31-year lock-in if that treaty is ever ratified.

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member should know that we do not comment on matters that are before the courts.

What I can say is that this investment treaty sets out a clear set of rules under which investments are made. It also sets out a clear set of rules under which investment disputes are resolved. Canadian investors have been asking for this agreement for a very long time. This is about protecting Canadians when they invest abroad. I can assure the member that this government has every intention of bringing this agreement into force.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER**ORAL QUESTIONS**

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, during question period, the Minister of International Trade mentioned, and we have already had to correct the Prime Minister on this, that the NDP never supported any trade deal. He will know that we supported the Jordan trade deal—

Private Members' Business

The Speaker: That is a matter of debate, not a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, in answer to my question, the minister mentioned a Mr. Figueroa. My question was about the Zamudio family.

[*English*]

The Speaker: I suggest that he ask the question maybe at a different time. It is not a point of order.

The hon. Minister of Justice is rising on what I hope is a point of order.

• (1515)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe it is a point of order. There were several allegations levelled against me about the use of government aircraft. It is public record that I have never used government aircraft for any—

The Speaker: The minister is free to answer any question in the House during question period and he can certainly table information, but that did not sound like a point of order.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

PAN-CANADIAN PALLIATIVE AND END-OF-LIFE CARE STRATEGY

The House resumed from May 14 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recording division on the amendment to Motion No. 456.

• (1520)

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

(Division No. 148)

YEAS

Members

Abлонczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Angus	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Atamanenko	Aubin
Baird	Bélangier
Bennett	Benoit
Benskin	Bergen
Bevington	Bezan
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Blaney	Block
Boivin	Borg
Boughen	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Braid
Brisson	Brosseau
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt

Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Caron	Carrie
Casey	Cash
Chicoine	Chisholm
Chisu	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crockatt	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Daniel	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dechert
Devolin	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dreeshen	Dubé
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Falk	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Freeland	Freeman
Fry	Galipeau
Gameau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Gill
Glover	Godin
Goguen	Goodale
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Gravelle
Grewal	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Jones
Julian	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kellway
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Lauson	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leslie
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
Mayes	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nicholson
Norlock	Nunez-Melo
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole	Pacetti
Payne	Péclet
Pilon	Poillievre
Preston	Quach
Rafferty	Raitt
Rajotte	Rankin
Rathgeber	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Saxton	Scarpaleggia

Private Members' Business

Schellenberger	Scott
Seeback	Sellah
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Storseth	Strahl
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Tilson
Toet	Toone
Tremblay	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Turnel	Uppal
Valcourt	Valeriote
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 262

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment carried.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1530)

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

(Division No. 149)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Angus	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Atamanenko	Aubin
Baird	Bélanger
Bennett	Benoit
Benskin	Bergen

Bevington
Blanchette
Blaney
Boivin
Boughen
Brahmi
Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Caron
Casey
Chicoine
Chisu
Choquette
Clarke
Comartin
Crockatt
Cullen
Daniel
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Del Mastro
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dykstra
Eyking
Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Freeman
Galipeau
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Gill
Godin
Goodale
Gosal
Gravelle
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Hsu
Hyer
James
Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lamoureux
Larose
Lauzon
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leef
Lemieux
Leung
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
Mayes
McGuinity
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nantel
Nicholls
Norlock
Obhrai
Oliver
O'Toole
Payne
Pilon

Bezan
Blanchette-Lamothe
Block
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Braid
Brosseau
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Carrie
Cash
Chisholm
Chong
Christopherson
Cleary
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Davidson
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dechert
Devolin
Dion
Donnelly
Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dusseau
Easter
Falk
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Freeland
Fry
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Glover
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Grewal
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Hughes
Jacob
Jones
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kellway
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lapointe
Latendresse
Lebel
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)
Leitch
Leslie
Liu
Lobb
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
Marston
Masse
May
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menegakis
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nash
Nicholson
Nunez-Melo
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
Pacetti
Péclét
Poillievre

Private Members' Business

Preston	Quach
Rafferty	Raït
Rajotte	Rankin
Rathgeber	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Scott
Seeback	Sellah
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Storseth	Strahl
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Tilson
Toet	Toone
Tremblay	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Turnel	Uppal
Valcourt	Valeriot
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 264

NAYS

Members

Fortin— 1

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

MARINE MAMMAL REGULATIONS

The House resumed from May 15 consideration of the motion that Bill C-555, an act respecting the Marine Mammal Regulations (sea fishery observation licence), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, the house will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-555 under private members' business.

The question is on the motion.

● (1540)

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

(Division No. 150)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht

Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anderson
Angus
Ashfield
Aubin
Bélanger
Benoit
Bergen
Bezan
Blanchette-Lamothe
Block
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Braid
Brosseau
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Carrie
Cash
Chisholm
Chong
Christopherson
Cleary
Côté
Cullen
Daniel
Day
Del Mastro
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dykstra
Eyking
Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Freeland
Galipeau
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Gill
Godin
Goodale
Gosal
Gravelle
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Hsu
Hyer
James
Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lapointe
Latendresse
Lebel
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leitch
Leslie
Liu
Lobb
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
Marston
Masse
Mayes
McGuinty
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nantel

Allen (Welland)
Allison
Anders
Andrews
Armstrong
Aspin
Baird
Bennett
Benskin
Bevington
Blanchette
Blaney
Boivin
Boughen
Brahmi
Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Caron
Casey
Chicoine
Chisu
Choquette
Clarke
Comartin
Crockatt
Cuzner
Davidson
Dechert
Devolin
Dion
Donnelly
Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dusseau
Easter
Falk
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fortin
Freeman
Gameau
Genest
Giguère
Glover
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Grewal
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Hughes
Jacob
Jones
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lamoureux
Larose
Lauzon
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leef
Lemieux
Leung
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menegakis
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nash

Private Members' Business

Nicholls	Nicholson
Norlock	Nunez-Melo
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole	Pacetti
Payne	Péclet
Pilon	Poilievre
Preston	Quach
Rafferty	Raitt
Rajotte	Rankin
Rathgeber	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Scott
Seeback	Sellah
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Storseth	Strahl
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Tilson
Toet	Toone
Tremblay	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Turnel	Uppal
Valcourt	Valeriotte
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer— 258

NAYS

Members

May— 1

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

FORMER CANADIAN FORCES MEMBERS ACT

The House resumed from May 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-568, An Act respecting former Canadian Forces members, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made Tuesday, May 27, 2014, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion that Bill C-568, An Act respecting former Canadian Forces members, be now read the second time and referred to a committee.

• (1545)

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

*(Division No. 151)***YEAS**

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Atamanenko
Aubin	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Caron
Casey	Cash
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseauit
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Jones
Julian	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Péclet	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Turnel	Valeriotte— 118

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Benoit	Bergen
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge

Private Members' Business

Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Falk	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 144

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

The House resumed from May 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-483, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (escorted temporary absence), be read the third time and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to an order made on May 26, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division at the third reading stage of Bill C-483.

● (1555)

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

(Division No. 152)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Atamanenko
Aubin	Baird
Bélangier	Bennett
Benoit	Benskin
Bergen	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blaney
Block	Boivin
Borg	Boughen
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Braid	Brison
Brosseau	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Caron
Carrie	Casey
Cash	Chicoine
Chisholm	Chisu
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crockatt
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dreeshen
Dubé	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Fortin
Freeland	Freeman
Fry	Galipeau
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Gill
Glover	Godin
Goguen	Goodale
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Gravelle
Grewal	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	James
Jones	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)
Leef	Leitch

Private Members' Business

Lemieux	Leslie
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	Mayes
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Menegakis	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nicholson	Norlock
Nunez-Melo	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	O'Toole
Pacetti	Payne
Péclet	Pilon
Poilievre	Preston
Quach	Rafferty
Raitt	Rajotte
Rankin	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Scott	Seeback
Sellah	Sgro
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Storseth	Strahl
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Tilson
Toet	Toone
Tremblay	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Turmel	Uppal
Valcourt	Valeriote
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer— 260

NAYS

Members

May— 1

PAIRED

Nil

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

(Bill read the third time and passed)

[Translation]

DIVORCE ACT

The House resumed from May 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-560, An Act to amend the Divorce Act (equal parenting) and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. Pursuant to an order made May 27, 2014, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-560 under private members' business.

● (1605)

[English]

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

*(Division No. 153)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Albrecht	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Benoit
Boughen	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chong
Clarke	Crockatt
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Falk
Fletcher	Galipeau
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lemieux
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
May	Mayes
Merrifield	Miller
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	O'Toole
Preston	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shipley	Smith
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Toet
Trost	Van Kesteren
Vellacott	Wallace
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	Weston (Saint John)
Weston (Saint John)	Williamson
Wilks	Young (Oakville)
Woodworth	Zimmer— 80
Young (Vancouver South)	

NAYS

Members

Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Alexander
Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Atamanenko	Aubin
Baird	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin
Bergen	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette

Routine Proceedings

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

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Blanchette-Lamothe | Blaney |
| Bloch | Boivin |
| Borg | Boutin-Sweet |
| Brahmi | Braid |
| Brisson | Brosseau |
| Calandra | Caron |
| Casey | Cash |
| Chicoine | Chisholm |
| Chisu | Choquette |
| Christopherson | Cleary |
| Comartin | Côté |
| Crowder | Cullen |
| Cuzner | Daniel |
| Davidson | Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) |
| Day | Dechert |
| Dewar | Dion |
| Dionne Labelle | Donnelly |
| Doré Lefebvre | Dubé |
| Duncan (Vancouver Island North) | Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) |
| Dusseauil | Dykstra |
| Easter | Eyking |
| Fantino | Fast |
| Findlay (Delta—Richmond East) | Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) |
| Fortin | Freeland |
| Freeman | Fry |
| Garneau | Garrison |
| Genest | Genest-Jourdain |
| Giguère | Gill |
| Glover | Godin |
| Goguen | Goodale |
| Goodyear | Gosal |
| Gourde | Groguhé |
| Harris (St. John's East) | Holder |
| Hsu | Hughes |
| Hyer | Jacob |
| Jones | Julian |
| Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's) | Kenney (Calgary Southeast) |
| Lamoureux | Lapointe |
| Latendresse | Lauzon |
| Lebel | LeBlanc (Beauséjour) |
| LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard) | Leef |
| Leitch | Leslie |
| Leung | Liu |
| MacAulay | MacKay (Central Nova) |
| MacKenzie | Maguire |
| Mai | Marston |
| Martin | Masse |
| Mathysen | McCallum |
| McGuinty | McLeod |
| Menegakis | Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue) |
| Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam) | Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot) |
| Moore (Fundy Royal) | Nantel |
| Morin (Laurentides—Labelle) | Nicholls |
| Mulcair | Nunez-Melo |
| Nash | Oliver |
| Nicholson | Péclet |
| Obhrai | Poilievre |
| Payne | Rafferty |
| Pilon | Rankin |
| Quach | Raynault |
| Raitt | Rempel |
| Ravignat | Rickford |
| Regan | Rousseau |
| Richards | Sandhu |
| Ritz | Scott |
| Saganash | Sgro |
| Scarpaleggia | Shory |
| Sellah | Sopuck |
| Shea | St-Denis |
| Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor) | Stoffer |
| Sims (Newton—North Delta) | Thibeault |
| Sitsabaiesan | Toone |
| Sorenson | Trottier |
| Stewart | Turmel |
| Sullivan | Valcourt |
| Tilson | Van Loan |
| Tremblay | Wong — 174 |
| Truppe | |
| Uppal | |
| Valeriotte | |
| Warawa | |

PAIRED

Nil

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to one petition.

* * *

CERTIFICATES OF NOMINATION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 111.1 (1), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a certificate of nomination, with biographical notes, for the proposed appointment of Daniel Therrien to the position of Privacy Commissioner. I request that the nomination be referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the first part of the 2014 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held in Strasbourg, France from January 27 to January 31.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology in relation to the main estimates 2014-15.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The committee advises that, pursuant to Standing Order 91.1 (2), the subcommittee on private members' business met to consider the order for a second reading of the Senate public bill and recommends that the item listed herein, which has been determined should not be designated not votable, be considered by the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Accordingly, pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the report is deemed adopted.

Routine Proceedings

HEALTH

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Health in relation to the main estimates 2014-15.

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled "Opportunities for Aboriginal Persons in the Workforce". Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates on the supplementary estimates (A) 2014-15.

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in relation to the main estimates 2014-15.

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled "Main Estimates 2014-15".

* * *

● (1610)

[Translation]

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACT

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-603, An Act to amend the Motor Vehicle Safety Act (vehicle side guards).

He said: Mr. Speaker, there have already been too many deaths involving cyclists and heavy trucks. A simple and effective way of preventing serious injury and death is installing side guards on heavy trucks. Side guards protect pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists from being pulled under the wheels of these vehicles.

It is quite simple: side guards save lives. That is why I am very proud to continue the work done by Olivia Chow and introduce this bill in my name today.

[English]

There have been too many fatalities involving cyclists and heavy trucks across Canada. One of the simplest and most effective ways to save lives is to install side guards on heavy trucks. They prevent pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists from being pulled under the wheels of these vehicles.

A few years ago, Olivia Chow first tabled this bill to make side guards mandatory. Today, it is my honour to continue her work and to table this bill, which is also my first bill in the House.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present today a petition signed by a number of people from various parts of the city of Regina, expressing their very strong support for the Millennium Development Goals and calling upon Canada to meet its commitment of directing 0.7% of the nation's gross national product toward official development assistance every year, and to reach that goal by 2015.

DIVORCE ACT

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition from some 900 residents of my constituency. The undersigned citizens of Canada call on Parliament to amend the Divorce Act as in MP Maurice Vellacott's bill, Bill C-560, to require that equal parenting be treated as the rebuttable presumption in custody decisions, except in the cases of proven neglect or abuse.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Just a reminder to hon. members to use the riding name of the member and not their actual name.

Presenting petitions, the hon. member for Nickel Belt.

DEMENTIA

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am quite pleased today to rise to present two petitions.

One petition is calling on the Minister of Health and the House of Commons to pass my bill, Bill C-356, an act respecting a national strategy for dementia. As members know, we have an epidemic right now of seniors who have dementia, and we would like the government to take action on this unfortunate illness.

BLOOD AND ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is from dozens of people from the Windsor area, asking the government that people's sexual preferences not be grounds for the instant refusal of the right to donate organs.

Routine Proceedings

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present. The first one calls on Parliament to refrain from making any changes 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.

CANADA POST

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition concerns the reduction of Canada Post services. It calls on the Government of Canada to reject Canada Post's plan for reduced services and to explore other options for updating the crown corporation's business plans.

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is calling on the House of Commons to amend the Food and Drugs Act for mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods.

•(1615)

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to the House a petition regarding the cuts to Canada Post's services.

People in my riding are very concerned. They are worried about the negative impact these cuts will have on them. They are calling on the government to reject Canada Post's service reduction plan and explore other avenues for updating the crown corporation's business plan.

I hope that the government will take this petition seriously, given my constituents' growing concern.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions this afternoon. The first is from residents of Vancouver and other locations through the Lower Mainland. It calls on this place to make legislated what has been a moratorium on supertanker traffic on the British Columbia coast ever since 1972. The petitioners call for a tanker ban.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition comes from residents throughout various parts of British Columbia. They are calling on the government to provide stable, secure, and predictable funding to our national public broadcaster, the CBC.

SCIENCE

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to present a petition signed by dozens of community members in my riding of Parkdale—High Park. They are calling on the Government of Canada to create an independent science watchdog.

The position of national science adviser was eliminated back in 2008, but it lacked independence from the government and it had limited capacity, only to advise the prime minister. Parliamentarians need sound information and expert advice on scientific matters to ensure policy decisions are based on the best scientific evidence available. Therefore, these petitioners are calling on the government to support Bill C-558, which would establish an independent parliamentary science officer.

[*Translation*]

VIA RAIL

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition that has been signed by dozens of people who are calling for better VIA Rail service in eastern Canada, particularly in northern New Brunswick and where I come from, Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

I would like to point out that VIA Rail has already announced that it will delay the resumption of VIA Rail services in the Gaspé, which belies the commitments the company made in the past.

I hope that the government will put pressure on VIA Rail so that it improves service and delivers on its commitments, which would respond to the concerns set out in this petition.

[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand in this place on behalf of the good people of Davenport in the great city of Toronto to present a couple of petitions.

The first one is from very concerned residents, friends, and allies of Oscar Vigil, who came to Canada from El Salvador in 2001. He raised a family here. In fact, his wife and three children are now Canadian citizens. The government wants to send him back to El Salvador. The petitioners request the Government of Canada and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to grant ministerial relief to Oscar Vigil and allow him to remain with his family in Canada as a permanent resident.

URBAN WORKERS

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more than half of workers in Toronto cannot access a stable, full-time job. They have part-time jobs, precarious work, and contract employment. This petition is from members of the riding of Davenport. They are calling on the government to support a national strategy for urban workers.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seniors and people on fixed incomes are still getting bills in the mail for which they are charged a pay-to-pay fee to get their bill in the mail. The government said it was going to eliminate these fees, but citizens are still getting these bills with fees attached. This petition calls on the government to stop the practice of pay-to-pay fees across Canada.

Routine Proceedings

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition regarding Bill C-442, the national Lyme disease strategy act, brought by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, which would develop a national strategy to ensure the recognition, timely diagnosis, and effective treatment of Lyme disease in Canada. We have a large and growing number of citizens in Thunder Bay—Superior North who have Lyme disease, and unfortunately, it is increasing with climate change.

• (1620)

RAILWAY TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to raise attention on behalf of residents of Sault Ste. Marie, Aweres, Prince Township, Goulais River, and Hilton Beach, which are in the Conservative riding of Sault Ste. Marie. They are concerned about the subsidy removal for the Algoma Central Railway passenger rail service and the fact that there was no broad consultation; that it is impacting businesses, homes, and communities along the route; and that it is affecting their local economy, especially for small businesses. They are asking the government to reinstate funding for the Algoma passenger rail service. I have to admit that the government did put a bit of funding back, but only for one year, and these residents remain concerned about that.

[*Translation*]

THE SENATE

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have here a petition signed by the people of Brome—Missisquoi. They are calling for the Senate to be abolished. This house of unelected representatives—who are not accountable to anyone, other than the party that appointed them—costs us \$92 million a year.

The petition states that senators represent no one except the party that appointed them. It must be abolished.

[*English*]

BLOOD AND ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have petitions from all over Canada calling on the Government of Canada to review thoroughly and examine the policy on blood and organ donation in Canada. The petitioners ask that the sexual preferences of people not be an instant refusal of the right to donate. They point out that they understand that people should be pre-tested for any disease prior to being qualified to donate. They understand that there may be some high-risk activities. What they object to is the automatic assumption that because of someone's sexual preference, they would be prima facie excluded from donating blood. They request that the Government of Canada return the right of any healthy Canadian to give the gift of blood, bone marrow, or other organs to those in need no matter the race, religion, or sexual preference of a person, because they believe that this right is universal to all people and is a very important right of citizenship.

[*Translation*]

DEMENTIA

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to present three petitions to the House.

The first petition is calling for a national strategy on Alzheimer's and dementia affecting seniors. This has an impact on many Canadians.

PUBLIC TRANSIT OPERATORS

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is aimed at putting an end to violence against bus drivers, a problem that is not going away. We hope that a solution is found soon.

[*English*]

THE SENATE

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is from residents of Vaudreuil—Soulanges, from towns such as Hudson and Saint-Lazare, who are asking that the House of Commons abolish the Senate. They are saying that it is an unelected chamber, it is unaccountable, and it has no place in our democracy.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition entitled “The Right to Save Seeds”, sponsored by the National Farmers Union, on behalf of hundreds of residents of Toronto—Danforth.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to refrain from making changes to the Seeds Act or the Plant Breeders' Rights Act through a bill that is currently before this House, Bill C-18. They fear that it would further restrict farmers' rights and add to farmers' costs. They ask Parliament to enshrine instead of that part of the legislation the inalienable right of farmers and other Canadians to save, reuse, select, exchange, and sell seeds.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

●(1625)

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The Chair has received notice of request for an emergency debate. I will acknowledge the hon. member for St. John's East.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as was pointed out, I did give notice to the Speaker of a request for an emergency debate under Standing Order 52(2). I am seeking leave to propose an emergency debate on the alarming reports of sexual assault in the Canadian Armed Forces.

There is an urgent need for an emergency debate to allow parliamentarians to address this crisis in a substantive way so that substantive action can be taken to determine the extent of the problem and much-needed steps can be taken to prevent future cases.

I want to emphasize the fact that sometimes when emergency debates are proposed, it is suggested that there may be an opposition day on which the issue could be raised. However, there are no opposition days in the following weeks. There are none on the planned agenda of the House, and an emergency debate may well be the only occasion we will have to debate such an important and urgent issue.

It involves a serious matter: victims of sexual assault in the military. We have seen reports that as many as 1,700 assaults per year, or five a day, take place. People in the military need to have confidence that when anything like this happens, their complaints will be taken seriously, that it will not have a negative effect on their careers if they complain, and that the perpetrators will be handled properly and appropriately. That seems to be a big problem.

There is a potential significant loss of confidence that the current government is taking the matter seriously. We need a debate to allow members to talk about this issue and to discuss the possible ways of dealing with it.

There is the fact that we do not have reports that are statutorily required and a whole series of serious issues that cannot be dealt with and answered properly in 35 seconds of question period. Therefore, there is a need for a substantive debate. If it does not happen by way of an emergency debate, it may not be debated until the fall.

These are the reasons it is an emergency. The seriousness of the issue, I think, speaks for itself. We are talking about victims of sexual assault, and there are reports in the media that they are being re-victimized within the military because of improper handling of these matters.

This is a matter that has been ongoing for some time. There were reports of it 16 years ago. We have similar reports today.

Something serious needs to be done. We need to debate the issue here in Parliament, and an emergency debate seems to be the best method of doing that right now.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I thank the hon. member for St. John's East for his interest in the subject and for his

submission. We have taken the matter in hand, reviewed the proposal that the member submitted, and find that it does not actually meet the usual test or requirements that would compel an emergency debate in this case at this time, and so we will let that matter stand.

Before we go to orders of the day, 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 Saanich—Gulf Islands, Canada-U.S. relations; and the hon. member for Trois-Rivières, housing.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

STRENGTHENING CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT

BILL C-24—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

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

That, in relation to Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the second reading stage of the Bill; and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

●(1630)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. As has been the case at other times where the House has considered these questions, we like to limit members' interventions to around a minute so that enough members will have the opportunity to participate. In addition, this is another reminder that the 30-minute question period is primarily intended for opposition members to question the government on the proposal that it has before the House.

We will proceed with questions. The hon. opposition House leader.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 65 times we have had closure and time allocation. That is the deplorable record of the government. Back when Conservatives were trying to replace the former corrupt Liberal government, they said they were going to do things differently. They were not going to ram bad legislation through the House but would actually take the time to consider amendments from the opposition. We all remember that. That is what the Conservatives used to say.

[Translation]

Now, a few years later, the government has a deplorable record: it has used closure and time allocation 65 times. The public has a number of concerns about this controversial bill, which makes it even more deplorable that the government is doing this yet again.

Government Orders

The government does not want to show openness in the House. It simply wants to impose its law, regardless of the consequences. We all know what kinds of consequences these controversial bills have. The bills are so badly botched that the government is forced to introduce new bills to fix the problems. Furthermore, the Supreme Court has systematically rejected bills introduced by this government. This has happened four times in the past few weeks.

My question for my colleague is very simple: why is the government imposing a closure and time allocation motion for the 65th time, especially on such a controversial bill?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are doing it because we have a responsibility to Canadians, a responsibility to do what we promised we would do.

This overhaul of citizenship legislation has been on our agenda for years. We promised it during the last election campaign, in various throne speeches, particularly the most recent one, and in our budgets. Now it is time for action.

Canadians care deeply about their citizenship. They understand that it is very valuable and that problems in the existing law need to be fixed.

The law was last updated in 1977 under Prime Minister Trudeau's Liberal government. Many problems, such as abuses and processing delays, have surfaced since then.

If we do not take action and make this bill the law of the land, tens of thousands of permanent residents who want to become citizens will suffer. The opposition is not taking their interests into account.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have the government of the day that continues to want to use time allocation. It uses time allocation more than any other government in the history of Canada. It is abuse. It is so sad to see. We have that on the one hand.

Then we have the official opposition, the New Democrats, who do not even want to sit in the evenings. They voted against having those extra hours so we could have more debate.

We have legislation, such as the bill that is being proposed here, that generally needs to be debated extensively, and the government is trying to prevent that debate from taking place by bringing in closure.

Then we have New Democrats who, even though they agree with legislation, the simplest of legislation, want to invoke and pressure government to have time allocation.

The question I have for the government House leader is this. Why are the NDP and the Conservatives unable to sit down with the Liberals and work out a legislative timeframe that would allow for adequate debate on the important pieces of legislation that Canadians need to see legitimately debated at second reading?

•(1635)

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, there has been abuse. There has been a problem. Under our current Citizenship Act, last amended under a Liberal government in a thorough-going way in 1977, the

door was open to people who claimed residence in this country, in relatively large numbers, but whose physical presence in the country was never checked. That is the kind of abuse Liberal governments left behind them, decade after decade, and this government is moving to correct, because Canadians attach importance to their citizenship. They want to see the rules followed. New Canadians want it. Canadians who have achieved citizenship by descent want it. People aspiring to citizenship today, making the sacrifices to go through the "Discover Canada" guide and to learn our official languages to the level required, want these rules to be followed. That is what the bill would do.

We have already had 36 hours of debate in this House. We will have many more hours of debate tonight, thanks to the willingness of this government to put its shoulder to the wheel and to work for the benefit of Canadians. That has allowed all sides of this bill to be considered. It has been pre-studied in committee. We are making progress, and we will make more tonight.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my constituents are shocked. They are angry. I do not know why the current government does not buy an entire warehouse of duct tape and just tape every single mouth in this House. It is ridiculous that we are actually debating something so fundamental as what citizenship is and means in a modern democratic country. It is unbelievable.

My Liberal friend should probably check the record. It has been very clear from the beginning. We said we had no problems with working. The point is that they got into bed with the government in order to keep us from actually moving motions. How democratic is that? It is incredible.

My question is the following. Is my hon. colleague, who I know is well intentioned and for whom I have a lot of respect, not capable of recognizing that something as fundamental as citizenship, something that concerns Canadians so much, here and abroad, should be properly discussed by this august chamber?

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, we strongly agree. It can and should be properly discussed. It has been discussed for dozens of hours. It will be discussed for further hours, this evening. It will be considered carefully in committee.

However, there is urgency to passing these measures, which we announced years ago in speeches from the throne and in budgets and for which Canadians sent us here with a strong mandate to bring into law, to bring into effect, because for us on this side who are in government it is very clear what Canadians' expectations are.

Last year was the biggest year ever for applications to become citizens: 330,000-plus permanent residents applied to become citizens. Our production of new citizens, of new awards of citizenship this year, has been unprecedented: 75,000 in the first three months. We are going to carry that pace forward.

However, we cannot meet Canadians' expectations and we cannot start to bring processing times down without the measures in the bill. They are urgently needed. That is why this debate, this fulsome debate, which has carried on for 36 hours, needs to continue tonight and come to a conclusion in due course.

Government Orders

•(1640)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Marleau and Montpetit's historical perspective on closure is that the closure rule has been the subject of scrutiny and discussion on numerous occasions. In December 1957, the new Diefenbaker government placed a notice of motion on the order paper to repeal the closure rule, but the motion was never debated. In July 1960, the government thought about giving it to committee to look at the closure procedure. Then the Liberals of the 1970s again considered the desirability of repealing the closure rule, but they did not report it on either. Basically, no action has been taken on repealing this awful measure that was used only a handful of times for half a century. There was reluctance to apply the closure rule. It only started in 1913.

My question for the minister is simple. Does he actually believe in cutting off debate through this use of the closure tool, or like the Conservatives and Liberals of the past, would he at least consider repealing the idea of closure in debates?

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I would correct the hon. member. This is not a closure motion; this is a time allocation motion. We are debating a measure that has been amply debated. Aspects of it were debated under different guises as private members' business, and aspects of it have been debated in different forms in previous amendments to the Citizenship Act.

These issues are familiar to Canadians, but what would this bill accomplish? First, it would underline and reinforce the value of Canadian citizenship, which all Canadians consider incredibly important. It would speed up processing. If we get this bill passed quickly, it would benefit tens of thousands of those waiting for their citizenships to be processed. It would also honour those who served Canada and circumscribe those cases in which citizenship can be revoked for gross acts of disloyalty. These are all measures that are very popular in this country, that are very much needed, that we have amply debated in this place, and that we want to move forward with this bill.

Hon. Bal Gosal (Minister of State (Sport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, this bill has been debated in committee and in the House. It is a very important piece of legislation for citizenship. I would like to ask the minister if he can tell us what he is hearing from Canadians out there about this bill.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, we are hearing from Canadians from all walks of life, in all parts of the country, about how much importance they attach to their citizenship and how much they want to see it protected, its value enhanced, and its integrity assured—the integrity of the process that brings people to this country first as immigrants, second as permanent residents, and then allows them to become citizens in unprecedented numbers these days.

These are the things this bill would do. It would help us to prevent the kind of fraud that, unfortunately, has prevailed in the system to a significant degree for decades, thanks to Liberal neglect. I have not heard in one single speech from the NDP, the official opposition in this place, that abuse has occurred. Many of the NDP speeches seem to be cookie cutter copies of one or the other. None of them has acknowledged the fact that there was abuse, that people have committed residency fraud in seeking to acquire citizenship in this

country. New Democrats complain about the lack of debate, but they refuse to see and describe the reality as it is.

This bill is urgently needed, and Canadians want it because it would put citizenship on firmer foundations than ever and reflect the value that Canadians attach to one of their greatest possessions.

•(1645)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for the minister. I am sure he knows he was mistaken when he said that we had debated this bill for 36 hours. I would like to remind him that Bill C-24 was debated for just a few hours by just five members: a Liberal, a New Democrat and three Conservatives, if I remember correctly. If I am wrong about that, he can set the record straight.

That means that only five out of 308 MPs, or just 2%, have been able to speak to this bill. That means that 2% of Canadians have been able to express their views on a very important bill about the basic tenets of Canadian citizenship.

I would therefore like to ask the minister a simple question: what percentage of Canadians would have to have an opportunity to speak to this bill for the debate to be democratic?

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, every Canadian has the right to have a say in this debate and many did. They sent us letters and emails to share their point of view on this bill.

The vast majority of them are in favour of the measures in this bill. We are listening to the NDP and the Liberals. If they have something new to say about this bill, then we want to hear it. However, we keep hearing the same things, the same baseless accusations and a refusal to acknowledge past abuses. If the NDP and the Liberals have anything new to add to this debate, then this evening is the time to do it because there are still a few hours of debate remaining.

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to join with my colleagues in expressing extreme concern about having time allocation and limiting the amount of debate for the 65th time in the House by the Conservative government. It is a shocking disregard for democratic debate and for the very reason we are sent here, which is to voice the views of our constituents, which is to examine fully the issues before the House prior to voting on legislation, and hopefully, through the voicing of those views and through that democratic debate, to influence one or more speakers and come up with a result that is in the best interests of all Canadians.

I want to use my question to express the views of some experts in my community of Parkdale—High Park. I am referring to the Inter-Clinic Immigration Working Group and Parkdale Community Legal Services, who offer services for the community on immigration issues. In a brief to the immigration committee they said, in their expert view:

Government Orders

In the final result, the longer the residency requirement, the more people we have residing, working, and paying taxes here without the full benefit of full civic participation.

They are especially concerned in this regard about temporary foreign workers. They are saying that prolonging the requirement prior to citizenship would weaken Canada as a nation. It would not strengthen it.

If the minister believes so fundamentally that his government is right, that there is serious abuse, and that it would strengthen Canada as a nation, why would he oppose full democratic debate on this? Let us hear some examples. Let us hear some stories. We will present our stories. Let us get everything on the table for Canadians.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, we do agree that this legislation is urgent and that it needs to move forward. We do agree that it needs debate. We invite the opposition tonight to give us some perspectives that we have not had until now. I am not sure if the member opposite was agreeing that there has been abuse in this program in the past. I am not sure if she is agreeing that there are measures in the bill that would address that abuse, that would prevent residency fraud in the future.

What is clear is that we can and will act for Canadians on the basis of the mandate we have, in the interests of a citizenship that serves a strong immigration program, that serves a strong Canadian economy. We need to do these things because we need to be more efficient now, not at the end of this year and not next year. We need to be more efficient in awarding citizenship to hundreds of thousands of Canadians who have earned it, who deserve it, who have applied for it, and who have qualified for it.

•(1650)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I wish we could be having the kind of conversation that would reflect the honesty of what is going on in this place, which would mean that I was not addressing my question through the Speaker to the hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration but to the puppet masters in the various leaders' offices who have decided that the House is going through the charade of late night sittings until midnight in the absence of the kind of trust and political consensus we should have been building in this place to allow us to avoid long debates on bills on which we completely agree, such as Bill C-17, to get it to committee and not take up our time in speeches, and allow us to have the kind of debate that this particular bill really requires.

If we had the kind of respect across the House that should be the job of all parliamentarians, we would not be sitting until midnight in a farcical exercise to prove we are working hard, because we are not going to be working smart by the end. I know what happened last June when we worked every night until midnight. Late night sittings do not advance the kind of parliamentary performance that our voters deserve.

I do not know if my hon. colleague would agree with me, but would it not be better if the House leaders were able to work together so we could focus our time deservedly on this bill and move up the passage of the ones on which we all agree?

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, this place, this House has done some of its best work over the decades and over the centuries in

these hours, the evening hours, when there is important business to do on behalf of the Canadian people.

That is why we are here. That is why we have this mandate. That is why we are prepared to work through the night. That is why we do it without complaint and with enthusiasm.

If we look back 100 years ago to the debate that really first gave us the concept of Canadian citizenship under a Conservative government in 1914, we see that long before there was a citizenship act, there was a naturalization act which talked about citizenship for the first time.

We had the Hon. R. B. Bennett and Prime Minister Borden speaking to these issues. They dealt with that bill at second reading in one day. Believe me, it was fewer hours than we will have invested here in this House today.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when many of us first arrived in 2011, we witnessed an argument around time allocation from the government that went something like, "Well, we debated this bill in the last Parliament, so there is no point in talking about it now".

I do not know where the minister is getting his numbers of 30-odd hours of debate when we have only had two hours, but I will tell the House about some other numbers that the minister is not talking about. When he talks about fraud, he says that we have not acknowledged fraud in the system. That is untrue; we have acknowledged that there is some. What the minister has not acknowledged is to what degree his department is concerned about fraud.

We have 325,000 applicants in the queue. Of those applicants, the RCMP is investigating 5,000 for potential fraud. That is—calculators out, folks—about 1.5%.

Now, of that 1.5%, some may have committed fraud. Some may have, but can the minister tell us how many? Is this truly the focus of this incredibly important and incredibly problematic bill?

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, fortunately we do have the capacity to investigate cases of fraud already, and we do revoke citizenship when it is proven. That has been done in dozens of cases since 2011.

As the member says, there are 3,000—not 5,000 but 3,000—RCMP investigations under way. I am not going to speculate on how many of those will lead to a conclusion that fraud actually took place. That is the RCMP's job. However, there are very important measures in this bill to prevent fraud in the future, measures to make it impossible for applicants to mislead the authorities responsible for citizenship in my department about the time they have been physically present in Canada.

That is going to be extremely valuable for this program and for the value of citizenship. It will be welcomed by those who know this program and want to benefit from it across the country. Most of all, it will improve processing.

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For Canadians, for those who have applied for citizenship, and for those who are here as permanent residents and will apply soon, the main benefit is that processing will be faster under this act. Anyone who delays the passage of this bill is actually disenfranchising many tens of thousands who urgently want that citizenship.

• (1655)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is very hard to sit here and listen to some of the rhetoric I have heard today.

We have a minister who says we have spent 30-plus hours debating a bill that this House has only studied or spoken on for two hours, and even though it has some of the elements of a bill that was previously debated, this bill has many other elements in it.

We have a minister who, instead of having a detailed and thorough debate on something as substantial as taking away somebody's citizenship, is putting more and more power into the hands of ministers, allowing them to become despotic and taking us away from parliamentary democracy.

What we have right now is a government that is using closure or time allocation for the 65th time. After only two hours of discussion on something that is going to fundamentally change what it means to be a citizen in this country, the government has the audacity to say it is now moving time allocation on this issue.

My question for the minister is this: where on earth did he get 30-plus hours of debate on this bill?

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite speaks in very alarming terms about despotism. I will tell the House what despotism is. It is any government, any parliament that refuses to take action when laws and rules are broken.

That way lies anarchy. That way lies poor service. That way lies an undermining of the rule of law, and in this bill we are determined to move against just those trends.

It is astonishing that critics, experienced members of Parliament on the other side, would refuse to acknowledge the basic benefits that the bill would bring by allowing us both to take action against fraud in the system and to process applications faster.

In my time in this House, I have not heard that member once acknowledge that there was abuse in the system, that there was residency fraud. She would do well, for the sake of her credibility—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Questions. The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we need an element of decision-based evidence-making, and the bill is really a classic example of a solution in search of a problem.

Everybody knows that in any system there is some degree of manipulation and even some fraud, but the bill goes far beyond dealing with that: it makes it harder for someone to acquire citizenship. It increases residency requirements from three years to four years, it fails to count any time spent as a permanent resident, it increases the language requirements and now forces 15-year-olds and 64-year-olds to demonstrate proficiency in English where they did not have to before, and it triples the application fee. Those are the

measures the government has taken. They have nothing to do with attacks on fraud.

The minister talked about fraud. I would like to know exactly what the data is behind the government's move to increase residency requirements. How many people in this country does he think have obtained their citizenship by residency fraud? Let him give us an idea of the scope of the problem to see if this is truly a case of a hammer smashing a pea.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member demonstrates his lack of understanding of the bill in what he just said. He said that time as a permanent resident would not count toward citizenship, but that is exactly what would count under the bill.

The bill says that time when an individual is not a permanent resident would no longer count. It is much clearer to have one rule for all categories of permanent residents and to make it absolutely crystal clear what Canada expects, what Canadians expect, and what new Canadians who have become citizens expect from those who aspire to Canadian citizenship, which is that they reside here for four years out of six.

How many cases of fraud are there? We do not know. The RCMP is investigating 3,000. We have revoked citizenship for fraudulent acquisition thereof in dozens of cases in the last three years. We hope to get to the bottom of hundreds of cases in the months and years to come.

However, what is absolutely clear from the bill is that with the exit-entry records, we will be able to check in the future. With the new measures in the bill, residency fraud will become a thing of the past. All members should welcome that.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the minister that Bill C-24 is not on solid constitutional footing. It could run into challenges regarding section 15, in particular, and section 11 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Does he realize that?

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the legal advice and review that the government requested concerning this bill. The chances of a constitutional challenge to this bill are low. In fact, it was assessed to be a slight risk.

We are confident that it is reasonable to insist that those who want to become Canadian citizens express their intention to do so. This will never undermine their right to free mobility or their rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It makes complete sense, when requiring that permanent residents spend a certain number of years here, to ask the people if they intend to reside in Canada.

[*English*]

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

Government Orders

[Translation]

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 in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

• (1740)

[English]

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

(Division No. 154)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Benoit	Bergen
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Devolin
Dreeschen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mays

McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 143	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Aubin
Bélanger	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Caron
Casey	Cash
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Devar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Jones	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Péclet
Pilon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Rathgeber	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan

Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Valerioté — 113

Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Turmel

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion government, orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

It being 5:44 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

DAIRY PRODUCERS

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should respect its promise to dairy and cheese producers of Quebec and Canada who will be affected by the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union, by: (a) revealing details without delay related to the compensation that will be paid; (b) providing for an implementation period for the agreement that is as long as possible; (c) putting an end to the circumvention of tariff quotas and the misclassification of products at the border; (d) maintaining high quality standards by imposing the same production and processing requirements on imported products; and (e) committing to provide support for commercialization.

She said: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for seconding my motion.

I am proud to rise in the House today to move Motion No. 496 in support of dairy and cheese producers.

My motion has already received the support of the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec, the Dairy Farmers of Canada, the Producteurs de lait du Québec, the Association des artisans fromagers, the UPA, the Solidarité rurale du Québec and the Association des transporteurs de lait du Québec.

My motion calls on the government to keep its promise to producers who will be affected by the results of the negotiations for the comprehensive economic and trade agreement with Europe.

Over the past few months, I have met with many stakeholders in the agricultural industry, particularly those in the dairy and cheese sector. They could not believe what happened when the agreement in principle was signed. Having followed the negotiations in the media, I never would have imagined such an outcome.

Private Members' Business

The Conservatives negotiated this trade agreement in secret, favouring certain sectors at the expense of dairy and cheese producers. The NDP is open to trade agreements, but we would never turn our backs on the dairy and cheese sector.

The Union des producteurs agricoles supports my motion and, like me, it was very surprised by the agreement in principle that was negotiated. The UPA's senior vice-president, Pierre Lemieux, had this to say:

People are being kept in the dark. We do not know what kind of help we are going to get. We are being kept in the dark.

It is true. Producers did not know that their industry was going to be sacrificed in October and, today, they still do not know what they can expect to get in the way of compensation.

This year is the International Year of Family Farming. The time has come not only to move forward and foster a dialogue on the future of our farms but also to recognize the hard work that is done by our producers and farmers.

In supporting my motion, the government will be taking a step in the right direction. My motion responds to calls by dairy producers across the country. Their requests are quite reasonable and justified. The government promised compensation. Now it just has to unveil the details of that promise.

Dairy producers have faith in their supply management system. The system costs nothing, absolutely nothing, to the government and the producers are not receiving any subsidies. The producers would like to have a compensation structure that would protect the supply management system.

In Canada, our dairy and cheese industry is thriving. We have reason to be very proud of its success these past few years and the quality and diversity of its products.

Who here in this room does not enjoy our Canadian cheese? Canada produces more than 1,050 types of cheese, which are listed in the Canadian Cheese Directory. We produce 133,200 tonnes of specialty cheeses.

Quebec has always been a leader in cheese production in North America. At the end of the 19th century, the first cheese school in North America was established in Saint-Denis-de-Kamouraska. Since 1893, the École de laiterie de Saint-Hyacinthe, now known as the Institut de technologie agroalimentaire, has been working on improving cheese technologies and production while conducting research in chemistry, bacteriology and nutrition.

In the 1980s, a return to the land and traditional values breathed new life into the production of fine cheeses. The arrival in Quebec of a Swiss craftsman-cheesemonger, Fritz Kaiser, sparked the passion of Quebec producers for traditional European cheeses. Many focus on manufacturing specialty cheeses, and their products are starting to win prizes in international competitions.

In the 1990s, micro cheese-makers started offering a wide variety of artisanal cheese throughout the different regions of Quebec, including several raw-milk cheeses.

Private Members' Business

Today, the producers are enjoying the fruit of those efforts because the fine cheeses of Quebec offer consumers recognized quality and remarkable diversity.

• (1750)

More than one Canadian cheese has won an award at international competitions, such as the World Championship Cheese Contest, which is held in Wisconsin. The Canadian Cheese Grand Prix, a biannual competition held by Dairy Farmers of Canada, showcases the richness and quality of Canadian cheeses.

The Fromagerie Domaine Féodal, in Berthierville, in my riding, won third place at the American Cheese Society competition in 2011, and first place at the British Empire Cheese Show. Guy Dessureault and Lise Mercier, from Domaine Féodal, make exceptional products. I presented my motion during a press conference at their cheese factory last week. I visited their facilities and had the opportunity to taste their delicious cheeses. I want to sincerely thank them for their warm welcome and their support.

One of their best-known cheeses is the Guillaume Tell, a soft cheese steeped in ice cider. They told me that they invested more than \$179,000 in creating this cheese. That does not include the time that Lise and Guy put into this effort.

We must recognize that cheese producers invest a lot of time and money in their businesses. They have worked very hard to create their products and market them, as well as to develop the fine cheese market. They are so very disappointed that European cheeses are going to be invading their market. For each European cheese that enters the grocery store, one of our own cheeses will lose its place on the shelves.

My motion will ensure that our cheese producers will have the support they need to compete with European cheeses. Guy effectively summed up the sector's demands as follows: "I want us to be able to earn a living and be smart about it". It is as simple as that.

We must understand that under the agreement in principle, the European Union will have greater access to the Canadian cheese market, which is supply managed. That directly undercuts one of the pillars of supply management, the control of imports, and jeopardizes the effectiveness of the system. This potential agreement is detrimental to Canada's dairy producers. In fact, it would deprive Canadian dairy producers and their communities of some of their revenue, to the benefit of the European industry. The economic development of communities and any associated jobs would be affected.

Marcel Groleau, president of the Union des producteurs agricoles points out that "cheese factories that were planning investments will reconsider. They are going to be cautious and wait to see the repercussions of the agreement".

That is just one consequence of this agreement, and it must not be minimized. It is vital to continue supporting this industry, which, at the same time, supports the survival of our farms and farm labour. Producers reinvest in their farms and support local suppliers and businesses, which contributes to the Canadian economy as a whole.

Claire Bolduc, from Solidarité rurale du Québec, supported my motion. She raised two important points: this agreement undermines the supply management system and creates a dangerous precedent for future free trade negotiations. The government is talking out of both sides of its mouth when it says that it protects supply management while weakening one of its pillars.

She also explained how the sale of European cheeses in Canada will affect our communities. Thousands of our cheese factories across the country create jobs, wealth and diversity in our communities. She noted that if we do not do something, an entire industry and the pride of the rural economy will be at risk. She is right. Our families, our communities, the use of our land, our services and our identity will be at risk. We must give our cheese and dairy producers the tools they need to remain competitive and mitigate the adverse effects of the agreement.

The Conservatives promised to support supply management, but the conclusion of negotiations with Europe has undermined it. They then wanted to calm things down by promising to compensate producers. It is now time to provide the details. That is what I am asking them to do today with my motion.

The dairy market is one of the most unstable in the world. Canada is lucky to have a stable, reliable dairy market thanks to its dynamic supply management system, a system that has proven its worth. This stability enables farmers to reinvest in their farms and to earn a living from the market without relying on government support.

• (1755)

Supply management is not a subsidy. Canada's dairy producers get no help from the government. However, in Europe, producers get state subsidies that can be as high as 60%. Our dairy producers are not on a level playing field with European producers.

Increased access to 17,700 tonnes of European cheese in Canadian markets will have significant repercussions. Canada's milk output will fall. Subsidized European cheese entering the market will compete with Canadian cheese. There will be increased competition between Canadian cheese and artisan cheese. Some of the growth in the market, which dairy producers have been investing in for a long time, will be lost.

Granting European cheese greater access to our market will not benefit producers, communities or the regions, particularly not when Europe already accounts for a significant proportion of the Canadian cheese market.

The tariff rate quota already allows for the importation of 20,412 tonnes of cheese duty-free. Two-thirds of the tariff rate quote are allocated to the European Union. This concession in the agreement will have no impact on retail prices because the vast majority of European cheese already enters Canada duty-free.

The NDP will support an agreement with Europe that is in Canada's best interests, an agreement that enables us to increase our exports and our opportunities to do business without compromising our government's ability to protect Canadians' interests and to protect the public.

Private Members' Business

We are nevertheless concerned about the potential impact of the agreement on the dairy and cheese industry in Quebec and Canada. That is why I am asking the government to keep its promise to dairy producers and the cheese industry in Quebec and the rest of Canada, which will be affected by the economic and trade agreement.

My motion would mitigate the impact of the agreement on the dairy and cheese industry and support Canada's supply management system, which ensures stable, fair pricing.

The NDP supports producers. We want the government to walk the talk and protect Canada and its dairy and cheese industry. The government must not harm our flourishing cheese industry. If it does, it will lose the industry's contribution to local economies.

I am ready to answer my colleagues' questions.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé for her speech on the dairy and cheese sector.

I would like to hear how she came up with those numbers. She said that this will provide market access to 500 million new European consumers and bring an additional 17,700 tonnes into Canada, so how did she calculate the producers' losses? I would also like to hear her thoughts on the importance of the time period that will allow cheese producers and dairy processors to adapt to this new reality. How many years would be enough to make the time period fair for everyone?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

I did not pull my motion out of thin air. It is based on consultations with industry representatives. The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food also conducted a study.

Canada's milk producers have estimated their industry's losses at \$450 million a year. That is not exactly a bright future for the industry. That is why the motion also includes an implementation period of 10 years, the longest period possible. The industry made that request so that it can adapt to the changes. It is important to have a longer, 10-year implementation period, as the industry has requested.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have recognized the value of supply management and the important role that it plays in certain industries. One only needs to look at our dairy industry in terms of the quality of product, the lifestyle of farmers, and the positive impacts overall. Supply management has seen Canadians benefit immensely.

One of the concerns in regard to the European trade agreement is the idea of protecting supply management. Could the member go beyond the motion and comment on the lack of faith or trust in the government with respect to supply management and the profound negative impact it would have if the government were to start targeting that issue?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, this agreement in principle sets almost a precedent for negotiating future contracts with other countries. It is a big hit that the industry was not expecting. Supply management ensures supply and demand. It is a control that means that farmers know what to expect and that they will have good revenue, especially now that we are seeing a need for *la relève agricole*. We have an aging population. These dairy farms are big business. They are looking to plan for the future, so without an idea of what the compensation package is and with this deal in principle, it is hard to plan for the future.

Those are the comments I am hearing in my discussions with people. They are nervous. They do not have very much confidence. Even today in question period, a question was asked by one of the member's colleagues about compensation. We need to restore the confidence that Canadians should have in the government. It is a step in the right direction to get more information to be able to plan for our future. That is all it is.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to support Motion No. 496. Every day, the innovative dairy producers of Canada put safe and nutritious foods on our tables, while creating jobs and adding value to our economy in rural and urban areas of Canada.

The industry makes an important contribution to our economy with nearly \$22 billion in both farm gate and processor sales. That has created thousands of jobs for Canadians.

This economic success is due in large part to our hard-working farm families and Canada's supply management system.

This system has served Canadian farmers, processors and consumers well over the years, which is why our government continues to support it.

At the same time, we are pursuing the most ambitious trade agenda in Canadian history. Canadian farmers depend on export markets to remain competitive and stimulate economic growth across the country. Our government and our farmers know that Canada's balanced trade position is working.

Over the past six years, we have concluded free trade agreements with 10 countries; announced an agreement in principle on a free trade agreement between Canada and the 28 countries of the European Union; and concluded negotiations with South Korea, Canada's first commercial presence on Asian soil. We are also in the process of negotiating agreements with nearly 30 countries.

This work is paying off for our economy. Last year was the best export year on record for the agriculture and food industry in Canada, with over \$50 billion in trade activities for the first time in our country's history.

Private Members' Business

From dairy products to poultry, livestock to oilseeds, our government will continue to support a strong agricultural industry in Canada because our economy and our well-being depend on it.

As members know, our government recently reached an agreement in principle with the European Union on a new free trade agreement. It is the most comprehensive and ambitious trade agreement since NAFTA.

With the Canada-EU trade agreement and NAFTA, Canada will be one of the few countries in the world with preferential access to the two largest world economies, which represent nearly 800 million of the wealthiest consumers in the world.

In total, the Canada-EU trade agreement should generate \$1.5 billion in earnings a year for Canada's agricultural sector. Canadian producers will have preferential access to the biggest and most lucrative market in the world.

Let me repeat: the Canada-EU trade agreement will retain the three main pillars of supply management—production, import limits and pricing.

In every trade agreement it has signed, our government has clearly indicated to its trade partners that it supports and protects its supply management system, and it will continue to do so.

We are working in the best interests of Canadians and farmers. The government will strongly defend the interests of supply managed sectors in all of its international trade negotiations.

That is why we are pleased to support this motion. I want to point out that we have already taken measures that address some of the key aspects of the motion.

• (1805)

[*English*]

The first part of the motion relates to compensation for the industry for losses incurred as a result of the increased access for cheese under the Canada EU free trade agreement. As publicly stated by the Prime Minister, our government is fully committed to monitoring the impact from the implementation of the agreement and, if needed, to provide compensation should a negative impact be realized.

We have been consulting with industry stakeholders on this issue over the past five months, and we are continuing to do so. This includes provincial dairy producer and processor associations, as well as individual cheeses processors, provincial governments, cheese importers and downstream stakeholders.

With respect to the urgency expressed in the motion, we are very focused on this issue and expect to have more details in the future.

As the motion states, the government has every intention of respecting its promise to dairy farmers that are affected by the trade agreement between Canada and the European Union. Our goal is to develop an approach that will effectively address impacts and ensure we can effectively monitor the impacts as the agreement is implemented.

Regarding the motion's second point on the implementation period, Canada continues to press for the longest implementation

period possible for the Canadian cheese tariff rate quota to help to mitigate as much as possible the potential impact on Canadian dairy and cheese producers.

Regarding the third point on tightening up of controls at the border, we fully recognize that import controls are important to maintain the integrity of the supply management system. We are committed to ensuring that importers play by the rules.

For example, late last year we took action to address a loophole regarding the importation of cheese through pizza topping kits. We clarified the rules to ensure that for this category of products there would be consistent application at the border. This measure has been very effective.

A recent global agricultural information network report from the USDA on the impact of trade action on pizza topping kits showed \$5.5 million worth of pizza kits entering Canada per month from the U.S. in 2013. That amount rapidly fell to \$1 million per month after we closed the loophole.

In addition, it is important to note that the Canada-EU trade agreement in principle underscores our government's commitment to ensuring that our border controls are doing their job.

Regarding the fourth point on production standards of imported goods, the government has already acted to ensure that imports into Canada meet our high quality standards. All food sold in Canada is subject to the Food and Drugs Act, whether it is imported or produced locally. In addition, dairy products imported into Canada are required to meet the dairy products regulations.

While food production and processing requirements may not be exactly the same across foreign jurisdictions, Canada recognizes that the food safety systems of our major trading partners, such as the European Union, have equivalent food safety outcomes.

This system of recognizing equivalency allows goods to be imported into Canada, provided that the goods continue to meet Canadian food safety standards and regulatory requirements. Of course, it allows our products to be exported.

A year and a half ago, we passed a Safe Food for Canadians Act. Under this landmark legislation, we are proposing regulations that promote equivalency in food safety outcomes for domestic, imported and exported food products.

Finally, Motion No. 496 calls on the government to provide support for commercialization of innovative dairy products. We are already addressing this through our \$3 billion, 5-year Growing Forward framework.

Private Members' Business

Growing Forward 2 is helping Canada's dairy industry capture new markets through a number of key initiatives, including the \$12 million dairy research cluster, which almost doubles our previous investment under Growing Forward 1, focusing on milk's human nutrition and health benefits, sustainable milk production and genetic improvement, and investments of close to \$1 million to help Canadian dairy farmers meet consumer demands for traceability, animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and food safety and quality.

My message today is this. Our government has always been, and continues to be, committed to keeping the Canadian supply management sector strong and profitable. Our long-standing support for supply management has not changed. We will continue to promote a balanced trade agenda for all sectors of our economy, to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

We will continue to drive innovation and growth through our investments under Growing Forward 2 because, as we all know, a strong agriculture industry means a strong economy.

Our government puts farmers first, and we are pleased to support the motion.

• (1810)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Liberal Party, it is with pleasure that I rise to speak in support of the motion. We see the merit in having a vote on this very important issue.

A number of weeks ago I had the opportunity, just out outside of Winnipeg and literally minutes away from my own home, to take a tour of a dairy farm. At this farm, milk production was under the supply management system.

When we have the opportunity to take tours of this nature, it gives us a better appreciation of just how important supply management is and the systems on which our farmers are very dependent. They can be so very effective for all of us.

As I put forward in a question, Canada has an excellent, world-class, quality product through supply management. It may be cheeses, milk or other agricultural products. At the same time, we can ensure that the farmer receives a decent return for the service being provided and that we have enough of that product for consumers from coast to coast to coast.

I listened to the government representative, and there are a few points I would like to try to address in my limited time on this important issue. One of them deals specifically with the idea that the government says "trust us", and that we do not have anything to worry about because it will be supportive of our cheese manufacturers, our dairy industry, and supply management as a whole.

I have a difficult time trusting the Conservative government on the issue. It was not that long ago, for example, when a Conservative government felt that the Canadian Wheat Board had a valuable role to play in the Prairies. In certain situations, the government said that to the grain farmers. It said "trust us", that it believed in the Wheat Board and would never get rid of it".

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Look at the record harvest. What a good harvest we had this year.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that has nothing to do with the record harvest. It has everything to do with this whole "trust us" attitude that the government proclaims to the farmers. Its actions do not reflect what it asks Canadians to do, which is to trust it.

Now we have the very important issue of supply management. We know the government has been soft at best in affirming strong support toward supply management.

When we look at what has taken place with the comprehensive economic trade agreement in principle between Canada and the European Union, some red flags and concerns have been raised regarding certain industries in Canada. One of those industries, specifically, is the cheese industry.

The Liberal Party as a whole has been exceptionally supportive of freer trade and the idea of free trade agreements. However, at the same time, it has been encouraging and calling on the government to be more transparent in exactly what it is saying abroad. What is the government attempting to negotiate? To what degree is it putting our farmers at risk? Canadians have these concerns.

I am pleased to hear that the government seems to want to support the motion, and that is a good thing. The problem is that it would not be the first time the government has voted in favour of a motion and then, months later, seems to contradict it. All we have to do is take a look at the fair elections act to exemplify that.

I am grateful that at the moment the government members seem to be somewhat supportive of supply management.

• (1815)

However, I am an optimist. I believe there might be hope at the end of the day for the Conservatives in making that solid commitment to supply management. I would like to hear that commitment more often. I say that because I am genuinely concerned about industries, not only in my home province of Manitoba, but, as pointed out in the motion, the province of Quebec and in fact all over Canada as well. There has been an immense benefit.

It was interesting what we heard about the agreement between Canada and the European Union, and it is important that we realize it is far from being complete. I suspect there might come a day when we will achieve that free trade agreement with the European Union. Hopefully, if things go well over the next couple of years, it could be a Liberal administration signing off on it. In that situation, supply management would be well taken care of.

Members over there are a little sensitive on this issue. Maybe they see the writing on the wall.

However, it is not only the Liberal Party that has raised the issue of ensuring that people are aware of the ramifications. Some interesting points were raised by the Dairy Farmers of Canada. We need to have more discussion on this. European Union access will total 31,971 tonnes, or 7.5% of the Canadian cheese market.

Private Members' Business

I am very proud of a local company we have in Manitoba, Bothwell Cheese. The company came into being in 1936. The member for Provencher gave me the thumbs up. He is very familiar with Bothwell Cheese. If one lives in Manitoba, one has to be proud of that company. It is the best cheese in the world. In fact, I think it is their marble cheddar cheese that we could honestly say is the best product in the world. We are very proud of that fact. Our cheese manufacturers can excel, not only in Canada but also abroad.

However, many cheese companies still are concerned about the percentage of cheese and want to maintain as much as possible the percentage of the current market in Canada. Total imports will reach 38,171 tonnes, or about 9% of the current Canadian consumption. It is a significant increase. How is the government responding to this issue? There are a number of issues that have to be taken into consideration when we start to talk about these kinds of numbers. We are talking about jobs, quality of life for farmers and quality of product ultimately.

We can look at the financial compensation. There are all sorts of hidden tariffs out there. We need to get a better sense of what the government is talking about when it is sitting at those trade negotiations. When we start talking about these kinds of numbers, we really need more transparency. We want the government to be more transparent in what we hear from the European trade negotiations, discussions and so forth.

There is serious concern from our dairy farmers with the equivalent of farm quota cuts. There are serious concerns about the fine cheese market in Canada and the rationalization that will have to take place with our dairy herds.

• (1820)

So much can be said about this important issue.

The Liberal Party supports the motion. We are concerned about the government's lack of a solid commitment to supply management. We want more transparency on the issue of negotiations.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always great to rise in this place, but it is even better when the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture is fully supportive of the motion my colleague has introduced. This is a good day. I am not sure about the chair of the agriculture committee, because we still have to hear from him. A little bird whispered in my ear that perhaps he may say complimentary things as well. We await his remarks and anticipate that he also will endorse the motion, because it is a good one.

There are multiple reasons for the motion, but one of the most important is to let cheese producers and dairy farmers across this country know that we understand what the impact of CETA would mean for them. Mr. Wally Smith, the president of Dairy Farmers of Canada, said that for dairy farmers, the impact would be about 2.25% of quota. Those of us who understand the supply system know what quota means. For folks who are listening to us today who are not dairy farmers, that translates to \$60,000 in lost potential income for each dairy farmer across this country. That is a significant amount of money, and it is troubling to them. That is what today's motion is meant to address. It is to get the government to recognize that it needs a timeline that would allow for the adjustment.

The motion proposes a couple of other things.

My colleagues have pointed to investments in cheese production across this country. Some of that investment has happened in the Niagara region. A new cheese producer opened up in the Niagara region a number of years ago. All members would say that cheese producers in their regions are the best, and of course they are. Why would they not be? If people want to find fine cheese, they should come to Niagara. They could also enjoy the finest wine this country has to offer. Not only that, but the finest ice wine in the world can also be found in the Niagara region, and some great cheese could be purchased to go along with that. I would highly recommend that all of my colleagues come to Niagara, sample the cheese, and have a bottle of wine while they are at it. If they come in September, they would be there when we have the Niagara Wine Festival. There would be cheese, of course. This would support local dairy producers, because cheese producers buy milk from local producers.

As my friends across the way on the agriculture committee know, that is why the system works as well as it does. It is not just the three pillars. It is about those producers knowing they have a source of income and spending it within their regions. They buy all the inputs they need for their farms locally, whether that be insurance products or a number of different services, which holds that economy together.

As many of us in the agricultural field know, lenders love dairy farmers. Why is that? It is because they know that dairy farmers have a steady stream of income. They do not worry about whether the commodity market is up one day for soy beans, or this way for canola, and that way for wheat. They understand that in the supply managed system for dairy, dairy farmers have a predictable income stream. Lenders lend money to them because they know they are going to be repaid. They are not taking the same sort of risks they do with others. Perhaps there are other alternatives for farmers in riskier areas. Lenders tell me and my colleagues when we tour this country that it is great for them, because they have a solid foundation in their financial institutions when they provide commercial loans to dairy farmers.

Dairy farmers have the sense that this is a one-way street. We are waiting for details on CETA. We are constantly asking the government to share more information than what it has to date. We continue to ask for that, because one can only make a reasonable decision when one has the details.

• (1825)

We heard today during question period the Minister of International Trade say, "Stay tuned". We have heard that a couple of times. It reminds me of an old advert, but that would give away how old I am.

The government is saying that dairy farmers and cheese producers could enter that market. There are cheeses from Canada in the market now in the EU. We cannot sell them for less than we sell them here under the supply system, so that makes them, at a certain price, not necessarily competitive. However, one of the biggest impediments for our cheese makers over there are geographical indications, or what is known as GI.

Private Members' Business

The Europeans have a fondness for geographical indications, which we do not have to the same degree. We do not express ourselves, when it comes to food, with geographical indications. We may know that those are Quebec cheeses, but we do not trademark them or label them the way Europeans do. Foods like feta can only come from feta. Therefore, if that becomes one of the geographical indications, we cannot actually make feta here. We would have to call it something else.

That is exactly what happened to champagne in Niagara. We made champagne in Niagara for decades, and by all accounts, internationally we did extremely well and it was a great product, but the geographical indication for Champagne from France won at the end of the day in a trade ruling. We no longer have champagne in Niagara. We have champagne, but is now called Brut. If it is Brut, we know we are buying champagne from Niagara.

I give full marks to the winemakers in Niagara for making sure that it is marketed in such a way that they did not actually lose any of the domestic market, but people have to hunt to know that it is champagne, and that is the danger of geographical indications to the cheese industry in Canada. We do not have that. That perhaps rules us out of entering some of those markets in the EU where there may be a GI that will be an impediment to us. It is a trade impediment by another name.

I will refer to my notes from Mr. Wally Smith when he was testifying before the agricultural committee a little while ago. He said that there has been a huge investment over the last 10 years, to the tune of about \$30 million, by the dairy industry and the cheese producers, which have been expanding and building the market. Canadians have come to know that Canadian homemade cheese is a great product and they are looking to get hold of that product, and they have been able to expand over a period of time. There are many artisanal cheese makers. They tend to be small. We obviously have some big ones as well, but the vast majority are smaller ones.

However, they are taking a fairly substantial risk, because they make a large investment to actually start this up. How do they plan now as we go forward? How do they reinvest in what they want to do if they are not sure what the timelines are, because if the timeline is too short, perhaps they will not get off the ground and market their product in time to go forward.

That would be a real shame, because this is an industry that reminds me of the wine industry in my home area. When I was a bit younger, a few decades ago, the wine industry in Canada was seen as not really a wine industry. It was not regarded as being very good. Now it is regarded throughout the world as being on par with the best in the world and exceeds the best in the world by winning gold medals.

Our cheese industry is at the point where it is ready to make that breakthrough. I hope the Conservatives will support the motion. They say they wish to help. It would ensure that for the cheese producers who are now maturing into world-class cheese producers, that actually happens.

• (1830)

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in this House today and support Motion No. 496. I also want to thank my colleague from the NDP,

who is vice-chair of the agriculture committee, for putting this motion forward.

The purpose of the motion is to support the action our government has already taken in terms of initiatives for supply management and the EU CETA agreement. Why? It is because the motion calls on our government to respect its promise to Canadian dairy and cheese producers who may be negatively affected by the Canada-European free trade agreement. This is a position we wholeheartedly support.

We have been consulting with the industry on this issue over the past number of months, and we continue to do so. This includes the provincial dairy producers and processors, associations, individual cheese processors, provincial governments, importers, and downstream stakeholders.

As stated by the Prime Minister, our government has fully committed to monitoring the potential impact of the implementation of CETA, and if needed, to providing compensation should a negative impact be observed. Our government continues to put the best interests of farmers first in every decision we make on agriculture. Especially in our rural areas, we recognize the value of Canada's dairy industry and its contribution to the economy and to the well-being of all Canadians.

We have nutritious milk, great cheeses, yoghurts, and ice cream. These are the hallmarks of our highly innovative, highly dedicated dairy industry. From the farm gate to urban centres, when Canadians shop at their local grocers, they do not have to wonder where their milk comes from. They know that it is brought to them by the farmers of Canada. They know they can count on the consistent quality they have come to expect from our dairy farmers and the processing industry.

As members know, the industry is an important contributor to our economy with close to \$22 billion in both farm-gate and processing revenues. It provides thousands of jobs for Canadians and a continuous supply of high-quality dairy products for our consumers. That is why we are proud to stand in support of Canada's dairy sector.

Our government has backed up this commitment with concrete measures. We have doubled our investment in the dairy research cluster under Growing Forward 2. We are helping to build a world-class traceability system for livestock. We are also promoting science and rules-based trade to open, and in fact, re-open markets around the world for our world-class dairy genetics. Furthermore, we continue to support supply management, because it has served Canadian farmers, processors, and consumers well over the years.

Supply management is supported by the vast majority of our producers, because it provides them with the opportunity to receive fair and stable returns on their labour and investments. It also provides consumers with a steady supply of high-quality products at predictable and stable prices, and it has done that for over 40 years. It is easy to support an industry that is so committed to innovation, new technology, and the delivery of the highest quality dairy products to Canadians.

Private Members' Business

We have come a long way, but we will strengthen and expand the agricultural sector even further. That is why we are pursuing the most aggressive trade strategy in our nation's history. Our farmers depend on export markets to grow, and our government has demonstrated that we will unlock new opportunities while continuing to support supply management. In fact, in every trade agreement we have reached, our government has been very clear with our international partners that we support and will protect Canada's supply management system. For example, we have concluded a number of ambitious trade agreements, not only CETA but agreements with Peru, Colombia, and most recently, South Korea. We did that while keeping supply management intact.

• (1835)

We are pursuing ambitious new agreements with 30-some other trade partners because Canada's export sectors need global markets to grow, to create jobs, and to make this great country stronger still. Be confident that, throughout these negotiations, we remain committed to protecting the interests of all sectors of our Canadian economy.

Canadians appreciate our dedication to our dairy farmers, who are also committed to ensuring that the highest quality of milk and milk-based products reach the grocery store shelves. Our government is committed to keeping this sector strong and profitable by helping our producers stay on the cutting edge.

Allow me just to share a couple of examples.

In 2013 the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food announced that our government has almost doubled our investment in dairy research clusters to \$12 million under Growing Forward 2.

In March we announced two investments under the agrimarketing program, which came close to \$1 million.

The first investment of \$529,000 supports the implementation of the proAction initiative, and this national assurance program for dairy production reinforces the industry's commitment to consumers to provide high-quality, safe Canadian milk and dairy products. This includes on-farm pilot testing of assessment tools and producer training. The six programs under the proAction initiative include milk quality, food safety, livestock traceability, animal care, biosecurity, and environmental protection.

The second investment of \$416,000 supports a national traceability program and updating traceability standards for milk producers. This will help Dairy Farmers of Canada to train and assist provincial associations toward program implementation at the producer level; so it is a trickle-down.

Motion No. 496 calls for support for commercialization.

I am also pleased to share with members these kinds of initiatives that go a long way toward building and strengthening commercial confidence and, in turn, boosting sales of our world-class dairy products. In addition, under Growing Forward 2, the new enabling commercialization and adaptation system within the agriInnovation program offers support to the sector for bringing to new markets its innovative products, processes, and services.

I have underscored our government's support for the dairy industry and put to rest any doubt regarding our commitment to supply management. We have a system that works for Canada, for farmers, for consumers, and for all those who are in the agriculture industry. If there were ever a strong example of consumers buying locally in this country, it would be in our dairy, egg, and poultry industries. We are working in the best interests of Canadians.

I want to thank my hon. colleague again for bringing this motion to Parliament. We are looking forward to a continued strong and prosperous future for not only our dairy industry but all of Canadian agriculture.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not have much time for my speech, so I will get to the point.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion by my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé. I want to say that she does an excellent job working on agricultural issues across the country. That is important to point out.

This motion calls on the government to honour the promise it made to dairy and cheese producers with respect to the free trade agreement between Canada and the European Union. The agreement was signed on October 18, 2013, which was seven months ago. The government made a promise to dairy and cheese producers, who are at a significant disadvantage as a result of this agreement, but the government has not yet made any announcement about compensating these producers, who work extremely hard and feed the country. We could get into a debate on food sovereignty and food safety, but that is for another day.

The dairy industry in Canada, particularly in Quebec, creates a lot of direct jobs in dairy production and other areas, but also a lot of indirect jobs in processing. Obviously, milk is a very versatile product.

Dairy and cheese producers publicly expressed their concern over the possible economic and commercial repercussions of this agreement, and rightly so. Many jobs are at stake. Let us not forget also the quality of our Canadian products. The motion seeks to mitigate the impact that the agreement might have on this sector. It is also very important to talk about the supply management system in Canada, which helps ensure stability and fairness with regard to the products, without compromising their quality.

Obviously, the NDP and I support this bill. I am very aware of the significance of this situation, given that I am from a very intensive farming area. The supply management system is very important. We must not abandon it or weaken its pillars. The pillars of supply management are there to make it work properly. If one of those pillars is compromised or collapses, then the entire system will collapse with it. That is what we want to avoid by supporting this motion, which is very relevant to the debate on the free trade agreement.

I humbly ask that the government keep its promise to producers and think about this job-creating industry that is immensely important to our country.

Government Orders

• (1845)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

STRENGTHENING CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed from February 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): When this matter was last before the House, there were five minutes remaining for the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Seeing as the member is not in the chamber, we will resume debate with the hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in opposition to this motion at second reading, Bill C-24, an act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Today in this Parliament we witnessed, for the 65th time since I have been a member of Parliament, a government using the hammer of time allocation to shut off debate. I was in this House when the time allocation motion was discussed. I was so shocked to hear the minister say that we had over 30 hours of debate on this particular bill. Let me make it very clear. We have only had two hours of debate on this bill that has many components to it. From regulating immigration and citizenship consultants, to taking away citizenship, to qualifying for citizenship, all of those different components are in this bill, and yet the only time this Parliament will have time to discuss it is this evening. I am wondering what the rush is for the government. Why is it so afraid of legislation being debated? What does it want to hide?

Let me remind the House that there is a small part of this bill that is like déjà vu. It takes me back to last June when we were dealing with a private member's bill, and through it the government tried to bring about fundamental changes to citizenship in Canada. That was outside of the rules. Then it tried to change the rules. Of course it was not able to, because it was outside of the purview and the timing ran out. What has happened here is that two elements of that bill have been taken and thrown in with at least five other elements, and a whole new bill has been produced.

I heard the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration say today that we have spent over 30 hours discussing this. He must have been having discussions in a place other than Parliament, because I have gone back and checked and this bill has only had two hours of debate. Now we are going into an evening session until midnight and then the allocated time will run out and there will be a vote on it sometime tomorrow. Then it will go on to the next stage.

This is what is beginning to worry me. There seems to be a pattern. It is a pattern in which the government is using its majority to bully. It is using bullying tactics to rush through legislation that it does not want Canadians to find out too much about. It does not want Canadians to know what is really in this piece of legislation.

Let me be clear. There are two or three elements in this legislation that I support, but they are buried. That is typical of the Conservative government. It brings in omnibus legislation, which is legislation as thick as the telephone books for many of our communities across this beautiful country, and it has taken things that we know we need to take action on and buried them in with the worst elements of legislation that it knew were not only badly written but would have been open to all kinds of constitutional challenges; and it says it is trying to fix things.

• (1850)

I will be the first one to say that the immigration system needs to be reformed. The Liberals allowed long waiting periods, and that created backlogs. Some clarity and updating also needed to be done, but the minister has used that as an excuse and has broken the immigration system. He has taken it from one of nation-building to one of nation-dividing. That is a real concern.

Because of the new changes, family reunification is almost impossible right now. It is taking longer for spouses to get over here. As well, thousands of applications by skilled workers were shredded, even though they played by the rules we made, and now parents and grandparents have been turned into a lottery system. I agree that we do want the young and the brightest, but the young and the brightest have parents. They do not fall out of the sky.

Our immigration policy has gone from a nation-building policy to one in which the government sees itself as agents who provide temporary foreign workers at minimum wage so that big business can make huge profits. Vulnerable workers are being exploited, while Canadians who spend hundreds of hours looking for work cannot find it because the jobs they could do are being given away. The system is broken.

This legislation purports to fix citizenship, specifically the waiting list. I worked at a citizenship ceremony recently. The judge showed me a room full of files and told me it would take him a long time to get to those files. People have to wait over 31 months after their applications are in, and this is after they have met all criteria. During that time, these potential Canadian citizens are being denied their rights as well as access to many of their responsibilities.

There is nothing in this legislation that would expedite citizenship and get rid of the backlog. The government says it has invested extra money into getting rid of the backlog, but the lists have in fact become longer and the time period to obtain citizenship has become longer.

Government Orders

I am pleased to see that regulation of consultants is in the bill. We hear too many stories from coast to coast to coast of unscrupulous agents and consultants who are abusive toward vulnerable people in this situation. People are looking for help, and these unscrupulous agents make all kinds of promises and commitments. Then all kinds of money changes hands, so it is good to see that kind of regulation in the bill.

However, at the same time, this legislation has something in it that I find absolutely unacceptable.

I have to share with the House what citizenship means. I chose Canada to be my home. I came to Canada in 1975 as a young teacher, excited about exploring this beautiful country. I fell in love with it and decided this was where I wanted to stay and have my children and raise them, and I now also have grandchildren.

It was a very proud moment for me when I became a Canadian citizen. I can remember meeting the judge. He asked me a couple of questions. I was a social studies teacher, so he presumed I knew a lot of the background. We talked about what my experiences were like. I stood next to him and we had a lovely photograph taken. I had become a Canadian citizen. It was a very emotional time for me, because I take Canadian citizenship very seriously. I see it as an honour and a privilege.

Citizenship has to mean something. If we attend a citizenship ceremony here in Canada, we see people from all around the world with their eyes filling with tears as citizenship is bestowed on them.

● (1855)

Last Friday, which was May 23, 2014, was a very significant day in Canadian history, although members may not know it. It was the 100-year anniversary of the *Komagata Maru*. That is the ship that arrived in Vancouver harbour, where the racist policies of the day, passed by Parliament, prevented people from landing in the harbour. They were British subjects, because India was part of the British Empire at that time, but they were turned back. Some died en route. Some were shot once they got to India. Others faced many challenges.

On that day, as we were commemorating the 100-year anniversary, a man asked if he could speak. He went up to the mike and said, "After all these years living in Canada, I got my citizenship today, of all days". He talked about what that citizenship meant to him. That is somebody who became a naturalized Canadian citizen, just as I am.

In Canada we do not differentiate those who are born in other countries and come to this country and choose to make Canada their home because, as we know, except for our aboriginal people, most of us became Canadian citizens that way.

However, what we are seeing here in this legislation would change what citizenship means, and not just for those who are born overseas and come here and become naturalized citizens. I think it is on this aspect that Canadians need to pay close attention to what the current government is doing. This legislation, if passed as is, would mean that the minister—not the courts, not anybody else—could take away citizenship from somebody who was born in Canada. Their family could have been here for a couple of generations, but they

could still have citizenship taken away from them if they have a dual citizenship.

As members know, dual citizenship is not limited to a few people in this country. There are many Canadians who have dual citizenship, and—

Hon. Bal Gosal: Are you Canadian or not?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I wish my colleagues would learn to listen. I am a Canadian. I am a proud Canadian, and in this country it is the law of this land that allows one to hold dual citizenship.

However, what the government is trying to do with the bill would actually change what citizenship is, because even for someone born in Canada, the government would give the minister the ability to take that citizenship away. I think it behooves each and every one of us to pay very special attention to this provision, because we are talking about potentially taking away citizenship from people who may never have been to another country, who were born here, and who have lived here all their lives.

By the way, I am not blaming just the Conservatives. The party at the far end started this trend because it was too chicken to publicly debate the changes it was making to immigration. It vested more power into the hands of the ministers so they could make changes behind closed doors and not have to go out and explain them to Canadians. The scary part is that we have seen the current government, a government on steroids, increase that power in the hands of the ministers, whether it comes to refugee situations or otherwise. In this case the bill asks Parliament to give the minister the power to take away somebody's citizenship, and it would not have to be based upon any sound evidence. It could be based upon suspicion.

● (1900)

There is no judicial hearing or anywhere that a person can go to tackle that. Someone's citizenship can be taken away based on suspicion. It is that scary. What is more scary is that kind of power will be given to some of the ministers I see sitting across the aisle from me. That, I will tell the minister, should scare Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

In Canada we are proud that whether people are naturalized or whether they are born here, once they are Canadian citizens, they have the same rights and the same responsibilities. However, under this legislation we are going to take one group of Canadians and hold them to a totally different bar. They could not only have their citizenship stripped away but would then have to leave the country, based on the whims of whom? It would not be based on any trial or anything like that, but in any case we should not be using citizenship as a tool, as part of a judicial system.

Let me be clear: if anybody gets his or her citizenship in a fraudulent manner, there is already a mechanism to have that person's citizenship taken away. If anybody has lied or deliberately used fraud in order to get citizenship, of course he or she should have his or her citizenship taken away.

Government Orders

We are not talking about that here. We are talking about somebody born in Canada, maybe someone born just down Wellington Street or in my riding at the local hospital in Surrey. I would say that Canadians would suddenly be feeling a bit worried, because what does citizenship mean if the minister can take it away based on suspicion, et cetera?

I read a quote by the new minister of immigration and I kept thinking that a minister would not say that. Here is the quote: "Citizenship is not an inalienable birthright." If one is born a Canadian citizen, surely that is his or her birthright. That is how people gain their citizenship, unless they have been naturalized, in which case they have the same rights and privileges.

Here is something from the U.S. Our government always likes to quote some of the governments it likes some of the time. This is with respect to the U.S. Supreme Court. It is a quote by Lorne Waldman, the president of the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, on February 5, 2014. He states:

The US Supreme Court got it right over 50 years ago when it said that citizenship is not a licence that the government can revoke for misbehaviour. As Canadians, we make our citizenship feeble and fragile if we let government Ministers seize the power to extinguish it.

As I said, there are some parts to this bill that we would be pleased to support if they were separated into different components. On the other hand, there are parts of this bill that give us fundamental concern. I know the government has an allergy to experts and expert opinions, but expert after expert has said that this legislation will be open to constitutional and charter challenges.

It is too late to plead for a more in-depth debate, but when the bill gets to the committee stage, let us at least hope that we will have a wholesome debate and that the Conservatives will accept the amendments we will take to that stage.

● (1905)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member. I take somewhat of an exception to her shots at the Liberal Party, especially when we look at the history of immigration to Canada. Many would acknowledge that Canada has been a wonderful, generous country towards immigrants. Ultimately, through immigration, we have built one of the greatest nations in the world. We have been ranked fairly high by the United Nations as one of the best countries in the world to live. A great deal of recognition likely goes to individuals like Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Jean Chrétien, and good solid sound immigration programs.

Having said that, no doubt there is a need for periodic modification. What we have witnessed over the last couple of years has been somewhat disappointing.

Could the member provide further comment? I was in the committee with the member when we had an awkward member from the Conservative Party bring forward a private member's bill that was actually being hijacked by the government, which had a totally different agenda.

Part of that agenda has now been brought into this legislation. Could the member comment?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I were at the immigration committee last year when we dealt with the precursor of parts of this bill. I could see that there was some real danger in the direction the government was going. I stand by my words that some of the power we have seen being delegated to ministers is causing me major concern. It is allowing major changes to be made to immigration and, in this case, even to take away citizenship on a suspicion, so to speak.

I do not think we want to have that kind of despotic power put into the hands of ministers. We live in a parliamentary democracy, and we need to be debating issues right here. It is time that the immigration committee got back to looking at immigration policies that would be nation building, not ones based on the fear that everybody is a terrorist.

We are getting to the stage where we are not doing Canadians any favours.

● (1910)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I find this bill very disturbing and for many of the reasons that the member has already outlined in terms of the notion that citizenship can be held as a discretionary privilege in the hands of any particular political administration.

As I look at this bill, one of the areas that I think is most troubling is if the minister is of a reasonable belief that individuals have a second citizenship, they can lose their Canadian citizenship. There is a very real risk that other commentators have noted that we could create, basically, statelessness for people we have decided to exile.

It is a very unusual bill in that it is unprecedented. If there are people we believe deserve punishment, we can put them in Canadian jails. If they are Canadian citizens, they should experience Canadian punishments. The notion that they would be deprived of Canadian citizenship, even people who were born in Canada, is a rather slippery slope of depriving the most fundamental aspects of what citizenship means.

Does the member think that I am right, that we might actually have a circumstance where someone ends up stateless?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, the original private member's bill would have led to statelessness because it did not specify where there was dual citizenship.

In this bill, it could happen. In many cases people who are thought to have dual citizenship may not.

I have heard my Conservative colleagues yell across the way that it is all about holding people to account for treachery or treasonous activities. Nobody in the NDP has said that wayward or treasonous citizens must not be held to account. Absolutely, they must be held to account.

Government Orders

We still believe in the judicial system. Even the most egregious crime, no matter what it is, demands fair and equal treatment under the law. This legislation would confer different levels of citizenship on different citizens. Individuals born in Canada could find themselves being removed from Canada after they have lost their citizenship. To me, that just seems bizarre. Somebody else who is born in Canada would not be facing the same kind of double jeopardy.

This just seems wrong. It does not even pass the common sense test.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the concerns of my colleague from Newton—North Delta are well-founded. The government would certainly benefit from paying close attention to the matters she brought forward. If I could just elaborate a little bit more, we could be in a situation where, on simple suspicion of fraud, a person could have his or her citizenship revoked.

That kind of power seems excessive, especially, as the member mentioned herself, we already have procedures to prove fraud and for people to be penalized and suffer the consequences of fraud where they are found guilty of it, but here we are talking about simple suspicion.

The minister himself has been quoted as saying that citizenship is a mutual responsibility. Surely the responsibility of the state would be to make sure the person's rights are safeguarded, that there would be due process and rule of law.

I would like to hear comments from the member. Does she find that the process that is being proposed here is leading to a situation of lawlessness, where the minister is taking upon himself to be judge and jury without due process? Without the benefits of the whole process, individuals can lose their citizenship and quite possibly end up stateless.

We need to have a better understanding of the rule of law in this country, and the bill seems to be going in the wrong direction.

• (1915)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is one of our most hard working members of Parliament in this assembly.

What we have here is, as another colleague summed it up, a solution in search of a problem. This is what the government wants to do and then it has gone backwards and asks how it can justify it. I do not see where the justification is.

Right now there is a mechanism to remove permanent residents because they are not Canadian citizens yet. There is a mechanism for a Canadian citizen who has achieved that through fraud, once proven, to have that citizenship taken away.

What are we saying when we tell people who were born in Canada or who have become citizens through naturalization that they will now be held to a different standard than another person who was born in Canada or another person who becomes a naturalized Canadian? What is it saying? It is creating a two-tiered citizenship. That is fundamentally wrong. It is the responsibility of the state. The state owes some responsibility to citizens as well.

In this case, I feel that what the minister and the government want to do is shunt that individual off somewhere, when that individual is a Canadian citizen.

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for St. Catharines.

I am very pleased and privileged to have this opportunity to add my voice in support of Bill C-24, the government's legislation that would strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship. Let me also say that it is a privilege to be a Canadian citizen and to be able to rise in the House to speak. I first came to this country as an international student in 1968, but I was made a stateless citizen in 1971 when Canada chose to change its recognition from the Republic of China to the People's Republic of China. Due to the generosity of the Canadian immigration system, I was able to apply for my permanent resident status and subsequently became a citizen in 1976.

Let me address some of the issues in the new citizenship act. As we know, Canadian citizenship is highly valued around the world. The fact that more than 85% of eligible permanent residents go on to become citizens is a testament to this. Last year, this translated into nearly 129,000 new Canadians citizens from no fewer than 219 countries, a 14% increase over 2012 numbers. We can all take pride in the value of our citizenship and in our high naturalization rate. Unfortunately, because Canadian citizenship is so valuable, some people are prepared to lie or cheat in order to qualify. For example, they may break our citizenship law by pretending to be living in Canada when they are living abroad. In fact, more than 85% of Canadian citizenship fraud involves falsifying residency. In many cases, permanent residents have used the services of immigration consultants who fraudulently establish evidence of residence in Canada while living abroad most, if not all, of the time.

Ongoing large-scale fraud investigations have identified more than 3,000 citizens and 5,000 permanent residents linked to major investigations, the majority of them related to residents. In addition, nearly 2,000 individuals linked to these investigations have either abandoned or withdrawn their citizenship applications. Individuals who seek to obtain Canadian citizenship fraudulently have no real attachment to Canada. They want citizenship for no other reason than to obtain the many benefits associated with Canadian citizenship or purely for financial gain.

Right now, applicants must reside in Canada for three out of the previous four years before being eligible to apply for citizenship. The major fault with the current citizenship requirements is that "residence" is not defined under the current Citizenship Act. As a result, it is currently possible for someone to become a Canadian citizen even if he or she has spent little time actually living in Canada.

Under the changes we propose, the rules around resident requirements would be strengthened so that adults applying for citizenship would have to be physically present in Canada. We would also lengthen the residency requirement to four years out of the previous six years, with a specific requirement to reside in Canada for a minimum of 183 days during at least four of the six qualifying years.

Government Orders

In his testimony before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, Martin Collacott, a former Canadian diplomat and spokesman for the Centre for Immigration Policy Reform, said:

...I think newcomers will value their citizenship more if they know it is not something that can be acquired quickly or without meeting certain standards.

He added:

I strongly support the provisions of Bill C-24 aimed at ensuring that residency requirements are actually met, particularly in view of evidence that thousands of people have obtained their citizenship fraudulently by claiming they had spent time in Canada when they had not.

The proposed residency requirement in Bill C-24 would be consistent with the Income Tax Act, which says that those in Canada for less than 183 days with no other attachment to Canada are considered non-residents for income tax purposes. Unlike the majority of Canadians, non-residents are generally only required to pay taxes on their Canadian-sourced income. By better aligning the residency requirement for citizenship with the residency rules under the Income Tax Act, it would help to further strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship. Coupled with the new residency requirement, it would also strengthen the permanent residence attachment to Canada.

Immigration lawyer Richard Kurland, in a recent appearance before the standing committee, said the following:

For the first time, we have a pragmatic, transparent threshold to access Canadian citizenship. That is long overdue.

● (1920)

We obviously agree. I would add that these amendments to the Canadian Citizenship Act are also important because the physical presence in Canada assists with permanent residents' final integration into society.

A longer residence period would enable newcomers to develop a stronger connection to Canada. Furthermore, creating a clear and longer physical presence requirement would help deter citizens of convenience. Those individuals become citizens purely for the convenience of having a Canadian passport and to access the full range of taxpayer-funded benefits that come with this status, without any intention of contributing to Canada or even residing here.

In other words, they regard their Canadian citizenship primarily as little more than an insurance policy, to quote Mr. Collacott.

Of course in order to support their admission to Canadian society, citizens must first have an adequate knowledge of one of our official languages. As Mr. Collacott has said, the basic command of one of Canada's official languages is an essential skill for newcomers who are going to be able to contribute to society and the economy, as well as be able to realize their own dreams and aspirations as immigrants.

The government also believes that citizens must have knowledge about our country as well as the responsibility and privileges of Canadian citizenship, as this knowledge is essential to a new citizen's civic participation. This is why the amendments contained in Bill C-24 would also expand the age group who must first show proof of their language proficiency and take a citizenship knowledge test. We would expand the current age group from 18 to 54 years old, to 14 to 64 years old.

This would provide incentive for more individuals to acquire official language proficiency and civic knowledge, thus improving their integration. It would also ensure that more newcomers are better prepared to assume the responsibility of citizenship.

Lengthening the residency requirement and expanding the group that must meet knowledge and language requirements would ensure that more new citizens are better prepared for full participation in all aspects of Canadian life.

As I have said, these changes would also help deter citizenship of convenience. Taken together, the amendments in Bill C-24 would preserve and protect the value of Canadian citizenship both today and in the future by ensuring Canadians have a real, rather than a tenuous or non-existent, connection to Canada.

In his testimony before the standing committee, Shimon Fogel, chief executive officer of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, said his organization appreciates the steps taken by Bill C-24 to promote strong ties to Canada and buy-in to core Canadian values. He also added that the introduction of more robust residency requirements including physical presence to qualify for citizenship is particularly well received.

Canadian citizenship is highly valued around the world and, with this balanced set of reforms, the government is taking steps to ensure that it stays that way.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. He certainly raised some valid points, especially the fact that Canadian citizenship is highly valued. People around the world have a deep respect for Canada and Canadian citizenship.

That said, the temporary foreign worker program has shown us that it seems to be very difficult to become a Canadian citizen. It seems to be more and more difficult to obtain Canadian citizenship. The government seems to want to tighten the rules and no longer grant citizenship, or do so less frequently. Instead, the government wants to exploit foreign workers and use them as cheap labour in Canada. We have seen this on many occasions. The examples we have seen of the temporary foreign worker program in Canada show that it is used as a tool to lower the value of the worker on the labour market.

Since we are talking about the granting of citizenship, we should perhaps also talk about valuing workers in Canada. In my opinion, if someone can work, they should also have the right to vote.

[*English*]

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Speaker, what we need to appreciate is that citizenship itself is a privilege. To be a citizen or to be a landed immigrant to work in Canada is itself a privilege. Then we also need to be clear that we have to separate those who come here on a temporary basis from those who are here with an intention to stay. Those who are here with an intention to stay, if they fulfill the residency requirements, will be granted citizenship.

Government Orders

One of the responsibilities of being a Canadian citizen is the ability to have some sort of civic participation. With most of our elections being somewhere between every four years and every five years, I feel it is necessary for a person to have actually physically experienced that period of time in Canada in that civic participation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could provide some comment about what rationale was used when no longer recognizing workers to the degree they are recognized under the current law. Now people can work in Canada on a temporary visa and can have worked in Canada for a couple of years, and ultimately, when people land in Canada, a portion of that time period would go toward their citizenship time requirements.

It assisted individuals who were working and contributing to Canada in a very real and tangible way. As a bit of a reward for that, they did not have to wait as long as others to qualify for citizenship.

What is the rationale? Why would that be taken away from those who are here as temporary workers?

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Speaker, there is a difference. Let me share my personal experience on this with him. When I first came to Canada as an international student in 1968 and graduated in 1972, I was prepared to pursue my postgraduate education either in Europe or in the United States. There was not that intent to reside in Canada or to stay in Canada. It was not until I subsequently obtained permanent residency that I decided to stay in Canada.

Therefore, when people are here on a work visa or under temporary status, there is no guarantee that they have the intention to stay. When we hear the intention or the voluntary desire that people profess to want to be a Canadian, that is the time when we should start counting their intention to be a Canadian citizen and their contribution to society.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to follow my colleague, who did such a good job describing and talking about the Citizenship Act and the changes we would make through Bill C-24. I would like to add my part to the point of how our government is planning to strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship.

Canada's 37-year-old Citizenship Act is in need of serious reforms. Its original purpose, of course, was to ensure we had individuals who worked through the process of becoming Canadian citizens and followed through on the legislation and regulation that was put forward at that time.

Indeed, the reforms today are here to work toward stopping the abuse of our immigration system and to put an end to the dubious folks who actually cheapen our citizenship by having zero connection or attachment to our country.

It is clear that our government takes the value of Canadian citizenship seriously. That is why we see this bill here before us today.

Citizenship defines who we are as Canadians, but it comes with certain responsibilities, like respect for the rule of law, contributing to the well-being of our communities, supporting ourselves and our families, and protecting our country.

Citizenship also means that we share a commitment to the values that are rooted in our history, values like peace, freedom, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Canadian citizenship is about more than the right to carry a passport. It is about the complete entity of what it is to be a Canadian citizen.

Citizens need to have an ongoing connection to their country, and in this particular case, an ongoing connection to our country of Canada.

As a government and as Canadians, we believe citizenship is truly something special.

When asked, Canadians across this country—especially those who have acquired, or recently acquired, Canadian citizenship—will say how special it is to actually achieve that end and that goal.

We cannot and do not attach a price to citizenship. Unfortunately there are those who would attempt to attach some form of monetary cost to Canadian citizenship.

The changes found in this legislation would be a real step in the fight against attempts to defraud the Canadian citizenship program and to defraud Canadian citizens of what is truly a remarkable feat once one achieves that citizenship.

It is unfortunate, but citizenship fraud is a serious issue in our country. The Government of Canada's investigation into residence fraud continues to grow, with nearly 11,000 individuals potentially implicated in lying to apply for citizenship or to maintain their permanent resident status. These are individuals who were most likely trying to establish the residency requirements for citizenship when they were actually living abroad. These practices demean and devalue what it is to be a Canadian and what it is to achieve Canadian citizenship.

The legislation before us would amend the Citizenship Act to ensure that, not only are we protecting the value of Canadian citizenship against those who would cheapen it, but we are also enhancing and building upon it.

Here is how we are proposing to do that. First and foremost, our citizenship program officers do not currently have the tools to determine if a consultant has been involved with an application for citizenship. We propose to change that and to require that applicants who use a representative when they apply for citizenship use only an authorized representative.

Changes to the Citizenship Act would give the minister the ability to designate a body to regulate and enforce citizenship consultant conduct. These changes would mirror recent changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

It was just a couple or three years ago that we passed that new legislation in which a regulatory body within the Ministry of Citizenship would actually oversee and ensure that only consultants who were licensed through the ministry, who were approved through the ministry, and who actually met the guidelines were able to represent both individuals attempting to achieve refugee status, in the case of our refugee act, and individuals attempting to achieve citizenship and who are applying for it through this new act.

Government Orders

In regulating consultants, we would offer a level of protection to newcomers that they do not have at the moment.

● (1930)

We have all heard stories and talk within our constituency offices and our ridings from those who come in to our office to sit down with us and explain how they have simply and very clearly been ripped off. They have been led down the garden path to believe they can achieve citizenship if only they pay \$1,000, \$5,000 or \$10,000 to this individual who does not have a reputation of being able to achieve that end and who is not licensed to work within the province of Ontario.

The amendments would also bring the penalty for committing citizenship fraud in line with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. They would increase the penalties for citizenship fraud to a maximum of a \$100,000 fine, or up to five years in prison, or both.

The second part of this is we are taking action to strengthen the residence requirements for citizenship. My colleague spoke about that briefly in his remarks as well. Currently the Citizenship Act does not define what “residence” actually means. The act does not say or deem what “residence” or “resident requirements” actually mean when people are applying for and working through the process of citizenship.

Under the current act, prospective Canadians apply for citizenship and are simply required to have resided in Canada for three of the past four years. Our proposed amendment to the act is to stipulate that prospective Canadians would need to be physically present in Canada. This is important, because physical presence in Canada helps newcomers to integrate and establish a sense of belonging and attachment to Canada.

However, it is more than that. It is also about the ability for those individuals to learn what it is to become a Canadian, to learn about our history, to learn about our geography and what happens in the east or west of our country, what happens in Ontario and Quebec, and the fact that we have two official languages. It gives those individuals the length and the breadth of understanding, and the ability to know that when they achieve Canadian citizenship, it is because they earned it and because they understand it.

We will, however, include an exception for applicants who are outside of Canada because they are accompanying either their Canadian spouse or parent who is employed in the Canadian Armed Forces or as a crown servant. This is to prevent these permanent residents from being penalized simply because of their family's service abroad for our country.

It is an issue that we missed in the former bill, Bill C-37, which passed unanimously. I hope this citizenship bill will also pass unanimously. The former bill, Bill C-37, did not cover this instance where an individual had a spouse, parent or child employed in the Canadian Armed Forces. It would not have given those people the ability to achieve citizenship, so we will ensure it is in this act. We also want to lengthen the current residence requirements and require prospective Canadians to be physically present in Canada for four out of the six last years.

The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration had the opportunity to hear key testimony on the bill. Organizations such as the Centre for Immigration Policy Reform and Immigrants For Canada as well as several immigration lawyers all agreed that extending the residence requirements would strengthen the attachment that individuals would have to Canada and that when they received that Canadian citizenship, it would enhance their ability as a Canadian.

Immigration lawyer, Mr. Reis Pagtakhan, noted that the longer an individual lived in Canada, the greater the connection would be. He accurately stated:

Citizenship bestows rights and protections many foreign nationals do not have. As Canadian citizens, they can vote and seek elected office, so it is important that they participate in Canadian life before they become citizens.

I could not agree more. Newcomers should have a deep understanding of Canada's culture and society before they apply for citizenship. We believe Canada has a strong identity, and this bill would build on that sense of nation.

Finally, as part of their applications, applicants would also be asked whether they intended to reside in Canada. If an applicant had no intention to reside in our country after they obtained citizenship, or if the government obtained information to this effect, they would not be eligible for that citizenship.

Our citizenship is highly valued around the world. Canadian citizenship is an honour and a privilege. It comes not only with rights, but it comes with responsibilities. The bill would reinforce that, build on it and take that 37 years since we have worked on the act and make it that much stronger and that much better. It would close a loop that should have been closed a long time ago.

● (1940)

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, some parts of the parliamentary secretary's comments were enlightening, but a lot of it was, in my opinion, quite terrifying.

He spoke of fraud, that the bill would address individuals who tried to exploit people who were trying to immigrate to Canada by charging them vast sums of money to get to our country. I do not see how revoking someone's citizenship in Canada is going to stop someone overseas from exploiting a person overseas. The question really is how do we protect Canadians in Canada.

He mentioned that there would be new residency requirements. The person would have to abide by an intent to reside in Canada for four years. The Canada Revenue Agency, notoriously, cannot define intent when it comes to residency, so how does he think the immigration department will do any better?

Government Orders

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, let me just give the member the example of how we achieved the Refugee Protection Act. Consultants must now be licensed. They must be approved. They must work through that process. They are known within the ministry. The minute there is an attempt to take advantage as a consultants the individuals would now have the opportunity to go to the ministry, inform the regulatory body of what happened and an investigation would begin immediately. That has never happened when we have pursued the issue of Canadian citizenship and the ability for those to achieve it through fraudulent means.

If the member takes a look and reviews how successful it has been over the past few years with respect to the refugee legislative changes we have made, he will see that this is a strong supporting mechanism that has worked, and it will work within the framework of our citizenship changes as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year Canada benefits immensely from students from all over the world who come to study at our universities, colleges and many private institutions. In many ways they come to Canada because they believe they might have an opportunity to ultimately land in Canada. At least a fair percentage of them come to Canada believing and hoping that this will happen. For many of them it will materialize. They will ultimately land in Canada.

My question for the former parliamentary secretary to the minister of immigration is this. Why has the government decided to recognize students who have been studying in Canada, but not allow those students to use a portion of the time they are in Canada as a way to meet the requirement of being here for a certain period of time to get their citizenship? Why not allow those students to use a portion of the time they were here while studying under a temporary student visa as a way to provide incentive and encouragement? After all, they have made a significant contribution even before they have applied to land in Canada. Why take that away from them?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, we have not taken that away from them. In fact, we have introduced a process, and he is very familiar with it, that students from other countries who come to study in Canada have an opportunity to seek out permanent residency upon their graduation. Permanent residency is a first step for them to reach that citizenship.

However, let us be clear. Canadian citizenship should be at value, at a potential height, that is not only respected but honoured. If individuals come to our country with every intention of studying or working here on a temporary visa and their intentions are to go back to their country of origin, we will honour that. We have the individual having the visa. We have the individual who is allowed to work here and he or she returns home.

However, when it comes to Canadian citizenship, if this is the value that individuals want to achieve, the ability to have Canadian citizenship, then giving up four years of their lives to live here directly on the soil of our country to earn that citizenship, I challenge you to find one person, one Canadian citizen in our country who would not say "That seems pretty fair to me".

● (1945)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before resuming debate, I would like to remind all hon. members to direct their comments to the Chair rather than directly to their colleagues.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge River.

With the exception of our first nations brothers and sisters, all of us in the chamber are newcomers to this country, every one of us, and we should be very aware of that reality when we start to bandy about and talk about citizenship. My own family came from places across the world.

My husband is from Holland, one grandmother was from the United States, a grandfather was from England, and my paternal grandfather was from Italy. In the case of my paternal grandfather, there are various stories about the reason for his departure from Italy. Some say poverty. I am inclined to believe it had something to do with him smoking under the police station veranda and accidentally causing a fire that made his departure essential. No matter what the reason, all who came here came for a better life. They came to make a new beginning, and that is what makes this bill so very important. That is also what makes it so very important to get Bill C-24 right.

Bill C-24 is an attempt to amend the Citizenship Act. It causes, at least on this side of the House, some great concerns regarding the fairness and constitutionality of the changes suggested by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Everyone agrees that Canadian citizenship is something of enormous value. It is sought after around the world. However, what we do not want to see is any approach that plays politics with the issue, a situation that we have seen all too often from the government.

The Conservatives have a track record of politicizing issues for partisan gain. They also have a history of violently denouncing anyone who dares to contradict or disagree with them, including public servants like Linda Keen, Richard Colvin, Kevin Page, Pat Strogran, Munir Sheikh, Marc Mayrand, environmental groups, scientists, unions and international NGOs. How can the government be trusted with the power to decide, with no reference to courts or appeals processes, who should have their citizenships revoked and who should be secretly granted citizenship?

Some of the changes to the Citizenship Act would address deficiencies in the current system, and they should be applauded. With respect to the bill, it is high time that the issue of the lost Canadians was addressed. This is an absurdly unfair situation that has gone on far too long. The bill would allow for individuals to finally obtain Canadian citizenship, individuals who were born before the first Canadian citizenship act took effect. This would also extend to their children born outside of Canada in the first generation, this citizenship that is their right.

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Despite this positive amendment, though, other parts of the bill are, as I said, profoundly concerning. For example, the question of revoking citizenship has raised significant legal concerns and we are always worried about proposals to concentrate more power in the hands of the minister. Under the provisions of the bill, the minister may revoke citizenship if he or any staffer he authorizes is satisfied on the balance of probabilities. Staffers are not elected, they are not responsible to Canadians, and yet they may be granted the authority to say that an individual has obtained citizenship by fraud.

Until now, such cases have all typically gone through the courts and cabinet. It would not be the case anymore. Again, the judicial process would be sidestepped. Are the Conservatives telling Canadians that they do not believe we have a reliable judiciary? Well, maybe just Supreme Court judges.

This aspect poses serious issues to the extent that the minister would have the power to revoke a person's citizenship solely based on suspicion, without an independent tribunal to rule on the veracity of the allegations. Does no one on the government benches understand how terrifyingly dangerous this is? Many organizations, including the Canadian Bar Association and the United Nations Children's Fund, have also expressed a concern over this and many other of the bill's provisions, and they have offered several amendments that could strengthen the bill.

• (1950)

One of the major problems that we have addressed with this bill is the broad discretionary powers granted to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, especially when dealing with revocation of citizens with dual citizenship. This is extremely concerning. Canadian law has already established procedures by which to punish individuals who commit unlawful acts. It is unnecessary to grant these powers to the minister. Ministers come and go. The judicial system is the one constant, but this bill would take the Federal Court out of the equation except in very limited circumstances. Awarding this much power to the minister is, as I said, dangerous and, in a matter as serious as citizenship, a fair and impartial decision-maker must be maintained.

The Canadian Bar Association believes that because revocation of citizenship is such a serious matter, a statutory tribunal like the immigration appeal division should have jurisdiction to consider the validity of the minister's decision to revoke citizenship. This provision to allow the minister such power would create a two-tier citizenship system where some Canadians would have their citizenship revoked and others would be punished by the criminal system for the same offence. The new revocation procedures are apparently related to a citizen's loyalty to Canada. However, it is unclear why only dual citizens should be so targeted. Do the Conservatives think dual citizens are less loyal than other Canadians? We have to step back from this and make a very clear statement that all Canadians should be treated fairly and equally. The Canadian Bar Association also warns that this process is likely unconstitutional and warrants serious additional review. Many of the revocation processes are quite simply discriminatory and retroactive.

UNICEF has also weighed in. It argues that these changes could place vulnerable children at risk and leave them without sufficient protection. The potential revocation of a child's parent who is of dual

citizenship could lead to family separation where the child is abandoned in Canada without a parent or legal guardian. Just some weeks ago I was in Geneva at the Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting. We discussed at length the issue of abandoned children, children in war-torn areas or children who had lost their parents, and what the world had to do in terms of ensuring these children were protected and safe because they were alone, and here we are in this country that is supposed to be democratic, that is supposed to have principles and mores, setting up a situation where a child could be abandoned. It is unspeakable. It is unbelievable. What have we come to?

Further, under these revocation procedures, it is possible for a child to be found to be or believed to be guilty of an act that warrants revocation. How absolutely absurd to treat a child as an adult. This is undermining international law. Children who are faced with these circumstances will not likely have any familial ties in their homeland and may not have the proper channels to fight any decisions that revoke their citizenship. They are children, and we are supposed to care about that and we are supposed to protect them. These potential situations can place children in situations where their lives and their futures are at serious risk. UNICEF suggests incorporating an amendment that would require children under the age of 18 to not be included in the assessment.

Canada has a proud record of high naturalization rates. We are among the highest in the OECD, and we should continue to encourage people to become new citizens rather than creating procedures that only make it more difficult for them to do so. These individuals have the potential to be the biggest asset that we have. They account for 67% of our annual population growth. It is imperative that we make the necessary changes to this bill so that our society can continue to flourish and benefit from new Canadian immigrants.

• (1955)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her highly enlightening presentation.

I think that most, if not all, of us here in the House agree on the importance of Canadian citizenship. Before granting Canadian citizenship to someone, we must ensure that the criteria we are using are as objective as possible.

What does my colleague think about the idea in Bill C-24 that, from now on, there will be a declaration of intent to reside in the country?

Having an intention means opening the door to all kinds of speculation. For example, a person might say he intends to settle in Canada and remain here, but then he might be offered work outside the country a few months later. That happens to lots of Canadians. Would anyone doubt that person's intention when he said he planned to settle and reside in Canada?

I think that this criterion is not the kind of objective criterion we are looking for, and I would like to know what my colleague thinks about it.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, by way of answering, I have to tell the member about my experience in London.

I go to every citizenship court that I can and what I see there is incredible pride, tears of joy, and a real sense of how important it is to be part of this country. However, I can understand, and I tell this to these new Canadians, how terrifying it must be to come to a new country. They leave everything that they know behind: their family, friends, work, and the things they are familiar with that guide them through life. I admire their courage, but for some who come here, the decision to stay, no matter how intended they are in regard to staying, must sometimes give them pause. I understand where minds can be changed. Situations may be such that they cannot stay.

To have the Conservative government speculate and be so suspicious of everybody's motives troubles me very much. I think people come here with integrity, honesty, and a will to make a life here. If that does not work out, well, that is a situation that we have to accept. However, this kind of suspicious and negative treatment by the government over and over again is unspeakable.

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for London—Fanshawe has uttered so many incorrect claims that it is impossible to address them in a few seconds. She is wrong about children. She is wrong about the levels of proof required to revoke citizenship. She is wrong about the authority of the minister. She is wrong about the role of the judiciary in all of these tests.

My first questions is: why is she fearmongering in this case?

Why is the member trying to make this claim at a time when citizenship has never been more popular, at a time when Canadians have never been more law-abiding, more prepared to follow the rules, and insistent that the rules be followed? Why is she insisting somehow that we will base revocation on suspicion when neither in the law nor in regulation is that remotely possible? It has not been possible for years, and it certainly is not possible now.

Could the member for London—Fanshawe please tell us why she is fearmongering tonight?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I am quite delighted by that question. It seems to me that in case after case, in situation after situation, in statute after statute, the current Conservative government has placed itself above the law.

Conservatives can talk about the law all they want, but let us think about the judiciary, for example. Let us think about Supreme Court justices. Let us think about laws that prove to be unconstitutional. Over and over again, they think they are above the law, and this particular bill is no different.

To underscore the fact that the Conservatives think they can do anything they want, I would just like to remind everyone about people who have come into disagreement with them: Linda Keen, Richard Colvin, Kevin Page, Pat Stogran, Munir Sheikh, Marc Mayrand. All of these people have had the misfortune to disagree.

Well, I am not fearmongering. I am disagreeing, and I am not afraid to do so.

● (2000)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am really grateful that I have the opportunity to speak to the bill before us today in the House because there are so many other bills that I wanted to speak to. The government consistently forced the ending of debate, whether it was through closure or time allocation. Its record now stands at 60. Even on this bill we are speaking under time allocation. I really wanted to do a full 20-minute speech, but now I do not have the time to do this.

In February, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tabled Bill C-24. He stated that the bill and the changes within it are meant to actually reduce citizenship fraud, increase efficiency of the system, and reduce backlogs. He said that it would “protect the value of Canadian citizenship for those who have it while creating a faster and more efficient process for those applying to get it”, yet the bill is not actually doing much of any of that.

I personally value my Canadian citizenship very much and I am sure everyone agrees overall that Canadian citizenship is something of enormous value to everyone. All Canadians value it very much. I do not want to see changes to our system at citizenship and immigration that play partisan politics with something that is so fundamentally important to so many.

I welcome some of the changes in the bill as it does address some long overdue deficiencies in our current system. However, many of the other changes proposed in the bill cause much concern and need significant amendments to ensure the protection of our valued Canadian citizenship.

In the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, of which I am a member, we have been doing a pre-study on the subject matter of the bill. We have had presentations and witnesses, but we have many more write to the committee hoping that they would be able to appear at committee when the bill is sent back to committee for actual study. Considering the fact that the Conservatives have now moved time allocation in the House on the debate, I am scared and nervous that we are not going to do a full study of the bill when it is sent to committee and that we are not going to be able to hear from more witnesses.

I want to list a couple of the organizations that have sent in requests to appear. These are not individual Canadians. Individual Canadians who want to make a presentation at committee should be able to. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees wants to make a presentation, but will not be able to. Amnesty International wants to make a presentation, but will probably not be able to. These are expert witnesses who want to speak at committee about the bill, but I am scared that we will not be able to do a proper study of the bill when it gets to committee.

A positive element of the bill is the issue of the lost Canadians. It is high time that this issue is addressed. It is an unfair situation that has gone on for far too long. We heard from the Canadian Council for Refugees and a couple of other witnesses who welcomed the measures to address the unfair exclusions from citizenship that have been allowed to go on for decades. They are, of course, the lost Canadians who are pre-1947 cases.

However, the council said that it regrets that there are no measures to address the unfair situations created by the 2009 amendments by the government to deny citizenship to the second generation born abroad. Canada is now creating a new set of lost Canadians and making some children who were born to Canadians stateless. We are signatories to the UN convention for the prevention of statelessness and this is what is happening.

● (2005)

Even though I said I am going to be speaking about good things, there is a sprinkle of bad even in the good.

Another good item in the bill is expedited citizenship for permanent residents who are currently serving in the Canadian Forces. When we did another study in the citizenship committee, I remember that a representative from the forces gave us actual statistics. He said it is about 15 people on average. What it would do is shorten the residency requirements from the new four-year requirement to three years for permanent residents who are serving in the armed forces. It is a great way to thank those people who are serving in the forces.

A third good thing is stricter rules for fraudulent immigration consultants. It is high time we finally regulated these immigration consultants. The NDP has been calling for the regulation of immigration consultants. We do not tolerate or condone any form of immigration fraud. We have pushed the government to develop tough legislation to crack down on the crooked immigration consultants. We have been supportive of anti-fraud measures. We would like to see increased resources for the RCMP and CBSA to continue to identify these fraudsters who are hurting a lot of citizens in Canada and are increasing the work in many of our MPs' offices, to be honest.

Now I am going to move on to the negative aspects of this bill. I do not have enough time left to go through the many bad things in this bill.

This bill would create far too many new barriers to citizenship. It would create a longer waiting period to qualify for citizenship. It would not actually give any value to pre-PR time spent in this country. UNICEF Canada has sent us a brief that says that we would be in contravention of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which we are a signatory.

There would be increased fees. Fees would double from \$200 to \$400. The language requirement right now is 18-54 years old for the language test, and Bill C-24 would change it to 14-64 years old.

Let me get into what UNICEF said about these actual changes. I know we do not have enough time for me to go through all the things I would like to say.

Bill C-24 proposes to amend subsection 5(2) of the Citizenship Act.... This shift in age requirements is problematic for immigrant and refugee children for a number

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of reasons. For instance, language and knowledge testing of children could lead to challenges with reuniting children with their families, and therefore could lead to the deprivation of the child's right to family reunification under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 10). This measure does not take into account the added stress that such testing may cause, or the children's ability to be able to be successful in test environments. In some cases, children may be still facing fear of authority, trauma from their home countries, and other experiences—depending on their individual life circumstances and migratory paths—that impair their capacity to successfully take such tests.

They go on.

I did not even touch on the fact that this bill would allow for the revocation of citizenship. The revocation would be based on the creation of two tiers of citizenship in this country.

My understanding is that one is either a Canadian citizen or not. There is no real in between. The government would create that in-between case. One would be a Canadian citizen with only Canadian citizenship or a Canadian citizen who had dual citizenship with another country or who the minister has reason to believe has dual citizenship. If that were the case, whether an individual actually had dual citizenship or wished to have it or if the minister believed the person might have another citizenship, the onus would now be on the individual to prove citizenship to the minister. The minister would have the discretion to revoke somebody's citizenship for committing a crime in another country or jurisdiction.

● (2010)

It just goes to show that there are so many things that are bad in this bill.

I really wish I had more time and that I was not speaking under time allocation so I could get through the other things I would like to talk about. Hopefully my colleagues will ask questions about the limitations and the values of people in Canada who are spending time as pre-permanent residents.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I sat here and listened to the member's dissertation, and I have to say that I am pleased that there are a number of things in the bill she does like. However, I know that there is a particular aspect of the bill that is critically important in her riding of Scarborough—Rouge River, as it is in mine, because we are both from greater Toronto area ridings, which is a very multicultural part of the country.

The new bill proposes a new system. We would go from a three-step process to a one-step process for processing Canadian citizenship applications. That would reduce wait times from upwards of three years to less than a year. That would be very significant in our ridings.

I wonder if she could speak to how processing citizenship faster, as this bill proposes to do, would affect her constituents and her constituency work?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, the member is a parliamentary secretary, and he is on the immigration committee. He has heard, just as I have, time after time and hour after hour, from witnesses who are experts in the community, including lawyers and front-line service agents as well as individuals who came to the committee who said the exact opposite. They said that processing would actually increase, and it would actually make it harder for people to become Canadian citizens.

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The first piece is that people would now have to wait longer to qualify. The residency questionnaire that would be a new introduction would also make it more difficult for people to get their citizenship and it would take longer.

We know that the wait time for some people is already almost five years. Some people have been waiting almost five years for their citizenship applications to be processed under the Conservative government with its backlog.

The Canadian Council for Refugees says it would make people wait longer. That would undermine Canada's stated commitment to integrate newcomers into this country. That is what the government is trying to do. It is trying to undermine newcomers to this country in integrating well into our community.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it came time to look at the issue of revoking citizenship, if it had not been not for the United Nations policy that a country cannot make an individual stateless, the government would have had the ability to withdraw a person's citizenship, even if it made that person stateless. We need to acknowledge that point.

The member was quite right when she commented at the tail end of her speech. She made reference to two-tier citizenship. That is something we need to be very wary of. Why would the government establish two tiers? I suspect that we will see challenges that will go right to the Supreme Court.

I would like to ask the member if she would like to provide further comment on how the government would establish two-tier membership and how those with dual membership would be treated compared to individuals who had just Canadian citizenship.

● (2015)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is correct. A private member's bill a Conservative member brought forward actually did exactly what he suggested, and that was revoke people's citizenship and create a situation of statelessness. When that bill was studied in committee, we realized how poor it was, and the Conservatives decided to kill it. Of course, they changed it from the quality work the committee did. They amended that bill, put it into Bill C-24, and are now creating two tiers of Canadian citizenship.

The answer to his question is that there are people who have only Canadian citizenship, whether it is through birth or naturalization or from renouncing another citizenship they may have had. There are also people who have dual citizenship. What is happening is that people who have dual citizenship are now being discriminated against. Because they have dual citizenship, the minister in Canada has the opportunity to revoke their Canadian citizenship and send them to their home countries, whether they have ever been in those countries or not. They could have been born in Canada, and for whatever reason have access to another citizenship. The Canadian minister can now take away their Canadian citizenship, their country of birth, just because they might have a claim to another citizenship.

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank everyone in the House tonight, and those across Canada who are taking part in this debate. It is important, it is historic, and it will have an impact on generations of new Canadians to come, on lost Canadians, and on those who have not benefited from the privileges of citizenship today unjustly. It

means a great deal for all of us who take pride in our Canadian citizenship.

There is a coincidence that this debate should be happening now, because it was 100 years ago this month, on May 22, 1914, when a middle-aged R.B. Bennett, who was the member of Parliament for Calgary at the time, said the following:

If the benefits of our citizenship and participation in our future are, as I think they are, privileges so great that they cannot be measured or expressed...five years is not too long a term.

He went on to say:

...those who come after us bear the standard... [and] cannot do that unless we do something to acquaint those who deserve to take on our citizenship with its benefits and privileges, and also with its responsibilities and obligations.

R.B. Bennett said that 100 years ago this month. That is how old Canadian citizenship is as a legal concept. I had not realized that it was entrenched in law by the House long before the 1947 Canadian Citizenship Act. This was part of the Naturalization Act of 1914, a historic step forward for our Canadian identity, for our rights as citizens, for our autonomy within a British empire, and for our accession to full nationhood, which of course, in that month of 1914, had not yet been formed in the crucible of World War I, but would be soon after.

An hon. member: The Statute of Westminster.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, members are reminding me about the Statute of Westminster and World War II, and so it went on to 1947 when our first citizenship act was passed. Canadian citizenship builds on a noble tradition.

[*Translation*]

It draws on the pride of French Canadians, those who settled and stayed in New France, who believed in the virtue of their system of government and the power of their institutions under the reign of Louis XIV.

[*English*]

It draws on the pride of first nations aboriginal peoples in their place on this land, on its lakes, on its rivers, in this physical space; the care they have always taken for these places; and the respect they have always shown for its natural heritage. It builds on centuries of belief that, as Bennett said, with the privileges of citizenship go the responsibilities. These are responsibilities that Canadians exercised in the War of 1812 and responsibilities that they exercised on a grand scale after that debate a hundred years ago, as Europe marched to war and Canada marched with it. It has evolved and changed in every generation. It has kept up with the times. It has been, in many respects, ahead of the times.

I just had the pleasure of meeting with the UN high commissioner for refugees, Antonio Guterres. Everyone has heard that he is here in Canada, travelling across the country, continuing to consider our country an example of the best behaviour in its treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. All of that generosity is based on the firm foundations of citizenship that we have and the foundations of our privileges and responsibilities as members of this society, those with the right to vote, those with the right to sit in this place, those with the right to carry that passport proudly around the world.

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We on this side do not take the responsibility of citizenship lightly. We on this side, with the vast majority of Canadians, understand that, from 1977 to today, 37 years is a long time to go without a thorough root and branch reform and modernization of our institution of citizenship. That is why we are here tonight. That is why we have given days of debate to second reading in the House. We have given nights to this debate as well, in committee. That is why we continue to listen with interest to the other side, in the hope that we will hear something new and not just puppets on the other side somehow repeating the hopelessly misguided statements of the Canadian Bar Association or a couple of witnesses who came before committee who really do not understand what citizenship in Canada is today. We have not heard anything really original from the opposition so far. We look forward to hearing that. There is still time. There will be lots of us on this side of the House to listen.

In the meantime, let us remind ourselves what the bill would do. It would make our processing of citizenship more efficient. It would reinforce the value of citizenship. It would strengthen integrity and remove fraud from this program. It would protect and promote Canada's interests and values. For everyone in the House, because we all have constituents in our ridings who are new Canadians, immigrants, and permanent residents, what matters most is processing, in the short term.

Citizenship in our country has never been more popular than it is today. We have one of the highest naturalization rates in the world. It may be the highest in the world. At 86%, it is well beyond what Australia, the United States, the U.K., and other immigration countries have. It has gone up in our government's time in office, as we have raised the bar slightly in terms of knowledge and language requirements for citizenship in Canada, because we think there should be an attachment—

● (2020)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have heard the minister say that we have debated this bill for days and days. Could the minister tell us which days? As I recall, this is only for two hours.

The Deputy Speaker: That is obviously not a point of order.

The minister has the floor.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, we are proud of the fact that, by increasing the value of Canadian citizenship, we have actually enticed more immigrants to this country and enticed more of those immigrants to want to become citizens. Last year there were 333,000 applications to become a Canadian citizen, a record unparalleled in Canadian history.

As a consequence, we have a backlog and it now takes two to three years to process a new application. That is too long. The measures in this bill would streamline decision-making and improve the ability to determine up front what constitutes a complete application; and provide a strengthened authority to abandon applications where applicants do not take the steps requested to provide information and appear before a hearing, where they have not taken on their responsibilities as citizens to get the job done. All of that would make a difference this year if we pass this bill into law, with the low scenario of 150,000-plus people becoming Canadian citizens if we filibustered this out, listened to every member on the

other side repeat the same speeches, let them have their way and this debate went on for months; as it did not do in 1914. The debate then, which was in many ways even more historic as it was citizenship for the first time, went on for a day by my reading of the *Debates*. It was a good debate on all sides of the issue. The opposition members had their points. They were well informed.

If we were to let the opposition have its way, tens of thousands of new immigrants to this country would be denied their citizenship this year, because the measures in this bill would make processing more efficient this year, and it would make the difference between 150,000-plus or many tens of thousands more. That is what Canadians really deserve to know about the implications of this bill.

We have heard members opposite say that we are putting citizenship out of reach, that we are making it harder. We are talking about—

● (2025)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. On a point of order, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I was waiting for a natural pause in the minister's speech. The minister was a little confused, it seemed, with the actual number of hours in here. I just want to say that it was on February 27—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I have already ruled that is not a point of order.

The hon. minister has the floor.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, we are determined to make that processing happen, but we are also determined to continue to reinforce the value of Canadian citizenship to show that it is not just by being interested in Canada, by being domiciled in Canada, or by having visited Canada that one becomes a Canadian citizen.

There has always been a principle of residency in this country behind Canadian citizenship, since 1914 when the length of time in that bill was actually raised to five years. It stayed there for a good long time. It was reduced to three years under the Trudeau government of the 1970s. That was too little. It was not only a much shorter time than Australia, the U.K., the U.S., all of our peers, France, and other European countries have. Many of them have much longer periods, seven or ten years.

It was also a short period of time during which a select few of those who paid the right lawyers or paid the right crooked consultants were able to leave requirements unfulfilled. They pretended they were here for three years when, in fact, they were not. That cheapened Canadian citizenship. That undermined the value of Canadian citizenship. That made us, in some parts of the world, in terms of citizenship, a laughingstock.

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It is this government that has done more than any in our history to clean up that abuse, abuse that began in 1977 under a flawed model of citizenship, and we are absolutely convinced that it is the right thing to do to require four out of six years of physical residency in this country, and to be able to check that people are actually here, to be able to avoid all of that paperwork, those banker's boxes of receipts and plane tickets that people used to have to bring with their citizenship applications. We would be able to do it electronically starting next year, and there would not be fraud associated with our residency requirement.

We would also clarify that residence means physical presence. We would ask prospective citizens not just to be physically present but to say up front that they intend to reside in Canada. It sounds reasonable that someone who is physically present in Canada for three, now four, years would actually have the intention of being here.

The opposition seems to think that people end up here by accident, that they do not intend to be here and that we should not ask them what they intend because they are here anyway. They kind of sleepwalk into Canada. That is the perspective of the Canadian Bar Association. That is the perspective of a few on the other side.

Would it curb their mobility rights? Absolutely not. For people who say they intend to reside in Canada and then decide to go somewhere else or marry someone else or accept a job offer somewhere else, their intent to reside in Canada ends. Their physical presence in Canada is curtailed. They would not qualify for Canadian citizenship at that point in their lives. So be it.

Their human rights, their rights under the Canadian charter, their rights as permanent residents would not be affected. They have just changed their plans. Anyone who pretends that this is interference, that this is an unfair burden on new Canadians, has not talked to any new immigrants lately. New immigrants are proud to say that they intend to reside here. They want to become citizens as quickly as possible.

Right now, already, it is not three years on average that people spend here; it is actually four years, on average, that the majority of new Canadians have spent here before they apply to be Canadian citizens. We are actually catching up with reality. It is actually something that Canadians want us to do to ensure that the connection, the integration, and the sense of belonging are strong, the way they should be among citizens who share political institutions, who share the burden of participating in this democracy together.

The third set of measures we have in this bill relates to citizenship fraud, combatting abuse of the citizenship process, among other reforms. I am glad to hear some on the opposition side say they are happy to see a regulatory body set to be designated for citizenship consultants.

● (2030)

There is a much larger of immigration consultants. We made a very successful effort to regulate them, to make sure that they are self-regulating and that the ones who were counselling people and guiding them down the wrong path toward residency fraud and all

kinds of abuses would be left out of the game from now on. We made sure that people would get good, honest advice.

We have all heard cases in our constituency offices of people who spent large amounts of money in different parts of the world to supposedly come to Canada, but then the person disappeared or the advice was wrong or the application was only half filled in. We do not want our citizenship to be associated with that kind of advice. Under this measure, we would take another important step toward making sure that we are not.

We would also increase the penalty for committing citizenship fraud. We would streamline the revocation process and bar people whose citizenship was revoked because they obtained it fraudulently from reapplying for citizenship for 10 years. Did members know that? Did they know that those who obtained citizenship fraudulently and who had it revoked by cabinet could then reapply for citizenship? It was not considered a crime.

Criminals are inadmissible to Canada. They would be inadmissible as citizens under this bill, but we were still letting people who had committed citizenship fraud come back and be citizens. That would no longer happen.

We would also revoke Canadian citizenship from dual citizens who are members of an armed force or an organized armed group engaged in armed conflict against Canada. We would deny citizenship to permanent residents involved in the same actions. Dual citizens and permanent residents convicted of terrorism, high treason, treason, or spying offences would be similarly affected, depending on the sentence received.

Some on the other side, and the bar association again, like a bad Greek chorus, have said this would create two classes of citizenship. I mean no offence to the parliamentary secretary; I am talking about an ancient Greek chorus.

It is actually very simple, and everyone on the opposition benches would do well to understand the difference. People are citizens if they do not commit these crimes; if they commit the crimes, they are no longer citizens. That is the difference. There are not two classes of citizenship. We would not have citizens who have other nationalities in circumstances where these very grave acts of disloyalty to Canada are committed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: But if they only have citizenship in Canada—

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I am being heckled by the Liberal Party again. It has been going on all day.

The Liberals used to stand by these kinds of principles. Their Citizenship Act, in 1947, made it possible to strip citizenship from those who committed treason, even if it made them stateless.

That was the Liberal Party when it stood up for Canadian citizenship, when it had been hardened by war, when it had solid people in its front bench, and when it was fiscally responsible. Today the Liberals joke about it, but let us be honest: Louis St. Laurent was quite fiscally responsible. It was a long time ago, before any of them were born.

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The fact of the matter is that all of this went by the boards in 1977 when the Trudeau model came forward. Dual citizenship was allowed in Canada, and rightly so. We respect that. However, there was next to no penalty and next to no interest in whether people were loyal in these deep ways to Canada, to her institutions, and to her laws, and there were almost no consequences.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this was a time when the Liberal Party was somewhere between the superpowers in the Cold War, playing footsie with Moscow and not standing on the kinds of principles that Canadians like to stand on and have stood on for centuries.

This measure is reasonable. We would not create stateless people with this measure. It would not apply to those who have only Canadian citizenship, and anyone who wants it to not apply them can renounce their other citizenship.

If a dual national commits these crimes, they would be far fewer in number than the number of citizenships revoked for fraudulent intention.

● (2035)

This would be the right thing to do. It would send a powerful message. It would be a powerful deterrent telling those inside the country and outside that we are serious not only about the privileges and benefits of citizenship but also about the responsibilities, the accountability, and the example that we expect to be set by those who carry the passport, by those who vote in this country, and by those who are proud to call themselves Canadian citizens, as we have done for 100 years.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been very difficult to sit through that diatribe and to stop myself from heckling because I do not like to do anything like that. I want to be able to hear the points that are made.

However, one thing that absolutely fascinated me today was the minister's assertion that we have had days and nights of debate on this bill.

I want to put on record that the bill was last debated on February 27, for all of two hours. That is 120 minutes. Today we started debating at around 6:44 p.m. I do not see how that can be portrayed as days and nights of debate.

We have a bill that is fundamentally flawed because, despite the protestations otherwise, it would create two levels of Canadian citizenship. Those born in Canada could be treated totally differently from other people born in Canada who just happen to have dual citizenship through their parents or grandparents, and this from a country that actually accepts dual citizenship.

Who has the minister been debating the bill with? It certainly has not been in this Parliament.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, it has been two days of debate at second reading in this place, so we could well say 48 hours, and I understand there have been 12 hours of debate in committee. We have been seized with the bill for a good long time. Many of its provisions have come before this House in other forms as private members' bills or as versions of various amendments that were proposed in minority government. The House is familiar with these provisions.

What has not changed is that the other side of the House simply does not care about some of the issues the bill tries to address. Canadians do care about them.

We are not surprised to hear skepticism about treason, joining another armed force, or terrorism. We are used to it from the debates on Afghanistan.

When I was in Kabul somewhere between the Canadian embassy and working for the United Nations, the hon. former leader of the opposition, Jack Layton, was saying that we should sit down with the Taliban, who at that time were killing Canadian soldiers.

That was a disgraceful moment for our politics.

It continues to be unfortunate that the NDP cannot bring itself to admit that terrorism is a real threat, that al Qaeda is still out there, and that Canada has an interest in deterring its youth and others from bringing those fights to our shores.

● (2040)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will give the government credit in terms of its ability to cast spin. The Conservative government is very good at spin. Even if the facts get in the way, it does not bother the government. It will create or fabricate something to try to make it look good.

Let me give members an example. The government will create a crisis. It will say that there was a citizenship backlog crisis, and that is the reason it had to bring in the legislation.

In reality, before the Conservatives took office, the processing time for someone to get citizenship was less than a year, and that was at a time in which almost an additional \$100 million was budgeted to reduce it and bring it down to six months or eight months. It was a significant contribution.

My question for the minister is related to the problem that has been created by the Conservatives. It now takes a minimum of two years to get citizenship. That is a minimum. Often it will go to five or six years.

My question for the minister is this: when does he anticipate that the average time to get citizenship will be no more than a year? That is where it was prior to the Conservatives taking government.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat for the member for Winnipeg North the facts of the matter. The waiting time now for a new application is 28 months. It is more than two years and it is unfortunate, but it is because Canadian citizenship has never been more popular. There have been 333,000 applications.

Why was there no backlog for citizenship under the Liberal government? It was because there were fewer applications. There was a lower naturalization rate. There were lower levels of immigration.

I was talking to a former Liberal minister a couple of days ago, who said the Liberals would set immigration levels that they could not even fill. They could not find enough people who wanted to come to this country, because the economic prospects of Canada relative to the United States and other countries were so much worse then than they are now.

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Today we have no problem filling our immigration levels. We have more than enough demand. We have never had a higher naturalization rate. We have a backlog because we have been looking into residency fraud and asking questions of those who are clearly trying to disobey the rules.

We do not apologize for that, and the measures in this bill will bring us back to one-year processing by early 2016.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the strongest human rights principles is to create all Canadian citizens equal, no matter what. That is the fundamental human rights situation. That is what I am concerned about in this bill, and I would like clarification on from my friend, the minister of citizenship. I agree very much with all of the other aspects that the minister has mentioned. I strongly support this bill except on this one condition, which is the fundamental right for a Canadian to be treated as a Canadian, no matter what.

When a Canadian citizen's citizenship is revoked, unless that citizenship was obtained fraudulently—and I can agree with revoking it for that reason—we are treating one Canadian differently from another Canadian, and in my opinion that is against a fundamental human rights provision. That is the area of my concern in relation to this bill.

I would like the minister to speak about how he would address this issue of this fundamental human rights principle that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. We do not talk about dual nationality. If a person has obtained a Canadian citizenship, it is then his legitimate right to be treated as a Canadian citizen. That is what I am asking my dear colleague.

• (2045)

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I have enormous respect for my hon. colleague, but on that logic there would be unequal treatment under the current law, because someone who came to this country and was naturalized as a Canadian citizen but had not in fact resided for three years and then saw his or her citizenship revoked because of residency fraud would be treated unequally, differently from me, since my citizenship cannot be revoked because I am Canadian by descent.

Does the member seriously think that we should stop revoking citizenship in cases where we find it to have been obtained fraudulently just to be able to treat everyone equally?

With all due respect, citizenship is a creation of this place. It was created by a law in this place 100 years ago. It was reinforced in 1947. The rules were changed again in 1977. There have always been rules for obtaining and for losing Canadian citizenship.

Terrorism, espionage, and other grave forms of disloyalty to this country constitute very serious crimes. I think my hon. colleague will agree with me that these are very serious crimes, and our position has not changed. The punishment for committing these acts will be severe, and in cases of dual nationals under this bill, it will be in the same way that all of our NATO allies have such provisions.

It was only Pierre Trudeau who prevented us from having these provisions earlier. I think the only NATO ally that does not have these provisions is Portugal. The NDP may prefer the Portuguese

model. António Guterres was a very good former prime minister of Portugal, but he did not change this measure. He did not bring Portugal into the mainstream.

We are going into the mainstream. Citizenship has its obligations, and if a dual national commits these crimes, that person will lose Canadian citizenship. That is fair.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was a rant from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. That was not really a speech full of any facts. I wonder whether the minister has borrowed his facts from Kijiji because we have seen that before with the Minister of Employment and Social Development with regard to the temporary foreign worker issue. However, I will leave that for today and speak to the bill.

There are quite a few holes in the bill. One of my constituents said that the holes were big enough to drive a truck through. I will try to lay it out and I would ask members to pay attention, because there may not be that many holes to drive a truck through. Maybe we could make some sensible changes to improve the legislation.

I am pleased to stand in the House today on behalf of my constituents from Surrey North to address Bill C-24, which intends to strengthen the Citizenship Act.

We in the official opposition, along with many experts and Canadians from across the country, are very concerned about a number of aspects in the bill.

We agree that changes to the Citizenship Act are greatly necessary and long overdue. This act has not been revised since 1977 and some elements of Bill C-24 would create clear injustices.

In addition, Canadians continue to face ridiculously wait times for citizenship applications.

Even though some changes are necessary, the bill is another example of the Conservative government's use of power to make secretive, arbitrary decisions by cabinet ministers.

I will first speak to a couple of good things in the bill. There are not a lot, because as I have pointed out, we could drive a big truck through the many holes in the bill.

I will be splitting my time with the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île, Mr. Speaker.

The bill would do a couple of things that I do agree with and they should have been addressed a long time ago. The issue of so-called lost Canadians is addressed in the bill. The NDP has fought hard for many years to get this matter resolved. We are happy the Conservatives are bringing this forward as a result of pressure from the opposition.

The other positive aspect of Bill C-24 is the part dealing with expedited access to citizenship for permanent residents who serve in the armed forces, which the NDP supported in the last session with Bill C-425. However, for a bill that is over 50 pages long, it completely fails to accomplish what it is supposedly intended to do.

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Instead of addressing the current problems, Bill C-24 would arbitrarily attribute more unnecessary powers to the minister, prolong naturalization, treat many Canadians like second-class citizens and create more injustices.

Our citizenship and immigration system is flawed. We need a bill that would actually strengthen Canadian citizenship, not one that is not even constitutional. I say that because we have heard from many experts. We have heard from the Canadian Bar Association and from lawyers. They point out the unconstitutionality of many parts of the bill, and yet the Conservatives are not willing to hear all of that.

I pointed to some of the good points of the bill and now I would like to take a look at some of the points that are really worrisome. Let us take a look at the aspect of intent to reside.

Basically, under Bill C-24, if granted citizenship, a person must declare his or her “intent to reside”. The goal of this provision is to ensure Canada’s expectation that new citizens live and work in the country after completing naturalization. However, this change would empower officials to speculate on an applicant’s future intentions. It portrays the image of immigrants as deserving of suspicion and mistrust, and also treats naturalized immigrants as second-class citizens.

• (2050)

The vagueness in this provision will severely create travel restrictions. International mobility will be imperative. It allows Canadians to study abroad, see their families and become globally aware. If Bill C-24 passes, naturalized citizens will lose this fundamental right.

Citizens who travel abroad for honest reasons may face losing their citizenship because they misrepresented their intention to reside in Canada when they were granted citizenship.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration could revoke citizenship under the false pretence of fraud. There would be no appeal, no hearing and no public knowledge of this, which brings me to another concern, and that is the powers of the minister. The bill would grant the minister more powers.

Bill C-24 would place unnecessary powers in the hands of the minister. If the bill is passed, the minister will have the authority to grant or revoke citizenship without public knowledge or any form of judicial process.

I am really worried about this aspect of the bill, because the minister will get to decide whether to revoke somebody’s citizenship. There is no process, no hearing and the public will not even know about it. That is really worrisome.

Peter Edelmann, a Vancouver immigration lawyer who sits on the executive of the Canadian Bar Association, said:

What’s happening here is they’re proposing that citizens could lose their citizenship on a paper-based process with no hearing at all and no independent tribunal—forget about going in front of a judge to make the decision; you may not get to speak to or even see the officer...

This is clearly unconstitutional. The Canadian Bar Association is saying this, yet the government is not listening to some of the top lawyers in the country who point to the unconstitutionality of this power grab by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

It is not surprising to me, because I have been here a number of years now, that the Conservatives are using bills to grant themselves more discretionary powers. We have seen this in many other bills in the House where they are consolidating the power.

A Conservative member is chirping at me, Mr. Speaker. I ask you to ask those members to pay attention and maybe they will learn one or two things, oppose the bill and actually work for Canadians rather than chirping away when another member is speaking.

The Conservatives love power, even if it is at the cost of Canadian democracy and justice. By giving the minister these new powers, Canada is taking a step backward and opening the doors to decisions that are subjective and politically motivated.

Instead of providing solutions to the issues Canadians face every day, the Conservatives are using the legislative process to give themselves even more power than they already have. Unfortunately, they are not worried about the process because they have a so-called small majority, and they are ramming these changes through.

There are many other issues I could discuss such as the unconstitutionality of a number of things in the bill. There are fees and language testing issues. It seems that the only consultations the Conservatives have done in drafting the bill is among themselves or they have gone to Kijiji, as they have done before. We see time and time again Conservatives are not willing to take any sort of advice from neither the opposition, nor from the experts who testified before committees.

Along with my NDP colleagues, I will continue to fight for a fair, efficient, transparent and accountable immigration system. I urge the Conservatives to stop battering democracy and start listening to Canadians.

• (2055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the member’s comments in regard to English language testing. This is very new where the government has made a decision on two issues. One is expanding the numbers of individuals who will now have to get English language testing to qualify for citizenship. I am curious to know the motivation for the younger and older age groups.

Also, there is the requirement to have IELTS testing done. It costs a significant amount of money to get the testing done and it will also disqualify a number of people from getting citizenship because of the new requirements.

It does not seem to me that the system was broken in the first place. People were quite able to integrate into Canadian society. Would the member comment on what he believes might have been the motivation for making those changes?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, the only motivation I can see, and the minister could answer this, is ideological.

Government Orders

I want to share a personal story. I came to this country in 1980 and I hardly spoke a word of English, yet I am a very proud Canadian today to be standing in the House. My mother was 50 years old when she came to this country and she hardly spoke any English, yet today she is a proud Canadian and a proud Canadian of a member of Parliament.

I do not see why we need to expand what is already there. I only see ideological reasons, which the Conservatives try to feed to their base.

• (2100)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, does the member opposite think it is ideological to want to eliminate abuse from the citizenship program? Second, can we agree in the House tonight that the measures in the bill would not create conditions of statelessness? They will not.

The revocation of citizenship will take place for dual nationals only. The other measures in the bill do not create statelessness. We have taken very seriously our obligations under the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Will the member opposite agree that because we are protecting the citizenship of all those affected by the bill, we will ensure that they are nationals of a country? We are doing much better than, for instance, Pierre Trudeau did. When he recognized the People's Republic of China, once upon a time, he suddenly created a class of stateless people in our country who had the citizenship of the Republic of China. This was under a Liberal government that was a state party to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Would the member agree that our system is better than Trudeau's?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is anyone in the House, any Canadian who would not want to fix the immigration system or stand here and say that we do not need to plug the holes where there are abuses of the system.

Usually we study the bill, but the Conservatives wanted to ram the bill through so they came up with studying the subject matter of the bill. We have been studying it at the immigration committee. All the lawyers from the Canadian Bar Association and many organizations from across the country say that we are creating a two-tier system where a naturalized Canadian citizen and naturally born Canadian citizens may be deported on behalf of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. That is worrisome. Canadians should be worried about it. They should be questioning the integrity and ideology of the Conservative government.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, my speech today is a casualty of time allocation. I was supposed to have the floor for 20 minutes, but thanks to the Conservatives, I will have only 10 minutes even though this is a very complex bill about a fundamental issue: Canadian citizenship. We have just a few hours to debate it in the House, and only a small percentage of members will have a chance to speak to it.

To begin, I would like to demonstrate how the Conservatives have, once again, adopted an ideological approach to the immigration system. I should point out that there is currently a moratorium on applications to sponsor a parent or grandparent. Fewer family

reunifications are taking place. The Conservatives seem to think that is a quaint notion best discarded.

I remember one of the first speeches I gave in the House. It was on Bill C-4, which was about refugees. The Conservatives had made refugees their big issue. They punished refugee children by detaining them and punished vulnerable refugees by denying them the health care services they were entitled to. That illustrates the Conservatives' right-wing ideological approach to the immigration system.

I think it is important to point out that the bill will not solve any of the problems related to processing times. That is smoke and mirrors, because processing times are getting longer and longer. I know this because the people who come to my constituency office say that it can take two years, sometimes even longer. This bill will not help families, children, wives, husbands and grandparents reunite and become Canadian citizens. This is just smoke and mirrors. The Conservatives will not convince anyone that this bill will reduce processing times.

In my speech, I want to focus on two very important points, one of which is the constitutionality of the bill. I do not think the Conservatives have figured it out yet. Are they not tired of being turned down by the Supreme Court of Canada? This just goes to show how the Conservatives operate: they do as they please and could not care less about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and our founding principles. They have no respect for Canadians, for democracy or for the parliamentary process.

The minister's ability to revoke citizenship creates two classes of citizens. One class for Canadians who have dual citizenship, and the other for Canadians who have only Canadian citizenship. For one offence, there are two different penalties. Why the discrimination? What is the ideology behind it? Simple, it is the Conservative ideology.

There are already mechanisms in place that do not fall under the minister's authority. Why is the minister being given the power to revoke someone's citizenship? Why is he being given the power to determine what penalty will apply in a given situation? That responsibility falls to a court, an independent organization, not a minister who is being told what to do by the Prime Minister's Office of a given party and a given government. I am not talking about the Conservative minister in particular, because another party could be in power. It is a discretionary power.

In a democracy like Canada, which is under rule of law, there must always be a court or a monitoring system in place to prevent the ruling party from making partisan decisions and using power for political reasons. That is fundamental. As it stands, no independent court can rule on the minister's decisions because the minister is being granted all the power.

It is of utmost importance to talk about the constitutional validity of revoking citizenship. In his speech, the minister said that it was possible to revoke citizenship after the Second World War, right up until 1977. At that time, the only ground for revoking citizenship was fraud.

I would like to ask the minister a question.

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• (2105)

I would like the minister to tell me one thing. Would he like to turn the clock back to the days of World War II? Is that how far back he wants to go? It is 2014 and the Conservatives want to go back to World War II. Once again, we clearly see the Conservative ideology.

In committee, professor Audrey Macklin, the chair in human rights law at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law, quoted the Supreme Court and asked the following question:

Can you revoke somebody's citizenship in order to punish them for what we'll call crimes against citizenship?

The Supreme Court was clear:

The social compact requires the citizen to obey the laws created by the democratic process. But it does not follow that failure to do so nullifies the citizen's continued membership in the self-governing polity. Indeed, the remedy of imprisonment for a term rather than permanent exile implies our acceptance of continued membership in the social order.

Ms. Macklin then said:

In other words, the Supreme Court of Canada stated quite clearly that punishing somebody by depriving them of their constitutional rights, indeed, by denying them all constitutional rights and casting them out in the name of the social contract, is not constitutional. It isn't constitutional to deny somebody the right to vote, just in order to punish them. That's one right under [section 11 of] the [Canadian] charter [of Rights and Freedoms].

Therefore, depriving a person of their constitutional rights is unconstitutional.

How can the minister rise in the House today and grant himself powers that violate Canadians' fundamental rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms? If he cherishes his country, then he also cherishes fundamental rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I would like to finish my speech by mentioning that section 11 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the right not to be punished twice for the same offence.

The list of crimes in Bill C-24 includes terrorism and treason, and sentences are imposed by an independent tribunal, not a minister. That is a punishment that must be imposed on a criminal, not the revocation of his citizenship.

I would like to reiterate that section 11 stipulates that a person cannot be punished twice for the same offence. As a result, under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the sanction imposed by an independent tribunal is the one that must prevail. The discretionary power that the minister is giving himself is not constitutional.

Patti Tamara Lenard, an assistant professor at the University of Ottawa's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, testified that:

...the bill grants the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration the discretion to revoke citizenship in too many cases. Currently, as written, the bill would give the minister discretion to revoke citizenship in cases of fraud, but there is no requirement...for a court to evaluate if fraud in fact did occur.

This bill gives the minister, who is not necessarily qualified and who is not an independent tribunal, the authority to determine what constitutes fraud.

What is more, there is no way to appeal that decision. There is no independent body to oversee the minister's decisions.

Once again, the Conservative government has decided to impose its right-wing ideology and give itself powers that violate Canadians' fundamental rights.

• (2110)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île has just misled Canadians by claiming that there is no oversight over the revocation of citizenship.

Has she ever heard of the Federal Court and the Supreme Court? Why is the hon. member saying that we are privatizing citizenship by talking about it here in the House of Commons, where citizenship was created?

Citizenship was not created as a result of the charter or the Supreme Court. We had citizenship long before those institutions existed. We created Canadian citizenship through legislation, and we can legislate again to change the rules.

Is the hon. member prepared to admit that? Is she also prepared to admit what is really happening with applications to sponsor parents and grandparents? There is no moratorium. We processed 20,000 applications this year and more than 50,000 in 2012-13.

Why is she saying things that are not true?

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, I respect the minister's nostalgia. He is remembering a time when there was unfortunately no Supreme Court or independent body to control the government. I can see that he would like to go back to such a time.

As I mentioned in my speech, the Supreme Court was clear:

But it does not follow that failure to do so nullifies the citizen's continued membership in the self-governing polity.

The Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to revoke citizenship. It cannot be used as retribution.

If the minister is prepared to rise in the House and say that he is going to violate the principles and disregard the rulings of the Supreme Court, that is up to him. He is the one who has to look at himself in the mirror. However, my speech was clear: this bill is unconstitutional.

• (2115)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe it was June of last year when the government brought in legislation through a private member's bill, Bill C-425. We found out then that the government wanted to hijack that particular bill. I see the member across the way who was the sponsor of Bill C-425.

The government was prepared to hijack the bill by bringing in this whole revoking of citizenship and establishing a two-tier citizenship. That was when the bill ran into serious problems. It ultimately failed and was not able to get out of committee.

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We need to recognize and be very clear that it was saying if one had Canadian citizenship, and no other citizenship, and committed a certain type of offence, it would be okay and one would be allowed to retain that citizenship. However, if one had dual citizenship, and the example I used back then was the leader of the official opposition who has dual citizenship, and if he committed the same sort of act, he would be deported and lose his citizenship.

I wonder if the member might want to comment on Bill C-425.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, to be honest, I am not sure that I followed my colleague's reasoning, but I see where he was going. This bill would create two classes of citizens, which I mentioned in my speech.

Richard Kurland, who testified in committee, said that there was a very big design flaw in paragraph 10(3)(a) of the bill. This paragraph states:

(3) Before revoking a person's citizenship or renunciation of citizenship, the Minister shall provide the person with a written notice that specifies:

(a) the person's right to make written representations;

That is not enough, because it means that if we want to revoke someone's refugee status, they have a right to a public hearing, but if we want to revoke someone's citizenship, they only have the right to make written representations. There are the two classes of citizens.

[*English*]

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to note that I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver South.

I am honoured to rise in the House tonight to speak to our government's Bill C-24, the strengthening Canadian citizenship act. This legislation would be the first major overhaul of the Citizenship Act in nearly a generation.

While Bill C-24 touches on a variety of areas, all of which would make important changes strengthening the integrity of the immigration system and preserving the value of Canadian citizenship, there are several areas I am particularly passionate to be speaking to tonight. Those areas of the bill encompass the entirety of my former private member's bill, Bill C-425. When I first introduced my bill, I gave the reasons for tabling that legislation. My intention was to reward permanent residents for their service in our Canadian Armed Forces and to underscore the immense value of Canadian citizenship by revoking it from those convicted of terrorism or treason.

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to our hard-working Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and member for Ajax—Pickering for keeping those provisions of my bill alive by drafting them into Bill C-24. I would also like to thank each and every one of my current Conservative colleagues on the citizenship and immigration committee for their diligent work, and also those who have contributed long hours spent keeping these ideas alive in the face of unrelenting opposition filibustering last year.

I believe the importance of this legislation cannot be overstated. It is good news for new Canadians, good news for settled Canadians, and good news for those hoping to become Canadians, and I will tell members why.

Bill C-24 would honour our Canadian Armed Forces by fast-tracking citizenship by one year for permanent residents serving Canada in our military who have stated their intention to become citizens. As members know, service in the Canadian Armed Forces is unique. We call on our soldiers to make the ultimate sacrifice, to risk their lives in faraway places away from their families in some of the worst conditions imaginable, and they do it gladly. They are willing to lay their lives down for their fellow Canadians. That is what makes service in the Canadian Armed Forces unique and deserving of the highest possible respect.

Bill C-24 seeks not only to support these brave men and women but also to strengthen and defend the values they stand for and protect. To do this, we must act to address one of the biggest threats facing Canada today: terrorism. Bill C-24 would allow for the revocation of citizenship for any dual citizen who is convicted of a terrorism offence, treason, or waging war against the Canadian Armed Forces as part of an armed group. This measure would bring Canada into line with virtually every other western democratic nation that has similar revocation laws.

Strangely enough, the opposition Liberals and New Democrats continue to strongly oppose this measure. I know what I am about to say is not new, but it seems to me that those members on the other side of the House need to be reminded once again, perhaps again and again, that the Canadian public overwhelmingly supports revoking citizenship from convicted terrorists.

If the members were to survey their own supporters or Canadians in general, they would find the following, according to a national poll conducted by NRG: over 83% of Canadians from coast to coast support the idea of stripping citizenship from convicted terrorists; of those, 80% of people who identified as NDP supporters support this measure; and, 87% of those who identified as Liberal supporters also support this measure. Also interesting to note is that among those who were polled, when it comes to those born in Canada versus those not born here, 83% of immigrants support stripping citizenship from convicted terrorists versus 82% of settled Canadians.

I would like to know why it is that the opposition Liberals and New Democrats continue to choose to ignore the will of Canadians and the international community.

Some people might be surprised by the last figure I gave, but as an immigrant myself, and as the member of Parliament for the hard-working riding of Calgary Northeast, the most diverse riding in the country, I know that new Canadians as well as settled Canadians understand the need for this measure.

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• (2120)

Canadians understand that when a dual national willingly decides to radicalize and participate in terrorist crimes, to carry out bombings, to plot the murder of his or her fellow citizens, this is damaging to the value we attach to Canadian citizenship.

We cannot wait for the terrorists to submit an application to renounce their citizenship. We must read into their actions a deemed renunciation of that citizenship. This measure is entirely consistent with our sister jurisdictions among western democracies.

I have spoken to many ethnic organizations, groups, and constituents in my riding and across Canada. The overwhelming majority support revocation of citizenship for convicted terrorists.

For example, Salma Siddiqui, president of Muslim Canadian Congress, had this to say while testifying on my private member's bill on March 26, 2013:

Canadians who are opposed to the values of our society should not be allowed to abuse the privileges that come with holding Canadian citizenship. We must act to strip Canadian citizenship from those who seek to exploit it for violent and illegal activities.

She also conveyed similar thoughts recently when she appeared at the committee to discuss Bill C-24.

Just last night I read an article in the *National Post*. Fawzi Ayoub, a dual Lebanese Canadian, was recently killed fighting in a terrorist group in Syria. He was a senior member of the terrorist group Hezbollah.

In fact, he has been on the FBI's most wanted terrorist list since 2009. His crimes include attempting to enter Israel in order to carry out a terrorist bombing and attempting to hijack a passenger aircraft in Romania.

Ayoub lived in Toronto for several years and mused about returning to Canada one day. Just imagine, if he had returned to Canada, what might have happened.

This illustrates precisely why we need Bill C-24 to become law. Canadians are angry that terrorists are using Canadian citizenship simply as a convenient way to fly under the radar in order to commit terrorist acts. In doing so, they are eroding the value of Canadian citizenship.

Under the provisions of Bill C-24, those convicted of a serious terrorism offence in Canada or in jurisdictions Canada recognizes as having an equivalent judicial system would no longer be able to use a Canadian passport to facilitate their terrorist activities abroad.

Revocation is not a provision I hope to see used regularly. Ideally, it would never be used. However, Canadians are increasingly concerned about the threat of home-grown terrorism. Terrorism is closer to home than we may think. Radicalization is happening in places we least expect: our cities, towns, and neighbourhoods.

Our security services are sounding the alarm bells about the dangers of home-grown terrorism. CSIS has reported it is tracking at least 80 Canadians who have gone overseas to participate in terrorist activities.

They will return to Canada further radicalized and armed with knowledge of how to carry out terrorist activities. We cannot allow radical terrorist ideologies to thrive in Canada. We must condemn these dangerous practices and give them no safe place to hide and absolutely no legitimacy whatsoever.

If we allow terrorists to keep the Canadian citizenship they have abused, we are sending a message that our citizenship is not about shared values, freedom, democracy, the rule of law, or loyalty. It sends the message that our citizenship is simply an entitlement.

I believe Canadian citizenship is much more than a piece of paper used for identification purposes. It does represent our shared values, and its value is something we need to vigorously defend.

We must let Canadians know where their elected representatives stand. I implore members opposite to set aside their politics and join me to unanimously support Bill C-24.

• (2125)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened, again, to another speech filled with lots of rhetoric.

I am alarmed that we have such a small amount of time to debate this issue. I am wondering if the government has any idea how these measures would impact those folks who are already living in Canada.

For example, how many people would be affected by this bill in the short term and in the long term? More importantly, I am concerned about whether different ancestral groups be impacted differently. Would there be different impacts on people of different ethnic origins? Has the government done any study on that at all? If it has, could it please table those documents?

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the opposition for putting a vague question, not a specific one. To answer his question, absolutely, the bill would be applied to anyone and everyone who is a terrorist and is convicted of terrorism.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the member's private member's bill, Bill C-425, and ask the member to reflect on what he was proposing there. It was to ultimately allow for a landed immigrant who chose to join the Canadian Forces to wait two years instead of three years to qualify for citizenship. Would that principle apply with the current legislation? Would a member of the Canadian Forces who is a landed immigrant only require two years to be able to apply for citizenship? That is what his bill was all about last year.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, in Bill C-425 it was very clearly said that those who would join the Canadian Armed Forces would be given credit for one year toward their residency requirement to be a Canadian citizen.

To answer his question, yes, it would be the same principle that would be applied. Those who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces and want Canadian citizenship would be given one year's credit toward that.

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Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we are on the subject of the imaginary issue of people who are in the armed forces who are not Canadian citizens. I put it to the minister in committee and he was clear about this as well. Number one, to join the Canadian Armed Forces a condition precedent is that one is already a Canadian citizen. In rare circumstances, the Chief of the Defence Staff can appoint someone who is not a Canadian citizen to join if there is an urgent issue or a matter of national security.

I asked the minister in committee how many people this might apply to. Currently, it is about 13 individuals. I do not know if any of them seek Canadian citizenship. It seems to me this is most likely an expedient for theatres of war where allied forces, such as U.S. troops, might want to be contained within a Canadian regiment for some particular reason. However, it is certainly not an entire class of people. It is a very rare incident when anyone who is not already a Canadian citizen would be in our armed forces. It is very rare and only by specific and direct order of the Chief of the Defence Staff for a particular person in a particular situation.

Given that, I wonder why we have even included such a provision. Is it to mask the fact that so much of the bill is about stripping people's citizenship who would otherwise, as people born on Canadian soil, be citizens and punished under Canadian laws if we wished to punish them?

• (2130)

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the member. If she goes to the DND website, she will see that it says one can be either a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada with the intention of becoming a Canadian citizen. If she cannot find it, I would be happy to provide her the website.

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to contribute to this debate on Bill C-24. I am pleased to know that implementing the measures in this bill would protect and strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship at home and abroad.

I have been fortunate to have travelled to many countries around the world, both as a private citizen prior to becoming elected and also as an MP for my great riding of Vancouver South. In each of the countries that I have had the opportunity to visit throughout the world, I am proud to say that as a Canadian citizen, I have been warmly welcomed, treated with respect and often with envy. This is because, as I am sure all of my hon. colleagues in this place would agree, we are extraordinarily fortunate to be Canadian citizens.

In fact, these people-to-people and real experiences show us time and again that when we share our citizenship with others, and as public opinion research confirms, there are millions of people across the globe, even in highly developed countries, who dream of becoming Canadian citizens. My own life experience and that of my family closely mirrors this fact. Both of my grandfathers came to Canada in the early 1900s, fulfilling their dreams of coming to *Gam Saan*, which translates from Cantonese to mean "Gold Mountain". Even then, Canada was seen as a land of opportunity, freedom, and new life.

For over 140 years, Chinese immigrants have come to Canada, building communities, building the railroad, and contributing toward

building Canada. These values of seizing opportunity, hard work, diligence, dignity, and respect are values that infuse Canada and embody the Canadian values that we all hold dear. I am proud to say that two generations later, I too was able to emigrate to Canada, learn English, and become a citizen at age 13.

Due to my life experiences as an immigrant, as a Canadian, and now as a legislator, I believe that it is our duty to continue to protect and strengthen the value and privileges of our citizenship and to ensure that its acquisition ensures knowledge of our country and the duty of necessary citizenship responsibilities that Canadian citizenship should confer. If we do not value and hold our citizenship dear to us, how then can we maintain our value to others around the world? After all, Canada has always stood for freedom, equality, and respect for the rule of law built around a model of compassion, care, and the great strength of our diversity.

We must, therefore, periodically update and set standards that are necessary to make our citizenship relevant, current, and reflective of the global world in which we live, thus enabling us to maintain its high value and respect wherever our citizens may go. Bill C-24 is such a bill. It takes an old, worn bill of 36 years and implements new standards that are required for a modern, first-class country that is Canada.

The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration had the opportunity to listen to key testimony on this bill. Salma Siddiqui of the Coalition of Progressive Canadian Muslim Organizations had this to say:

I have heard concerns that Bill C-24 represents a knee-jerk reaction or that it serves a...political process. I disagree. Bill C-24 represents an assertion of the pride we hold in our values of an open, liberal democracy, where our freedoms are applied to all.

I could not agree more. We should all be grateful for our rights and freedoms in Canada, but we must also recognize that citizenship is about more than a legal status or just a title. It is also about the responsibilities that we all have in our country and to our communities.

In recent years, our government has taken a number of steps to strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship. Unlike the opposition, we will not turn a blind eye to citizenship fraud and those who cheapen the value of Canadian citizenship. One important responsibility for anyone who wishes to acquire Canadian citizenship is to understand who Canadians are as a people, where we come from, and what values define us.

To help ensure that new citizens share a common understanding of Canada's history, traditions, and institutions, the government introduced a new citizenship study guide in 2009 called, "Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship".

• (2135)

Citizenship applicants study this guide to learn about Canada and what Canadian citizenship means, and to prepare for their citizenship test. This was the first substantial update of Canada's citizenship guide in almost 15 years.

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We are proud that “Discover Canada” contains meaningful information about Canadian history, important symbols, shared values, balanced rights and responsibilities, and critical institutions. It also imparts a better understanding of and appreciation for our country, and shares information about how Canada was founded in diversity.

The contents of this guide now form the basis of the new citizenship test, which asks applicants to demonstrate their understanding of the chief characteristics of Canadian history, geography, and our system of government. To pass the test, prospective citizens need to have knowledge of our country, which better prepares them to assume the obligations and responsibilities of being Canadian citizens and to join Canadians in celebrating what it means to be Canadian. Without this foundational knowledge, citizenship becomes meaningless, just another government form to fill out. After all, it is this knowledge of who we are and the shared celebration of it that make us the great nation that we are.

It is inspiring to learn that since its introduction in 2009, “Discover Canada” has proven to be massively popular, not only with newcomers to Canada, but also with established Canadian citizens. Hundreds of thousands of copies of this guide have been distributed across Canada. This demonstrates that Canadians have a real thirst for knowledge about our country.

Our government has also promoted a number of other measures that reinforce the value of Canadian citizenship. Of course, Bill C-24 is just the latest example of this, but it is not the only one. For example, in November 2012, our government implemented an assessment of the language abilities of new citizens to be standardized across Canada so that new citizens would have a basic language that they would need to communicate in emergency situations, to meet neighbours, or to conduct basic life skills. For decades, studies have clearly shown that the success of newcomers to Canada is directly correlated to their proficiency in either of Canada's official languages, French or English.

As Canada faces an aging population and we need more immigrants, we need to ensure that we attract immigrants who can be successful as soon as possible. The new language proficiency test at level 5 is very basic and would therefore ensure that our new citizens have the most important tool that they will need to succeed in Canada. That is the ability to communicate in one of our two official languages, enabling their full participation and success in Canadian society.

On May 12, the committee had the privilege of hearing the testimony of Paul Attia, from the organization Immigrants for Canada. He explained that language capabilities are essential not only for economic success, but also for integration. This is something that I have lived myself. He said:

Language is a unifier...Even on a values front and a cultural front, the mere fact that you have the capacity to turn to the person to your left or the person to your right and have a conversation with that person automatically creates a natural connection.

For myself, and for the many new citizens in my riding, we value sharing our diversity by using one of our unifying languages.

Canadian citizenship is more than a passport of convenience. It is a pledge of mutual responsibility and a shared commitment of values

rooted in our history for our mutual future. This is why the measures in Bill C-24 are so important.

The bill before us today is another great example of the reforms that our government has introduced to strengthen and protect the value of Canadian citizenship. I urge my hon. colleagues to support these necessary measures and to ensure that Bill C-24 passes into law.

• (2140)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague from Vancouver South on the other side of the House and her comments on this bill. I find it very curious that Conservative members are so intent on saying that Canadians must obey and uphold the law, yet they create legislation that would put a minister above the law. This is one of the really offensive parts of this bill.

Could the member explain to us and Canadians how it is that her party feels that it is acceptable to bypass judicial due process in revoking citizenship? Why should so much power be conferred on the minister solely to do that without a judicial process?

Ms. Wai Young: Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, it is because my colleague has been here so long that she wants to uphold these old and antiquated processes.

The new law would bring forward a more streamlined process that would give the minister a more shortened ability to conduct his ruling. Therefore, the bill would update the law, as the member very well knows.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague the hon. member from Vancouver South for really hitting on the key points in Bill C-24, the strengthening Canadian citizenship act.

I was touched when she related some of her personal stories about her family coming here. She has worked tirelessly not only as a member of Parliament since her election to this place but before with many newcomers coming to Canada.

Does my colleague think that strengthening Canadian citizenship by asking newcomers to be better integrated into Canada by learning better one of the official two languages of the country, and spending an extra year here, four out of the last six years, would assist them in moving forward with their lives in this new country of theirs? Would that give them a better opportunity for more progressive outcomes in their lives moving forward?

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Speaker, some 25 years ago I led the working team that developed the language training program for across Canada. Level 5 at that time was developed but it was never implemented consistently across Canada. I am so pleased to see in Bill C-24 that it will be implemented consistently because newcomers need this level of language for emergency purposes and for life skills. We are not asking for university-level English whatsoever. We are asking for basic life skills.

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• (2145)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a fairly straightforward question for my colleague. Does she believe that the state has the right to take citizenship away from somebody who is born in Canada? Let me give her an example.

Let us say that she has people living in her riding from countries that Canada has a dual citizenship relationship with. There are two Canadian citizens, both born in her riding, one has dual citizenship but the other does not. Does she think it is fair that one should have his or her citizenship taken away because of this unjust legislation that targets and differentiates between citizens?

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite well knows that we are a signatory to the United Nations convention and therefore nobody can be rendered stateless. It is up to individuals to choose whether they want to renounce one citizenship or the other in choosing where they want to be.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure I to rise to address what I think is an important issue. I always enjoy the challenge of trying to hold the current government accountable on the immigration and citizenship file.

Over the last number of years, the current government, more than any other government that has preceded it, has been fantastic when it comes to Conservative spin. The Conservatives like to create a crisis and then try to fix the crisis. The whole area of citizenship, I believe, is a great example.

Let me expand on that. When the Conservatives took office a number of years ago, people had to wait a certain period of time to get their citizenship. After that period of time, they would put in the application. They would meet the criteria, put in the application, and roughly 12 months later, would have their citizenship. That is what it was prior to the current government taking office.

There might have been a certain percentage of cases that took over a year. There was some concern at the time. We wanted to address what appeared to be an increasing number of days to have them processed. At the time, the Paul Martin government allocated close to about \$75 million in the budget to speed up the processing time so that people who had qualified for citizenship could anticipate waiting from eight to 12 months. That is the type of situation the current government took over. It was not more than 12 months for most cases, and there was a serious investment to reduce it to a more reasonable timeframe.

What has actually transpired? Ever since we have had the Conservative government, the waiting period for processing has become worse. Month by month, it has continued to grow. Today it is well over two years before—

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: No.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It is well over two years, and I am being generous.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: It's almost three years. Check the website.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if we were to look into the residency issue, we would find that it is four years, and that is being generous. On many occasions, people are having to wait six years for processing.

However, if people put in their application today, they can anticipate that it will be at least two years before they are going to get their citizenship.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Thirty-one months.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Thirty-one months is what the website says, Mr. Speaker. That is completely unacceptable. It is not justifiable. The Conservatives have made a crisis. What do they say? They say that they have legislation that is going to speed up the process.

When I posed the question to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, what did he say? He said that by 2016, because of this legislation, we are going to have a one-year processing time. Not only is the after the next election, but the Conservatives' goal, through legislation, is to try to get it to where it was when the Liberals were in government. That is their goal.

I think we should raise the bar a bit. It is 12 months, with new legislation.

Remember when the Liberal Party gave a financial commitment of close to \$75 million? One would think the Conservatives would not have had a problem keeping it under 12 months. One questions why they made such a mess of it. Their priorities are all wrong is what I would argue.

• (2150)

What are the ramifications? We hear of the citizenship issue and the processing time. Let me give a couple of real examples that are taking place across this land, from coast to coast to coast. Oh yes, to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, these are real situations, and I am sure his office would be aware of them.

Imagine a landed immigrant who has been here for three, four, or five years, who has met all the requirements and is excited about becoming a citizen of Canada. He or she puts in an application but then finds out that they will be waiting two and a half or close to three years before being given citizenship.

I will use the example of the Philippines, a country I am very passionate about. For many of my constituents from the Philippines and India, particularly those two countries, I am constantly dealing with immigration-related issues, including citizenship.

There are many people across Canada who are in the queue for their citizenship and are anxiously waiting for it to arrive. It happens that they are using the passport from the their homeland country, whether Philippine or Indian. However, if that passport expires and they do not have citizenship, and they cannot get Canadian citizenship even though they are often more than qualified for it and have been waiting for more than a year—they are unable to travel outside of Canada unless they get the passport from the country of their birth renewed.

I get cases on an ongoing basis—

An hon. member: You're making me sympathetic for the minister.

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Well, Mr. Speaker, I feel very sorry for the member who does not appreciate how many of our constituents are affected by the Conservative government's poor performance.

In reality, we end up with individuals who are not able to travel if an emergency were to occur, and this happens far more often than what some members might think. They are now put in a bind. Let us say there is a death in the family, and they have to travel back to the country of their birth, but they do not have a valid passport. They cannot get a Canadian passport, because they are waiting in queue.

An hon. member: Sure they can.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: No, Mr. Speaker, they cannot get a Canadian passport—

• (2155)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. There is just too much chatter in the House. I know you will all find it surprising, but I am having some difficulty hearing the member for Winnipeg North. Could we keep the chatter down please?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, people cannot get a Canadian passport until they get their Canadian citizenship, so if they are waiting for three years to get their citizenship and their country of birth passport has expired and they have an emergency and have to leave Canada, that means they are obligated to get the passport renewed by their country of birth. That is costing people time, money, and resources, because the government has not been able to reduce the processing period for citizenship. Those are the types of real issues people are having to deal with because the government has been negligent in terms of processing times for citizenship.

Another example is the provincial election in Ontario. Whether it is the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, or British Columbia, there have been tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of individuals who have not been able to vote in provincial elections, because the government has allowed the citizenship processing time to hit that two to three year mark. If the government had done its job and kept that processing time to 12 months or less, we would have had more Canadians participating in our democracy. There are hundreds of thousands of people who call Canada home and qualify for citizenship, and the government's priority has not been to try to get into the hands of those individuals their citizenship.

Even by the minister of immigration's own admission, this bill is designed to reduce the processing times. We did not need legislation to reduce the processing times. It might help, but we did not require the legislation to do it. What we require is that the minister and the government have the political will to reduce processing times for citizenship. Although the current minister of immigration would argue that we have a huge demand of 333,000, some of the lowest demands on the citizenship branch in the last 15 years were while the former minister of immigration, his colleague, was responsible for the department and the processing time was making its greatest jumps. Therefore, the argument the minister of immigration was using this evening is bogus. That is the reality.

The reason we have the legislation in the first place, the government and the minister of immigration will tell us, is that it is all about reducing processing times, at least in good part. I would

argue that the minister has not. That is why I suggested at the beginning of my comments that what the government is good at doing is talking about fixing problems, when what it does not tell people is that the problems it needs to fix are the problems it has created. The biggest problem for the government is that it creates problems in immigration, whether it is the processing times for citizenship or issues relating to the temporary foreign worker program.

• (2200)

The Liberal Party did create the temporary foreign worker program, but the problem was created from that government. We did not have a problem. We did not have the calls that we have today.

When the Liberal Party was in government, the average was about

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I want to remind members that there will be a question and comment period in just about five and a half minutes. If they could just hold off all their comments until then, I know the Chair would appreciate it. I am sure the member for Winnipeg North would appreciate it as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I appreciate your intervention, Mr. Speaker. The point is that the government is constant in spreading misinformation. It created the problem within the temporary foreign worker program. That is why the Conservatives have had to make the changes today. They created the problems with the backlog in immigration. That is why they have to do things such as hit the delete button on the skilled worker program, which wiped out the applications of 300,000 skilled workers. The former minister of immigration created half of those in three months when he issued his ministerial instructions on the skilled worker program.

It is the government that has created the problems within immigration and there is no difference in this legislation. Why do I say this? Because I believe there are important issues that need to be dealt with in regard to immigration and the government has been unable to address many of those issues.

Let me give a good example of one that comes up every week at my constituency office. It is the issue of visiting visas. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of visiting visas that I believe ultimately should have, and could have, been approved if the government had done its work and improved the system.

I have a very difficult time when, for example, people are in a hospital on their deathbeds and they cannot get a sibling into Canada to visit them. These types of cases happen far too often. It is about priorities and the government has not been doing a job in addressing these priorities.

When I look at Bill C-24, it deals with the issue of citizenship, but it also deals with other issues that will have a fairly profound impact. We are establishing a two-tier citizenship. If the government were to take that aspect of the legislation out of Bill C-24 and have a free vote on the issue, I would suggest that it would not pass. I know there are a number of Conservative members of Parliament who are uncomfortable with the bill. We saw a sampling of that when a minister stood in his place and challenged the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in regard to that very issue.

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There are issues within citizenship such as the cash grab. When the government introduced the fact that it would bring in this legislation, it dropped the legislation and dropped the increase at the same time to the public. The Conservatives are going to increase the application fees. When we say 300,000 a year and get an extra \$200-plus from each individual, we are talking about a significant cash grab.

When we say we have to get English language testing done, or IELTS tests, who pays for that? What was the problem? Was there a huge outcry saying that we had to force people to get the IELTS exams done? There will be a substantial cost for that.

• (2205)

The Conservatives are making it more difficult for individuals to acquire their citizenship. I do not understand it, and I have not heard the argument for that from the them. They seem to stand in their place and say that this bill is all about patriotism, about Canada and how wonderful it is to be a Canadian, and how proud we should be. That is their only justification for all of their increases and changes.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the member relating how many immigrants the Liberals had on their list and how many we had on our list. I have been in the House for 10 years. I was here when the Liberals were in power, and I was here well before the hon. member. When we took over in 2006, the Liberals had 800,000 people on their list. The prediction was it would take six years to get through that list.

At the moment, our list is 350,000, and if the bill is passed, we will get it done in two years.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member has an issue because he is listening to the Conservative spin.

I may not have been in the House of Commons for as long as the member, but I have been an elected official for over 20 years and I have been dealing with immigration and citizenship throughout that period.

Even as an MLA, I dealt with it. Manitoba excels in the provincial nominee program more than any other province per capita. I understand the way immigration works. The absolutely worst increase to the backlog was when the former minister of immigration brought in the special ministerial instruction for skilled workers. Then the worst action ever taken against immigration is when that same minister hit the delete button on skilled worker program, deleting 300,000.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this whole mess of backlogs was created by the Liberals first, then compounded by the Conservatives.

Let me tell the House how the Conservatives want to solve this. If an individual is on a waiting list to have surgery, the Conservatives say they want to reduce the waiting list, but we do not want anybody else getting on the waiting list. That is how they want to reduce the backlog.

I heard from many citizens, from England, Romania, Germany. Their concern is that if they are convicted in our country, they be deported back to where they migrated from.

Could the hon. member answer that question for me very clearly? Unfortunately the government is not answering the question.

• (2210)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, based on the legislation, if it passes as it is, in certain circumstances, those who are dual citizens will in fact be deported, because they will be stripped of their citizenship.

Let me get to the member's first comment, because he saw fit, as other New Democrats do, to take shots at the Liberals. I can tell the member that the worst increases in backlogs in the provincial nominee program, which is an immigration program in the province of Manitoba, occurred under the NDP administration. Even though the New Democrats have never been in office in Ottawa, they should at least attempt to try to give the impression that they would do better.

I can assure the member that when the Liberals were in government, the only area in which there was a lengthy backlog was in fact being improved upon, and that was through the parents. That is because we believe, as Liberals, that it is important to have a family class. We were very critical when the government of the day, the Conservatives, froze that program.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg North mentioned the fact that he was having trouble getting visas, or some visas were not being accepted for family members who were sick or ill and wanted to have siblings come and visit them.

Our office in Montreal is aware of a lot of young immigrant families having children. In some cases both parents are working, or there is already more than one child, or the other spouse is probably working two or three jobs just to keep the family afloat. Therefore, there are a lot of requests to have the parents come over. Nine out of ten of these requests are refused.

I am not sure if the hon. member sees the same thing happening in his neck of the woods.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. It gets right down to the issue at hand. There are some very important immigration issues we should be dealing with and the government has failed in dealing with them in a fashion.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Name one.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member asks me to "name one". There is the very issue that my colleague just mentioned. We have family members who are living abroad and want to come to Canada to visit, to support families, to provide care for their grandchildren, or to be in Canada while a sibling is dying, or to participate in a marriage of a child. There are numerous reasons.

It is amazing. We are not talking about hundreds. We are talking about thousands who are being denied that opportunity. In some cases what this is saying is that a brother will never be able to see his brother who is dying in the hospital. That is just wrong. These are the types of changes we need to push for, reforms of our visitors visas.

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Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech very carefully and I am quite confused. He is jumping all over the place. The issue of visitors visa are dealt with by the visa officers at the embassies. The rules are clear. They have a lot of discretionary power. It was no different when the Liberal government was in office. I do not think the rules have changed that much.

There was mention of the backlog. When I came to the country, over 28 years ago, the waiting period for applicants was six months. That was during a Conservative government. When the Liberals left office, over 800,000 people were waiting in line and the waiting time was anywhere from two to three years.

Is there a relation between the number of applications that you accept and the number of people you admit to the country?

The Speaker: I would just remind colleagues to address their comments through the Chair, not directly at their colleagues in the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member throws numbers all over the place and at the end of the day my problem with government members on the whole backlog is that they are listening to the wrong person. They want to listen to the Minister of Immigration, believing that he is being straightforward and honest with them on it. The worst backlogs that were created were under the former minister of immigration. There were no higher backlogs. He created the highest in the history of our country. That is the reality. They might not like the reality, but that is it.

In regard to the visitors visas, I would strongly encourage us not to be content. The need for change is absolutely critical. I believe, as my colleague has pointed out, there are far too many that are being denied. We need to start doing more to ensure we have more families able to visit their family in Canada.

• (2215)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under this legislation, could someone born in Canada have their citizenship taken away from them?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that if people are born in Canada and have dual citizenship, their citizenship could potentially be taken away. I could not say that as an absolute fact. All I know is, if someone is a dual citizen what has been implied is that the government could, under a certain situation, be able to take that citizenship away. What is a fact is a two-tier citizenship is being created.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Winnipeg North put forth some hypotheticals. One thing that has concerned a number of human rights organizations is whether this law would offend the Convention on the Rights of the Child? If a minor child whose parents lose citizenship and they have citizenship in another country, that child could be considered a potential dual citizen as well, even though born in Canada. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that child must be given the opportunity to become a Canadian citizen if that is his or her choice.

I believe the bill could offend the convention. Does the hon. member for Winnipeg North have a view on this?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day this whole issue will ultimately end up in court. This is one of the issues that has been raised. I suspect it is only a question of time. What I have seen is that the government has brought in legislation that is not family-friendly. All we need to do is take a look at the fast removal of foreign criminals where the government would actually deport a father and leave a wife with two children in Canada. If I had more time, I would be able to expand, or if the government—

The Speaker: Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Provencher.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to be splitting my time this evening with the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's, and I will be directing my comments to the residency requirements portion in Bill C-24.

I am grateful to have this opportunity to add my voice in support of Bill C-24. It is a long-overdue piece of legislation that would restore value to our Canadian citizenship after decades of neglect and abuse. The Liberals had 13 years to fix the Citizenship Act and did not do anything to crack down on citizens of convenience. This important piece of legislation would also deliver on the government's promise in the most recent Speech from the Throne to strengthen and protect the value of Canadian citizenship.

Canadians recognize the important role immigration has played in building our country throughout its history. Canadians welcome newcomers who wish to become citizens and contribute to the political, social, and economic life of this country. However, Canadians have little patience or tolerance for people who do not play by the rules.

We have all heard the stories about individuals who lie or cheat to become citizens of this great country. These people concoct schemes and pretend to be living in Canada but have no real intention of ever moving and planting roots here. Instead, they only wish to abuse the privileges of our citizenship, using their Canadian passports or citizenship whenever it is most convenient for them. This is something that must end. We must protect the value of our citizenship and take action against those who seek to cheapen it, to protect the system for those who use it properly and who play by the rules.

That is why we have introduced Bill C-24: legislative changes to the Citizenship Act that would strengthen the program and the value of citizenship by helping to ensure citizens have a real connection and commitment to Canada.

Government Orders

One big problem is the residence requirement for Canadian citizenship. Currently, adult applicants must reside in Canada for three out of the previous four years. However, residence is not defined in the act. As a result, it is possible under the current act for someone who has spent little time in Canada to become a citizen. Under proposed changes, the rules around citizenship residence requirements would be strengthened so that adults applying for citizenship would have to be physically present in Canada for a longer period: four years in the six years prior to applying for citizenship. In addition, applicants would also be required to be physically present in Canada for at least 183 days for four out of those six years. Not only is this common sense, but it also is important because physical presence in Canada assists with newcomer integration.

Let me read what Canadians have been saying about strengthening the residency requirement.

Immigration lawyer Raj Sharma said we do know that citizenship fraud has been rampant, especially out of certain places in Canada such as Montreal. He thinks that unilateral revocation for the purpose where there is fraud or identity fraud or other fraud is not necessarily a bad thing. We need to recognize that Canadian citizenship is a sought-after benefit or a commodity and certain unscrupulous individuals will lie or deceive to exaggerate their time in Canada.

Then there is also Simon Kent, a *Toronto Sun* columnist. He said he thinks a lot of people would say it is a reasonable expectation if they want to live in Canada. If they want to enjoy living in a free and prosperous country like Canada, they should spend time there and they should live and contribute according to civil society. While that sounds like something out of politics 101, basically saying living here, enjoying the fruits of one's labour, paying taxes, showing that one is committed, and extending the period of permanent residency here from three to four years or maybe even five years before one can take up citizenship is a very fair and reasonable proposition.

Nick Noorani, the managing partner of Prepare for Canada, said:

I congratulate the government on its changes Citizenship Act that combat residency fraud and ensure new Canadians have a stronger connection to Canada. With the changes announced today, processing times will be improved and new Canadians will be ready to fully participate in Canadian life.

● (2220)

Martin Collacott, with the Centre for Immigration Policy Reform and a former Canadian ambassador in Asia and the Middle East, comments:

The government's new citizenship legislation addresses a host of long overdue issues relating to the acquisition of citizenship. Its provisions, such as strengthening residency requirements for applicants, will increase the value and meaning of Canadian citizenship and will be warmly welcomed by both Canadians and newcomers serious about becoming full members of the Canadian family.

Then there is Gillian Smith, executive director and chief executive officer of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, who said:

Our organization works extensively with Canada's newest citizens who tell us that measures taken to foster their attachment and connection to Canada have a positive effect on their successful integration. New citizens' sense of belonging comes in large measure from experiencing Canada first-hand—its people, nature, culture and heritage.

Shimon Fogel, from the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, commented:

We also support the introduction of measures to ensure that those who apply for Canadian citizenship actually intend to maintain a meaningful connection to Canada after taking the oath. The "intent to reside" provisions are an important element in this regard and could have a significant impact on reducing the problem of citizens of convenience.

Paul Attia, of Immigrants for Canada, says the following:

I am in favour, and the organization is in favour, of the longer requirement. You want to be able to have the person experience life in Canada and establish life here before he commits to citizenship. Citizenship is meant to say that you are a Canadian now.

It is clear that a longer residence period may allow newcomers to develop a stronger connection to Canada, while at the same time helping to deter citizens of convenience.

It would also ensure that the residence requirement is applied consistently. Creating a clear physical presence requirement would strengthen the legislative tools to deal with residence fraud.

Meanwhile, a six-year window to accumulate physical presence would provide more flexibility to accommodate applicants whose work or personal circumstances require regular travel outside Canada.

Crown servants who are permanent residents, as well as their spouses and children outside Canada, would be permitted to use time spent abroad in service to Canada for the purposes of meeting the residence requirement.

That said, under the proposed new requirements, all applicants would be able to accumulate absences of two years within the qualifying period. This should accommodate newcomers who have to travel outside of Canada for their work.

Another residence change concerns time applicants spend in Canada before becoming a permanent resident. Currently, a day that citizenship applicants spent in Canada before becoming permanent residents counts as a half-day of residence toward their citizenship application, up to a maximum of two years in Canada as non-permanent residents. Under the proposed changes, to further strengthen the residence requirement and create a level playing field for all citizenship applicants, applicants would no longer be able to use time spent in Canada as non-permanent residents to meet the citizenship residence requirement.

While it may take people who came to Canada as temporary foreign workers or foreign students a little longer to meet the residence requirement under the new rules, this change is designed to deepen their attachment to Canada.

In addition, to be eligible for a citizenship grant, an adult applicant would have to file a Canadian income tax return for four years out of the six years before they apply, if required to do so under the Income Tax Act.

Canadians are pleased with this requirement. Hard-working, tax-paying Canadians expect this from all permanent residents and Canadians. The message is clear: if they have a serious connection and attachment to Canada, they should show it. It is not hard to provide proof that they have filed their taxes. We all do it at least once a year.

Government Orders

Immigration lawyers like Richard Kurland have praised this new requirement, saying that until today many people have been able to get away with being resident for immigration citizenship purposes but not for tax purposes. That meant that they had the benefit of Canadian citizenship without the burden of filing Canadian income tax returns like everyone else.

Salma Siddiqui from the Coalition of Progressive Canadian Muslim Organizations has also applauded our government and said:

The requirement for citizenship applicants to file Canadian income tax is a step in the right direction, but does not go far enough. I believe that even after the grant of citizenship, Canadians living abroad should be asked to demonstrate that they have contributed taxes to avail themselves of public services subsidized by the Canadian taxpayer.

• (2225)

Payment of taxes is an important obligation of permanent residents and citizens. This new citizenship requirement would help to further strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague's speech.

There seem to be two sorts of principles he mentioned in his speech. Some of them are objective, number-based even, and some people will agree with them while others will not. However, they are easy enough for the majority of Canadian citizens to understand. On the other hand, some of the elements are very subjective and difficult to assess.

Can he tell me how to actually assess a person's intention to reside in Canada? How does the government intend to objectively measure someone's intention?

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, I will continue, and I think my further comments will help to clarify that.

It is important to note that the new rules would not restrict the mobility rights of new citizens. They would be able to leave and return to the country just like other citizens. Rather, the purpose of the provision is to reinforce an expectation that citizenship is for those who intend to continue to reside in Canada. Once newcomers become citizens, they enjoy all the rights of citizenship common to all Canadians.

Let me be clear. New citizens have the same mobility rights as all Canadians. They can come and go as they please, but we must ensure that new citizens make a real connection to Canada, and that starts by actually living here.

• (2230)

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his interesting talk about the Citizenship Act and the changes.

I would like to ask the hon. member if he believes that these changes would affect Canadians who have perhaps tried to take advantage of the generosity of the system as it stands, whether the changes would benefit very many people in his riding, if he has heard stories from his constituents about their experiences, and if any of these changes, had they been implemented earlier, would have helped any of his constituents.

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, in my riding there are many immigrants. It is actually a hub in southeastern Manitoba, with Russian-German immigrants and Filipinos. The feedback I am getting from the people in my office has indicated very clearly that the new requirements we would put in place would actually help to clarify what is required to become a citizen. They feel that it would not be onerous at all to increase the residency from three years to four years and that actually living in and being present in Canada for 183 days of the year seems to make a lot of sense. They say it would be very useful in clarifying what is required.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on one hand, the Conservatives and the member are saying that Canadian experience counts, that people should live in this country long enough. On the other hand, they are not recognizing that when students come to this country, they may live here for three or four years, and yet this bill does not recognize the time spent here by those students.

How can the member say that Canadian experience counts and not include the very experience that students go through in our universities? They may want to apply for a PR card and that does not count toward their citizenship. Can the member comment on that?

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, currently, residence is not defined in the Citizenship Act and, as a result, it is possible under the current act for someone who has spent little time in Canada to be granted citizenship. The proposal to lengthen the requirement from three to four years out of six and to replace residence with a requirement for physical presence would mean that students who are in school in Canada are typically going to have to wait a little longer to become citizens in Canada.

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AGRICULTURAL GROWTH ACT

BILL C-18—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, regrettably, I must advise that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-18, an act to amend certain acts relating to agriculture and agri-food.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

*Government Orders***SAFEGUARDING CANADA'S SEAS AND SKIES ACT**

BILL C-3—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to bring to the attention of the House that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the third reading stage of Bill C-3, an act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act, and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

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STRENGTHENING CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on debate this evening on Bill C-24. I have been listening to the debate. It has been a fairly animated and lively debate. This is second reading of the legislation and it is on fast-track and citizenship by descent. I rise today to speak in support of the proposed changes to the Canadian Citizenship Act that would strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship.

Since 2006, Canada has enjoyed the highest sustained levels of immigration in Canadian history, an average of 257,000 newcomers each year, and accordingly, the demand for citizenship has increased by 30%. Furthermore, Canada has the highest rate of naturalization in the world; 85% of eligible permanent residents become citizens.

Last year, Citizenship and Immigration Canada received more than 330,000 citizenship applications, the highest volume ever. Canadian citizenship is highly valued around the world and with the balanced set of reforms in Bill C-24, the government is taking steps to ensure that it stays that way.

Lengthier residency requirements and requiring more applicants to meet language and knowledge criteria would ensure new citizens will be active and contributing members of our communities and our economy. Since the first Canadian Citizenship Act of 1947, it has always been a requirement that new citizens have an adequate knowledge of Canada and of one of our official languages. The language level required is not changing and it is a basic level of English or French, sufficient for everyday communication.

Overall, these changes would mean that new citizens have a strong connection to Canada and are better prepared to assume the responsibilities of citizenship and become active members of Canadian society.

Canadians take great pride in our citizenship. We are taking action to further strengthen that pride and the value of Canadian citizenship with the first comprehensive reforms to the Citizenship Act since 1977. The strengthening Canadian citizenship act would deliver on our government's commitment to reduce backlogs and improve processing times while strengthening the integrity of Canadian citizenship.

Our Conservative government has welcomed over 1.4 million new citizens. That is a record to be commended. These new citizens come from all over the globe. Some of them come here for economic improvement and some of them are refugees who faced difficult times in their home country and have been forced to leave. Canada is a haven for these people and we are accepting more immigrants and more refugees than any other government in Canada ever has. Therefore, we need these changes to the Citizenship Act to modernize it, to allow that backlog to become smaller, and to streamline the process. That is what we are talking about here.

I have heard a lot of questions, and I am sure I will get some after I finish my own speech, saying something is wrong here, in section a, line 3, paragraph 7. We have been told that we have to make that change or the bill is no good, throw the whole thing out. This is the proverbial baby being thrown out with the bathwater.

At the end of the day, these changes are going to be brought in. We are going to streamline the system. We are going to make it faster and more efficient. All of us on both sides of the House have immigration files involving people who want to come to Canada, who want to contribute to our society. We are going to be able to move them through faster. However, we will see who votes in support of this legislation and who does not.

We want newcomers to be welcomed as full members of the Canadian family of citizens, fully contributing to our economy and our communities from coast to coast to coast. With Bill C-24 we propose to strengthen the rules around access to citizenship to ensure that they reflect its true value and that new citizens are better prepared for full participation in Canadian life.

● (2235)

More specifically, Bill C-24 will resolve the vast majority of the lost Canadian cases once and for all.

Government Orders

The Liberals claim to care about the lost Canadians, yet they did nothing to fix the problem of any cases of lost Canadians over 13 long years in their government. Our Conservative government will right a historical wrong by granting citizenship to children born abroad to crown servants and will honour the service of permanent residents who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces by granting them quicker access to Canadian citizenship. In addition, members of the Canadian Armed Forces would have a fast-track access to citizenship through a reduced qualifying period as a way of recognizing their important contribution to Canada. The bill would ensure that children born outside Canada to, or adopted outside Canada by, a Canadian parent who was serving abroad as a crown servant are able to pass on citizenship to children they may have or adopt outside Canada.

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces put their lives on the line in order to honour the interests and security of our country and protect the safety of our citizens. This legislation would accelerate citizenship for permanent residents serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. It would also provide for a grant of citizenship for individuals on exchange with the Canadian Armed Forces. Under the proposed changes to the Citizenship Act, those who have served for one year less than the residence requirement would be eligible to apply for a grant of citizenship. Once the new legislation comes into force, the residence requirement would be four years out of six, that is representing three years of service for the fast-track provision. Those who served in the qualifying period and have been released honourably would also be eligible for the fast-track to citizenship.

Generally speaking, Canadian citizenship is a requirement for enrolment in the Canadian Armed Forces, but permanent residence may also be employed in exceptional circumstances. The problem is that one's lack of citizenship gives rise to challenges related to security clearances and passport arrangements and can therefore make it difficult to deploy him or her for service abroad. The United States and Australia already have a similar fast-track mechanism for members of the military as a way of honouring their service and addressing deployment challenges.

Introducing a fast-track citizenship for permanent residents serving in and for individuals on exchange with the Canadian Armed Forces as proposed in Bill C-24 would honour their service to Canada and make their deployment abroad much easier.

Another advantage is that it could provide an incentive for newcomers to Canada to enlist in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Citizenship legislation is extremely complicated. Many of the amendments that came into force in 2009 were retroactive, adding another layer of complexity. Amendments are desirable under Bill C-24 to ensure that the law supports consistent implementation of the first generation limit to citizenship by descent and it does not bar access to eligible applicants.

Currently, the Citizenship Act contains an exception to the first generation limit for children born to or adopted by a parent who is a crown servant. The exception means that children born outside of Canada to serving crown servants, including military personnel, would always be Canadian at birth, irrespective of what generation they were born outside of Canada. However, these children are not able to pass on citizenship to any children they have or adopt outside

Canada as a direct result of their parents' service to Canada. This includes children born prior to April 17, 2009, such as the nearly 4,000 children born between 1983 and 1994 at the Canadian Forces base in Lahr, Germany. Under the current law, these children are not able to pass on citizenship to the children born or adopted abroad.

The first generation limit creates distinctions between family members of crown servants depending on where the parents were serving when the child was born. It also acts as a disincentive to serving outside Canada for persons of childbearing age and creates a disadvantage when compared to public servants serving in Canada.

● (2240)

For all these reasons, we propose to amend the Citizenship Act to ensure that children born or adopted outside Canada to serving crown servants, including military personnel, are able to pass on citizenship to any children they have or adopt outside Canada. It is that simple. It truly is.

We have this huge gap out there, from 1983 to 1994. Children born to Canadian parents serving in Lahr, Germany, were not Canadian citizens, even though they were born on a Canadian Forces base to Canadian parents. That is the lost generation. Somehow we have to correct that. The bill would do that.

● (2245)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if there has been any research done by the government as to how these measures would be impacting the Canadian population. I have a specific interest in whether there would be different impacts on different ancestral groups and whether groups with different ethnicities would perhaps be disproportionately affected by these new measures. If these studies have been done, perhaps they could be tabled for us to review, since we have such a short time for debate.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, I think what we have to look at is that this is a bill that would be results driven. I think the hon. member would concur and agree with me that we have to improve the Citizenship Act. This would allow citizenship applications to be approved within a one-year timeframe. Canadian citizenship is valuable. We have more applications now, 330,000, than we have ever had before. We are processing them more quickly. However, we understand, as a government, that we have a responsibility to do a better job.

This would not penalize any one group of immigrants to Canada. It would not penalize any ethnic group. This would be a fairer, rules-based citizenship act that would treat all immigrants the same.

Government Orders

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my hon. colleague, the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's, spent so much of his speech focusing on one part of the bill that I really do support, and that is the part dealing with the issue of lost Canadians. It has taken too long. It has proven complex. I know that the previous minister of citizenship thought they had done the job, but it is an enormously complicated area. I know a lot of the remaining lost Canadians are grateful for that.

My concern, though, remains, and I have phrased it in the House before, that the bill is designed to do something that no previous piece of Canadian legislation has ever done, which is strip citizenship from someone born in Canada for offences committed that, everyone would agree, are abhorrent offences but for which Canadian law is perfectly adequate to mete out punishment in a Canadian prison.

I ask the hon. member if he is not worried that we are creating a slippery slope with two classes of citizenship for people born in Canada.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that question, because it is a serious question. It is one that was struggled with in the last incarnation of the bill.

My understanding is that this part of the bill, and I am not an expert on the bill, is for dual citizens. It would only affect dual citizens who actually are citizens of Canada but are also citizens of another country in the world. If people in that class of individuals commit treason against this country, they cannot expect to keep Canadian citizenship. I think that is fair and understandable, and I think most Canadians would agree with that approach.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am particularly interested in the topic of backlogs, which my colleague talked about in his speech.

He said that the bill will ensure that applications are processed within 12 months. I have great respect for the hon. member, and I apologize for my skepticism, but I have to say that every time the government promises that the process will be sped up, it actually slows down. There are plenty of examples, such as employment insurance, but that is not what we are talking about.

What in the bill will ensure that applications are processed within 12 months and convince us that this is more than just lip service?

• (2250)

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the hon. member for that question. I think that is a pertinent question.

My understanding is that we will be moving from the old system, where we had a three-step process, to a new system, where we will have a one-step process. Quite frankly, there will be more decision-making powers in the hands of the highly trained civil servants who will be looking at this aspect of the act.

It should allow us, and it may take a bit of time to put it in place, to go from a 22- or 23-month backlog to a 12-month process for applying for citizenship and having it granted, if one qualifies.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Resuming debate. I would remind hon. members that, starting now, the length of speeches will be 10 minutes, not 20 minutes. Members should adjust the length of their speeches accordingly.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your announcing the bad news with a smile.

Since I will not have nearly enough time to get through all of the points I wanted to make to the House, I will take a few minutes to comment on this paradox: I consider myself lucky to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-24. It should not be luck, though, it should be a right in the House of Commons. All MPs who want to talk about a bill should have the chance to do so, thereby reflecting the diversity of the citizens they represent. Unfortunately, we are bound by the 65th time allocation, which means that many members who wish to speak will not be able to. That is why I consider myself lucky in spite of it all. I will probably buy a lottery ticket when the House adjourns around midnight.

Let us get back to Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. Canada is a land of immigrants. The founding peoples built a welcoming country where everyone can feel free to settle and contribute to the nation's prosperity while living our shared values. We are all, to varying degrees, immigrants. Some of our families go back generations, while others are relative newcomers. Canadian immigration laws are therefore an important part of our identity and even of our uniqueness as a country.

In 1947, the Canadian Citizenship Act created a distinction between "Canadian citizen" and "British subject". It also specified that both Canadian citizens by birth and naturalized citizens were entitled to the same privileges and were subject to the same responsibilities and obligations. The laws were amended in 1977. On February 6, 2014, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration introduced Bill C-24, which would bring about a major overhaul of Canadian immigration laws.

Has the time come to change them? Is our immigration system still dysfunctional? Sometimes, yes. Some of the bill's proposed changes to the Citizenship Act have been a long time coming. They fix problems with the existing system and are very welcome. For example, one provision sets out stricter regulations for immigration consultants who sell fraudulent services at high prices, taking advantage of vulnerable refugees and people who want to immigrate.

I want to be very clear about this: we are urging the government to create strict laws to crack down on dishonest immigration consultants. We support measures that tackle fraud, such as giving the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canada Border Services Agency more resources to detect fraudsters.

Government Orders

However, some clauses really change the rules of the game and have to be denounced. Before getting into the details of some of the provisions of the bill, I would like to caution my colleagues on the government side. Citizenship and immigration policy must not be left in the hands of just anyone. This is an issue that directly affects the collective identity of Canadians and the fragile balance in our multicultural society. Please, let us not play petty politics with such a sensitive issue.

Given the recent election results in the European Union, for example, it would be presumptuous to believe that Canada will never have to deal with feelings of exclusion or xenophobia within its population. Let us not think we are any smarter than the other states that wanted to score political points with immigration issues.

On that point, I unfortunately find it hard to trust the current Conservative government for the following reasons. Citizenship is a matter of law and must be kept out of the hands of politicians as much as possible. The bill in fact proposes allowing politicians, more specifically the minister, to interfere in granting and revoking citizenship. We are seeing a leitmotif, a repeated approach in a number of Conservative bills, which seek to give the ministers more and more powers.

● (2255)

Bill C-24 seeks to give the minister many new powers, including the power to grant or revoke the citizenship of dual citizens.

The government has a strong tendency to create laws that concentrate power in the hands of ministers. This way of doing things is not good for democracy. There is no other way to say it.

The NDP does not want people to be exposed to the possibility that the minister will make arbitrary decisions about their case based on political motivations or suspicions rather than on evidence that could be put before a court.

If this bill is passed, I wonder whether the minister will have the courage to disclose the list of people to whom he is going to unilaterally grant citizenship and his reasons for doing so, of course. Unless he does, there will be reason for suspicion. We must have both transparency and the appearance of transparency.

The minister is no substitute for justice. Take for example, cases where people are granted citizenship as a result of fraud. Usually, it would be up to the courts to enforce the law. With this bill, the minister can act unilaterally. This is a serious abuse of political power and proof of the Conservatives' contempt for Canada's judiciary. Unfortunately, this is not the first time this has happened.

Why are we concerned about the recent amendments? The NDP is not systematically opposed to all the amendments and improvements proposed in this bill. However, unfortunately, we know what the Conservatives are up to.

Since March 2008, more than 25 major changes have been made to immigration-related procedures, rules, laws and regulations. More and more changes have been made since the Conservatives won a majority. Coincidence or ideology? I will let people decide for themselves.

Here are a few examples: the moratorium on sponsoring parents and grandparents, the approval of fewer family reunification applications, and the punishment of vulnerable refugees. The sweeping changes that the Conservatives have made to the Canadian immigration system have not made the system fairer or more effective.

As proof, I have many immigration files that I have worked on in my own riding of Trois-Rivières, a city with a population of 134,000. Before I was elected, I mistakenly believed that Trois-Rivières was rather homogenous. However, just a few weeks after I was elected, I discovered just how multicultural this riding really is, and since then, I have been constantly dealing with immigration files, even the simplest of which take a considerable amount of time to resolve.

Many organizations have raised concerns about several provisions of the bill. These are not political organizations, and the vast majority of them practise immigration and citizenship law and are very familiar with this legislation. Why then do these organizations seem so opposed to this new bill? They likely oppose it because it does not address the real problem.

The real problem with citizenship and immigration, the problem criticized by all the groups, is the inefficiency, or rather the slowness, of the system and the decision-making process. We have been debating this bill for a few hours in the House, and I have heard little to assure me that the measures proposed in this bill will effectively enable people waiting for responses to get them more quickly.

Unfortunately, this bill does not provide any real solutions that would reduce the ever-increasing number of delays and the citizenship application processing wait times.

There are currently 320,000 people—yes, 320,000—waiting for their applications to be processed. Right now, the processing wait time is approximately 31 months. In 2009 the wait time was 15 months. The government would have us believe that the minister can wave his magic wand and this wait time will drop to 12 months, but no one knows the details. There is a lot of uncertainty here.

● (2300)

The Conservatives have never managed to solve this problem. The backlog of applications and the processing times have doubled under their watch. Furthermore, cuts to the public service will most definitely not help resolve this problem. That is the most significant problem with our current immigration system. The Conservatives only seem to be taking this problem seriously in their rhetoric. In practice, we hear very little about concrete actions.

Let us now move on to the issue of integration. Arriving in our country and becoming established in our community are very important steps in the life of immigrants. This also represents an individual or family challenge that the government can facilitate. That way, we can make it easier for newcomers to integrate into our country and for all of us to live together.

Government Orders

However, one of the bill's provisions weakens the progressive integration and welcoming of families that arrive in Canada. If this bill is passed without amendment, citizenship applicants between the ages of 14 and 64 will henceforth have to pass a test assessing their knowledge of French or English. Previously, this applied to people between 18 and 54 years of age.

Let us be clear: this is not about questioning the importance of having immigrants speak either of the official languages or even both official languages. I am just wondering why the age at which candidates will have to take the test is changing from 18 to 14. I will go back to my teaching experience, which was not that long ago. When a student failed an exam, the first thing the teacher wanted to know was what he or she could have done to ensure the student's success.

The bill is not very clear about what will happen if the candidate fails the language test, which will be administered to children as young as 14 and to older adults, for whom learning a second or third language is much more difficult. What is more, the bill is mum on any assistance that might be provided to these people to ensure that they pass the language test.

The NDP contends that the backlogs are the biggest challenge when it comes to immigration. I talked about that earlier. The minister acknowledges that the wait times are increasing, but he is not proposing any real solutions to resolve the problem.

We are against this government adopting increasingly restrictive immigration measures, based on secret and arbitrary decisions made by the minister in cabinet.

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on a great speech.

Given the new powers that the minister would have if this bill were to pass, what are my colleague's thoughts on the following scenario? Two people come to the minister's office with identical cases, but one is a major Conservative Party backer and the other is a union boss, as they like to say. Would the two be treated the same way?

• (2305)

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Laval—Les Îles for his very good question.

The sad thing about my answer is that I cannot answer that question. Of course, I have an idea what the answer might be, and I definitely understand the concern he is expressing in his question.

The real answer is that we will never know why one person is granted citizenship while another has his citizenship revoked, because that will be a secret closely guarded by the minister's office.

This is a definite tendency for this government. It is giving more and more powers to ministers while making all of its decisions more and more secretively. This ends up making governance more and more obscure.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my esteemed colleague touched on a fundamental issue. The Conservative approach involves concentrating more and more power in the hands of fewer and fewer individuals.

To make good decisions, one must consult others and have all of the necessary information, but that is being neglected here. A minister does not necessarily have all of the tools to make good decisions.

It is a real shame that the Conservative government has chosen to defend itself by saying that it is tackling a problem created by the Liberals and that it will shorten the waiting list. I wonder if it is achieving that simply by eliminating people from the list. Their approach should be more compassionate. What does my colleague think?

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Pontiac for his question.

In many areas, including this one, what works in theory does not work in practice. What the Conservatives are putting in place with their bills, which eventually become law, is not in synch with what MPs have to deal with in their constituency offices.

To date, I do not see anything in Bill C-24, other than the fine principles, to reassure me. It does not contain any measures that I can use as examples to tell my constituents that the Conservatives did their homework and that this bill should be passed quickly because it will finally provide a mechanism to quickly meet their demands. I do not see anything of the sort. My three years in Parliament tell me that I should not expect that it is going to happen.

[English]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that concerns me in Bill C-24 is proposed section 10, which says that the act will make it so that the immigration minister can strip any Canadian of citizenship if the person is convicted of a terrorism offence, even if it happens to occur outside of Canada.

Right now Mohamed Fahmy, an Egyptian-Canadian journalist with Al Jazeera, has been detained in Cairo and has been charged with terrorism. It seems to me that this journalist could easily be caught up in this particular law.

This has been brought forward by the Canadian Bar Association, but earlier this evening the minister indicated he believed that the Canadian Bar Association was misguided.

Does the member think, given the situation regarding Mohamed Fahmy, that perhaps the minister may be wrong?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, if I had to choose between the bar's opinion and the minister's, I would choose the bar's, if only because members of the bar got together and came to a clear consensus. The bill before us is steering us down the path my colleague referred to.

• (2310)

[English]

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am really honoured to have this opportunity to speak in support of Bill C-24, which would help prevent fraud in the citizenship program. It would protect it from abuse and preserve its integrity.

Government Orders

Poll after poll suggests that people from around the world would choose Canada as the country they would most want to live in. Why not? We have the best quality of life. As former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker said:

I am a Canadian, a free Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship God in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, free to choose those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind.

Canada stands as a model of how people of different cultures, ethnicities, religions, and beliefs can live and work together in peace, prosperity, and mutual respect. That is what it means to be Canadian.

Because Canadian citizenship is so valuable, many people are prepared to misrepresent facts to make it appear that they qualify for citizenship. For example, they may pretend to live in Canada, when in fact they are living abroad. Ongoing large-scale fraud investigations have identified more than 3,000 citizens and 5,000 permanent residents linked to major investigations, a majority of them related to residence. In addition, nearly 2,000 individuals linked to the citizenship fraud investigations have withdrawn their applications.

More than 85% of citizenship fraud involves falsifying residence. In typical cases, permanent residents have used the services of crooked consultants to circumvent the law to fraudulently establish evidence of residence in Canada while living abroad most, if not all, of the time.

Media reports in recent years have highlighted some of the actions taken to simulate residence in Canada. Some of the most common examples are creating home addresses by using the address of a friend or relative in Canada; paying a building owner to rent an address, usually by a consultant, or using a postal service outlet; purchasing telephones and having someone in Canada use them to create a record of incoming or outgoing calls; opening a bank account, maintaining a healthy balance, and giving the ATM access card to someone in Canada to perform regular in-Canada transactions on the account.

Canadians know that citizenship sits at the heart of our democratic institutions. The Canadian people expect their government to protect the integrity of the citizenship process. Even a small number of crooked consultants who facilitate this type of fraud represent a substantial problem, as this undermines the program and the integrity and value of Canadian citizenship. That is why Bill C-24 proposes measures to help combat fraud and to protect the citizenship program from further abuse.

In short, the strengthening Canadian citizenship act would give the government the legal authority to designate a regulatory body whose members would be authorized to act as consultants in citizenship matters. This would ensure that citizenship consultants were held to the same professional and ethical standards as immigration consultants and would help prevent fraud in the citizenship program.

Another serious issue is that the penalties for fraud in the current citizenship act have not increased since 1977 and are ineffective in deterring individuals from committing citizenship related offences, such as misrepresentation. The current penalty for citizenship fraud is a mere \$1,000, the maximum fine, which is \$4,000 in 2014 dollars, or one year in prison, or both.

We need to prevent fraudsters from becoming citizens, and the introduction of stiffer penalties would help deter people from committing citizenship fraud.

● (2315)

The proposed new penalty for fraud is a fine to a maximum of \$100,000 or five years in prison, or both, which would modernize the penalty for fraud in the Citizenship Act. It would also be the same as the penalty for the equivalent offence under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, or IRPA, thereby bringing the citizenship program in line with the immigration program.

The proposed legislation would also add a provision to refuse an application for misrepresentation of material facts and to bar applicants who misrepresent such facts from reapplying for five years. This would help deter fraud and would also bring the Citizenship Act in line with the IRPA.

Revocation is an important tool to safeguard the value of Canadian citizenship and to protect the integrity of our citizenship program. Bill C-24 would streamline the process for the government to revoke citizenship from those who are discovered to have lied or cheated on their citizenship applications. This is important, because the current revocation process can be complex and cumbersome. It can also take an inordinate amount of time to take citizenship away from someone who should not have obtained Canadian citizenship in the first place. If we want to get serious about cracking down on those who seek to undermine the value of our citizenship, it is imperative that we be in a position to revoke their citizenship in a timely manner, as proposed under Bill C-24. Individuals who have had their citizenship revoked for fraud would also be barred from reapplying for 10 years following the revocation order, up from the current bar of five years.

Our government is concerned about the recent discovery of a dual national committing a terrorist act abroad. In cases where dual nationals commit gross acts of disloyalty, such as treason or terrorism or taking up arms against our Canadian Forces, they too will lose the privilege of Canadian citizenship. We all have an interest in sending a message to such misguided individuals. They are committing serious crimes, and their actions have consequences.

Let us not forget that it was our government that introduced the Combating Terrorism Act, which will make it a criminal offence to leave Canada to commit terrorist acts. Let me remind all Canadians watching at home right now and those here in the House that it was the NDP that voted against this important, overdue protective measure.

Government Orders

Our government also introduced the Faster Removal of Foreign Criminals Act to make it easier to remove dangerous foreign criminals and to make it harder for those who pose a risk to Canadians to come to the country. However, both the Liberals and the New Democrats opposed this bill, and they have said repeatedly that they believe terrorists should be able to stay in Canada under humanitarian and compassionate grounds. The NDP member of Parliament for Parkdale—High Park said her discussions in Lebanon a while back led her to believe:

....that it is just not helpful to label them [referring to Hezbollah] as a terrorist organization. If the political parties in Lebanon who may disagree with Hezbollah...can figure out a way to work with Hezbollah and try to get along internally, then perhaps we should take a cue from that.

The opposition members have the opportunity right now to correct their mistakes and support our government's proposals to protect Canadians from ruthless terrorists. If they do not support this bill, the New Democrats reaffirm that they are soft on terrorists and organizations like Hezbollah.

We already know the Liberal leader's admiration for dictatorships, making light of Russia's annexation of Crimea. Worst of all, he said, on the Iranian embassy closure here in Canada, "It's important to talk to each other and it's especially important to talk to regimes that you disagree with and that disagree with you to make sure that there is means of communication".

This is the same Iranian regime that seeks nuclear weapons, that seeks the destruction of Israel, and that funds terrorist organizations around the world. It is the same regime that murdered Canadians such as Zahra Kazemi. This is the regime the Liberal Party wants to reward with diplomatic status and engage in communication with.

• (2320)

I just want to conclude by saying that it is imperative that the opposition parties rally themselves, rise above their own partisan interests, and do what is right for Canada and support Bill C-24.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed in my colleague. I thought he would have listened attentively to my speech and noted that the most important point is the constitutionality of the bill. My colleague surely recognizes that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms constitutes the foundation of our Canadian democracy and our beautiful country. I hope that he will support this first statement.

I would like to quote a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada on the revocation of citizenship:

The social compact requires the citizen to obey the laws created by the democratic process. But it does not follow that failure to do so nullifies the citizen's continued membership in the self-governing polity. Indeed, the remedy of imprisonment for a term rather than permanent exile implies our acceptance of continued membership in the social order.

According to Professor Macklin, the Supreme Court of Canada clearly stated that the revocation of Canadian citizenship is unconstitutional.

What does my colleague have to say about the Supreme Court ruling and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to her remarks earlier, but they did not make a whole lot of sense, so I am going to have to give her an answer she may not agree with but that she should be prepared to listen to in any event.

The NDP should really learn to rise above its ideological blinders and do what is right for Canada. It takes the side of being soft on terrorists and terrorist organizations, and is on the side of those who would harm our Canadian Forces or those who would betray their own Canadian citizenship by taking up arms to fight in foreign lands.

These are the kinds of people the NDP chooses to support, rather than those hard-working people who come from all over the world to our great country of Canada. They come here for hope and opportunity. They come for opportunity for themselves, and more importantly, for their children. It is so important that these are the kind of people we embrace, these immigrants who embrace Canada.

We should not be supporting terrorists and those who seek to take up arms not only against those here in Canada but against our Canadian Forces abroad. The New Democrats should really be ashamed of themselves.

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague from York Centre for the best speech I have heard tonight on the issues of fraud and disloyalty to Canada and how they affect our citizenship programs.

I am very proud to be on a government side in the House that is not only saying the right things and explaining in detail why this bill should move forward but is also showing how democracy works by disagreeing with one another. I am very proud of the member for Calgary Southeast and his huge contribution to shaping this bill. I am also proud that the member for Calgary East, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, took a different opinion on one aspect of the bill. That is the strength of this side. We are able to express our own views. We are able to differ and yet come together behind an important piece of legislation like this.

Could the member for York Centre please remind the House why it is so important to point out to Canadians how vulnerable the system has been to fraud and how important it is to fight terrorism, when basically, all the opposition has done tonight is defend spies, traitors, and terrorists?

• (2325)

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying that I want to thank the finest Minister of Citizenship and Immigration that Canada has ever had. He deserves all kinds of credit for the hard work that he has done, putting his heart and soul into Bill C-24 to make Canada a better country. We should all be proud of our Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Just let me say quickly—

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The Speaker: The member had 30 seconds and he used them on congratulating the minister, which I am sure the minister appreciates, but unfortunately there is not enough time to answer the question.

We will move on and resume debate with the hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to say at this late hour, that was a very fine example of Conservative self-glorification at its best. I would like to thank both the minister and the hon. member for the wonderful job they did of patting each other on the back regarding the most dreadful bill that we have had before this House.

Believe it or not, I can remember a day when the current government was in opposition. Those members would have been outraged that a bill, which was so important, had two hours of debate back in February and then today, for the 65th time, was put under a censure order so that we will just have debate tonight and then it moves on. This has become such a familiar pattern, but it really is very disturbing. I remember when Conservative members would have stood up in this House decrying the fact that the government of the day was doing this, yet here they are, worse than anybody has ever been.

I feel honoured to represent Vancouver East, a riding where immigration and new citizenship are very honoured. It is something that has built our communities, whether the Chinese Canadian, Japanese Canadian, or the Filipino Canadian community. There are people from all over the world. It is a working-class, hard-working riding. People have come from all over and built businesses. They have contributed to community services and have gone to school here.

I feel very proud to be part of a community that is very much built on immigration. It is a place where people feel very proud about being a Canadian citizen. Therefore, this issue of citizenship and what it means is an important subject in Canada. We are basically a country of new Canadians. Other than first nations, we are all newcomers. Some of us have been here for generations and some folks are here for the very first time. I myself come from a first-generation immigrant family and so I very much value the notion of what it means to be a Canadian citizen, which is all the more reason to look at Bill C-24 and go through it.

My colleagues here tonight and I are very concerned about the bill. Listening to the debate from the Conservative members, I feel as if we are in different worlds. Maybe we identify some of the same problems, but from two different worlds.

In the Conservative world, everything is good or evil. If anyone dares to speak about the rule of law or due process, somehow means that one is in favour of terrorists or criminal behaviour. I mean, it is so juvenile it is sort of pathetic. One would want to see the level of debate in this House be a little more thoughtful, but that is what it has come down to.

Of course, in the NDP, like anybody else, we are very concerned about terrorists and criminal acts, but the question that we are looking at tonight with Bill C-24 when we identify these problems is: how do we respond to them? How do we deal with them?

When we look at the bill, the conclusion that I come to is that basically Conservatives hold themselves above the law. Bill C-24 lays out a process whereby there are extraordinary powers conferred upon a minister to revoke citizenship in certain instances based on suspicion, without any regard to due process, without any regard to independent tribunals or court process. The government really does see itself as the final arbiter.

We believe that is fundamentally wrong, which is why we feel so concerned about the bill. Not only is it being rushed through, but this premise in the bill of affixing problems that have been identified is so suspicious in the power that it confers on an individual. Again, it is a familiar pattern that we have seen on numerous occasions with different legislation.

In the NDP, we do believe in the rule of law. We do believe in the legitimate role of Parliament to debate, to investigate, and to improve legislation. That is what we are here to do.

• (2330)

That is what we are here to do. That is what we are elected to do by our constituents. However, we see more and more legislation rushed through Parliament and rushed through committee, sometimes at all stages, through closure, censure, and time allocation. As I said earlier, we have seen it tonight for the 65th time, and it really does make a mockery of what debate and investigation of legislation should be in the House of Commons.

I feel a sense of dismay tonight, even at this late hour. I am sure we are all tired because we have had a long, busy day, but there is a compelling argument that makes us want to take this on again and again and respond to the absolutely irrational arguments being put forward on the government side.

I heard the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration say earlier in the debate that NDP was fearmongering, yet when we look at the bill and the powers that the minister would have, there is a sense of fear over what the consequences of this bill would be. When we look at the expert organizations in this field and the concerns they have expressed—and I certainly hope they will be heard in committee—surely we see that there has to be a rational debate about whether this bill tips the balance and goes to an extreme in conferring on the minister such extraordinary powers to revoke citizenship.

I do not want two-tiered citizenship in this country. There are other countries that have that kind of regime. That is something that Canada should stay away from. A Canadian citizen is a Canadian citizen. If a person has gone through the process of becoming a citizen, that is good, and then citizenship becomes a right.

There are also responsibilities, and if there is wrongdoing, then we have provisions in this country—I think it is called the Criminal Code—that allow for a process to be enacted, for due process to happen, and for people to be prosecuted and jailed if necessary. We have that system in place, but in reading this bill, one would think that none of it existed.

Government Orders

I find it really quite extraordinary that we are dealing with a bill that would in effect allow the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to act as prosecutor, judge, and enforcer. To me, that is simply wrong. We have a separation of powers in this country for a very good reason. We have a balance of powers in terms of a legislature with regard to the execution and enforcement of the law. There is a reason we have those checks and balances, so the legislation before us is very disturbing.

There is no question that there are issues in the bill that need to be dealt with, such as the issue of the lost Canadians. That is a long-standing issue that has needed to be addressed. I am glad that it is being addressed, but it is being smothered in this bill by other provisions, particularly the revocation of citizenship, which I think is very offensive.

There is also the question of why some of the real concerns we have about our immigration system are not being addressed. Many members tonight spoke about the issue of the backlog, the fact that there are over 300,000 people still waiting and that it takes an extraordinarily long time for applications to be processed. The Conservatives have promised and failed on many occasions to rectify that problem. We have not seen it happen, and it is not rectified in this bill.

If we look at an issue like family reunification, which is very important in terms of citizenship and immigration, we see that it is not dealt with at all; in fact, to the contrary, all of the measures we have seen from the government have actually narrowed family reunification and made it a lot more difficult.

At the end of the day, Bill C-24 is a bad bill. There might be some good provisions in it, but overall, the powers that it would confer upon the minister are unnecessary. They are not needed. They are powers that would cause problems in the long term.

I am very proud that New Democrats have been standing tonight to debate this bill and expose how fundamentally flawed it is. It will go to committee, and we will do our utmost to ensure that there are witnesses and that there are amendments. We can only hope that members of the House will be willing to consider amendments to make sure this bill is improved.

• (2335)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from the remarks of the member for Vancouver East, it is very clear what the fundamental difference is between us and the opposition on this bill.

The NDP believes that it can somehow be coherent, that it can somehow be consonant with Canadian citizenship to have someone be convicted of terrorism and retain their citizenship. We respectfully disagree.

Gross acts of disloyalty deserve to result in penalties under the Criminal Code, but also the revocation of citizenship when statelessness is not a result. Many other countries agree with us, all of our allies in NATO, except one.

Could the member opposite cite one example of revocation of citizenship for citizenship fraud that was done improperly or that was

unfounded? Has she seen any case where the power and duty to revoke under the law has not been implemented properly by the government or others? Will the member come clean with Canadians and admit that when there are cases of revocation for terrorism, or espionage or treason, there will be judicial supervision and involvement? That is required under the bill.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, we are here tonight to talk about what this bill means and what it would do.

In reading the bill, what is very clear is that it would confer extraordinary power on the minister to allow the minister, he or she, to revoke citizenship in certain circumstances. That is wrong. We believe it violates due process, that it is not done through the judiciary with independent tribunals. It has been strongly criticized and condemned by a number of organizations that have examined the bill.

Why does the minister think a minister alone should have that kind of power? It just seems so fundamentally wrong. I do not think the government has answered that question. Where is the accountability? We have not heard that tonight from the government.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I share the concerns of the hon. member for Vancouver East.

There are some good elements of the bill. I appreciate the member for York Centre pointing out he is best minister we have ever had, although I do not know how the current Minister of Employment and Social Development feels about that. However, with all due respect to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the bill represents a dangerous departure from fundamental understanding of what it means to be a citizen. It runs contrary to international commitments that Canada has made under the Convention on Statelessness and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It arguably also runs contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in treating classes of Canadian citizens differently from each other.

I do not quarrel for one moment with what the minister says. If somebody obtains his or her Canadian citizenship by fraud, there are already ways in which that citizenship can be revoked because it was obtained fraudulently.

However, for Canadian citizens who arguably might or might not be dual citizens of another nation, to lose their citizenship from Canada is a dangerous and slippery slope.

• (2340)

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, the member has identified a real problem in the bill, in that the bill would create two tiers of citizenship. That is unheard of in Canada. I do not know what kind of debate there has been out there in the community. I do not know if people are even aware that this is what the consequence of the bill would be.

We have yet to see whether it will contravene international conventions. As we see with so much of the legislation passed by the government, there are all kinds of legal challenges that have to take place because legislation is brought forward in such a narrow partisan way.

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I feel that the whole notion of sound public policy is being eroded by the Conservative government. Bill C-24 is a very good example of that.

I thank the member because her comments are very relevant.

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a great honour to be here this evening. We stand in a historic place and we look forward to a historic anniversary. Our 150th celebration as a nation is coming. If we look back 100 years from today, Prime Minister Borden was bringing in the Naturalization Act that precipitated the Citizenship Act of 1947, and here we are today, generations later, finally updating our Citizenship Act.

We stand in the name of great people. I am honoured to represent people from West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, people who really care about their citizenship, a varied population of different ethnic backgrounds and first nation backgrounds. They are people who cherish their citizenship.

I stand in the name of my father and my uncle. My late father was a prisoner of war in World War II. My late uncle, Smoky Smith, was the last surviving Victoria Cross holder. I am very proud this day, and I know that they would be very proud, considering what we are doing to protect the rights of Canadian citizens and ensuring the rights of a group that I am about to speak about, the lost Canadians.

I am proud to speak on behalf of my predecessor, the former member of Parliament for this riding, John Reynolds, who was an ardent advocate for the lost Canadians, for the people whose rights will be restored in Bill C-24. I am proud to speak on behalf of constituents who have worked for this day, including people like Don Chapman, who helped John Reynolds on his way to advocate for lost Canadians.

Given these personal connections, I am also very glad to speak on behalf of all Canadians who have been watching the evolution of this bill from coast to coast and who have waited with anticipation for us to do something truly historic.

The measures in Bill C-24 represent the first comprehensive reforms to the Citizenship Act in more than a generation, and they deserve the support of every member in this House. Canadian citizenship is central to our identity, values, and traditions and is a tremendous source of pride for all of us who are fortunate enough to have it.

Generations of Canadians have made great sacrifices to defend our way of life, to ensure that our country remains strong and free, and to guarantee the rights and responsibilities that come with citizenship. Among those Canadians are the people I have mentioned, and there are others, such as the people who have returned from Afghanistan so recently and those at that poignant ceremony that we celebrated, the Day of Honour. Those are the people who are watching this evening.

In short, Canadian citizenship is precious, and it should never be taken for granted. Its value must always be preserved and strengthened whenever possible. That is why Bill C-24 is such an important piece of legislation.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, I would like to focus on one particular measure in this bill: the restoration of citizenship to those who are known as the lost Canadians.

Under the 1947 Canadian Citizenship Act, there were groups of people who were either not eligible for citizenship or who lost their citizenship for various reasons. They included people born outside Canada to a Canadian parent and people born in Canada who naturalized in another country. They were people who might have justifiably but erroneously thought they were Canadians. They were excluded because of outdated and inconsistent provisions in previous citizenship legislation. Those affected by these provisions became popularly known as “lost Canadians”.

Some lost Canadians spent many years of their lives believing in their hearts that they were Canadian citizens and publicly identified themselves as such. They did not realize that they did not actually have Canadian citizenship. In some cases, the bad news of their actual status came as a nasty surprise when, for example, they applied for a Canadian passport for the first time. Other lost Canadians spent many years yearning for the citizenship they felt would rightfully be theirs if not for outdated legal provisions.

This was a unique and unfortunate situation. I am sure all of us in this House can sympathize with the plight of these unlucky individuals.

● (2345)

Over time, many lost Canadians asked the Government of Canada to give them citizenship. Four and a half years ago, building on the advocacy of my predecessor John Reynolds and others, the government did just that. In 2009, significant changes to Canada's citizenship legislation were implemented. The changes restored citizenship or granted it for the first time to the vast majority of lost Canadians. The amendments reflected the seriousness with which our government takes the issue of people's citizenship.

On the day that law came into effect, most lost Canadians automatically obtained their citizenship retroactively, as of the date they lost their citizenship if they were former citizens, or as of the date of their birth.

Many of my hon. colleagues may remember the day in April 2009 when this law came into effect. There was a lot of media coverage of what was naturally a very happy story of these lost Canadians, so-called, returning home. In fact, a number of former lost Canadians showed up here on Parliament Hill that day, determined to celebrate the restoration of their citizenship and to apply for a Canadian passport at their earliest opportunity.

Our government resolved the vast majority of lost Canadian cases in 2009, and we are committed now to fix the remaining ones. The Liberals could have done this, but they failed to do so.

Government Orders

Although the 2009 legislation did cover the overwhelming majority of lost Canadians, there still remained a small number of people who did not benefit from those changes. The lost Canadians who would gain citizenship under the provisions of Bill C-24, the bill we see before us this evening, fall into three categories: people born or naturalized in Canada before 1947 who subsequently lost their British subject status and did not become Canadian citizens on January 1, 1947; second, British subjects ordinarily resident in Canada prior to 1947 who did not become citizens on January 1, 1947; and third, children born abroad in the first generation to any parent who was born, naturalized, or was a British subject ordinarily resident in Canada prior to 1947.

Here is what Bill Janzen, consultant for the Central Mennonite Committee said about Bill C-24:

I welcome the government's decision to include "Lost Canadians" in their changes to the Citizenship Act. The decision will improve the situation of people born outside of Canada who until now were deemed ineligible for Canadians citizenship....

For instance, someone who was born out of wedlock before 1947 to a Canadian father and a non-Canadian mother did not automatically gain Canadian citizenship when the 1947 law came into force. Neither did someone born in wedlock to a Canadian mother and a non-Canadian father.

It goes without saying that these, seen from our perspective today, are archaic provisions. There is why the measures in Bill C-24 pertaining to remaining lost Canadians are so timely and necessary.

In summary, these measures, measures that I have advocated for since becoming an MP, much of which time I was on the citizenship and immigration committee, would extend citizenship to more lost Canadians born before 1947 and their children born in the first generation outside Canada who did not benefit from the 2009 changes.

It is proposed to extend citizenship to these individuals retroactively to January 1, 1947, or to their date of birth if they were born after this date.

I urge all hon. members of this House to join me in supporting the passage of this bill in order to ensure that Canadian citizenship remains strong and that we can ensure these lost Canadians are welcome and remain a part of the Canadian family.

● (2350)

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is important that the issue of lost Canadians be redressed. I would like to remind the member that there was a first stab at it in 2007 when a bill was adopted that dealt with the largest part of those now-called lost Canadians. Some were left behind. Addressing that problem is worthy business of the House.

The problem is that the bill does not just deal with lost Canadians; it deals with a lot more. We could have easily dealt with the lost Canadians as an independent bill, but we have not done that. We should have redressed that years ago. The fact that the bill in 2007 did not sufficiently address the problem is a problem from 2007, so the government now seven years later is fixing a problem that has been dragging on for many years.

Now, all of a sudden, after the government first presented this legislation in February, the Conservatives are in a massive hurry to

pass it before the summer recess. I do not know why they could not have brought it back to the House long before today. Again, they tabled it the first time on February 27 and now they seem to be in the biggest hurry to pass it, send it to committee, and who knows how long it will spend in committee. I tend to think that it might not last very long in committee either.

We need to have a complete debate on the bill if only because we are talking about the possibility of removing citizenship. Adding citizenship to lost Canadians is a worthy cause. Removing citizenship, especially in a process that seems to lack a serious amount of due process, is questionable and may very well contravene international obligations.

I would like the member's comments on the revocation of citizenship that the bill would bring in, not just fixing a problem that unfortunately the government left standing for seven years.

Mr. John Weston: Mr. Speaker, it is the hallmark of an optimist who will compliment a good deed and the hallmark of a pessimist who asks why it was not done earlier.

It is welcome news that my colleague across the way is basically saying that we are taking a good step by enacting these provisions to enfranchise the lost Canadians.

He also mentioned due process. There are at least two provisions in the bill. There will be a Federal Court review and there is a new level of court review through the Court of Appeal for anybody who is in the unfortunate position of having citizenship removed.

As a lawyer myself, I look at this and think that not only would we be securing the sacredness of citizenship with the bill, but we would be ensuring that people who ought to have their rights removed would have them removed only subject to due process.

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have enjoyed the debate this evening. It is quite robust.

Bill C-24 speaks to eliminating fraud within the system.

I am proud to say that my riding of Cambridge-North Dumfries has the largest Portuguese community in all of Canada. When I speak to these folks in the Portuguese community, they tell me they are very proud to be Canadians and they are proud of the ethical process that they went through to become hard-working citizens. My first job was on an asphalt crew with a bunch of Portuguese men who were a great influence in my life.

My feeling on the bill is that it works toward preventing fraud in the system, which these hard-working new Canadians want to see happen.

My question for the member is this. Should we not improve this system to enforce and improve the integrity of the system to deal with those who are committing fraud within the system?

● (2355)

Mr. John Weston: Mr. Speaker, there are several provisions in the bill that would increase the penalties for fraud and jail time. The penalties would be increased to \$100,000 for fraud.

We know from investigations that there have been thousands of cases over the past years and only a minimal number of cases have been prosecuted. This is going to make Canadians feel that our citizenship is more secure.

There are other provisions in the legislation like the income tax provisions that will now be presented for the first time so that people who claim permanent residence and use it will have to present their taxes. This will ensure their connection to Canada.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off with a quote from Macbeth:

Good things of day begin to droop and drowse;
While night's black agents to their preys do rouse.
Thou marvell'st at my words: but hold thee still;
Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.

I would like to contend that the bill presented before us is a bill bad begun. It has grown from a rotten seed that was planted as the genesis of partisan ill will to drive a wedge between Canadians by a school alumnus of the minister from UTS, Mr. Garth Turner, who coined the term "Canadians of convenience" during the Lebanon crisis.

Although it might be a popularly held belief among many Canadians that some Canadians abuse their citizenship by leaving Canada, I would contend that this is not the case and that we have to defend the rights of every Canadian citizen. No matter where their origin, no matter their choice to leave, we have to, because it is in the law of this land.

There are perils in the tyranny of the majority.

Thoreau said:

...the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period continue, to rule, is not because they are most likely to be in the right, nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest. But a government in which the majority rule in all cases cannot be based on justice...

I believe that is the case with this bill. I believe that it is a sign of political cowardice by the leadership on the other side of this House, and I would wish that one person would stand, as another minister did, and ask pertinent questions of their own government about why it is being politically cowardly about this issue.

I would like to clarify some facts made during the debate, particularly by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. He was clearly wrong when he heckled out during one of the debates that we were arguing that they are creating a law above the law in trying to defend on this side the Constitution of this country. The minister stated that the Constitution is not a law.

The definition of a constitution, according to Merriam-Webster, is:

The basic principles and laws of a nation...that determine the powers and duties of the government and guarantee certain rights to the people in it.

Now, the minister should know from his father, Bruce Alexander, who served under Bill Davis, the Ontario premier who was responsible for the patriation of the 1982 Constitution, that the Constitution is in fact the highest law of the land and that it frames our whole nation and the way that the government should act. It

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frames limits for the government so that it does not abuse its majority.

Everyone knows that the current government has problems with aspects of the Constitution, particularly the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Now, there are two charter rights that go against this whole popular notion of Canadians of convenience. One of them is section 6, which states:

Every citizen of Canada has the right to enter, remain in and leave Canada.

I would contend that the genesis of the bill is this whole popular idea of Canadians of convenience. There are no Canadians of convenience. If someone who is a Canadian citizen decides to leave, that is their fundamental right in this country.

The other one would be section 15, which outlines the principle of equality before the law, regardless of national origin. It does not matter if people are from China, France, the U.K., Turkey, or Lebanon. It does not matter where they have come from in the world; once they come here to Canada and become Canadian citizens, they are Canadian citizens, no matter what.

It is disappointing that this railing against the Constitution or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms comes from a man who has enjoyed a privileged life, a man whose father was a prominent lawyer who worked under someone who was arguably one of the greatest premiers in Canada, although I might disagree with that. He served under Bill Davis, who was responsible for the patriation of the 1982 Constitution with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which we know this side does not always agree with.

● (2400)

It is disappointing that the member cannot defend the highest law of the land, our Constitution. When one rails against the Constitution, there is a term for this. When one tries to subvert a constitution, there is a term for this and it is called sedition. It is seditious to try to subvert a country's constitution and to incite people to rebel against the highest law of the land. To sow divisions between Canadians is seditious behaviour.

I would argue that through presenting this particular law, Bill C-24, in the House it is sowing divisions among Canadians. It is attempting to subvert the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and it will end up having constitutional challenges that will entail costs for Canadian taxpayers. Every time there is a challenge to the Constitution, lawyers are hired. There are lots of costs involved and the government, which so much likes to defend the taxpayer, would in fact be footing the bill through the Canadian taxpayer in fighting all these cases that will arise out of this badly thought-out bill.

I would like to conclude by saying that I have a personal interest in this debate. I am the father of a dual citizen and I have been through this system. I have seen how it tears families apart and keeps families apart. I could not see my daughter for at least 12 to 13 months after she was born simply because of the immigration process and the length of time that it took to reunite families. I can tell everyone that this causes stress for families. It personally bothers me that my daughter who is a dual national would not have the same rights as I would.

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Some future administration might decide that she is treasonous for whatever reason, because the concept of treason is there in history, say in the case of *Brown v. Virginia*, where a person wanted to abolish slavery. At the time if the majority does not agree with this person, the person is judged to be treasonous and hanged. Let us consider what we are doing here because sometimes the majority and the popular sentiment of a country is not always the right thing. It is not always the right thing that is being done. We have to look at this and consider it.

I would seriously ask the government to retract the bill. There are so many elements in it that are problematic. It is shooting off in all different directions. I think it has been badly thought out. It is a poorly thought-out bill that has its genesis in ill will of popular sentiment. I would ask the minister and the ministry to reconsider the bill because it will have serious effects on numerous Canadians.

There are good aspects in the bill. The part that is trying to rectify the problems with lost Canadians is one of the better aspects of the bill, but there are troubling aspects when we explore the concept of revoking citizenship, and not citizenship of someone born here, but citizenship of someone who has dual nationality.

That is a problem. When I look at my daughter, she is as Canadian as everyone in this room. She may not have been born on Canadian soil, but when she sings *O Canada*, when I see the pride she has in her country, I believe that she is 100% Canadian. If she left this country and spent 27 years such as the minister did outside of this country, whether it was serving Canada or serving another purpose, I believe that in her heart she would be Canadian. We should never remove citizenship from a Canadian citizen, no matter what.

We have recourse to justice for people who have committed crimes. I think it is an easy solution in the minds of the government to take away someone's citizenship. There are already judicial rules in place that make sure that if people have committed a crime, they are punished. We have a justice system that is robust and can deal with this.

• (2405)

It is disappointing that the government is using legislation to divide Canadians. I would contend that the bill would be seditious, because it would subvert the Constitution.

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we had to wait until midnight to be accused of sedition on this side. It must be the witching hour.

I would like to express sympathy to the member opposite for the difficulty he clearly faced in the immigration system. We are aware that separation of family members causes stress. We are working very hard to reduce backlogs to try to make sure that families can be together as quickly as possible. We have made a lot of progress in that direction.

In our earlier exchange about the Constitution versus laws, my point was that the Constitution is not sufficient to provide for the rule of law in our country. We have a Constitution, yes. We have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They are important, but we need laws, like the law on citizenship, and we need revisions and modernizations of those laws to tell us what the rules are to make

sure that our country is well governed in every sphere. That is why we sit in the House of Commons.

Some of his colleagues were implying that it is enough simply to have the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that it is all we need to define our citizenship. That is not the case, and it is not the case in other countries.

Is the hon. member really implying, though, that there should be revocation of citizenship for citizenship fraud, yet not for cases as serious as sedition, like treason, espionage, and terrorism? In fact, they are much more serious crimes.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, my contention is that we have a law. We have laws touching on treason and on terrorist acts. Our justice system is robust enough to deal with these acts. If Canadian citizens commit these acts, we should take them to the courts and punish them. They are citizens. As Canadian citizens, they have rights, and those rights have to be protected.

One has a right to a fair trial in our country. That is one of the rights. This is another problem that would be created by the bill, because it would put in jeopardy the whole notion of having a fair trial.

My question is for the minister. Does he not trust our justice system enough? Does he not think it is robust enough to punish criminals who have done criminal acts of espionage, treason, and terrorism?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for a very impassioned speech. It was very well researched, with lots of literary references. I really appreciated that, being an English teacher.

Most of all, I wanted to say to him how much I appreciated that he shared his personal story on the difficulties he experienced. We have seen those reflected from coast to coast to coast, almost every one of us.

I live in Surrey in Newton—North Delta, one of the most diverse communities. My office often feels like the local hospital, where we do triage on immigration issues, and then we send people away feeling very frustrated. I actually have constituents who have been waiting 30 months, or four years, or as long as five years to get their spouses over. Sometimes the child, even after DNA tests are passed, is in kindergarten and grade 1 before the families are united.

However, what we are here to discuss today is really two-tiered citizenship, which my colleagues across the way have done everything they can to avoid talking about.

My question is very simple. If people are born in Canada or become naturalized and become Canadian citizens, under this legislation, could they have their citizenship stripped from them?

• (2410)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that for Canadians born here, citizenship cannot be stripped from them. For both, they can be stripped. It is not right. If people are Canadian citizens, they are Canadian citizens. They should not have their citizenship stripped from them. It is just not right.

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I thank the member for highlighting my personal story. It was a bit too emotional to describe to the House, but yes, it is quite an ordeal to go through the immigration process and to try to be reunited with family members. From what I have heard anecdotally, as a member in this place, I have heard worse stories than what I experienced, as the member just said. I was lucky enough to understand the political system and went to the member for Vancouver East and requested her assistance in that case, and she did an excellent job.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to have the opportunity to add my voice to support Bill C-24, which would help prevent fraud and protect the citizenship program from abuse. Our Conservative government will not turn a blind eye to citizenship fraud and those who cheapen the value of Canadian citizenship.

Because Canadian citizenship is so valuable, many people are prepared to misrepresent facts to make it appear that they qualify. For example, they may pretend to live in Canada when they are really living abroad, often with the help of crooked citizenship consultants, those who would take money to help permanent residents circumvent the law and gain citizenship by fraudulent means.

As of October 2013, the RCMP had conducted investigations involving more than 3,000 citizens and more than 5,000 permanent residents. The majority of the investigations were related to residence. There are also reports that nearly 2,000 people linked to these investigations have withdrawn their citizenship applications.

Even the small number of crooked consultants who facilitate this type of fraud represents a substantial problem, as this undermines the program's integrity and the value of our citizenship. That is why this legislation would help combat fraud and protect the citizenship program from further abuse.

These measures include permitting only authorized representatives to represent individuals in citizenship matters, increasing penalties for fraud, refusing applicants because of misrepresentation at any point in the citizenship process, and barring them from reapplying for five years. This bill proposes to do this through several amendments to the Citizenship Act.

The current Citizenship Act does not include any means to regulate citizenship consultants. New provisions under Bill C-24 would allow the minister to designate a professional body authorized to represent individuals in citizenship matters. This means that the government could monitor and collect information concerning citizenship consultants, require applicants to declare the use of a consultant, and return applications from people using consultants who are not registered.

These changes would be in line with amendments introduced in 2010 to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, or the IRPA, to crack down on crooked immigration consultants.

I see that my time is wrapping up. I would just like mention one last item, if I might.

The current penalty for citizenship fraud is a mere \$1,000 maximum fine or a one-year prison term; it would move to \$100,000 or five years in prison. This is extremely appropriate in this matter.

● (2415)

The Speaker: It being 12:15 a.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, 2014, the division stands deferred until Thursday May 29, 2014, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

The hon. Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I am wondering whether, if you sought it, you would find the unanimous consent of the House to see the clock at 12:30 a.m.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in adjournment proceedings to pursue a matter that I raised in question period on March 3. It is appropriate, although the hour is late or one might say it is early morning of May 29; it is the day on which the subject matter of my question will be going through clause by clause before the finance committee. The subject of my question is a very significant and dangerous piece of legislation buried in the current omnibus bill, Bill C-31.

The question that I asked is somewhat poignant. I will share with members that when I went back and read the text of the question, I realized that this was the last time in question period that I put a question for former minister of finance Jim Flaherty, our late and dear colleague. As much as I was very fond of Jim, as I read the answer I realized that the reason I put in a slip to pursue it in adjournment proceedings was that I did not actually get an answer.

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As I say, it is poignant and bittersweet to pursue in adjournment proceedings at 12:15 a.m. the matter of the constitutionality of something that many Canadians have probably never heard of: the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, otherwise called FATCA, which is buried in Bill C-31, the current omnibus budget bill.

What this Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act does is this. We know that sometimes we call the United States “Uncle Sam”. In this instance, Canada bent over until we said “uncle”, and that is on the matter of the U.S. doing something quite extraordinary. It has passed a domestic law and insisted that the rest of the world bow down and allow a U.S. law to apply extraterritorially all around the world.

As a former U.S. citizen myself, I find it ironic. When my family first moved to Canada, it was very clear that going to Canada and becoming Canadian citizens was something to which the U.S. government said, “Okay, forget it now; you cannot come back here and pretend you are Americans. We know you are Canadian now; no coming back here”. The laws were very clear that we were not U.S. citizens anymore. That was fine with me, because I was Canadian and that was all I wanted to be.

Now that the U.S. seems to find itself a little short of money, it is almost like people going around and trying to lift up the sofa cushions and reach for loose change under the seats where they had not looked before, in case they might find some money. Maybe a more appropriate visible image is of grabbing people who have any connection to the United States by their ankles and shaking them upside down to see if any loose coins fall out of their pockets.

The reality of this is that we have, under the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, acceded to the United States as if we were subject to a binding treaty with it, something called the “intergovernmental agreement”. In point of fact, the U.S. Congress has not ratified this so-called treaty, so it should not be binding on Canada at all. On top of this, we know that no less a constitutional expert than Peter Hogg has advised the Government of Canada in his letter, which I obtained through access to information, that the provisions under this act “... are discriminatory in a way that would not withstand Charter scrutiny”.

In other words, we are being forced through an omnibus procedure and into committee tomorrow at clause by clause, and unless my amendments are accepted, we will once again have passed a piece of legislation that is discriminatory, treating Canadians of different classes in different ways, which offends section 15 of the Charter. We will have done that to accede to something that is not even accepted by the United States as a treaty, because it has not ratified it.

There is a solution to this, and this solution has come from many legal experts. We should remove this from Bill C-31.

• (2420)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intervention by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and the fact that she stayed here this evening to pursue this, because the hour is late.

I disagree, of course, with her interpretation of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act. The reality is, and the hon. member

would know from having American relatives and family members, that Americans have always been taxed based on citizenship. There is nothing new here. An American citizen living outside of the United States is supposed to pay taxes in the States. That is the law and it has always been the law. Enough of my own relatives are American citizens, so I know that for a fact. To say that this changes those rules is simply incorrect.

The unfortunate part of this is that there will be some citizens who, by default or by accident of birth, will be American citizens, such as Canadians, for all intents and purposes, who happen to have been born in the states. They will have to correct their citizenship. However, dual citizens have always had a tax obligation. American citizens living in Canada who have permanent resident status have always had a tax obligation. This is not new.

One key concern was that the reporting obligations with regard to accounts in Canada would force Canadian financial institutions to report information on account holders who were new residents and U.S. citizens, including U.S. citizens who were residents or citizens of Canada, directly to the IRS, thus potentially violating Canadian privacy laws. That was a key concern. Without an agreement in place, obligations to comply with FATCA would have been unilaterally and automatically imposed on Canadian financial institutions and their clients as of July 1, 2014. As I said earlier, this would be based on the fact that they were American citizens living outside of the United States.

To directly address these and other concerns, our government signed a Canada-U.S. intergovernmental agreement, or IGA, in early February of this year. Under the intergovernmental agreement, financial institutions in Canada will not report any information directly to the IRS. Rather, relevant information on accounts held by U.S. residents and U.S. citizens will be reported to the Canada Revenue Agency.

The hon. member talked about Canadian citizens. Canadian citizens are not caught in this loop. Dual citizens will have to pay taxes in the U.S. or, properly speaking, for the hon. member's benefit, they have to file tax returns. They may not have tax debt, they may not have to pay taxes in the states, but they do have to file returns, which they have always had to file. The CRA will then exchange the information with the IRS through the existing provisions and safeguards of the Canada-U.S. treaty, consistent with our privacy laws.

I would also like to note that under the intergovernmental agreement, the IRS will provide the CRA with information on certain accounts of Canadian residents held at U.S. financial institutions, so we have some reciprocity.

This is an extremely complex intergovernmental agreement and treaty. It covers a lot of issues. However, the bottom line is that no one will be taxed who has not already taxed.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (2425)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I must disagree with my hon. colleague. There are many tax law experts, including Professor Allison Christians, who holds the Stikeman Chair in Tax Law at McGill University. This applies to what is described as U.S. persons. It casts a very wide net. It could well include Canadian citizens who are not dual citizens. It could include the children of former U.S. citizens. It casts a wide net and it reports on the private information of Canadians without their knowledge through to the IRS, and it is not sufficiently reciprocal.

The findings of many legal experts who have testified at the finance committee make it clear that this document is neither reciprocal, nor of advantage to Canada, nor required under international law because the U.S. has not even ratified the IGA. We also know from Professor Peter Hogg, Canada's leading constitutional law expert, that it will contravene the charter if it ever goes to the Supreme Court of Canada. It must be pulled out of the bill.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, again, I respect the hon. member's passion for this subject, but passion cannot be mistaken for facts.

The facts are that any American citizen living outside the United States has a tax obligation to the IRS. They have always had that, because the United States is one of two countries in the world where tax is based on citizenship. We can argue that that is right or wrong, but that is American tax law and American policy, and it has always been American policy.

We have to find a way to accommodate that without the United States being intrusive in Canada's laws and tax regime. We have been able to do that, and so have a number of other G7 countries and another 36 countries around the world.

Whether or not we agree with this policy is immaterial. The fact is we have to find a way to comply with it without being overly intrusive to Canadian citizenship.

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems that we will be ending the day together, or starting the night, I am not sure which one.

I am pleased to participate in this adjournment debate and I thank the parliamentary secretary for being with us at such a late hour, because I would finally like to have a meaningful discussion on behalf of all the pyrrhotite victims in Mauricie.

If there is one thing that I hope I have achieved in the three years of my mandate, it is to have raised parliamentarians' awareness of the tragedy of pyrrhotite in Trois-Rivières and more generally in Mauricie.

When I began working on this file, 800 families were affected by pyrrhotite. Today, more than 3,000 families are grappling with the problem of pyrrhotite in their homes—not to mention all the businesses, public buildings and infrastructure that are also affected by this scourge.

I do not want to hear the old “that is under provincial jurisdiction” response, so I will walk you through the chain of excuses to show how the federal government is responsible. Let us look at a very simple situation: a residential property owner is dealing with pyrrhotite. He decides to sue his contractor because he claims it is the contractor's fault. The contractor says that he built the house properly and according to the rules, just as he did with the foundation it was built on, but he did not make the concrete. He then tells the owner to sue the concrete maker. The concrete maker says that he poured a concrete foundation according to the rules but that he was not responsible for the aggregate or rock in the concrete. He tells the property owner that he should sue the quarry owner. The quarry owner says that the aggregate he sold complied with federal standards.

If this simple example does not illustrate how the federal government is directly responsible, I think there is a problem. Unfortunately the government has remained silent.

What is more, I think that providing support to our citizens during disasters is the responsibility of every level of government. In fact, I had the Library of Parliament do a study that looked at the largest Canadian disasters and the amount of money that was given by the federal government to the people affected by those disasters. You might be surprised to learn that pyrrhotite ranks second in terms of the magnitude of the disaster and its financial repercussions. It ranks first, however, in terms of the lack of government assistance, namely zero dollars.

As if that were not enough, we are told that this is a provincial responsibility, at a time when the Quebec National Assembly unanimously voted in favour of a motion, which I will not read for lack of time, calling on the federal government to become directly involved in this matter because it has a responsibility in terms of the Canadian standard in addition to its responsibility to help citizens.

I will repeat the questions for which we are awaiting a response. When will the government help the victims? When will the government change the standard to ensure that this problem does not occur in another region in Canada? Finally, when will the government appoint a credible spokesperson that the representatives of the Coalition Proprio-Béton can talk to?

• (2430)

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Trois-Rivières for bringing this subject up and staying here at this late hour.

Obviously, this is an important issue in the member's riding. I agree with him that it is a significant issue. A lot of families are affected, and it is a very serious problem. However, where we disagree is over jurisdiction, and I will explain my reasons behind that.

It is not the first time the member has brought this up, but let me indulge the House for a moment to specifically outline why this is a provincial issue.

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The provinces and territories regulate the design and construction of new houses and buildings and the maintenance, operation, and fire safety systems that exist in buildings. The national model construction codes, which include the national building code, are prepared essentially under the direction of the Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes made up of industry stakeholders with broad technical and geographical representation. They promote technical consistency of provincial-territorial regulations and market uniformity.

The Canadian Standards Association has developed the standard for concrete materials and methods of concrete construction. The 1994 edition of the CSA standard A23-1, which is referenced in the 1995 national building code, specifically prohibited the use of expansive aggregates such as pyrrhotite in concrete. In other words, construction standards were available governing the quality of aggregate to be used in concrete prior to the emergence of the pyrrhotite problem.

The adoption and the regulatory enforcement of the codes are the responsibility of the appropriate provincial and territorial authorities that publish provincial or territorial building codes. In this case, it was Quebec's choice on whether to adopt the national construction codes as is or to adapt them to better reflect its needs. In the case of pyrrhotite, construction standards have long been available governing the quality of aggregate to be used in concrete.

The Government of Quebec has launched a program to offer financial assistance to help homeowners struggling with damage caused by pyrrhotite. This program has been in place since August 2011. It is administered by the Société d'habitation du Québec. It provides financial assistance to affected homeowners to enable them to undertake the repairs needed to ensure the integrity of their foundations.

I want to ensure the hon. member that the Government of Canada appreciates the difficulties, the very real and serious difficulties, faced by the families whose homes have been damaged by this problem. However, as I have already noted, this issue falls under provincial jurisdiction. I would encourage affected homeowners to contact the Société d'habitation du Québec if they have not already done so.

Should homeowners who are impacted by pyrrhotite have CMHC-insured mortgages and experience some financial hardship as they repair or rebuild their homes, CMHC encourages them to contact their financial institutions at the first sign of financial difficulty to discuss their specific situation. CMHC provides approved lenders with a series of default management tools that they can use to assist borrowers with CMHC-insured mortgages who are experiencing financial difficulties.

In closing, this is a serious problem. It is not a matter of passing the buck. The rules are very clear. This is a problem for the Government of Quebec. It is not a problem that is under federal jurisdiction.

● (2435)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I completely disagree with the parliamentary secretary's comments.

If tomorrow morning, all of the people who own houses damaged by pyrrhotite that are insured by CMHC—another obviously federal organization—turn over their keys, the government would be stuck with quite a bill. Instead, it is pocketing taxes from people who have to pay again for work they have already paid for.

What has happened since the current Minister of Industry told the House, in relation to a nearly identical problem with pyrite in Montreal, that public works had announced that the federal government was giving \$3,500 in aid per homeowner to Montreal area homes damaged by pyrite?

The government is sending cheques to homeowners in Quebec but has not really done anything for condo owners in British Columbia whose condos are leaking—

[*English*]

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, I can only say again that the Government of Canada is sympathetic to the difficulties facing homeowners in the Trois-Rivières area whose foundations are deteriorating due to pyrrhotite. However, this is an area of provincial responsibility. The federal government has no involvement in Quebec's pyrrhotite assistance program. Construction standards concerning the quality of the aggregate to be used in concrete were in place in 1994, prior to the emergence of this problem.

I would encourage the member, in all honesty, to stop playing politics with the victims of a very serious and very real tragedy that he knows all about and to focus on helping his constituents focus their efforts on the Government of Quebec, which is responsible for dealing with this issue.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, 2014, the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:37 a.m.)

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