



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 19, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 19, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*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 responses to 10 petitions.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): 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 delegation of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association respecting its participation at the 41st annual meeting of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association, held in Paris and Grenoble, France, from April 25 to 29, 2014.

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[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move that the second report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, presented on Wednesday, February 5, 2014, be concurred in.

I want to thank my colleagues for such a warm welcome. We have been here for so long that it is hard to be warm these days.

I am moving concurrence in the report from the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. I am a member of that committee. The report is called "Terrestrial Habitat Conservation in Canada". Why did we study this? That is a good question. I am going to go back a bit on why we even have a report on terrestrial conservation.

I do not actually remember which throne speech it was, but a couple of throne speeches ago, there were some hints that the government was going to have a conservation strategy. That is not bad news. It is ostensibly good news, so we were excited to see what was going to happen with that. Then the environment committee was tasked with doing a study on what a conservation plan would look like.

On the face of it, that actually seems like really good parliamentary procedure. We have an idea from government. We are going to task a committee to study something and get some really good information so we can give advice to the minister. As I said, on its face, that seems wonderful and it is exciting to actually do good parliamentary work at committee, but what happened is it went off the rails a little bit. I know it is hard to imagine in this environment.

Where we started was with a general conservation study. My colleagues and I would show up and we would be keen. We had done our research. We would ask questions of the witnesses about conservation, what a conservation plan would look like, what that kind of strategy would look like. It was interesting. There were moments when it was very frustrating, because for some reason the Conservatives did not want to hear anything about climate change when it comes to conservation. It is interesting because conservation actually is a good solution to climate change on a lot of fronts. For example, if we are preserving large tracts of land, we are keeping the vegetation that is there. It is basically a natural carbon storage.

We heard some interesting testimony about climate change and how conservation would actually help us deal with the effects of climate change and prevent climate change from advancing. We also heard some really interesting testimony about the impacts of climate change on conservation efforts, the fact that we are going to have to adapt a little bit. If we are going to create parks, for example, we need to think about extreme meteorological events. We need to think about the impact of waves, tides, and storms on our infrastructure. It was good testimony. Remember that this is not the current report on which I moved this concurrence motion; it was the report before.

There was good information, good testimony about climate. None of it is in the report. We have to remember that Conservatives do have a majority on these committees, so what comes out in the end, although we can fight in camera and try to get stuff in a report, it does not end up in the report. There was nothing about climate change. The report was absolutely silent on that subject.

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Getting back to this idea of studying conservation generally, as I said, there was good testimony. We were pretty excited. We were thinking that this was our way to contribute to the parliamentary process, the democratic process. We were going to give some advice to the minister. Despite the fact that climate change did not make it into the report, there were some other positives about the report. We had these moments of feeling that we were part of a parliamentary project, that it was a worthwhile endeavour.

Then we went in camera to decide the next committee business. All kinds of ideas were put forward. The NDP has all kinds of ideas. We put forward so many motions. We put forward a motion that our committee review the government's sectoral approach to greenhouse gas regulations, and review the delays in establishing those regulations for the oil and gas sector. We put forward a motion on the Great Lakes and how climate change is impacting the water levels. We put forward a motion about the Arctic, to study the impacts of climate change and resulting new resource development and transportation routes on the Arctic, its environment, species and ecological balance. We came armed with so many good ideas.

We went in camera, where the majority rules, and we came out with a study on urban conservation. We went from conservation to urban conservation. We tried to be optimistic and full of energy and said, "Okay, another conservation study. Here we go."

Maybe there is a point to the urban conservation study, because in some musings that the government members had, they also talked about the creation of Rouge Park, a national park that would be an urban park. I think it would be North America's first urban national park. That is pretty exciting stuff. Again, there is a glimmer of this ability to contribute to the parliamentary process and government decision-making. That means there would be another study on conservation, but at least it would be on something where maybe there is a hope that the minister would be listening and we could talk about some important issues that we would see the results of in a bill about Rouge Park.

We started our study. There was some great testimony from people about urban conservation, the way that people can connect with the natural environment while living in cities and urban environments. We heard really good testimony about climate change, the way we can mitigate the impacts of climate change, and that we can mitigate the fact that climate is changing, and there are things we need to do to adapt when we are looking at urban conservation and climate change. Of course, none of that ended up in the report, because we cannot talk about climate change at the environment committee. It is quite amazing.

We did this study on urban conservation. What was interesting is that on Friday last week the government tabled a bill on the creation of Rouge Park in Scarborough. I believe it may be on the docket to talk about today, so I have been madly prepping to speak to the bill. It has been really difficult. I read the bill yesterday during my caucus meeting. We had a briefing on it from the minister's office yesterday afternoon. We are scrambling to give some feedback on the bill and we have not had the time to do a proper analysis. I have read it, but I have not digested it. I have not had time to reach out to stakeholders to get their advice on what is in the bill and if it is doing what it purports to do. However, I will say that I have had the time to look at our notes from that urban conservation study. There was a small

section on Rouge Park that we did in that study. I looked at the bill, and it is not apparent to me where those suggestions from our witnesses are in the final bill.

At the time I felt a bit discouraged that we were doing urban conservation right on the heels of a conservation study. However, I thought that maybe we would have an impact on the legislation, that maybe we are giving advice to the minister, which is what committees are supposed to be doing, and maybe it would be in the bill. I have the bill. Perhaps it will become clearer to me later when I listen to the minister's speech, but I do not see that good advice from the witnesses that we heard at committee reflected in the legislation.

I have gone from being a little disheartened by doing two studies in a row on the same subject to wondering what is the point of us even doing these studies if the minister is not listening. We did not choose the study topic. I will leave it to everyone's imagination, but a majority on the committee probably made the decision to study these topics. I wanted to study climate change. I wanted to study some other topics, but let us make the best of it if we are doing conservation, and then the results of our report are not even reflected in the bill. There were two studies on conservation.

We finished the study on urban conservation. If my memory serves me correctly, I think we managed to work in a rare show of collaboration with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment. I think we had a unanimous report on urban conservation. There is nothing egregious in it. We pointed out that it is missing a lot of things, but the information that was in there was accurate. There was no discussion on climate change, which we pointed out.

Then we went in camera and we made decisions about what we would study next. It is on the public record that the NDP put forward some incredible motions, such as doing a study on the Species at Risk Act, its implementation and funding. That is a really important issue right now. It is one of the only pieces of environmental legislation that was not gutted in the 2012 omnibus budgets.

Speaking of budgets, we put on the record that we wanted to do a study on the impacts of budget cuts on the operations, sustainability and accessibility for visitors, and sustainability impacts for the surrounding communities to Parks Canada. That is a great idea. Why are we not looking at the fact that we have seen all these job losses and all these budget cuts at Parks Canada?

●(1010)

Time passes. Also, in 2013, we had motion to receive a briefing by the official Canadian delegation to the climate change convention negotiations prior to the meetings in Warsaw in November 2013 to detail Canada's negotiating priorities. It sounded good to me. We are still waiting for that briefing.

An hon. member: 2014.

Ms. Megan Leslie: It is 2014, I know, Mr. Speaker. There is no point any more.

We come out, and what is on the docket for us to study? Terrestrial conservation. Do we not wish we were on environment committee? Talk about demoralizing. I think there are good reasons to talk about terrestrial conservation, but there are so many other issues, and we have already done two studies on conservation. Now we are doing terrestrial conservation, and that is what this report is, for which I moved concurrence today.

Why terrestrial conservation? Why not marine conservation? We would not want to study marine conservation because then we would have to talk about fish habitat. This is a way of excluding the important legislation that government gutted back in 2012. The House will remember there was a budget announcement in 2012 and then there were two bills after that in 2012. Those two bills, both of which passed, were remarkable in many ways. They were omnibus pieces of legislation. The first one touched over 70 pieces of legislation: it amended or repealed in some way or added to 70 pieces of legislation, all wrapped up in one bill that was over 400 pages long. Then we had a second one in the fall. This is really significant.

It is a little hobby horse of mine that the first bill, a budget bill, made changes to assisted human reproduction. Whether or not I can be a surrogate, whether or not I can sell my eggs was in a budget bill. My reproduction has nothing to do with the budget.

We have these giant omnibus bills. What happened on environment? A number of things. The Environmental Assessment Act was repealed. It was not tweaked or amended; it was pulled off the books and replaced with another one. What are the problems with it? For example, we have had what is called a trigger system with environment assessment. If a project touched a federal issue, such as migratory birds or waterways that crossed provincial boundaries, it would trigger an environmental assessment.

That makes sense. We can wrap our head around why it would be that way. However, now we have a list of things that mean environmental assessment. If something is not on the list, there is no environmental assessment.

Why is that problematic? Members should think about the oil sands. If we had had a definitive list 70 years ago, oil sands exploration would not have been on that list because we would not have known it was in the realm of the possible. We would not have considered that we should put oil sands development on the list. A trigger is important, because it is the situation that causes the assessment, not this definitive list. The other thing about the list is that it is cabinet that makes up the list. It is trouble, because the list is narrow. Seismic testing in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is not on that list. I think that is pretty problematic. We have moved from the trigger to the list.

We also had the environment commissioner testify at committee about this list. There used to be three stages of environmental assessment. The lowest stage was like a paper stage, where one would submit documents and get feedback on them, but it was still effective. Forgive me if I get the numbers a little bit wrong because I am tapping into my memory. We asked the environment commissioner how many environmental assessments were being done. My memory says he said 4,000 to 6,000 per year. My next question was how many will be done now that the Environmental Assessment Act

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has been replaced in this regime. He said 10 to 12. I actually thought he meant 10,000 to 12,000, but he said it was just 10 to 12 for the country. These are incredible changes to our environmental assessment regime. It practically does not exist anymore.

•(1015)

There are also all of the changes to consultation, where people now have to be directly affected. What does “directly affected” mean? If I live 10 kilometres downstream, am I directly affected? If I live 100 kilometres downstream, am I directly affected? If I am a scientist living in Vancouver who has expertise about the Douglas Channel, am I directly affected? There is no definition of this, and it completely curtails who can testify and be a party to these hearings.

In addition to the changes to the Environmental Assessment Act in 2012, there were changes to the Fisheries Act. The Fisheries Act was one of the strongest pieces of environmental legislation that we had here in Canada, because it talked about the protection of fish habitats. If we are going to protect our fish and our fisheries, we have to protect our fish habitat. That makes sense.

In 2012, the protection of fish habitat was taken out of the legislation. What does that mean?

An hon. member: Incredible.

Ms. Megan Leslie: It is incredible, Mr. Speaker. Now we are not protecting fish habitat. We are protecting fish, but not all fish. We are only going to protect fish that we name, and they are going to be fish that are of commercial significance, first nations significance, and recreational significance.

An hon. member: What about all of the other fish?

Ms. Megan Leslie: What about the other fish, Mr. Speaker? That is a great question. They are not protected. What about the fish that the protected fish eat? They are not protected. If we talk to anybody at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, they cannot tell us what fish are on the list. It does not exist. They do not know which fish are protected. It is a secret. Secret fish are being protected. Their food stock is not being protected.

An hon. member: It is a conspiracy.

Ms. Megan Leslie: It is a conspiracy, Mr. Speaker. We are not protecting fish. We can destroy their food source, we can destroy their breeding grounds, we can have a fish with three heads and that is okay, as long as we do not kill them. We can kill a lot of fish, just not the protected fish that do not exist and that are secret. It makes no sense that we have done this to one of the greatest environmental protections that we had.

We did a study on terrestrial conservation. Why? We do not want to talk about fish habitat because it agitates the Conservatives when people come and say that it was a bad decision, that we are not going to have a fishery anymore if we do not protect fish habitat.

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We have a very narrow study on terrestrial habitat. The terrestrial habitat conservation in Canada report that came out had no mention of fish habitat. I will say that the New Democrats were crafty. We talked about that liminal space between the terrestrial habitat and the marine habitat, and we managed to get some soggy land in some of the testimony. We asked, "What about that soggy area in between the lakes and the land?" That soggy area can sometimes be fish habitat. We were tricky and we managed to get in some important information about fish habitat.

We have a supplementary opinion to this report. It is a dissenting opinion that is on the record. It is worth a read. It is two pages. I want to point out that one of the things we said clearly was that there is no greater threat to our ecosystems or barrier to habitat conservation than climate change. There was significant consensus from witnesses on the need to address climate change issues in order to protect our biodiversity, and to design strategies for habitat conservation and the preservation of biodiversity in the context of a changing climate.

The Conservatives can control the reports. They can control the outcome. They can control what it is that they say happened at committee, but they cannot change committee witness testimony. They cannot change the fact that we had witnesses saying that we need to address climate change if we are going to do anything about habitat conservation in Canada.

• (1020)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge the almost standing ovation from the NDP caucus for the member's speech. We can see that they are quite excited about this issue. However, one could ask why they would not be as excited about the numerous other agenda items that are before us, and the many other concurrence reports.

That is not to take anything away from the issues of the environment and conservation. Those are very important issues, and I do not question that. I enjoy the opportunity to debate on a wide variety of issues, including this one. However, in going through the many concurrence reports, there are a number of them that are very significant. I would love to see more discussion and debate on concurrence.

When we think about the environment and conservation, and when it comes to ranking priorities, I wonder if the NDP members feel that this particular motion of concurrence would have been a good opportunity to talk about a very topical issue in Canada today, which is the northern gateway pipeline. Is this something that we should try to facilitate more debate on here today, given the impact it would have on our environment?

Conservationists are very concerned about this issue. However, I could not help but notice, given how big an issue it is, that the member did not make any reference to it and the impact that it has on conservation here in Canada. The member might want to provide some feedback on pipelines.

• (1025)

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I will answer it, but I first want to get to the point on why I moved a concurrence motion on this topic. Any chance we have to talk about climate change in this House is a chance that I will take. We have a Minister of the Environment who, until I asked her a

direct question in the House after her appointment, had never publicly uttered the words "climate change" that we can find on the record. Therefore, I will take any moment I have to talk about climate change, which I think is the most important issue facing us today.

When I was appointed the environment critic by Jack Layton, I asked what my mandate was. He said, "climate change". This was the thing I had to work on. It is the most important thing. However, there are other important things going on, and the question about pipelines is relevant.

One thing I did not talk about in my speech was how agitated the Conservatives get any time someone talks about the Species at Risk Act. It is like they visibly start to twitch, because they do not want to talk about that act, which is directly related to pipelines, and oil and gas exploration generally.

If we look at the sage grouse, I think there are 12 left in Alberta. Why? It is because they need big spaces to roam, and those big spaces are being interrupted by oil and gas development. If we look at something like pipelines, the fact is that they can bifurcate the existing grazing area of caribou, which is a species at risk. However, the Conservatives do not want to talk about this.

When we talk about conservation, especially terrestrial conservation, we have to talk about the full ecosystem, which includes animals. I think that we did miss an opportunity to talk about the impact of pipelines on our conservation efforts.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague for Halifax, in her very eloquent speech on the environment, touched on a link between the existence of species and our existence, such as the fact that certain fish are not listed as protected but they are the food source for other fish. She also mentioned the fact that caribou lands are being threatened, which threatens the existence of caribou, which threatens the existence and livelihood of our first nations brothers and sisters. I would love it if the member could take a moment to expand on that theory.

Our colleagues from across the way seem to feel that it is okay not to think about the big picture, to just kind of pull a few things that make money out of the works of nature and everything else can go to blazes, as my grandmother would say. I hope that is not unparliamentary language.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Jeanne-Le Ber for his question and also for his incredible advocacy on environment in this House. He stands up for the interests of his constituents. They care very much about the environment, as does he.

The member brings up a good point, about the fact that it is not about a species. It is not about a tiny tract of land that we can protect. It is about these full ecosystems. As I said earlier, how can we protect a fish if we are not protecting its habitat and if we are not protecting the fish that it eats or its other food sources? There is a chain here, and we have to look at things in this chain, in this holistic way.

Speaking about fish habitat, we heard very quick testimony at committee during those omnibus budgets on changes to the Fisheries Act. We heard quick testimony. We were sitting until quite late at night. There was a limited amount of time and a limited number of witnesses we could actually bring to testify.

However, we brought those witnesses. Some of them, representing incredible science-based organizations, said that the answer is no. The answer is not making an amendment to this. The answer is no; this change cannot be made, about protecting fish habitat.

We did the responsible thing. We moved amendments. I cannot remember how many hundreds, but there were hundreds of amendments. Not one was accepted. Not a single one was accepted. We do our due diligence on this side, but unfortunately the Conservatives are not listening.

• (1030)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed the passionate speech from my colleague, as well as all the work she does for the environment and with the environment team.

I wonder if the member could comment on—when we form government in 2015, because the Conservatives are considered an endangered species nowadays—what she would put top of mind, along with climate change?

I would also like to note that there are a lot of students here and youth in the galleries listening to us. I know environment is very top of mind, preserving our country and making it a better place, making sure we do our best and address climate change.

I wonder if the member could comment on what she would do as environment minister, potentially, in 2015.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, that makes me a little shy. I thank my colleague for the great work she does, standing up for her constituents here in the House. We sit close to each other, and she talks to me a lot about environment, the hopes and passions of her constituents around the issue of environment.

In 2015, first up on the endangered species list would be Conservative MPs.

It is easy enough to talk about some of the big-picture visionary things we would do. For example, we would put a price on carbon; we would bring back the ecoENERGY home retrofit program; we would take that \$1.3 billion in subsidies to oil and gas companies, which do not need our help to make money, and we would transfer that money to the new, incredible, innovative start-ups in the green tech industry.

Why are we subsidizing companies that are making billions of dollars, and not giving that leg up to those great new start-ups in the green tech world that will help us make the transition to the green energy economy?

Some of this is a little tougher. When it comes to CEAA, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, would we bring back the old bill? There were actually problems with the old bill, so we would make sure we consulted with people, consulted with scientists, and consulted with experts, and took that evidence before we made those decisions.

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It will be tough. Mark my words. Government has done a fantastic job of absolutely gutting our scientific capacity. It is going to be hard. I do not know that we have the scientific capacity right now. We need to start by rebuilding that scientific capacity and then taking that information and actually making changes to legislation.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That the debate be now adjourned.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1110)

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

(Division No. 221)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Ablonczy | Adler |
| Aglukkaq | Albas |
| Albrecht | Alexander |
| Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac) | Allison |
| Ambler | Ambrose |
| Anders | Anderson |
| Armstrong | Ashfield |
| Aspin | Bateman |
| Benoit | Bergen |
| Bernier | Bezan |
| Blaney | Block |
| Boughen | Braid |
| Breitkreuz | Brown (Leeds—Grenville) |
| Brown (Newmarket—Aurora) | Brown (Barrie) |
| Butt | Calandra |
| Calkins | Cannan |
| Carmichael | Carrie |
| Chisu | Chong |
| Clarke | Crockatt |
| Daniel | Davidson |
| Dechert | Devolin |
| Dreeshen | Duncan (Vancouver Island North) |
| Dykstra | Falk |
| Fantino | Findlay (Delta—Richmond East) |
| Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Fletcher |
| Galipeau | Gallant |
| Gill | Glover |
| Goguen | Goldring |
| Goodyear | Gosal |
| Gourde | Grewal |
| Harris (Cariboo—Prince George) | Hawn |
| Hayes | Hoback |
| Holder | James |
| Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission) | Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's) |
| Kerr | Komarnicki |

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| Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings) | Lake |
| Lauzon | Leef |
| Leitch | Lemieux |
| Leung | Lizon |
| Lobb | Lukiwski |
| Lunney | MacKay (Central Nova) |
| MacKenzie | Maguire |
| McColeman | McLeod |
| Menegakis | Miller |
| Moore (Fundy Royal) | Nicholson |
| Norlock | O'Connor |
| Opitz | O'Toole |
| Paradis | Payne |
| Poillievre | Preston |
| Raitt | Rajotte |
| Reid | Rempel |
| Richards | Schellenberger |
| Seeback | Shiple |
| Shory | Smith |
| Sopuck | Sorenson |
| Stanton | Sweet |
| Tilson | Toet |
| Trost | Trottier |
| Valcourt | Van Kesteren |
| Van Loan | Wallace |
| Warawa | Warkentin |
| Watson | Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country) |
| Weston (Saint John) | Wilks |
| Williamson | Wong |
| Woodworth | Yelich |
| Young (Oakville) | Young (Vancouver South) |
| Zimmer— 133 | |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Allen (Welland) | Angus |
| Atamanenko | Aubin |
| Bélangier | Bennett |
| Benskin | Bevington |
| Blanchette | Blanchette-Lamothe |
| Boulerice | Boutin-Sweet |
| Brosseau | Caron |
| Casey | Cash |
| Chicoine | Cleary |
| Comartin | Côté |
| Crowder | Cullen |
| Cuzner | Davies (Vancouver East) |
| Day | Dewar |
| Dion | Dionne Labelle |
| Doré Lefebvre | Dubé |
| Dubourg | Duncan (Etobicoke North) |
| Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) | Eyking |
| Footé | Freeland |
| Garrison | Genest-Jourdain |
| Giguère | Godin |
| Goodale | Gravelle |
| Groguhé | Harris (Scarborough Southwest) |
| Harris (St. John's East) | Hughes |
| Julian | Lamoureux |
| Latendresse | LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard) |
| Leslie | MacAulay |
| Marston | Mathysen |
| May | McCallum |
| McGuinty | McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood) |
| Michaud | Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue) |
| Morin (Laurentides—Labelle) | Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot) |
| Murray | Nunez-Melo |
| Pacetti | Papillon |
| Péclet | Pilon |
| Quach | Rafferty |
| Rankin | Ravignat |
| Regan | Saganash |
| Sandhu | Scott |
| Sitsabaiesan | St-Denis |
| Stewart | Sullivan |
| Thibeault | Tremblay |
| Trudeau | Turmel |
| Valerioté— 85 | |

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The House will now resume with the remaining business under routine proceedings under the rubric “motions”.

* * *

INSTRUCTION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved:

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs that, during its consideration of Bill C-27, An Act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (enhancing hiring opportunities for certain serving and former members of the Canadian Forces), the Committee be granted the power to expand the scope of the Bill in order to allow members of the RCMP to qualify for the priority hiring program.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak about this important veterans and RCMP veterans issue. I would like to say right at the beginning that I am very fortunate to be sharing my time with the extraordinary member of Parliament for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant.

The government shut down the debate on the environment, and it seems to want to shut down the debate on veterans. The Conservatives should actually be listening attentively.

An RCMP veteran named Eric Rebiere, from Bath, Ontario, said yesterday that the government is discriminating against veterans by offering different groups of them different benefits packages. The article, which has been carried across the country, says the following: “I feel like a second-class veteran.” This is an ex-Mountie speaking.

I am just going to read for the record the article itself. It is from Kingston, Ontario, and is dated yesterday. It states:

A retired Kingston-area RCMP officer is calling for the federal government to stop what he calls “discrimination” between different groups of veterans. Eric Rebiere, whose 24-year career in the federal police force ended in 2006—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, if you could get some order in this House, it would be appreciated.

The Speaker: I know we just had a vote, and sometimes it takes a few minutes to clear out the room. However, we are on to another item of business. For those of us who need to carry on conversations with a colleague, it would be more respectful to the member speaking to the House if they carried on those conversations outside the chamber.

The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

• (1115)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I think it would be more respectful to veterans and to former RCMP officers as well.

Eric Rebiere, whose 24-year career in the federal police force ended in 2006, two years after being diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder after taking part in NATO policing missions in Croatia and Kosovo, said the government should have one standard for all people who served in military operations, including RCMP officers who volunteered for policing missions. “They have created sub-classes of veterans, and that is discriminatory under the (Veteran) Charter”, Rebiere said. “To say we are not veterans is an insult”.

Routine Proceedings

At a rally on Parliament Hill earlier this month, Rebiere spoke about how the RCMP has for more than a century participated in Canada's military ventures. Like other retired RCMP officers, Rebiere is covered by the Pension Act and receives monthly payments, but can't access many of the programs the Canadian Forces veterans have.

Eric Rebiere pointed to Section 4 of the Department of Veterans Affairs Act, which requires the ministry to be responsible for "the care, treatment, or re-establishment in civil life of any person who served in the Canadian Forces" and "of any person who has otherwise engaged in pursuits relating to war".

What we have also found among veterans themselves is great support among veterans organizations that have felt often under attack by the government. We have seen the closing of so many veterans offices that the cutbacks in services to veterans have been quite appalling. I know on this side of the House that particularly the member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant and the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore have been at the forefront in standing and saying that it is unacceptable. What we need to do is put in place a full array of services for our veterans, but that is not what is happening, and veterans are aware of that.

Even at the Royal Canadian Legion's Dominion Convention in Edmonton on Tuesday, members voted unanimously to amend the Legion's definition of a veteran to include RCMP members and peace officers who serve in special duty areas. There is support from the veterans organizations themselves to say that veterans organizations should include RCMP veterans.

What the NDP motion of instruction is stating is that we instruct the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs "that, during its consideration of Bill C-27, an Act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (enhancing hiring opportunities for certain serving and former members of the Canadian Forces), the Committee be granted the power to expand the scope of the Bill in order to allow members of the RCMP to qualify for the priority hiring program."

This is no small thing. As Mr. Rebiere has said so eloquently, RCMP veterans are treated even worse than veterans by the government. It is an appalling state. Just two weeks ago, as I was leaving Parliament Hill to go to the airport to take a flight home, I came across a group of Canadian veterans standing at a table in front of Parliament Hill on Wellington Street. They were selling T-shirts to raise funds for their services. Look at that picture for just a moment. Because of the Conservatives' slashing and cutting of veterans' services, we have veterans selling T-shirts to try to provide services.

These are people who put their lives on the line for Canada. These are people who have said that they are willing to do anything to reinforce and defend Canadian democracy, yet Conservatives are forcing them to sell T-shirts to provide for services. I can think of nothing more despicable and nothing more hypocritical than the Conservative government's actions in the cutbacks to veterans' services and the closure of veterans' services offices right across this country. The hallmark of the government is treating our veterans with disrespect, and we see that constantly.

• (1120)

They are willing to be there when there is a photo-op. They are not willing to be there when it counts, which is where the NDP is every day in the House of Commons fighting for veterans and saying that veterans have the right to be treated with due respect by the

Conservatives and have the right to a full array of services when they have been willing to put their lives on the line for their country.

In my riding there is a veterans hospital, George Derby Centre. It is another one of the veterans hospitals that have been subject to cutbacks in the services offered to veterans. I see veterans regularly. Some of them are my friends. When I see the cutbacks being put in place and the services not being offered to the same extent they were even a few years ago, it saddens me.

That is why New Democrats are saying today that we want to engage in a vigorous debate, rather than having the debate shut down, as we just saw happen in the debate on the environment. My seat mate, the member for Halifax, spoke very eloquently about the environment. We wanted to engage the government on the environment, and the government said no, it was not going to talk about the environment in the House of Commons.

Now we have a debate on veterans' services and on expanding the scope of Bill C-27 to allow members of the RCMP to qualify for a priority hiring program. Our hope is that instead of the government shutting down debate, which is the only thing it seems to be able to do these days, it will actually engage in what is an important debate.

Mr. Rebiere was very clear that what is needed is the provision of services for RCMP veterans that match the services offered to veterans. New Democrats go even further. We would say that the services offered to veterans need to be expanded and enhanced, and the cutbacks have to stop. It is fair to say that this motion of instruction, if Conservatives are going to be consistent in what they have been saying, should receive the support of the Conservative members of the House so that they provide RCMP veterans and veterans with the full array of services that should be the entitlement of those who have been willing to put their lives on the line for their country.

When the bill was first introduced, New Democrats said that Bill C-27 simply does not go far enough. It overlooks entire groups of veterans. We thought that in principle, it was a good start, but that is only a first step in providing the full array of services that need to be provided to veterans in this country. We are saying today that we indeed need to expand the purview of Bill C-27 so that RCMP officers are included.

Eric Rebiere, a 24-year veteran of the RCMP, says that he feels like a second-class veteran. When there are veterans outside Parliament Hill selling T-shirts to try to provide some semblance of service because of the cutbacks by the government in terms of veterans' services, it is fair to say that veterans need to be treated better. That includes RCMP veterans. That is why we are offering the motion of instruction today. We hope it will have the support of both sides of the House so that RCMP veterans are no longer treated like second-class veterans and are included within the scope of Bill C-27.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government knows it has let go, either through attrition or outright dismissal, some 47,000 employees from the public service of Canada. Conservatives know that there is a freeze in hiring right now in the federal public service. They know that their existing bill does not meet the same criteria as the bill in the United States, which allows for more preparation and training not just for public service jobs but for private sector opportunities, where so much of the growth is in Canada.

Can the member help Canadians understand why the government would persist in putting forward what is clearly an incomplete bill?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Ottawa South for his question. I have worked with him often in committee and I quite like his approach when it comes to legislation. He is aware that this government has botched more pieces of legislation than any other government in Canadian history. It has had more pieces of legislation thrown on the floor of the House of Commons and subject to a record number of closure motions.

I think the member would perhaps try to defend it, but the former Liberal government, which had nearly 70 motions of closure in the course of its mandate, pales in comparison. This government has had 75, which is why it is being condemned by a number of journalists, saying the government simply does not believe in democratic debate.

However, the problem is this. The government has had more bills rejected, more shoddy product quality, because the bills it puts in the House of Commons are rejected, certainly by the courts. There has been a record number of rejections by the court. They have also been rejected by Canadians, as my colleague mentioned. The reality is that the government has had to produce more pieces of remedial legislation. That is a product recall. It botches the first bill it puts on the floor, then it has to introduce another bill to fix the errors in the first bill.

Therefore, my answer to the question from the member for Ottawa South is quite simple. The government does not respect the legislative process and that is why it has botched so many bills. In this case, it means that veterans are going to be more poorly served because the government did not do its homework.

• (1125)

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I respect the theme of my colleague's comments about looking after our veterans and RCMP officers, but I do take issue with the truthfulness of some of the comments he made about supposedly closing offices all over the country. These issues have been dealt with on the basis of expanding the number of services.

His comments about our cutting back funding for veterans issues are totally untrue. Since 2006, we have added some \$5 billion, new dollars, to veterans program services and support for veterans and their families. The rhetoric is really inflammatory when we misinform, miscommunicate, and also convey false information to those who are most vulnerable and most affected by some of these issues pertinent to veterans, their families, and their well-being.

I will be as crude as he has been with respect to commentary. I would suggest that, if he and his party pay back the \$1.17 billion in

respect to the misappropriated funds, we could probably do a lot more for veterans and the RCMP.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster, you have about 45 seconds.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I have 45 seconds to say this is exactly why veterans say they are being treated with such disrespect. That statement comes from the minister who, a week and a half ago, was running away from Jenifer Migneault, who just wanted to speak to him about the services that her husband, who is a serving member of the Canadian military, was not receiving. All she wanted to do was speak with him, and he ran away. That shows both the arrogance of the government and also its complete lack of respect for veterans.

In New Westminister, right outside city hall, are the names of two members of my family who gave their lives for our country. I believe, as do all New Democrats, that veterans should be treated with respect, and it should start with this minister. The minister should be—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would really like to thank my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminister for moving this motion in the House.

Not that long ago, we voted on a bill that completely overlooked RCMP veterans, who should be included and treated as such. Unfortunately, they are too often forgotten. They were once again completely overlooked in Bill C-27. That was one of our misgivings about that bill. I would like to thank the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminister for moving this motion that we had been discussing for a few days.

Eric Rebiere, an RCMP veteran with 26 years of service, spoke out during an interview with Elliot Ferguson from QMI Agency. He said he was outraged at how services were provided to him and that the government was not treating retired RCMP officers as full-fledged veterans.

I would like to read my colleague's motion in order to explain it to those watching at home:

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs that, during its consideration of Bill C-27, An Act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (enhancing hiring opportunities for certain serving and former members of the Canadian Forces), the Committee be granted the power to expand the scope of the Bill in order to allow members of the RCMP to qualify for the priority hiring program.

RCMP veterans have been completely left out of this bill. This huge gap shows that this bill is incomplete. I am unhappy with another aspect of this bill, which is that it has created even more classes of veterans. There are World War II and Korean War veterans who have access to health care still for some time.

Routine Proceedings

Ste. Anne's Hospital, near my riding, is destined to be transferred to the province, when it provided very good services to World War II and Korean War veterans. They are obviously aging, and there are fewer and fewer of them. Why not change the eligibility criteria and open this hospital to all veterans? That is what veterans groups are requesting. They say they are all veterans who served under the same flag.

Why always make classes of veterans who do not have access to the same services and the same health care? It is completely unacceptable that RCMP veterans have been completely left out of Bill C-27. The government should have considered them and stopped this tendency to create classes of veterans. We support the veterans ombudsman, who has been asking for years that the government stop creating classes of veterans and instead place them in a single veterans group. That is the approach we want to take in the House. The official opposition is asking the government to move in that direction, as all veterans and the ombudsman are requesting.

Mr. Rebiere says that he is absolutely outraged at the way services are provided to RCMP veterans, because they are full-fledged veterans. We are asking that they not be left out, which is what this bill does. They have been completely forgotten, which is why the motion by my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster asks that they be included.

• (1130)

The motion asks to find a way to include RCMP veterans and allow them to qualify for the public service priority hiring program, just as other veterans groups have been included. Mr. Rebiere is left with the impression that the government does not consider retired RCMP officers as veterans. He says he is completely outraged, and rightly so, at being treated like this and never getting the same services as other veterans groups.

I will read an excerpt from the article. I think it is very important.
[English]

A retired Kingston-area RCMP officer is calling for the federal government to stop what he calls "discrimination" between different groups of veterans.

Eric Rebiere, whose 24-year career in the federal police force ended in 2006, two years after being diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder after taking part in NATO policing missions in Croatia and Kosovo, said the government should have one standard for all people who served in military operations, including RCMP officers who volunteered for policing missions.

• (1135)

[Translation]

The ombudsman said, and Mr. Rebiere echoed this as well, that RCMP veterans do not get the same services and that is absolutely disgraceful.

To come back to the subject, Bill C-27 was already incomplete since it followed Bill C-11, for which we had only one or two hours of debate. That bill was incomplete and dropped and then was replaced with this one. We think that Bill C-27 is also incomplete since it completely excludes RCMP officers.

For an officer like Mr. Rebiere, having access to public service jobs could be very beneficial, which is understandable. He could continue to serve his country in the public service. This would be especially beneficial to those with post-traumatic stress disorder.

These are people who are no longer able to work in the military or the federal police service. If they could bring their expertise and skills to the public service, that would be very beneficial. If they also had access to the public service priority hiring program, they could pursue their career.

That perhaps could have been the case for Mr. Rebiere. The public service actually has a number of jobs for our soldiers and also for RCMP officers, who have been left out of this bill. We are asking the government to agree to our request and find a way to put RCMP officers on the priority list, which, for the time being, is for veterans only. We are hopeful that this bill will pass and come into force very soon. It would be completely unacceptable to exclude RCMP officers. They must also be included so that they can continue their careers. Many are forced to continue serving in the RCMP, without being totally employable and able to effectively serve the public as RCMP officers. They could continue to do so in the public service.

This is an entirely reasonable request. We are asking the government to vote in favour of this important motion and find a way to also include RCMP officers. In future bills, we will also ask the government to try to limit the number of groups of veterans to only one. We really believe in having only one group of veterans instead of creating divisions and more classes of veterans, as Bill C-27 does. Let us have only one group of veterans. They all served their country in the same way, so why give certain benefits to one group of veterans and forget about the others? That is completely unacceptable. It is fair to treat all groups of veterans equitably and in the same way.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

First, I would like to speak about cuts. The minister said that there were no cuts, but that is not true. The head office of the Department of Veterans Affairs is located in Charlottetown. This office now has far fewer employees to serve veterans, and the same is true of other offices across the country. It is completely false to say that no cuts have been made.

• (1140)

[English]

The question I want to pose is with respect to the view of the government with respect to RCMP veterans. We know there was a class action lawsuit launched by Dennis Manuge against the government with respect to the clawbacks of their disability benefits. We know that at the same time that class action lawsuit was commenced, a companion lawsuit was commenced by RCMP veterans who were in the exact same situation.

The Conservatives settled the case with Dennis Manuge after they lost at the Federal Court. They refused for months to include the RCMP vets in that settlement and made them wait for several more months before finally bringing them to the table.

Routine Proceedings

What does it say about the view of the government with respect to the status of RCMP vets in the eyes of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Government of Canada?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his intelligent question and comments.

I have the pleasure of being a member of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, with the member for Charlottetown. He is very knowledgeable about veterans issues, and he made intelligent comments about the cuts to Veterans Affairs Canada. The number of case managers is being cut, and the people who are left in those positions are being given more files. If memory serves, in the recent past, case managers used to handle 35 cases and now they handle about 40. They are responsible for more files and they have less time for veterans. They also have less time to figure out which services veterans are entitled to. In my opinion, veterans have not been receiving very good service in recent years.

I will now respond to the question about the RCMP. RCMP veterans are treated differently than other classes of veterans. The veterans in the class action law suit initiated by Dennis Manuge won their case, and the government agreed to reduce the disability benefits of those who are receiving retirement pensions. RCMP officers are in the same class. They have also launched a class action suit. However, the government does not want to apply the same rule. RCMP officers continue to be the victims of discrimination, when a settlement was reached in the Dennis Manuge case. This is further proof that the government is treating veterans who were members of the RCMP differently than veterans in other classes. The government is not treating all of our veterans in the same way, and that is completely disgraceful.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

In his speech, he mentioned Ste. Anne's Hospital. We have worked together on matters related to this hospital. This is a very important hospital, located on the West Island of Montreal, between his riding and mine.

Last weekend, I met with an employee of the hospital. The employees are very concerned about the situation. This is a clear illustration of the government's lack of respect for veterans. Veterans are not being accepted at this hospital, even though we are told that the hospital will shut down services because there are not enough clients. People who would like to have access to the hospital deplore the situation, just as current veterans do. Our veterans are afraid of losing the services they are entitled to.

I thank my colleague for showing his solidarity with the employees and users of Ste. Anne's Hospital.

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and for the work that she does for veterans and the employees of Ste. Anne's Hospital, who are indeed very concerned about the situation.

Three years ago, the government announced that the hospital would be transferred to the province, under the pretext that there are fewer and fewer veterans who have access to the hospital, given that it is reserved for World War II and Korean War veterans. Instead, the

criteria should be changed to open this hospital to all veterans who might need hospital services.

In fact, this is an excellent hospital, and I have had the pleasure of visiting it. Veterans receive wonderful, outstanding services there. However, since it is half-empty, the criteria could be changed so that those spots would be available to any groups of veterans who need long-term care. This would be a good alternative to transferring the hospital to the province.

● (1145)

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1220)

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

(*Division No. 222*)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ablonczy | Adler |
| Aglukkaq | Albas |
| Albrecht | Alexander |
| Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac) | Allison |
| Ambler | Ambrose |
| Anders | Anderson |
| Armstrong | Ashfield |
| Aspin | Bateman |
| Benoit | Bergen |
| Bernier | Bezan |
| Blaney | Block |
| Boughen | Braid |
| Brown (Leeds—Grenville) | Brown (Newmarket—Aurora) |
| Brown (Barrie) | Butt |
| Calandra | Calkins |
| Cannan | Carmichael |
| Carrie | Chisu |
| Chong | Clarke |
| Daniel | Davidson |
| Dechert | Devolin |
| Dreeshen | Duncan (Vancouver Island North) |
| Dykstra | Falk |
| Fantino | Findlay (Delta—Richmond East) |
| Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Fletcher |
| Galipeau | Gallant |
| Gill | Glover |

Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hoback
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
Opitz
Paradis
Poilievre
Raitt
Reid
Richards
Seeback
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Tilson
Trost
Valcourt
Van Loan
Warawa
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
Holder
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komarnicki
Lake
Leeff
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McLeod
Miller
Nicholson
O'Connor
O'Toole
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Rempel
Schellenberger
Shiple
Smith
Sorenson
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 130

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Aubin
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Boutin-Sweet
Brousseau
Casey
Chicoine
Comartin
Crowder
Day
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Foote
Garrison
Giguère
Goodale
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hughes
Lamoureux
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
MacAulay
Martin
May
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Murray
Nash
Pacetti
Péclet
Quach
Rankin
Scott
St-Denis
Sullivan

Angus
Bélangier
Benskin
Blanchette
Boulerice
Brison
Caron
Cash
Cleary
Côté
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Eyking
Freeland
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)
Julian
Latendresse
Leslie
Marston
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nantel
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Pilon
Rafferty
Sandhu
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Thibeault

Routine Proceedings

Tremblay
Valeriote — 81

Trudeau

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Presenting petitions. The hon. member for York South—Weston.

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, residents in my riding have continued to register their objection to the loss of home mail delivery by signing a number of petitions that I am tabling today.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to reject Canada Post's plan for reduced services and to explore other options to update Canada Post's business plan.

CADETS

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present to the House today.

The first petition is for the Minister of National Defence concerning the Valcartier cadets and an explosion that occurred in 1974, killing six cadets and injuring some 60 others.

The petition is signed by a number of residents of Quebec.

[*Translation*]

They are calling on the Minister of National Defence to ask the National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman to investigate this situation and to make recommendations to the government on how to help these former cadets.

[*English*]

It is an important matter. Permission has been granted.

The 40th anniversary of this explosion is July 30 of this year.

CANADA POST

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition concerns Canada Post.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to reject Canada Post's plans for reduced services and explore other options to update the crown corporation's business plan.

• (1225)

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here to present two petitions on behalf of constituents who are concerned about the lack of tough laws when it comes to drinking and driving.

The petitioners would like to see tougher laws and the implementation of a new mandatory minimum sentence for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death. In particular, they would like an offence of impaired driving causing death classified as vehicular manslaughter.

Routine Proceedings

CELL TOWERS

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the petitions I am presenting to the House today are signed by my constituents in Guelph as well as by Canadians across the country.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to allow cities, local residents, and politicians to make their own decisions when it comes to the installation of cell towers. They are concerned that we still do not fully understand the health impact of emissions. They indicate that there must be advance consultations with residents within a 1,000-metre radius so that the people most significantly impacted can have a say.

Specifically, the petitioners are asking Industry Canada and the Conservative government to reject proposals for the installation of Rogers Communications cell towers at the intersection of Alma and Crimea Streets in Guelph.

I look forward to the government's response.

CANADA POST

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hold in my hand a petition signed by 1,000 residents of my riding of Scarborough Southwest who are opposed to the cuts to Canada Post.

The petitioners are opposed to their postal worker neighbours losing their jobs. They are offended at the impact these cuts will have on seniors and people with disabilities.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada and Canada Post to reverse these devastating cuts and find better options so they can keep their home mail delivery.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have petitions signed mostly by residents of Vancouver.

The petitioners note that millions of girls have been lost through sex-selective pregnancy termination. They call upon Parliament to condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective abortions.

CANADA POST

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I rise today to table yet another petition regarding the devastating cuts in service and the huge price increases at Canada Post.

I am pleased to table this petition on behalf of many concerned Canadians.

I look forward to the government's response.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many signatures it will take for the government to listen.

I am presenting another petition today signed by hundreds of people who are calling on the government to reverse the decisions made at Canada Post and to find new means to finance this crown corporation instead of cutting services and constantly managing downsizing.

[*English*]

EMERGENCY PROTECTION ORDER

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present. Two of them are very similar and are with respect to the greater sage grouse in Canada.

The petitioners request the Government of Canada to rescind this strategy and to rescind the emergency protection order.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition to present with respect to the Species at Risk Act.

The petitioners, citizens from right across Canada, ask for the Species at Risk Act to be rescinded and for it to be replaced with something that encourages voluntary implementation.

CANADA POST

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition with respect to the drastic cuts at Canada Post, which will eliminate door-to-door delivery, close post offices, and drastically increase postage rates.

The petitioners, who are from Prince Edward Island, indicate that Canada Post is a public service that needs to be protected. They call upon the government to reverse the cuts and to look at ways to innovate.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions.

The first petition is signed by many members of our community on behalf of Jozsef Pusuma and his family. They were human rights activists in Hungary who, due to very poor legal representation, had their case mishandled. They are asking to stay in Canada until the Law Society of Upper Canada continues and finalizes an investigation into the conduct of their lawyer.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Second, Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by many members of my community who are calling for safer rail cars, especially the DOT-111 cars, in our community. The petitioners want to know what is being transported. They want these cars diverted from our area, if possible.

NATIONAL DAY OF THE MIDWIFE

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Third, Mr. Speaker, I have a petition with many signatures. It calls for May 5 to be designated as the National Day of the Midwife in recognition of the tremendous contribution to maternal and newborn health that midwives make.

• (1230)

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present, on behalf of constituents, a petition whereby they note that an Environics poll has indicated that 92% of Canadians are against pregnancy termination for sex selection purposes.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners call upon this House to condemn discrimination against girls caused through gender selection pregnancy termination.

FALUN GONG

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

The first petition is from literally hundreds of residents throughout Ontario, particularly in the Toronto area, calling for action to protect the human rights of those in China who practise Falun Dafa or Falun Gong. We know that many of them are imprisoned unfairly.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition from residents of my own constituency on Salt Spring Island. They are asking for the government to reverse itself on Enbridge and on approval of the so-called northern gateway risky pipeline and tanker scheme.

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting petitions protesting the elimination of postal delivery at Canada Post. I do not need to remind members that home delivery will be eliminated in three municipalities in my riding: Lorraine, Rosemère and Bois-des-Filion.

This same government supports keeping seniors at home, but it is depriving them of this rather essential service. I am presenting these petitions to protest this situation.

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by more than 150 Canadians who are opposed to the elimination of mail delivery.

The elimination of mail delivery in urban areas will affect more than five million households, and the most vulnerable members of society, people with reduced mobility and seniors, will suffer directly.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by many of my constituents who are calling on the government to create a legal ombudsman mechanism for mining, to ensure that Canadian mining companies operating abroad are held accountable to local populations.

CANADA POST

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by hundreds of citizens who are opposed to cuts at Canada Post.

I should also note that hundreds, if not thousands, of people in my riding have contacted me to say that they are concerned about these cuts. The cuts will have serious consequences, particularly for seniors and people with reduced mobility. I am pleased to be presenting this petition.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House today to present a new series of petitions. They have been signed by people in my riding, Sudbury, who are opposed to the Canada Post service cuts. This is not the first time I have presented such petitions, and it will not be the last.

The Conservatives' changes to Canada Post will have a significant impact on people in my riding and across Canada. This is an unfair, unjustified and arbitrary decision.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition with 600 names from people across the Lower Mainland in Vancouver, Surrey, New Westminster, and Burnaby. All of them are protesting the impending service cuts to Canada Post. They are calling upon the Government of Canada to reverse those cuts in services announced by Canada Post and to instead look at innovation within the postal service so that it can be a profitable national delivery service, as is the case in pretty well every other industrialized country. These hundreds of British Columbians are asking the government to reconsider the cuts, stop the cuts, and start offering home delivery service.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 498 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 498—**Mr. Matthew Dubé:**

With regard to the children's fitness tax credit, do Canadian Heritage or Sport Canada have studies in their possession measuring the impact that this tax credit has on the level of sports participation among young Canadians and the impact that it has on parents' decisions to register their children in physical activities that are eligible for the tax credit?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to date the Department of Canadian Heritage is not aware of any published studies that measure the impact of the children's fitness tax credit on the level of sports participation among young Canadians and on parents' decisions to register their children in physical activities that are eligible for the tax credit. Members should please note as well that the Department of Canadian Heritage has not conducted any research in this area.

* * *

●(1235)

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 489, 490, 491, 492, and 496 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

[Text]

Question No. 489—**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:**

With regard to the International Upper Great Lakes Study (IUGLS) commissioned by the International Joint Council (IJC): (a) what input or comment did the government provide, through any department or agency, during the comment periods for the two stages of the report; (b) what documents have been produced by any departments or agencies in preparation for or as a result of the IUGLS report, including the date and authoring department or agency of each document; (c) for each year since 2006, what measures have been taken by the government to mitigate falling water levels in the Great Lakes, broken down by department and agency; (d) what measures have been taken by departments or agencies as a result of the recommendations in the IUGLS; (e) what measures are being considered by departments or agencies as a result of, or in relation to, the IUGLS; and (f) what documents have been produced by any department or agency with regard to existing or future economic or environmental impacts of volatile water levels in the Great Lakes basin, including the date and authoring department or agency of each document?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 490—**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc:**

With regard to government funding in the riding of LaSalle—Émard, how much was provided for fiscal years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, broken down by (i) department or agency, (ii) name of initiative or program and its description, (iii) date, amount and name of recipient?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 491—**Ms. Yvonne Jones:**

With regard to contracts under \$10,000 granted by the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency since January 1, 2013, for each contract, what is the: (a) vendor's name; (b) reference number; (c) date; (d) description of the services provided; (e) delivery date; (f) original value; and (g) final value if different from the original value?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 492—**Mr. François Choquette:**

With regard to Health Canada's study on neonicotinoid pesticides: (a) what is the mandate of the study; (b) when will the study be completed; (c) will the results be released publicly and, if so, how will they be released; (d) will the study include public consultations and, if so, (i) with what groups, (ii) where, (iii) when; (e) will the study include case studies and, if so, (i) which case studies will be chosen, (ii) will the case studies cover the decline in the health of insect pollinators; (f) will part of the study include the impact of the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on the decrease in insect pollinators; (g) who will have access to the final report of the study from among (i) the public, (ii) government departments and agencies, (iii) ministers; (h) which (i) groups, (ii) departments (iii) organizations, (iv) scientists, (v) regions, (vi) groupings; (vii) towns, (viii) municipalities, (ix) provinces and territories will be consulted; (i) when determining the scope of the problem, will the study take into account the (i) direct, (ii) indirect, (iii) cumulative impacts of neonicotinoid pesticides; (j) which pesticides will be studied; (k) what impacts will be studied in terms of (i) the economy, (ii) municipalities (iii) communities, (iv) Aboriginal peoples, (v) human health, (vi) animal health, (vii) aquatic flora, (viii) aquatic fauna, (ix) terrestrial flora, (x) terrestrial fauna; and (l) what are the titles of the studies on neonicotinoid pesticides undertaken between 2004 and 2014?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 496—**Hon. John McCallum:**

With regard to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, what is: (a) the number of all positions authorized through Labour Market Opinions, broken down by (i) region, (ii) National Occupation Code; and (b) the number of all temporary foreign workers, broken down by region and National Occupation Code, employed by (i) any government department, (ii) any government agency, (iii) any Crown Corporation?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PROHIBITING CLUSTER MUNITIONS ACT

The House resumed from June 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, An Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to speak in the House on behalf of my constituents of Surrey North.

I know this may be out of order, but I would like to take a couple of seconds to acknowledge my staff who are here today in the gallery. I would like to thank my constituency staff for the wonderful work they do in the constituency. MPs are very busy. We would not be able to do our jobs unless we had our constituency staff to help us out. That is across party lines in the House.

I have been waiting to speak to this important bill. Last night I was here until midnight, because of the scheduling, and I am here again this morning. It is an opportunity for me to voice my concerns on behalf of the constituents of Surrey North.

Unfortunately, over and over again throughout this session the government has been moving time allocation motions. It is basically shutting down the debate and prohibiting the opportunity for members of Parliament to represent their constituents and bring their views to Ottawa. That is what we on this side of the House, the NDP members, like to do. We like to bring the views of our constituents to the House so that they can be heard. Unfortunately, this is the 76th time that time allocation has been used.

Unfortunately, Conservatives do not believe in bringing forward the views of their constituents. Time after time, they do not speak to some of these bills. A number of Conservative members do not speak to these bills. Maybe they do not want to bring the views of their constituents into the House. I believe what we are brought here to do is to represent our constituents. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have failed to do that not only on this bill, but on many other bills that have been introduced in the House.

There have been 76 time allocation motions. The Conservatives have tried to ram through every bill that has come before us. Omnibus bills containing some 500 pages have been brought into the House and the Conservatives have put time allocation on them. It prevents not only NDP members but Conservative members as well from bringing forward the views of their constituents.

Government Orders

This bill to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions is important. Cluster munitions are little explosives that are dropped and burst into thousands of mini bombs. They cause great damage, not only when they are dropped, but many years afterward as well. I have seen many times on TV where children are playing with these explosives and they get hurt. Some 98% of those injured by cluster munitions are civilians. People are not only injured during conflicts, but many years after as well. It is the civilians who are impacted the most when cluster munitions are used.

Canada participated in the Oslo process and worked with other countries to bring forth this convention. This was right after the signing of the treaty to ban land mines which took place in Ottawa. We had an opportunity to bring other countries together to show leadership on this very important issue of cluster munitions, where we could make a real impact around the world and ensure that these kinds of things are not used against civilians, children and women, to make sure that they are not hurt by these explosives. Unfortunately, the Conservative government has failed time after time.

There was a time when Canadians were viewed around the world as peacemakers. Canadians were viewed as people who would bring the world together. They would negotiate between different countries to bring them together for peaceful purposes. Unfortunately, under the Conservative government, we have seen the deterioration of our reputation around the world.

● (1240)

There was a time when Canadians were proud to wear the Canadian flag pin on their lapels. Citizens of other countries would wear the Canadian flag on their backpacks when travelling around the world. We were viewed as a peaceful country that brought people together, instead of what we have seen from the Conservative government, which is divisive and forceful attitudes, and empty rhetoric.

We have always been viewed as people who have helped countries. We look at the work of CIDA that was done many years ago. We helped poor nations. We helped nations come together. That is where we had our influence. We were out there helping many nations around the world. We had influence. We brought countries together for peaceful purposes.

Unfortunately, under the Conservative government, we have seen the deterioration in the CIDA funding that we provide around the world. It is now tied to businesses. It is tied more to mining companies or oil companies rather than humanitarian causes for which it was originally intended. That helped us have influence around the world to bring those countries together.

What has happened over the years? We pulled out of Kyoto. We were supposed to be the leaders in bringing countries together to deal with climate change. I know the Conservatives do not like the term "climate change". They rarely use it. This morning, the member for Halifax spoke about the environment, and that we should have a debate about the environment. She pointed out that Conservatives rarely use the term "climate change". There is scientific research behind it, and people all around the world know about it, yet some of the members from the Conservative side do not even want to use the term. They deny there is such a thing as climate change. We had an opportunity to show leadership in that regard.

The damage to our reputation has been severe. The UN Security Council is very powerful. We have had a seat on it on a rotating basis every year since the UN Security Council was formed, but this year we lost that seat. We did not even run because we knew we would lose to some other country, and we did lose. We did not even ask to be on the Security Council. That is how much damage the Conservative government has done to our reputation around the world. The UN Security Council was a place where we played an important role with all the work we have done as parliamentarians and as Canadians to bring countries across the world together for peaceful purposes. Under the Conservative government, we have lost that seat. That is the record of the government over the last six to eight years, and it has been downhill ever since.

We had an opportunity with this bill, Bill C-6, to repair some of the damage done by the government. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have failed in this regard. Some of the experts are saying that the Conservatives' legislation to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions is widely recognized as the weakest and worst in the world, that it undermines the very spirit of the convention it is supposed to implement. This is what the world is saying.

We had a great reputation as peacemakers and world leaders in bringing countries together, but now we have taken some steps backward. Not only did we not ratify the Kyoto agreement, but we also do not have a seat on the Security Council. Now the world is saying that we have an opportunity to be positive and show leadership around the world, and yet this particular legislation on cluster munitions is a step backward.

● (1245)

People around the world are saying that this will set a precedent for other countries to also undermine the regulation or banning of these explosive, deadly munitions that hurt people. Again, 98% of the injuries are to civilians.

Despite the strong opposition of a majority of participatory states and non-governmental organizations, Canada succeeded in negotiating into the final text of the convention an article that explicitly allows for continued military interoperability with non-party states. That is a troublesome issue. That is a very troublesome article that Canada actually championed and negotiated to include in the convention.

Bill C-6 goes beyond even the interoperability allowance in the convention. The main problem lies in clause 11. We heard this last night, and I am saying it again this morning. I think it is important because clause 11 establishes an extremely broad list of exceptions. We know what happens when there is a broad list of exceptions; it sort of guts the bill. I have used these words before with most of the legislation that the government presents, but we could drive a truck through this legislation which has been so gutted by these broad exceptions.

Government Orders

In its original form, this clause permitted Canadian soldiers to use, acquire, possess and/or transport cluster munitions whenever they are acting in conjunction with another country that is not a member of the convention, and to request the use of cluster munitions by another country.

China, Russia and the U.S. are not signatories to the convention. This is where we could have used our influence around the world. We could have brought countries together to persuade the countries that have not signed on to the convention to eliminate and ban the use of cluster munitions. The 98% of the people who are hurt by these munitions are civilians. We could help these people around the world. This is where leadership comes in.

Time after time the Conservatives have failed not only on the international stage but also on the domestic stage to show leadership in the areas where Canadians want their government to show leadership.

At the foreign affairs committee, the NDP supported Canadians and international civil society groups in pushing for changes to the bill. We engaged closely with the government, in public and through direct dialogue, to encourage improvements to this legislation.

We were successful in persuading the government to formally prohibit the use of cluster munitions at least by Canadian soldiers. There was a small give on the part of the Conservatives. However, other loopholes remain. Without amendments to rectify these loopholes, Canada's commitment to ending the use of cluster munitions will be superficial at best.

Indeed, Bill C-6 may even be damaging, as I pointed out earlier, by establishing an international precedent for opting out and exceptions. Therein lies the problem. The Conservatives entered into the process on the Convention on Cluster Munitions and came back with a whole bunch of exemptions. Exemptions are basically loopholes that allow for cluster munitions to still be used.

We have seen this over and over. In order for Canada to be a leader on this around the world, we need to close these loopholes. We need to work with other nations, our NATO allies, our Norad allies, and the UN. We need to work with all these international organizations to bring the countries on board so we can look at banning these explosives that hurt civilians, including children, around the world. What do the Conservatives do? They basically leave huge loopholes in the bill and that will not help.

• (1250)

As it currently stands, Canada's legislation will be the weakest of all countries that have ratified this convention. Unfortunately, with the government's approach to international issues, where it could take a leadership role and had shown leadership many years ago, it has failed to live up to that leadership. Canadians expect the government to live up to that leadership. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have failed Canadians again. This was an opportunity for them to show that leadership and, again, they failed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's last comments with regard to international leadership. The government has been able to demonstrate leadership on that file. My question is related to the fact that Canada played such a strong leadership role during the

1990s in terms of the land mines treaty. Not only did the Ottawa land mines treaty originate in Ottawa but it was then ratified during Jean Chrétien's era. Liberals demonstrated very clear leadership. Not only did we sign it off, but it was passed through the House unanimously, from what I understand.

My question is this. Does the member recognize that the government has not been able to get unanimous support from the House of Commons, which demonstrates a deficiency, and it also took so many years to bring it before us in the House today?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have not shown leadership on this issue. The member always talks about the Liberal leadership. Canadians know what leadership Liberals have shown. They are sitting in that corner with the little group and Canadians have told them what they have done.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Surrey North for his very eloquent remarks about this bill on cluster munitions and the failure of the government to live up to the promise of many international treaties. Just today, I introduced a motion calling on the government to sign the Marrakesh treaty so that people who are visually impaired can get access to these documents.

Can the member comment on the importance of signing treaties like the Marrakesh treaty?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, those are the kinds of things we need to do. The Conservative government has failed. In 2015, New Democrats will take those initiatives to bring honour back to Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 12:54 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Monday, June 16, 2014, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, 2014, the division stands deferred until later this day at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

Government Orders

●(1255)

ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK ACT

Hon. Ed Holder (for the Minister of the Environment) moved that Bill C-40, An Act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour and a privilege for me to speak in support of the bill to establish Rouge national urban park in the greater Toronto area. This park celebrates and protects, for current and future generations, a diverse landscape in Canada's largest metropolitan area. It offers engaging and varied experiences. It inspires personal connections to its natural beauty and rich history and promotes a vibrant farming community. In close proximity to 20% of Canada's population, the park includes more than 10,000 years of rich human history.

The national park would increase the size of the regional park by 25%, making it more than 13 times the size of Stanley Park in Vancouver and 16 times the size of Central Park in New York.

As Canada's first ever national urban park, the Rouge offers an unprecedented opportunity to support all three priorities of our government's national conservation plan: to connect Canadians to nature and to restore and conserve the parks' ecosystems and cultural resources.

We can all be proud that this legislation would create a remarkable new entity, one located within Canada's largest and most culturally diverse metropolis. This vast area would be an extraordinary mix of natural, cultural, and agricultural lands. Given its close proximity to one-fifth of Canada's population, the park would be easily accessible for people in the greater Toronto area.

This legislation would establish the Rouge national urban park as a new model of protected area in Canada. The park owes its very existence to local visionaries and stewards, citizens, organizations, governments, and countless volunteers. Our government is proud to pay tribute to the nearly 30 years of hard work and determination in building one of the largest urban parks in the world. We also want to acknowledge the over 100 provincial, municipal, aboriginal, and community stakeholders, and thousands of members of the public, who contributed to the vision and plans for Canada's first urban national park.

As hon. members will observe, the bill provides a new framework that would enable Parks Canada to manage the park's natural, cultural, and agricultural resources and to recognize the opportunities and challenges that its urban context brings. Home to nearly 1,700 species of plants and animals, several of which are rare or threatened, Parks Canada would apply its world-leading expertise in conservation and restoration and work with partners to ensure Rouge's ecosystems, plants, and animals are cared for, maintained, and restored for present and future generations.

The Rouge national urban park act would provide broad regulatory powers to address all aspects of park management. A flexible management approach is needed to meet future infrastructure. The minister of the environment, through Parks Canada, would be able to protect and present this unique place that encompasses

deep river valleys and glacial features, thousands of species of plants and animals, farmlands, archeological resources, built heritage, and cultural landscapes.

I want to emphasize that the park's tradition of agriculture is a unique feature among Canadian protected heritage areas. The presence of working farms would be integral to the future success of this park. People would continue to live and work on the park's agricultural landscape, as many families have done since the late 1700s. The national urban park status would also bring a new sense of security to the park farming community. Parks Canada would become the landlord of all existing leases on transferred lands and is working closely with the farming community to develop a lease structure that supports long-term farming. There is a real potential for visitors to connect with farming as it exists now, as well as opportunities for new types of farming to serve the growing and increasingly diverse population of the greater Toronto area.

The legislation would ensure that all these natural, cultural, and agricultural landscapes are protected and managed in an integrated way to the benefit of Canadians, now and for generations to come. In fact, the bill would give the Rouge the highest level of ecological protection it has ever had. The management plan would permit the minister to present a comprehensive conservation approach. This would be based on the most up-to-date science expertise and experience, drawn from the entire system of national protected areas.

The approach to management planning would strive to maximize the ecosystem health of the park by maintaining and restoring its native Carolinian and Mixedwood Plains forests, and wetland meadow and aquatic ecosystems. The approach to the ecosystem health envisioned in the bill for the Rouge would take into account the park's increasingly urban surroundings and the working farms, roads, rail lines, and hydro corridors. The bill recognizes that this dynamic urban and agricultural context has long driven change, both within and around the park, and it would continue to do so.

●(1300)

The agency would therefore manage the park, but in an adaptive way, maximizing ecosystem health in these ever-changing conditions. Working with people living next to and in the park would be an essential component of the management approach. The park lessee community and the park stewardship volunteers would play an important role in maintaining ecosystem health, visitor experience, and cultural heritage.

Our government's long-standing commitment to first nations involvement in protected heritage places would also play an important role in this park. The new status for the Rouge would facilitate first nations celebrations of their historical roots in this park. The bill contains a provision that would respect traditional renewable resource harvesting activities by aboriginal people. The bill would also respect the rights of aboriginal people in the event of any future agreement for the settlement of land claims.

Government Orders

As the House knows, our government made a commitment in the 2012 budget to invest more than \$143 million over 10 years and \$7.6 million annually thereafter to make Rouge national urban park a reality. This is a commitment we reasserted in the 2014 budget.

Among other things, this investment would make possible a protected area that is both larger and more strategically situated than the existing park. Increasing the park's size would also help advance the goal of connecting Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Moreover, with the creation of the Rouge national urban park we would expand the level of experiences that visitors have in the park. Residents of the greater Toronto area and all Canadians would be able to explore more areas of the larger park. This might inspire them to visit more of Canada's heritage places.

As I mentioned earlier, the creation of the Rouge national urban park supports Canada's national conservation plan. I would like to take a few minutes to explain how this plan will work.

The plan responds to a clear message from Canadians that they care deeply about the natural environment and want to enjoy and conserve it for future generations. The plan aligns and bolsters conservation efforts across this country. It protects the environment while supporting a growing economy and makes concrete and tangible progress to conserve and restore Canada's lands and waters and connect Canadians to nature.

The launch of the plan is an opportunity to continue to work together to conserve Canada's rich natural heritage. Many Canadians are already working to conserve and restore Canada's lands and waters. This includes all levels of government, aboriginal groups, environmental organizations, and the private sector, as well as many Canadians at the local level including landowners, land managers, community groups, and individuals across our great country.

The national conservation plan celebrates collective efforts to conserve the environment. It also invests \$252 million toward concrete and targeted actions on conservation. This investment over five years will support and expand successful initiatives, and also broaden work through new activities.

The plan built on the announcement on the 2014 budget including measures to invest in national parks, conserve recreational fisheries, encourage donations of ecologically sensitive land, and expand recreational trails. The national conservation plan's vision is to contribute to a stronger Canada, a country that cares about the conservation of its national heritage and where citizens can enjoy the beauty of Canada's environment from coast to coast to coast.

The plan focuses on action across three priority areas: conserving Canada's lands and waters, restoring Canada's ecosystems, and connecting Canadians to nature.

The first priority, conserving Canada's lands and waters, aims to safeguard and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems through conservation and stewardship actions.

The second priority is about restoring degraded ecosystems. Once restored, these ecosystems provide clean water and habitat for wildlife and are essential for the protection and recovery of species at risk. The plan also includes \$50 million in funding to expand support for landowners, aboriginal communities, agricultural producers,

conservation and community groups, and other partners to voluntarily implement measures to restore and conserve essential habitat and vulnerable species.

Stakeholders have reiterated that voluntary conservation and stewardship efforts are critical to achieving Canada's conservation objectives. These restoration actions complement existing efforts by the federal government such as the cleanup of contaminated sites.

● (1305)

With this in mind, the national conservation plan's third priority is to connect Canadians to nature. This work will leverage existing successful initiatives to help foster an appreciation for nature and build a community of stewards among Canadians of all ages.

Investments of \$9.2 million will be made to improve public access to protected areas and green spaces, focusing on those areas located in and near cities.

To conclude my remarks, the creation of this unique park, the Rouge park, will be another milestone in our government's renowned history of heritage protection. Since we formed government, we have created two national marine conservation areas, three marine protected areas, three national wildlife areas, one national historic site, and two national parks. This does not include the Rouge national urban park.

It also does not include the bill we tabled last week in the House to create the Nâáts'ihch'oh national park reserve in the Northwest Territories.

We have done more than any other government. In fact, the total area of lands we have protected in this area is more than twice the size of Vancouver Island.

The Rouge park's urban setting would offer exciting unprecedented opportunities and would connect Canadians to nature, culture, and agriculture. Nowhere is there greater opportunity to showcase and share our natural and cultural heritage than the greater Toronto area, which is home to millions of urban, new, and young Canadians.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker it is an exciting idea to create a national park in an urban space. I have been waiting for this legislation, because it has been promised for a while. I have to say I have been waiting for the speech, because the bill was just tabled on Friday, the departmental briefing was yesterday, and I have not even had time to do a proper analysis of the bill; so I was really looking forward to the speech today to figure out some details about it.

I am very disappointed that the minister is not the first to speak to this. I am also disappointed that more than half the speech was about the conservation plan and not about this park.

Government Orders

I have so many questions, but this is the question that I would love to have answered right now. We have a National Parks Act that says, “Maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity...shall be the first priority of the Minister...”.

The Ontario Parks Act, where this park is located, says that these areas “...shall be managed to maintain their ecological integrity...”.

The Rouge Park management plan says “The vision of the park has, as its primary focus, the continuing health and integrity of natural systems and habitats...in protecting the ecological integrity of the Rouge River watershed.”

The bill before us says, “The Minister must...take into consideration the protection of its natural ecosystems...”. How is taking consideration of a natural ecosystem actually going to fulfill the focus of all these other policies and pieces of legislation?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed that the critic for the NDP did not take the time to actually read the bill. As she said, it was tabled on Friday. As she quite rightly stated, there was a briefing yesterday, and unfortunately, she could not make the time to attend that. The answers to her questions would have been in there. If she had listened to my speech, she would have actually heard that the bill would provide the greatest protection that the Rouge has ever had in its history.

One of our priorities is to make sure we protect our environment for our future. As I said in my opening remarks, this has been a 30-year task. It has been 30 years in the making between all levels of government, and I must say, I am very pleased and I am very thankful for all levels of government—federal, provincial, and municipal—and all the stakeholders who have come together to make this a reality.

This is truly a historic moment for Canada. This is a unique park that is the first one in an urban area. It is a model, and it would be treated slightly differently because of the realities that are presented in the park. For example, there are things called highways. That is called development. There are things called hydro corridors. There are things called railways. These are developments that are in place.

Unfortunately, the NDP, instead of being known as the New Democratic Party, is now being known as the no development party, because it seems New Democrats are against everything.

• (1310)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the Government of Canada has a talent for turning what should be a good news story into a dubious, suspicious story about which Canadians have questions.

Frankly, I join with the member for Halifax in saying that the Conservatives could have done this in a fashion so people could have read it in advance, and they just possibly could have got more support than they presently have, because all they do is raise suspicions.

The first question comes out of clause 4, which is how the park is established. It says that one is supposed to go to the schedule of the lands that are being transferred, so one goes to the schedule of the lands that are being transferred, but there are actually three little squibs of land in Markham, hardly amounting to an acre or two of

land, which are actually being transferred. However, according to the presentation the hon. member made, we would be getting 58 square kilometres, which some people argue is even less than it should be.

Nevertheless, what is actually being transferred right now is three little squibs of land. Therefore, when Parliament passes the bill, that is all we would have. There is a heck of a lot of land to be transferred from the Province of Ontario, the municipalities, the TRCA, et cetera before this is actually anywhere close to reality.

Why present the bill now when you actually have no land, when the bill could have been presented when you actually had land to transfer—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. I do not know how many times I have said this, but hon. members need to address their comments to the Chair rather than directly to their colleagues.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the critic for the Liberal Party. At least he took the time to attend the briefing yesterday. However, I do believe his question was answered at the briefing.

The member may or may not be aware that when transferring lands from different levels of government, the process requires something to transfer them to. As I have said, we have got agreement with different levels of government to move forward in this way. The member is correct in that once the act were passed, there would be a certain amount of land, and once there were an official entity to which to transfer the lands, then the other levels of government and other entities would be able to transfer this way.

As I said, one of the things we should be very proud of is that this would be 25% bigger than the area that is there now, and it would be a parcel of land 16 times greater than the size of Central Park in New York City. This is historic. Unfortunately, it has taken a long time.

I agree with the member's former leader, Mr. Ignatieff, who said when it comes to the environmental files, “We didn't get it done.” This is other proof that the Liberals did not get it done. We are getting it done for Canadians.

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently, the Prime Minister launched the national conservation plan. I wonder if the hon. parliamentary secretary could explain how the creation of the Rouge national urban park would support this particular plan.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Kootenay—Columbia for the question and also for all the good work he does in his community. He lives in one of the most beautiful places in Canada, and he is very committed to conserving Canada's environment.

The Rouge national urban park would support the key pillars of the national conservation plan by taking practical action to connect Canadians to nature, restore Canada's ecosystems, and contribute to the conservation of Canada's lands and waters. Situated close to 20% of Canada's population, the park would provide a great place for Canadians to connect with nature, culture, and agriculture without having to travel far from home.

Government Orders

This park, as I said in my speech, has about 1,700 species of plants and animals, several of which are rare or threatened. Parks Canada would apply its world-leading expertise in conservation and restoration and work with partners to ensure Rouge's precious ecosystem, plants, and animals are cared for, maintained, and restored for present and future generations.

• (1315)

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I share our critic's dismay that the minister was not here, because there are some important questions to ask her about letters that local groups have sent and to which they are still waiting for a response.

My question is very specific and it has to do with one of the driving forces in the creation of Rouge Park, which is the Friends of the Rouge Watershed.

Jim Robb, the general manager of Friends of the Rouge Watershed said that his group and others have asked the Government of Ontario not to transfer Ontario's lands, which amount to about two-thirds of the park, until standards of past Rouge Park plans are met, because the current plan that the government is putting forward is not even as good as the last one. He is quoted as saying that, "The park they're proposing is actually not as good as the park they already have."

I would like to hear the parliamentary secretary respond to Mr. Robb's questions about why the government's current plan is not even as good as the park we have there now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I go to the parliamentary secretary, just to clarify, for a member to reference that someone did or did not speak to something is acceptable, because that is a matter of public record. However, to make reference to the fact that someone was or was not here is not. I understand that is a subtle distinction, but that is the rule.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, again the premise of the member's question is incorrect. If he had listened to my speech, he would have heard that what we are putting forward would offer the most protection that this area has ever been given.

There appear to be certain single-focus groups out there that may or may not have some misunderstanding of what exactly is going on with the new act. The individual he mentioned did take the time to come down and was there on Monday. I had the opportunity to speak with him, and I will be meeting with him in the near future to help answer many of the questions.

I am very pleased that all of these different groups have done a lot of good work to make this day happen. It is unfortunate that the NDP, the no development party, would even be against the development of the Rouge Park in the way it has been agreed upon. This is a historic agreement. All levels of government and all stakeholders are happy about it. The only people who are not, I guess, are the members of the opposition.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak to Bill C-40, and I thank the minister for bringing it forward. The name of my constituency is Scarborough—Rouge River. The Rouge River and the largest piece of the current Rouge Park are in my constituency.

We are excited about this legislation, but we have some concerns. When I say we, I am referring to myself and thousands of activists who have worked for over 35 years in the community to create the current Rouge Park. We have called for national protection of the park and national park status. It started many decades ago with people literally sitting down on these lands and hugging trees. Conservatives do not like tree huggers and environmentalists, but these people feel they have to protect the park's natural habitat.

Rouge Park is the northern most point of the mixed woodlands and the Carolinian forest. Activists on the ground felt they had to protect this land from being handed over to developers who might plan to build condos.

I am privileged to have this park in my community. Many of my constituents have the luxury of living with the Rouge River, or the Duffins Creek or Rouge Creek running along their backyards.

The minister has shown concern about who has read the bill and who has not. I have the bill in my hand and I have read it.

My first concern about the legislation is with respect to the section dealing with management of the park and factors to be considered with the management of the park. Clause 6 says, "The Minister must, in the management of the Park", and this is the concerning part, "take into consideration the protection of its natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes".

This clause looks like it makes sense on the first reading of it. It looks like it is a responsible measure. However, the language is weak compared to the existing legislation, which has stronger language.

Let me read section 8(2) of the existing Canada National Parks Act. It states:

Maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity, through the protection of natural resources and natural processes, shall be the first priority of the Minister when considering all aspects of the management of parks.

I note the words "shall be the first priority". This is far stronger language than what is in Bill C-40, which is "take into consideration" the protection of natural ecosystems.

Let us look at the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act. section 6, which reads:

Ontario's provincial parks and conservation reserves are dedicated to the people of Ontario and visitors for their inspiration, education, health, recreational enjoyment and other benefits with the intention that these areas shall be managed to maintain their ecological integrity and to leave them unimpaired for future generations.

The important words here are "shall be managed to maintain their ecological integrity". Let us compare that with what is proposed in the new bill, which states "take into consideration the protection of natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes".

The Canada National Parks Act states "shall be the first priority". In the Provincial Parks Act it is "shall be managed to maintaining ecological integrity". In the proposed bill it is "take into consideration".

Government Orders

The Conservative government, under the guise of this bill, “an act respecting the Rouge national urban park”, somewhere refers to making life better for everybody in the country as well. That is what the Conservatives do with omnibus bills. I am joking. I have actually read the whole bill, and it does not talk about the economic action plan once, which is pretty awesome because the Conservatives usually like to talk about immigration, economic action and job creation in every bill. That does not happen with this one. I congratulate the government for not making this an omnibus bill about 75 different pieces of legislation.

• (1320)

However, what the government is doing is weakening the protection of my and the people's park in Scarborough. That is what I do not like to see, especially because so many people have worked for so long to create this park and to protect it.

Just this past year, I have taken groups of schoolchildren and community activists to plant more trees and bushes in this park. We did it to ensure the sustainability and ecological viability of it. We have planted spruce, dark cherry, and bushes. We have taken students and gone in and removed invasive species that are not naturally occurring in this area, so the trees, bushes, and plants can actually thrive.

Activists and people who care about this park are the wardens of it. We are the ones who take care of it. I and my constituents in Scarborough—Rouge River want to ensure that the park has higher protection through the creation of national park status, rather than disintegrating the quality of it.

I can read more from the Rouge Park management plan of 1994, which was cabinet approved, by the way. The cabinet-approved the Rouge Park management plan in 1994. I will read excerpts from sections 6.1 and 10.3.

Section 6.1 reads, “The vision of the park has, as its primary focus, the continuing health and integrity of natural systems and habitats.”

Section 10.3 reads, “protecting the ecological integrity of the Rouge River watershed”.

Once again these are stronger words than “take into consideration the protection”.

Section 3.2.1 of the Greenbelt plan says:

The Protected Countryside contains a Natural System that provides a continuous and permanent land base necessary to support human and ecological health in the Greenbelt and beyond...support biodiversity and overall ecological integrity.

All of this is much stronger than clause 6 of the bill, which states “take into consideration the protection of its natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes and the maintenance of its native wildlife and of the health of those ecosystems”.

Let us look at clause 4 of the bill, which is on the establishment of the park. The minister wrote or oversaw the writing of this bill. It is funny because the bill lists the purposes of the creation of the Rouge national urban park and the first thing identified is protection. However, when it goes into the implementation and the factors to be considered in the management of the park, there is weak language.

Let me read part of clause 4. It says:

Rouge National Urban Park...is established for the purposes of protecting and presenting, for current and future generations, the natural and cultural heritage of the Park and its diverse landscapes, promoting a vibrant farming community and encouraging Canadians to discover and connect with their national protected heritage areas.

Once again, the government talks about protection, but in reality it weakens the protection for the park.

I would like to talk a bit about the responses since the bill has been tabled. We know that the idea of the creation of Rouge national urban park was mentioned in a couple of throne speeches. It got us all excited in the community, but then we saw there was no real financial commitment. We pushed and pushed and we saw some financial commitment, which is great. We then saw that somebody from Parks Canada had been assigned.

We thought the community would have a say in the creation of what we wanted to call “the people's park”. I remember that at the first public consultation, as it was called, which happened at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus, the member of Parliament who had the largest piece of the current Rouge Park in their riding was not invited. That was me.

• (1325)

My constituency is home to the largest piece of the Rouge Park. However, when the government was holding public consultations, I was not even invited. I forced myself in to ensure I was there. This is the people's park. Did the Conservatives say that it is about consideration for future generations? I was the youngest person in the room, and I was not even invited. I make sure that my opinions, the opinions of my constituents, and the opinions of those who have been activists on the ground were brought forward at that meeting.

The whole idea of “the people's park” came from that first consultation. I know we will probably hear Conservative members say that there was plenty of consultation, but if we speak to residents who live in the vicinity of the park, they will not even know that these consultations took place because not much notice was given to them. There needs to be a thorough inclusion of the constituents who will be affected in the area surrounding this park.

Recently, since the tabling or announcement of this bill in the House on June 13, CPAWS, which is the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, has issued a quick reaction to the tabling of this. I want to read a excerpt from the group's reaction. It says:

CPAWS recognizes and supports the importance of Rouge National Urban Park in connecting urban Canadians to nature and encouraging them to become nature stewards. It is imperative, however, that conservation is prioritized in the park's legislation and management plan to ensure this remarkable natural area and its wildlife are not “loved to death” over time. Putting nature conservation first is also consistent with the international definition and guidance for protected areas.

On first glance, it's not clear if the Bill accomplishes this as it only requires the Minister to take the health of park ecosystems and wildlife “into consideration” in park management. We also note there is very little information provided about how agriculture will be managed in the park.

Government Orders

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society is concerned about the weak protection of the conservation of the park. It is the same point I mentioned about clause 6 of the bill, which states, “take into consideration the protection”.

The second issue the group identified was the agriculture in the area. We know that within the park boundaries, much of the land is leased to people for private interests. A lot of the agriculture and farming that happens in the parklands is cash-cropping. We know there is usage of pesticides, a concern for many environmentalists, activists and neighbours.

Residents whose water is drawn out of the watershed and who take their children to walk in the park are concerned about pesticides being used in a soon to be nationally protected park. That is a problem. We need to ensure that the agricultural development and investments in this community are done in a way that is sustainable. Also, we should be supporting organic farming or local community farming in Rouge Park. We want it to be known as “the people’s park”.

I want to mention one other item. The parliamentary secretary mentioned that a lot of consultation was done and that this was the largest the park could be. We know that is not true because this park can be 100 square kilometres. What is being proposed is that it would be North America’s largest urban park. Central Park is the largest as of now. We are going to make it bigger than that.

• (1330)

It is an historic moment for this country’s national parks. I agree. However, why do we not make it the best park it can be? Why does it have to be a mediocre one?

I want to read from a motion from the city of Toronto. The city council actually passed a motion. It was passed unanimously by the city councillors who were present. I will quote from the recommendations with respect to what Toronto city council wanted to make sure was respected and conserved in Rouge national park. City council wanted to encourage the federal government to:

Ensure that the concept, legislation and management plan for Rouge National Urban Park respects, strengthens and implements the vision, goals and objectives of the City approved Rouge Park Plans (1994 and 2001) and current Toronto Official Plan, the Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005) and the Rouge Natural Heritage Action Plan (2008); including incorporating the existing park vision

This is the current park vision:

the Rouge National Urban Park will be a special place of outstanding natural features and diverse cultural heritage in an urban-rural setting, protected and flourishing as an ecosystem in perpetuity. Human activities will exist in harmony with the natural values of the Park. The Park will be a sanctuary for nature and the human spirit

That sounds fabulous. I have so much more to say. The recommendations go on to say:

Respect conservation science, good planning principles and long term park ecological health and visitor potential, by including the 100+ km² public land assembly within the Rouge and Duffins Creek watersheds as part of the Rouge National Urban Park study area;

iii. Ensure restoration of a large mixed-wood and Carolinian forest habitat system linking Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine with public parkland and trails; and

iv. Include First Nations and other respected conservation NGOs on the Rouge National Urban Park Advisory Board.

The motion was passed unanimously by city council.

How does it make sense to create legislation to create Canada’s first national urban park but to also push forward and support a pipeline that goes through this park, and then, to make this even worse, to not protect the main waterway that goes through this park and has the pipeline cutting across it? How does that make sense?

I put forward one of my private member’s bills, Bill C-532, an act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act (Rouge River), to ensure that the Rouge River, from end to end, is a protected waterway so that the pipeline that cuts across it does not actually pollute the waterway, which is the main waterway for this entire Rouge park. It goes into the tributaries, the Little Rouge Creek, and the underground water tables.

How is it that the government seems to think it makes sense when creating a national urban park, and saying that it is protecting it with the most protection it has ever had in its history, to not protect the largest waterway that cuts through this park? The government supports having an oil pipeline that cuts through the park.

For about two years, there was exposed pipeline in the park. It took Enbridge, or the company that went to fix it, two weeks to set up to access the pipeline to fix it. Imagine if there were a disaster.

There are pieces in the bill about spills—

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Have you ever been to the park?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Jasper. What about Jasper?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Jasper.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Oh, Mr. Speaker, a Conservative member is heckling me and asking if I have been to the park. Of course I have. I go there and plant trees and bushes, and I take care of that park. I personally take care of Rouge Park.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I want to see deer.

• (1335)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I am one of the stewards of this park, and that is why I am saying that this bill is a good start, but we need to make sure we are protecting this park and making it the best park it can be.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was listening attentively to the presentation by my colleague. I have heard a lot of misinformation presented to the House regarding the park. She said she participates in many activities in the park. Unfortunately, I have not seen her very much. I go there. I live in the park.

I would like to ask my colleague if there is a difference between a national park and an urban national park. Does she think Highway 401 should not be in Rouge Park, that the 401 should be destroyed, and that they should block the entrance to the park to everyone but the NDP? I would ask her to tell me, please.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, it is really funny that the member would say that he does not see me in the park, because the one or two times he has been to the park, I was there. I do not understand what he means. However, it does not matter. Let us not talk about what he does or does not do. I want to talk about the park.

Government Orders

The park is very important to me. He says that I was giving misinformation here. I was reading from existing legislation. I was reading from the Canada National Parks Act, the Provincial Parks Act, the Rouge Park Management Plan, and the Greenbelt Plan. I was reading from the motion from city council, from a release that CPAWS put out, and from the legislation itself. The member said he was listening very hard. Maybe he missed the parts I quoted from the existing legislation and the legislation that is before us.

After he attacked and said I do not spend time in Rouge Park, which is a joke, he asked about the difference between a national park and an urban national park and if I feel the park does not need highways. My vision for this park is that it will be one that conserves and protects the natural habitat and ecosystems of this park while allowing the residents of the area to enjoy the park. It also means making sure that there is not a large oil spill and that the water system is protected.

• (1340)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I go to questions and comments, I would remind all hon. members that they should wait until their colleagues are finished their questions before standing. Standing up before their colleagues are finished does not increase your chances of being recognized; in fact, it decreases your chances of being recognized.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member about her participation in Rouge Park activities. Those who have been active in the last 25 years, groups like Save the Rouge Valley System, Friends of the Rouge Watershed, Lois James, Derek Lee, a former colleague, Pauline Browes, a former colleague of members opposite, and a whole variety of others appear not to be involved in, or have been specifically excluded from, the management plan of the park. I wonder whether she could comment on their apparent treatment.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, Lois James is known as the grandmother of the park, and the Friends of the Rouge Watershed are the ones who take care of a lot of the tree planting in the area. The activists and community members who care seem to be left out. Who was invited to the announcement about the Rouge Park legislation? All of the Conservatives' friends were invited to it, it seemed, but Friends of the Rouge Watershed was not. My office did not get notice that they were going to be making an announcement about it.

Of course, the announcement was made in Markham, but we know that Rouge Park affects multiple ridings in the area, and we need to make sure that we work together for the creation of Canada's first urban national park. People like the grandmother of the park, Lois James, need to be included in at least the visioning of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. While the Chair appreciates the assistance of hon. members in this place, it is in fact the responsibility of the Chair to try to manage the clock. I know it is getting near the end of the session, but interruptions and interventions from the floor are more likely to delay the business of this House rather than expedite it.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by commenting on the heckling from the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette when he was talking about wanting to see the deer in the park.

Deer are one of 27 mammal species in the park. There are 55 fish species, 19 reptile and amphibian species, and 762 plant species. Over a quarter of Ontario's flora can be found in the park, as well as 225 bird species, including 123 breeding species. Therefore, there is a lot to see in the park beyond deer.

I want to ask my hon. colleague about the absolute negligence of the changes that were made to the Navigable Waters Protection Act by making sure—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member across the way referred to me as making a comment, and I have yet to speak today, so I would ask him to retract it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): On the same point of order, the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, I was commenting on heckling by the member when he was not recognized by the Chair, not on a comment he made when he was. Maybe he might want to wait until he is recognized before he speaks up.

My question to my hon. colleague was about the negligence in the changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act that mean that there will not be stop valves placed on both sides of the line 9 pipeline when the reversal is made and why that could lead to potential spills down the road.

• (1345)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Scarborough Southwest is correct.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, would you like me to continue over these hecklers?

Mr. Leon Benoit: You have your own members heckling.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. Could all hon. members speak when they have the floor and refrain from doing so when they do not? If there is a discussion that needs to take place, members are obviously free to leave the chamber and do it outside the chamber.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I very much appreciate your getting the House to order.

My colleague from Scarborough Southwest is correct in stating that Rouge Park is home to many endangered species. I can list a lot too. It is home to 70 species of trees, 27 species of reptiles, and 20 species of amphibians. More rare species of plants and animals are within Rouge Park than in any other region in Canada. That is not me saying that. That is from research done by the Canadian Environmental Law Association.

Government Orders

To answer the question my hon. colleague asked, which was about the protection of the waterway and the changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act and the Migratory Birds Convention Act that were brought forward by the Conservative government in one of its many omnibus bills, they actually makes it not safe. It was probably in a budget bill. I really do not remember. The changes ensure that the Rouge River, which is the main waterway in Rouge Park, is not a protected waterway. There is a pipeline going through it, and we need to make sure that there are protective measures and that there are valves on each side of the river to stop the flow into the waterway.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest. I know that the New Democratic Party is anti- pipelines going anywhere. I do not know if the member is aware, but the Kinder Morgan pipeline goes through our beautiful Jasper National Park, and has for many years. I do not think there is anyone in the House who would say that Jasper National Park is not a phenomenal treasure. The Kinder Morgan pipeline supplies 90% of the gas to the Lower Mainland. It has gone through my riding for many years.

I would ask the member this. Is she saying that Jasper National Park is less of a park because it has a pipeline that has gone through it safely for over 60 years and that pipelines and protected and treasured areas cannot coexist?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I have not had a chance to visit Jasper National Park, so I look forward to visiting it one day.

Every single one of our national parks in this country is a treasure. Every single one needs to be protected. We need to ensure that every single one is ecologically sustainable and that its habitat is protected. I'm saying this should happen for every single park; I am not saying that one park is more important than the other.

However, for me, Rouge Park is going to be the most important because it is in my backyard. It is the park I go to most frequently, because it is my park. It is the park where I go to hang out. It is the park where I run and go for a walk. Hopefully, someday I will take my children or grandchildren to that park.

However, if it is not protected and if there is a spill in it, as happened in Kalamazoo, then my park, the river, the watershed, and the groundwater tables will be ruined. That is what I want to prevent.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to enter into this debate. In the interests of full disclosure, Rouge Park is very close to my riding as well, and I have taken my children and my grandchildren through the park from time to time, both in winter and summer, so I am quite familiar with this piece of real estate and am very pleased to see that we have moved to the point of presenting legislation. However, in typical fashion, the government seems to have a talent for taking good news and turning it into bad news.

I suppose it is only coincidental that after the northern gateway decision, we are now debating two park bills, the first with respect to Rouge Park and the second with respect to a park up in the Northwest Territories. It is only coincidental that the announcement about northern gateway and the discussion about parks happens

almost sequentially. It has nothing to do with trying to burnish the environmental creds of the government.

Before I go too much further, I want to acknowledge the 25-year effort by my colleague, Derek Lee, in conjunction with Pauline Browes, in advocating on the floor of the House for the park and the reservation of these lands, along with a number of citizens groups, Friends of the Rouge, Save the Rouge, WWF, COSCA, and of course the patron saint of the park, Lois James. I am certain that I have left out a number of NGOs and individuals who have been very important to why we are here today. Regrettably, they do not seem to be as involved in the potential management plan as they possibly should be, and I hope that once the dust settles here, the officials will think it over and see their way clear to incorporate them into the park management plan.

The interesting part of this proposal is that according to the bill itself, what is actually being incorporated into the park are three little pieces of property in Markham. When asked about this at the briefing yesterday, the Conservatives said they are actually in negotiation with three or four levels of government, a variety of conservation authorities, et cetera, but the way it is being presented by the parliamentary secretary and others is that this is 58 square kilometres. Actually it is not 58 square kilometres; it is about two or three acres. By the time the bill actually receives royal assent, it will still be two or three acres and the negotiations will have yet to be completed.

Why is this a concern? First of all, the Government of Canada can unilaterally transfer from the Department of Transport the lands under its control, but for whatever reason, it has not included those lands in this bill or in the schedule that would be attached to the bill. In addition, there are other airport lands that apparently might possibly be under negotiations and that are not included in the bill. Instead of 58 square kilometres, some people would like to see 100 square kilometres, going all the way up to the Oak Ridges Moraine, in order to protect a corridor for wildlife, et cetera.

It is in some respects, as far as a presentation of a piece of land is concerned, much less than what it appears. Take note of the contrast between the bill for the park in the Northwest Territories, whose name I dare not pronounce for fear of offending someone, and this bill. Half the bill, six or seven pages, actually goes to a metes and bounds description of the park itself. That is normally the way a park bill is presented. Bill S-5 is a proper presentation.

In terms of the schedule of the land being presented, the actual amounts are far less, and there is no guarantee that the lands in the presentation by the parliamentary secretary are in fact the lands that will be transferred.

● (1350)

There are two reasons for this. First, negotiations are negotiations and they may go somewhere differently than the government hopes they will. Second, there is no presentation of a plan for ecological protection. That is worth drawing attention to, because in normal park bills we have a specific clause in each and every bill. The specific clause says:

...a set of ecological integrity objectives and indicators and provisions for resource protection and restoration, zoning, visitor use, public awareness and performance evaluation, which shall be tabled in each House of Parliament.

There is no such inclusion in the clause. When I asked the officials yesterday why it was not in there, their reason was that this was a unique park. The reasoning actually does have some sense to it. As others have pointed out, Highway 401 goes over the park, as does Highway 2, and so do Steeles Avenue and Taunton Road, and there is also a huge hydro corridor through the park. Therefore, we cannot set up ecological metrics to evaluate the ecological performance of the park. What we are left with is a very vague clause in paragraph 6 of the bill. It states:

The Minister must, in the management of the Park, take into consideration the protection of its natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes and the maintenance of its native wildlife and of the health of those ecosystems.

“Take into consideration” is not a plan. Let me just sketch a scenario. The minister goes to the Province of Ontario and says, “We would like your thousand acres, or two thousand acres”—or whatever the number is—“and we want to know how you're going to manage this plan and this park.” The minister says, “Trust me.” Well, “trust me” does not cut it.

As far as I and anyone else in the House know, including the parliamentary secretary or the minister, we do not actually know how this park is going to be managed. If I am the Province of Ontario, or the Town of Markham, or the City of Toronto, I am going to be asking that rather fundamental question. I would say “No plan, no transfer.” I rather hope that it does not get held up on that. I hope there is a plan. I hope the ecological and cultural integrity of the park would be protected. However, “trust me” is not exactly a great answer when one is asking for thousands and thousands of acres to be transferred, which according to the government's numbers are supposed to amount to 58 square kilometres.

If in fact the government had some ecological or environmental integrity, one might actually say, “Okay, trust us. We will have a plan and we will fulfill this.” However, as we know, the government's environmental credibility is as about as rock bottom as rock bottom can be, so “trust me” is not exactly an answer when we are asking other levels of government to transfer thousands of acres to the park for what would otherwise be a very supportable proposition.

Again, why is this of greater concern? As others have alluded to, in the park there is what is called mono-cultural or industrial farming, and some of those farming practices are in clear contradiction to proper park management functions. One might say “Well, let's not worry about that, because we'll make sure, as we renew each lease and try to move it up to market value, that in fact we will assure the best farming practices.” When I raised that question yesterday, one of the members of the Conservative Party dismissed the concerns about neonicotinoids. Frankly, that stuff is of concern. Here we have Environment Canada and Parks Canada managing farms in the park, which should be held to the highest possible standards, to the best science we have available for farming practices.

● (1355)

The member just dismissed it: “I do not give a hoot about the bees. I do not give a hoot about the watershed. I do not give a hoot about

Statements by Members

the hiring practices. Just get my constituents the cheapest possible land for the longest period of time.” It does not inspire—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I must interrupt the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood at this point. The time for government orders has expired. The hon. member will have 10 minutes remaining when this matter returns before the House.

ROYAL ASSENT

● (1400)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

June 19, 2014

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, will proceed to the Senate chamber today, the 19th day of June, 2014, at 5:30 p.m., for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to certain bills of law.

Yours sincerely,

Patricia Jaton
Deputy Secretary

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday my wife and 10-year-old twins tied a blue-and-white ribbon to our maple tree on the front yard of our home. They did this as a symbol of solidarity with the three Israeli boys, Eyal Yifrah, 19, Gil-Ad Shaer, 16, and Naftali Fraenkel, 16, who were kidnapped by the terrorist group Hamas. This ribbon will remain until the terrorists release the boys and they are returned safely to their homes. The young boys were abducted last Thursday as they were trying to get rides home from their religious seminary for the Sabbath.

Although not claiming responsibility, the terrorist group Hamas has praised the kidnapping. In fact, it and its supporters have been calling for the kidnapping of Israelis for some time now. Meanwhile, those who call for the boys' safe return are holding prayer vigils.

I call on all people of good conscience who support freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law to condemn this reprehensible and deplorable act in the strongest possible terms. The Palestinian authorities must find and apprehend the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

Until the three young boys are returned safely to their homes, I urge all people, wherever they may live, to tie a blue-and-white ribbon to their home, office, or car in solidarity, just like my family has done.

*Statements by Members***REFUGEES**

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today as we mark World Refugee Day, it is a time of growing concern in the international community as the number of displaced persons around the world soars to a dramatic new high. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees places the number of worldwide displaced people at more than 46 million.

We simply cannot begin to quantify the human suffering, the broken families, and the destroyed childhoods and livelihoods that come with fleeing a war zone. To date, over two million people have fled the Syrian conflict since its beginning in 2011, making it one of the largest refugee exoduses in history. Syria is only part of the problem, with millions also displaced in Sudan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and others.

Canada has a great tradition of providing assistance to refugees in need, and the determination to overcome adversity of those who come to Canada overwhelmingly leads them to make a significant contribution to the new homeland.

On World Refugee Day, let us not forget that those living in relative comfort today may tomorrow find themselves knocking on a stranger's door looking for safety and shelter.

* * *

COUNTRY 107.3

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate Country 107.3 in Tillsonburg on winning the radio station of the year for a secondary market award at the 2014 Country Music Association of Ontario Awards.

The awards night was held in Markham on May 26 to recognize artists, producers, songs, and radio stations that encourage and promote Canadian country music. The winners were selected by members of the Country Music Association of Ontario, who voted for their top three choices in each category.

Country 107.3 beat some tough competition and came out winning due to its great promotion of Canadian talent through its music selections, community involvement, promotions, leadership, and recognition.

Country 107.3 is not only an asset for Oxford but also for all Canadians who love to see Canadian talent being displayed and recognized. I would like to once again congratulate everyone at Country 107.3 on their win and tell them to keep on being champions of Canadian country music.

* * *

CANADA'S TOP CHEF

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I extend my congratulations to Ottawa's own René Rodriguez, who was recently crowned Canada's top chef.

Following 10 weeks of televised culinary competition, this chef bested 13 other competitors, and amazed judges with his creations. His dishes, inspired by his Mexican roots and his love of the Basque region of Spain, involved a range of ingredients and highlighted his creativity. He calls the experience of competing in *Top Chef Canada*

an incredible journey. He also said it has helped him to grow not only as a chef but as a person.

After studying at Le Cordon Bleu in Ottawa and honing his skills at a range of restaurants, Mr. Rodriguez is now the owner and chef at Navarra restaurant in the ByWard Market in Ottawa—Vanier. At Navarra, both European and Mexican influences merge to create the unique and contemporary cuisine.

Ottawa is proud to offer some of the best and most diverse dining options in the country, with chefs like Mr. Rodriguez. Congratulations once again, and bon appétit.

* * *

● (1405)

CANADIAN FORCES HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, five years ago today, the Canadian Forces Health Services Centre Ottawa, which serves 10,000 Canadian Forces members in the national capital region, moved to the Montfort Hospital.

[Translation]

It was all made possible by the Government of Canada's investment of nearly \$200 million over 20 years.

Our government has helped the Montfort Hospital shine and survive. It is a beacon for the Ontario francophonie.

[English]

More than 98% of all wounded taken to the Kandahar airfield hospital survived their wounds. This is a rate of success unmatched by our allies or our enemies in any war in history. Those health professionals are now here at the Montfort Hospital.

The relocation of Canadian Forces health care personnel to Montfort Hospital is yet more tangible evidence of the incremental approach adopted by the Canadian Forces Health Services with a goal of choosing projects that enable it to work closely with its community partners.

[Translation]

Happy anniversary to the Montfort and the Canadian Forces Health Services Centre Ottawa.

* * *

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today on behalf of all New Democrats across the country to recognize National Aboriginal Day on June 21.

Over the past year, the Métis Nation won recognition as Indians under the Constitution; the Inuit fought for a Nunavut food security strategy and action plan, and first nations won specific land claims.

Statements by Members

However, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples wrote a scathing report on how successive federal governments have not lived up to our obligations.

It has been a year when legislation was rammed through Parliament and ignored the rights of first nations. Resource projects are stalled across the country because of a lack of a coherent plan for consultation. There is a better way.

Consultation is not a roadblock to economic development. The government must sit down and negotiate a protocol that puts consultation at the beginning of resource development projects, not at the end.

Industry is creating successful partnerships with aboriginal peoples who want resource development on their territories, and they want their own citizens to reap the benefits through jobs and business opportunities.

Government needs to drop its colonial attitude and join the 21st century.

* * *

SCHOOL GRADUATIONS

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this time of year is a very special time for the young women and men graduating from secondary schools as well as grade schools.

Tomorrow morning I have the special privilege of participating in the commencement ceremony for T.L. Kennedy Secondary School in my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville, which will be honouring 170 students who are graduating.

I would like to acknowledge T.L. Kennedy's principal, Mr. Paul Freier, and vice-principals Rosemary Stiglic, Mark Botnick, and Brent Serebrin, along with the entire staff for their roles in the lives of these young people. We should also congratulate the students' parents, grandparents, caregivers, and relatives, who all share in these special moments.

To all who will be graduating as part of the class of 2014, my very best wishes on this special occasion.

Finally, I would like to ask my colleagues in the House to join me in thanking and congratulating all teachers and faculty members across our country for their hard work and success this school year.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL PEACE GARDEN

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the International Peace Garden, which lies on the Canada-U.S. border south of Boissevain and Brandon in southwestern Manitoba.

The International Peace Garden was officially opened in 1932 and continues to welcome visitors from across the continent and around the world. It represents the incredible relationship we hold with our southern neighbours and has flourished as a centre for students to share their ideas and to participate in international music or the Royal Canadian Legion athletic camps.

The Peace Garden spans over 2,300 acres and now has over 75,000 perennials that continue to grow and develop each and every year. The sheer beauty of the Peace Tower surrounded by the natural prairie landscape is a sight to behold. Visitors will feel a sense of calm and welcome. While they walk the garden grounds, they will in fact be in the United States and Canada at the same time.

I welcome all members and Canadians from across the country to visit the International Peace Garden if they are ever in friendly Manitoba. It will be a visit that will be long remembered.

* * *

WORLDPRIDE HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, next week members of the LGBTQ community from across the world will assemble in Toronto for WorldPride. Hundreds of LGBTQ leaders and activists will come together for the WorldPride Human Rights Conference, ranging from the world's first openly gay head of government, former Icelandic prime minister Johanna Sigurdardottir, to activists who bravely struggle against homophobia every day on the front lines. Hundreds of thousands more will attend the WorldPride parade on June 29.

New Democrats want to recognize today the tremendous work of the organizers in putting together WorldPride, and in particular the work of Brenda Cossman and Doug Kerr as co-chairs of the Human Rights Conference.

Today we also acknowledge the willingness of the government to work with us and conference organizers to secure visas for participants whose applications were initially denied. I want to recognize in particular the effective behind-the-scenes work by my colleague from Toronto—Danforth on these files.

While Canada has moved a long way down the road to full equality for the LGBTQ community, there is more Canada can do both at home and abroad. However, for today, I would like to ask all hon. members to join me in welcoming WorldPride to Canada.

* * *

● (1410)

AGREEMENT ON INTERNAL TRADE

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is, has been, and always will be a free-trading country. However, the frustrating reality is that it is often easier to trade internationally than it is to trade within Canada. That is why the Agreement on Internal Trade was created 20 years ago. It was to work toward breaking down the crippling barriers that hinder our economy and hurt Canadian businesses.

Statements by Members

Progress on internal trade has been too slow and unambitious to prepare Canada for the reality of today's global economy. That is why the Minister of Industry is in Halifax today, starting his cross-country tour so that he can hear first-hand from businesses and community leaders how the federal government can better work with provinces and territories to break down these barriers.

It should not be easier to trade with other countries than within our own borders. The Agreement on Internal Trade must be updated to reflect our new economic reality. The time for action is now, and there has never been a better time to start than today.

* * *

[Translation]

CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this year the Festival Âges et Culture is celebrating its 20th anniversary. This festival is taking place from June 6 to 23 in my riding, La Pointe-de-l'Île. It has two commendable objectives: to promote the many facets of Québécois culture and to use art to bring generations together. Over the years, the festival's organizers have created a vibrant, inter-generational event that unifies our community.

With diverse cultural programming, Mercier-Est is the place to be in eastern Montreal for these three weeks. There are participatory activities, exhibits that showcase local talent, and indoor and outdoor shows featuring both well-known and up-and-coming artists.

I would like to congratulate the organizers, the many volunteers, and all of the local businesses that are involved in the 20th annual Festival Âges et Culture. Thank you to all of those who have been contributing to this successful event for decades and who are making La Pointe-de-l'Île even more vibrant.

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[English]

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the leader of the Liberal Party tried to say that Canadians just could not understand his nuanced position on marijuana. He tried to say that he will not put illegal narcotics in convenience stores and that this was all just a big misunderstanding.

However, the very same day, the so-called “queen of pot”, Jodie Emery, announced that she had been approached by the Liberal Party to run as a candidate in Vancouver East. She explained that the reason she wanted to run as a Liberal candidate was to show that the Liberals are serious about smoking marijuana as a normal, everyday Canadian activity. In her own words, “It would basically be to say, ‘The Liberals support legalization’.”

As a mother, I am shocked by the reckless plan being put forward by the leader of the Liberal Party. Our Conservative government will continue to crack down on criminals and drug dealers, unlike the leader of the Liberal Party, who continues to try to push dangerous and illegal drugs on our children.

DAIRY FARMING

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the importance of our dairy farmers. Our 12,000 dairy farms produce wholesome and affordable products and create hundreds of thousands of jobs for Canadians. One of the reasons they are successful is our supply management system. Canadian dairy farmers sell almost eight billion litres of milk annually through processors and contribute over \$16 billion to our GDP.

Many of my colleagues in the House know me as a vegetable farmer, but I can milk a cow. Last summer the Cape Breton farmers exhibition featured the dairy industry and held a milking competition, which I participated in. The MacIntyre Farm in my riding helped me improve my skills.

Members of the House, and all Canadians, should visit a dairy farm this summer and see not only how milk is produced but also the love and care provided to the cows that produce the milk. Most importantly, we should keep the fridge full of milk, yogourt, and cheese, and of course enjoy the best treat of summer with some real Canadian ice cream.

* * *

●(1415)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to advance the most ambitious pro-trade plan in Canadian history. It is a plan that will create jobs and economic opportunities for hard-working Canadians.

Last week the Minister of International Trade tabled the text of the Canada-Korea Free Trade Agreement in the House. It is a landmark agreement that gives Canadian businesses access to an important Asian market.

This evening we will also see Bill C-20, the Canada-Honduras economic growth and prosperity act, receive royal assent. The NDP voted against this free trade agreement every step of the way. That is no surprise. It has voted against all free trade agreements and there is no sign that it will be stopping that trend any time soon.

I am proud of our government's record on trade. We have reached agreements with 38 countries; over 13 years, the Liberals reached agreements with just three countries. Maybe they think that trade agreements just sign themselves.

* * *

NORTHERN GATEWAY PIPELINE

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the 21 Conservative MPs from British Columbia have disappeared from the face of the earth. They are hiding from their constituents because of the Conservatives' disastrous approval of the northern gateway pipeline. Not a single Conservative minister from B.C. will explain the decision. The natural resources minister's spokesperson even went so far as to say the government had not actually approved it; it was just a “maybe”.

Oral Questions

An approval by the cabinet is an approval by the cabinet. Approving this pipeline puts 45,000 British Columbia coastal jobs at risk.

How did we get here? Well, the Prime Minister removed all of the real barriers to the project by gutting environmental bills in one of his earlier omnibus budget bills.

How can the Prime Minister possibly deny that he stacked the deck in favour of the pipeline? More than 35 years after the Berger report, more than 25 years after *Exxon Valdez*, Conservatives still do not understand the basics of pipelines and tankers.

In 2015, an NDP government will set aside this grotesque decision.

* * *

SEALERS MEMORIAL STATUE

Mr. Robert Goguen (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today in the town of Elliston, Newfoundland and Labrador, the unveiling of the Home From the Sea Sealers Memorial Statue will take place. My colleague, the member for Miramichi, is there today.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the 1914 Newfoundland sealing disaster in which we lost over 250 sealers in the North Atlantic from the *SS Newfoundland* and from the sinking of the *SS Southern Cross*.

It is important that we take the time to remember the lives lost on that day, including Reuben Crewe and his son Albert John, who passed away together on the ice and whose memorial statue will stand as a testament to the hardy and dangerous work done by sealers on the ice every spring.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have always been in favour of the northern gateway pipeline, but ever since they announced that they will allow Enbridge to destroy the fragile ecosystem along the northern coast of British Columbia, they have been doing everything they can to distance themselves from the pipeline project they just approved. A spokesperson for the minister even said that the government did not say “yes”; it said “maybe”.

Will the Conservatives respect those British Columbians who have said no to Enbridge? Will Conservative Party members represent their constituents, yes, no or maybe?

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear that projects will only move forward if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

Our decision is based on the conclusions of an independent science-based review panel. We have imposed 209 stringent

conditions to ensure this project meets the highest safety standards. The panel heard from nearly 1,500 participants in 21 communities and reviewed over 175,000 pages of evidence.

The proponent clearly has more work to do with communities along the route.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is only one thorough thing about this whole process, and it is that the Conservatives have thoroughly bungled it.

From environmental protection to first nations consultation to community involvement, in every sector the government has failed, and each time it turns around and blames the company.

The minister said, “The proponent clearly has more work to do in order to fulfill the public commitment it has made to engage with Aboriginal groups and local communities along the route”, but who is responsible for this? The government is. Does the government really not understand that consulting with the public and first nations is the government's responsibility?

● (1420)

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, aboriginal consultation is part of the review process. There were 72 days of hearings for aboriginal groups to share their knowledge, including traditional knowledge, and their views on this issue. In fact, 41 first nations were financed to enhance their participation in the review, and there were a range of views among those groups.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is continual disrespect for B.C.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister keeps saying that Enbridge will carry out thorough consultations with first nations. That is not Enbridge's job; that is the crown's job. In other words, it is the government's job. The Conservatives will alienate aboriginal people across the country and will end up preventing other energy-related projects that depend on good relations with first nations from ever seeing the light of day.

Why is this government not listening to British Columbia first nations? Why?

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is working to build a stronger relationship with Canada's first nations. Our response to the Eyford report is a first step to building stronger relationships with first nations.

The natural resources sector is the largest private employer of first nations people in Canada. First nations have benefited and will continue to benefit and contribute as full partners in the development of our natural resources.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, mistrust for this government is already so profound.

Oral Questions

First nations in Canada, particularly those on Canada's west coast, have deep animosity toward the government, and it will only be made worse by the government trying to force Enbridge northern gateway down their throats. So determined are Conservatives to poison this already fragile relationship that they are willing to sacrifice tens of billions of dollars of other development in mining and in LNG for the sake of one bad oil pipeline.

Twenty-one B.C. Conservatives have shamefully allowed their government to ram through Enbridge northern gateway against the wishes of British Columbia. However, maybe they found their courage overnight. Will one Conservative B.C. MP stand up and defend Enbridge northern gateway?

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, our decision is based on the conclusions of an independent science-based review panel. After carefully reviewing the report, the government is accepting the recommendation to impose 209 conditions on the project.

Our government has always been clear that projects will only be approved if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, B.C. Conservative MPs' silence on Enbridge as speaking volumes to their lack of courage and their lack of faith in their own government's decision. Perhaps they know that this toxic project is toxic politics in British Columbia.

I remember the days when Conservatives insisted that Ottawa should never impose energy projects on western Canada without the agreement of western Canadians. Then along came northern gateway. These guys could not rubber-stamp it fast enough, while completely ignoring the people of British Columbia.

The Conservatives promised to change Ottawa, but I guess it was Ottawa that ended up changing Conservatives.

Last chance: does any B.C. Conservative MP, any of them, want to stand up and defend this pipeline publicly for once?

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our decision is based on the conclusions of an independent science-based review panel.

We have imposed 209 stringent conditions to ensure this project meets the highest safety standards. The panel heard from nearly 1,500 participants in 21 communities, and reviewed over 175,000 pages of evidence. The proponent clearly has more work to do with communities along the route.

* * *

JUSTICE

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice recently made remarks to the Ontario Bar Association that were so strikingly sexist that lawyers there described them as offensive.

As one of the many mothers of young children in this House, I wonder whether the minister believes that we, too, should be intimidated by the old boys' network. Does the minister think that we, too, should stay at home because of our special maternal bond with our young children?

Will the minister apologize for his blatant chauvinism?

• (1425)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that, of course, is a complete mischaracterization of what I said, what I think, how I act, and who I am.

In fact, with respect to judicial appointments, they are based on one criterion and one criterion only, and that is merit and judicial excellence.

With respect to minorities and women being promoted to the judiciary, I think we can all agree that government of course plays an important role in that, but so too do law schools, so too do law societies. That is exactly the message I was bringing to the Ontario Bar Association.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of the Ontario Bar Association described the Minister of Justice's recent fifties rant as disappointing, bizarre, frustrating, and offensive.

As a parent, daughter, and granddaughter of women who worked full time, and as the critic for aboriginal affairs, I ask the minister to apologize to all Canadians for blaming motherhood for his abject failure to ensure that the Federal Court reflects the diversity of the society it is entrusted to judge.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all I can say is what I have already indicated, that that is of course a complete misrepresentation of what I said.

As a son, as a father, that is the last thing I would ever do. What I was doing was completely the opposite, in encouraging women to apply more readily to our judiciary.

That, of course, is done through a process, as the member knows. Appointments are made at the recommendation of the 17 judicial advisory committees across the country. Since 2006, I am extremely proud to inform the House that we have appointed 182 excellent women to the superior and appeal courts of this country.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice's comments are the latest salvo in the Conservatives' war on modernity.

This is more than just their attitude. It is their Archie Bunker-inspired policies. Whether it is killing national early learning and child care or their regressive income-splitting policy, the Conservatives just do not get the modern family.

Oral Questions

When will the government realize that Ward and June Cleaver are dead? When will they stop trying to drag Canada back to the 1950s?

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear that this government has demonstrated leadership on this file outstandingly; in fact, our Prime Minister has.

We know that whether it be GIC appointments or whether it be the public service, our numbers have escalated since we became government. Whether it be 31% of our GIC appointments and growing are women, or 37% of the leadership roles in the public service in this government and growing are women, we have taken action on this. Our Prime Minister has been a leader on this. I encourage the others to get on board.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice has resorted to making up facts to justify his badly written, unconstitutional bill on cyberbullying.

The Supreme Court clearly said no to access to personal information without a warrant. The Privacy Commissioner, whom the Conservatives say is an authority on the subject, has stated that this ruling invalidates the principles underlying Bill C-13. The bill must be split to stop cyberbullying and maintain the right to privacy.

Will the minister abide by the Supreme Court's ruling or not?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we always do. We always respect the Supreme Court. We always respect the decisions. The reality here is the Supreme Court's decision clearly stated that the Criminal Code provisions dealing with voluntary disclosure and immunity do not provide legal authority for access to information without a warrant. As our government has continually said, those provisions regarding voluntary disclosure and immunity do not provide legal authority for access to information without a warrant. This is nothing new.

We respect the decision. It reinforces the position of the government and we will move forward with Bill C-13.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he said, "I always respect the decision of the Supreme Court." When the government gets a decision that it does not like from the court, the Conservatives ignore it altogether, they make stuff up, or they attack the courts.

The Supreme Court was clear. Collecting personal data without a warrant, something the minister has defended, is in fact unconstitutional. Instead of respecting that decision, he turned around and misled the House and claimed it as a victory. Well, he is wrong.

Will the minister now accept that the only legal way to protect our children and respect legitimate privacy rights is to split Bill C-13?

• (1430)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I disagree and of course that is not what the Supreme Court said. The Supreme Court has stated and has

supported the government's position that provisions regarding voluntary disclosure and immunity do not provide legal authority for access to information without a warrant.

While I am on my feet, I want to congratulate the police in Halifax, who today announced the results of Operation Snapshot III, which led to the rescue of five children from sexual exploitation and 150 people charged. Since 2012, the national child exploitation coordination centre has identified more than 45,000 instances of child exploitation.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, dinosaurs still walk among us.

According to the Minister of Justice, there are not enough women and visible minorities in the top jobs in our courts because they do not apply for those positions. Instead they stay home with their children because they have a greater bond with them.

Why does the president of the old boys' club not try to achieve gender equality in our courts instead of talking nonsense?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are doing. We are encouraging more women to apply. We are encouraging more women to go through the judicial advisory council, which I am proud to say has resulted in 182 women at the superior court and appeal court level.

Further to that, I am extremely proud that our government appointed the first female Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal of Quebec and the first Haitian Canadian woman of the Quebec court. We are going to continue to appoint able women to the bench because they deserve to be there.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier today the minister doubled down on his comments, saying that women have a greater bond with their children. Well, women have babies. This is not news. What is news is the minister's disrespectful attitude, his government's failure to accept responsibility for the appointment of women and minorities to the courts. The Minister of Justice is blaming them for not applying. I am not looking for an apology here. Can the minister outline what actions he is taking and has already taken to ensure our courts are more representative of our communities?

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is what I have just said. We are in fact seeing more qualified, capable women based on merit appointed to our courts. For example, four vacancies were just filled in Alberta by four highly qualified women. Two vacancies were filled by two highly qualified women in Ontario. In British Columbia, there were two out of four recently appointed in November, qualified excellent judicial appointments. Two from Quebec, highly qualified, merit based appointments and one, just one that was available last week in the member's home province of Nova Scotia, filled by a highly qualified excellent judicial appointment.

* * *

LOBBYING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it looks like the Minister of Justice is an extra on the TV show *Father Knows Best*.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for York Centre, who is a member of the Standing Committee on Finance, holds a partisan fundraiser and invites bankers and lobbyists who are looking for favours from the Department of Finance.

To entice them, he uses the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the Minister of Industry. Personally, I do not see the appeal.

It is not surprising to later see the Conservatives support projects like northern gateway in order to help their lobbyist friends and make them happy, instead of standing up for the public interest.

When will the Conservatives stop making backroom deals with lobbyists?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was this government that brought in the Federal Accountability Act, which removed the influence of big unions and big corporate donations from the political process. We know, of course, that the NDP did break that when it accepted some \$350,000 worth of union donations.

Of course, we expect that all members will follow the rules when it comes to fundraising events. I do note that the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie is probably among those 21 members of the NDP who owe a significant amount of money to the taxpayers of Canada. I hope that he and his other 20 colleagues will do the right thing and pay back the \$1.17 million.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. These types of interruptions do take away time and I would hate to have to make that up further down the list.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay has the floor.

• (1435)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the member for York Centre was launching a full-out assault

on the independence of the offices of the ethics and lobbying commissioners, he was using his presence on the finance committee to fill his electoral war chest by hitting up lobbyists who were trying to influence him. He cannot do that. Section 14(1) of the Conflict of Interest Code is clear. Members cannot accept financial gifts in the form of tickets to fundraisers from lobbyists when they knock on their doors.

The member was paid by lobbyists for the petroleum, financial, and car industries. Did he recuse himself from any of the meetings in the finance committee that dealt with these interests?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, this is the government that brought in the Federal Accountability Act as one of our first measures, which removed the influence of big unions and corporate donations from the political process, something we are very proud of. Of course, we expect that all members of the House of Commons will host events and follow the rules.

At the same time, we know that the NDP accepted \$350,000 worth of illegal campaign donations to their big union friends. It is also ironic to hear this member talk about ethics when it was he who was singled out by the boundary redistribution commission as trying to gerrymander his riding. I think he should think about that and encourage his friends to repay the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, watching the government stand up for ethics is like watching a wrestling promoter stand up for good, clean, honest fun.

We know what the oil lobby bought when the government gave it northern gateway. Let us look at what the member for York Centre's tickets bought for these lobbyists: access to the government House leader, the Minister of State for Democratic Reform, and the Minister of International Development.

My question is to the government House leader, who attended this event. Does he stand behind these kinds of secret deals with lobbyists? Does he stand behind that?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just mentioned, it was this government that brought in the Federal Accountability Act to remove the influence of big money and big unions from the political process. As I said, we expect that all members will follow the rules when hosting fundraisers and other activities.

We know, of course, that the members for Welland, Pierrefonds—Dollard, Gatineau, Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, Hochelaga, Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Chambly—Borduas, Sherbrooke, Nickel Belt, Saint-Lambert, Halifax, Abitibi—Témiscamingue, Outremont, Vaudreuil-Soulanges, Laval, Scarborough—Rouge River, Toronto—Danforth, Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine are among the NDP who owe taxpayers more than \$1.17 million.

*Oral Questions***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Veterans Affairs is once again insulting Canada's veterans. As Sean Bruyey said, he is now making our wounded veterans out to be greedy whiners and complainers. It is just despicable. The minister bragged they get up to \$10,000 per month, but no one knows where that number comes from or how anyone would qualify for it.

Why does the minister insist on disrespecting our veterans? Will he at least now, finally, apologize?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly, that member did not read the article and if she did, obviously relied on certain facts that are not complete.

In fact, the average, and I stress “average”, monthly financial benefits available to an injured veteran may be anywhere in the area from \$4,000 to \$6,000 a month and, indeed, veterans are receiving in excess of \$10,000 a month in total income and support from the Government of Canada. The member should know her facts because she and her party voted against all these benefits.

[Translation]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister would have Canadians believe that our veterans are rolling in money when he says that some veterans can receive as much as \$10,000 a month.

The fact is that only four seriously wounded veterans are getting those types of benefits. The minister's half-truths are outrageous. Many of our veterans are living in poverty. Most of them are constantly fighting with Veterans Affairs, and most of the time they have to wait.

Will the minister have the decency to apologize?

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is quite an ironic scenario. The complaint is totally unfounded, especially so when we look at the consistent voting record of the NDP, voting against operational stress injury clinics, voting against the establishment of the Veterans Ombudsman and the veterans bill of rights, voting against independence housekeeping and grounds maintenance for veterans, and voting against funding for the provision of home care for veterans.

New Democrats voted against all of those, and I have another list. I could go on and on.

* * *

• (1440)

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week we were treated to the sad and sorry spectacle of the Minister of Finance traipsing through Ontario, criticizing the premier during the election campaign. The premier won; the meddling minister lost.

Specifically, he gave free lectures on balancing budgets, neatly ignoring the fact that he and his government know nothing about balancing budgets. To add to the hypocrisy, the PBO estimates that

the Government of Canada shortchanged the people of Ontario by \$1.2 billion.

Why does the Government of Canada not skip the lectures, write the cheque, and concentrate on getting its own house in order?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that member knows that federal support to Ontario has increased by 76% since our government took office. Federal support to Ontario will total over \$19.1 billion in 2014-15, a whopping \$8.3 billion increase since the Liberal government was in power.

We are also helping Ontario on the road back to becoming a “have” province, by making key investments in Ontario's auto sector, manufacturing sector, and much more.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the most efficient way to create jobs is through infrastructure investment. David Dodge, the World Economic Forum, the Australians, and the British, they all get this.

The FCM says the Building Canada fund is rife with red tape. It will cost property taxpayers way more money.

Now provincial ministers of finance are unanimous, blasting the minister for confusion, delays, and misinformation. No contribution agreements have been signed, not one. No shovels are in the ground. Projects are delayed.

It is June 19. Jobs are on the line. What are the Conservatives waiting for?

Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): I will begin by suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that this Conservative government has no lessons to take from Liberals with respect to infrastructure investments.

Since 2006, our investments in infrastructure have nearly tripled. Moving forward, those record investments will continue: over \$53 billion in stable, predictable funding.

There are no framework agreements. Yes, that is correct. There are no framework agreements because none are required. Let us get the job done.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, B. C.'s Premier Christy Clark is clear that the northern gateway pipeline does not meet her five conditions.

Despite that, the Conservatives have given the thumbs up to this risky proposal to run a pipeline clear through the heart of the province's wilderness and send massive supertankers along our treacherous coast.

Oral Questions

B.C.'s Conservative MPs can run, but they cannot hide from their own government's bad decision. How could the Minister of Industry, the regional minister for B.C., possibly support this Conservative cabinet's approval of this dangerous project, dangerous for the environment, dangerous for the economy, and contrary to the wishes of British Columbians?

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our decision is based on the conclusions of an independent, science-based review panel. We have imposed 209 stringent conditions to ensure this project meets the highest safety standards.

The panel heard from nearly 1,500 participants in 21 communities and reviewed more than 175,000 pages of evidence.

The proponent clearly has more work to do with communities along the route.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Blood Tribe is already suing the government for its failure to provide safe drinking water for the reserve. On top of that, the tribe is now suffering under yet another catastrophic flood, issuing a state of emergency with warnings not to use water from cisterns that may be contaminated.

The past two auditors general have chastised the government for failure to resolve federal roles or to allocate adequate funding for natural disasters in first nations.

Alberta's Siksika felt abandoned after last year's flood. How many more first nations will be left stranded until the government finally takes real action?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the truth and the facts do not bear out the statements made by that hon. member.

We are working in close co-operation with the Government of Alberta and with the affected first nations to address the issues that have arisen because of this flooding, for which the government is not responsible, by the way. I have checked with Environment Canada and it cannot do anything about it.

Therefore, we will keep working with the province and the first nations to ensure that the health and safety of those inhabitants is protected.

• (1445)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, talking about facts, the fact is that a year after the flood, more than 100 people are still living in hotels. The temporary neighbourhoods that were supposed to be in place 60 days after the flood are still not ready. That simply is not good enough.

The government would never tolerate these kinds of delays in neighbouring communities, so why are families in Siksika still waiting for homes? It is the minister's responsibility. Why does he not get the job done?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, we are working

in close co-operation with the Province of Alberta and the first nations that are affected by these floods. Everything is being done to ensure the health and safety of those inhabitants.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Employment and Social Development has been promising to fix the temporary foreign worker program for months, but the mess drags on. No penalties are being applied, no employers are being blacklisted, there is no independent review, and there is no fix to the mess the Conservatives have made of this program.

While businesses from various sectors complain about the uncertainty the Conservatives' mismanagement has created, why are they still leaving it to the media, the workers, and the unions to investigate abuses and problems with this program?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for her consistency, because every single assertion in her question was wrong. She did not have a single fact correct.

For example, this government has added several employers to the new strengthened blacklist. We have referred several cases to the Border Services Agency for criminal investigation.

Let us peel back the onion here. When the member said that businesses are complaining about uncertainty, that is the way that the opposition parties are narrowcasting a different message to constituents who are employers who want more and faster access to the program. Here they pretend they are against it; with their constituents they pretend they are for the program.

This government will fix the program. We will mend it, not end it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government, which has cut labour market research and prefers to google data, would have us believe that it can correct the problems with the temporary foreign worker program even though it has lost all credibility.

After ignoring the abuses by some employers and allowing Canadian workers to be replaced with cheap labour, how can the Conservative government believe that we will trust it to fix the temporary foreign worker program, a program that it botched?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the member has it all wrong. In fact, it was the Conservative government that created the blacklist and added the names of bad employers. That was the first time that was done. It was the Conservative government that initiated criminal investigations of employer fraud. It was also this government that added new powers in a bill, resulting in sanctions for bad employers. In the near future, we will add other sanctions for bad employers who abuse the program.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with Russia's ongoing military interference in Ukraine as well as new NATO reports confirming additional troop buildup near the Ukrainian border, the eyes of the world are focused squarely on Russian military activity. Our government has been clear that we stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. At the same time, there is no greater priority than defending Canadian borders and our sovereignty.

My question is for the Minister of National Defence. Can he update the House regarding Russian activity in the Arctic and what measures the government is taking to protect Canadian sovereignty?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot comment specifically on operational matters, but I can confirm to the House that, yes, we continue to see Russian military activity in the Arctic. The Canadian Armed Forces remain ready and able to respond. In fact, the Royal Canadian Air Force CF-18s were dispatched in recent days in response to Russian aircraft movements.

NORAD has intercepted in excess of 50 Russian military aircraft over the last five years. This clearly demonstrates both our capacity to respond and the need for ongoing vigilance. We will continue to work with our allies to defend Canadian sovereignty.

* * *

● (1450)

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the sad state of infrastructure and the road congestion in urban centres like Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver cost billions of dollars in economic losses.

It has been over a year since the Conservatives made their Building Canada fund announcement, but the provinces and municipalities are saying that the process to apply for funds is still unclear.

How does the minister explain this lack of clarity and these delays?

[English]

Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Building Canada

fund is open for business. The new Building Canada fund includes the provincial and territorial infrastructure component. This is where municipalities can apply for projects. They initially apply to provinces. Provinces establish these processes. Why? It is so that the provinces can identify their own infrastructure priorities. Applications are being received. One has already been approved. It is a major transit project in Edmonton. We are getting the job done.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, au contraire. Infrastructure is crumbling in Toronto, and all we get from this Conservative red tape brigade is more uncertainty and delay.

Thanks to the PBO, we finally do have some certainty on Conservative cuts to equalization payments. The Conservatives pulled the rug out from under Ontario. They changed the rules and are now shortchanging the province by \$1.2 billion. These cuts will hurt Ontario families and will make us less competitive. Why is the minister undermining the fiscal stability of our biggest province?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ontario will receive over \$19.1 billion in federal transfers this year, a whopping increase of 76% from under the old Liberal government.

I want to read a quote. It says:

...[the Prime Minister] made a deliberate effort to bring a principle-based approach to...equalization and federal transfers.... We are very much in agreement with that kind of approach....

Who said that? It was former Liberal Ontario premier Dalton McGuinty.

* * *

TRANSPORT

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the recall of vehicles with unsafe ignition switches continues to grow. Over three million cars were added this week. U.S. Congressional hearings are seeking answers about why GM failed to act sooner and how the problem slipped past regulators.

However, in Canada, the minister is not getting to the bottom of things and the Conservatives have even blocked attempts to study the issue. Does the minister really think Canadians do not deserve more answers on a safety defect that cost at least 13 lives?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, car companies in our country are required to notify Transport Canada of any defects and process the recall as soon as they are aware of them. We have no information that would seem to make us have a conclusion other than the one that GM issued its recall here in Canada when it received its information.

That being said, we continue to monitor the situation in the United States, and if we do see that GM Canada had information prior to the recall we, of course, would take the appropriate steps.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the United States Congress grilled GM over its lax approach to safety and recalls.

American legislators want to know what happened and what measures have been taken to prevent this from happening again. Canadians also want answers.

Why are the Conservatives refusing to examine this problem in parliamentary committee?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, GM Canada learned of the defect and the recall exactly when it issued its recall in accordance with our act.

That being said, we continue to monitor what is happening in the United States. If there is any information that would lead us to believe that GM Canada knew prior to that, of course, we would investigate and continue to ensure that we would prosecute to the fullest extent of the law.

* * *

• (1455)

*[Translation]***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the so-called roadmap for official languages is a sham. No new money has been allocated to this plan. The government even cut \$120 million from assistance to communities.

Nevertheless, the government could at least deliver the existing programs. Complaints are coming in from all over. Literacy, training, and social partnerships are all stalled, and communities cannot wait any longer.

What is the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages doing? It is her responsibility to wake this government up and get it moving.

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I said the same thing yesterday. I will say it again so the member understands.

[English]

The road map for official languages is the most complete fund that we have ever had in our country. It is \$1.1 billion. This is a fund that will provide to our official language communities in a way that has never been done before, including under that member's government.

We continue to push forward with getting these funds out of the door. My colleagues are doing everything in their power to do so, because they care about these communities.

I would ask the member to please assist us in ensuring that if he has information regarding some funds that are lapsing, then let us know.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the minister tried to justify spending tens of millions of dollars more on advertisements and commemorations, instead of programs and services, by telling Canadians about all of the veterans who received \$10,000 a month in benefits. There are four who receive that amount. That is less than 1% of seriously injured veterans. Most get much less.

It is insulting to veterans to justify wasteful advertising spending by trying to make it sound like, somehow, they just won the lottery.

When will he stop running away from our veterans and finally provide them with the care they desperately need and deserve?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that does not make it true. I will say again. The average monthly financial benefit an injured veteran may be eligible for is between \$4,000 and \$6,000 a month. As I said at committee, some injured veterans are receiving a total income that exceeds \$10,000 a month. This is in addition to rehabilitation and other supports from our government to help them transition to civilian life. That is the truth.

* * *

*[Translation]***HEALTH**

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives proclaim loud and clear that Canada is a leader in maternal health, but in reality, aboriginal women in Canada do not have access to the support they need.

We recently learned that a maternal health program managed by the first nations and set up on 14 Manitoba reserves will soon lose all of its funding, even though assessments show that the program is effective.

Could the minister explain why she wants to put an end to the funding for this essential program?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has committed over \$2.4 billion every year to programs and services aimed at improving aboriginal health, including 24/7 access to essential nursing services in 77 remote communities and home and community care in 686 first nations and Inuit communities.

We have also committed to excellent projects on the ground every year. These are things like the teddy bear fairs on reserve, which provide cognitive and development screening for children 0-6 years of age and the head start on reserve program, which nurtures the health growth of children from birth to 6 years.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about maternal health here. The NDP fully supports maternal health overseas, but women in Canada need support too.

According to Statistics Canada, the infant mortality rate among first nations in Manitoba is approximately twice that of the general population. That is completely unacceptable.

Will the minister reverse the decision and maintain funding for this vital maternal health program, yes or no?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, the member knows that we transfer over to \$30 billion a year to the provinces and territories to deliver health. On top of that, we are delivering an additional \$2.5 billion directly to first nations for programs and services aimed specifically at exactly what she is talking about.

Let me tell her about the brighter futures program, which involves activities supporting improved mental health, child development, parenting skills and healthy babies. A very successful program across the country, the aboriginal head start on reserve program, nurtures the healthy growth and development of children from birth to 6 years of age by meeting their social, health, nutritional, cultural and psychological needs.

We will continue to work on this issue.

* * *

● (1500)

PARKS CANADA

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the recent launch of the national conservation plan by our Prime Minister makes a commitment to connect Canadians to nature, particularly people living in urban areas. The problem is there are no national urban parks in Canada. What is our government doing to make this a reality?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to say that we have tabled a bill in the House recently that would create the Rouge national urban park in the greater Toronto area. The park is near 20% of Canada's population, enabling Canadians to connect with nature, culture and agriculture, without having to travel far from their homes. This park would be 16 times larger than Central Park in New York City. This action has been taken by our Conservative government to make this happen.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, instability continues in the Central African Republic. Over 140,000 people have been killed, and fighting has left 2.5 million in need of humanitarian aid.

On Monday, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs told the House that while Canada would not be sending troops to CAR, “there are other ways” Canada would support the UN mission. Our allies have made specific commitments.

Exactly in what other ways will the government support the UN mission?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is the ninth largest contributor to the UN's peacekeeping budget and supports the UN, French and African Union efforts in this crisis.

Oral Questions

In the last two years, as well, we have provided over \$23 million in assistance to help meet the widespread humanitarian needs and over \$5 million to the efforts by the African Union and France to restore security in the area. That includes \$6.5 million for humanitarian assistance, \$5 million for security and another \$16 million for humanitarian assistance later in the year.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Royal Society expert panel on the review of Safety Code 6 released its report a month ago and recommended that more research was needed into the health risks of radio frequency fields. Consumers and health advocates are demanding more information and safeguards to reduce exposure to harmful radiation and to investigate radiation hypersensitivity.

How does the Minister of Health plan to follow up on the concerns coming from the public and the Royal Society's recommendations?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, we have already committed to hosting public consultations on any revised safety standards. We do appreciate the work of the Royal Society and we thank it for its report.

The member should know that Canada's limits are similar to those of other countries around the world, such as the United States, Australia, the European Union and Japan. Canadians should be confident that our limits are some of the strongest science-based standards in the world.

However, we will continue to review the Royal Society's recommendations and we will take all necessary actions to protect Canadians and their families.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Governor General will grant royal assent to the fair elections act, which will require all voters to present a physical copy of their ID proving who they are before they vote. Identity vouching is gone and so is the use of unpaid loans to get around donation limits.

Could the minister comment on how the fair elections act will keep everyday Canadians in charge of democracy?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with royal assent, the fair elections act will be enacted today. Identification will now be mandatory in order to vote.

[English]

With today's royal sanction, we have finally and happily achieved the fair elections act, and it will be passed into law.

Government Orders

We will have royal assent. We will have a requirement for physical ID every time someone votes. No longer will politicians be able to use loans to get around donation limits. We will have independent investigations. It is fair, it is reasonable and, as of today, it will be the law.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, federal employees are boycotting National Public Service Week once again this year.

The week, which is intended to recognize the importance of the public service, no longer has any meaning, since the Conservatives have cut 19,000 public service jobs and are promising to cut even more. Public servants lament the contemptuous attitude of this government, which prefers to govern based on its own ideology.

When will the Conservatives stop turning their noses up at the excellent work done by the 400,000 federal public servants?

● (1505)

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to a modern and high-performing public service that gets results for Canadian taxpayers. In fact, our government is getting results while making the public service more effective and efficient.

[English]

For example, there is \$3,400 less in taxes per year for the average Canadian family and a balanced budget in 2015.

If the member opposite would like to ask a follow-up question, I have a whole list of things that are good for Canadians.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this is a question for the Prime Minister of critical importance for federal-provincial relations and jurisdiction.

If the Premier of British Columbia continues to maintain that British Columbians and the Government of British Columbia reject Enbridge's twin toxic pipelines, will the Prime Minister agree to rescind approval and respect the province of British Columbia's jurisdiction and the collective will of British Columbians, or does he intend to force it down our throats?

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear that projects will only move forward if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment. After carefully reviewing the independent regulator's report, the government accepts the recommendation to impose 209 conditions on the project. It will be up to the proponent to show the regulator and Canadians that those conditions have been met.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

RESPECT FOR COMMUNITIES ACT

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

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 the second reading stage of Bill C-2.

Call in the members.

[Translation]

The vote is on the motion.

● (1515)

[English]

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

(Division No. 223)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Ablonczy | Adler |
| Aglukkaq | Albas |
| Albrecht | Alexander |
| Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac) | Allison |
| Ambler | Ambrose |
| Anders | Anderson |
| Armstrong | Ashfield |
| Aspin | Bateman |
| Benoit | Bergen |
| Bernier | Bezan |
| Blaney | Block |
| Boughen | Braid |
| Brown (Newmarket—Aurora) | Brown (Barrie) |
| Butt | Calandra |
| Calkins | Cannan |
| Carmichael | Carrie |
| Chisu | Chong |
| Clarke | Crockatt |
| Daniel | Davidson |
| Dechert | Devolin |
| Dreeshen | Duncan (Vancouver Island North) |
| Dykstra | Falk |
| Fantino | Findlay (Delta—Richmond East) |
| Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Fletcher |
| Galipeau | Gallant |
| Gill | Glover |
| Goguen | Goldring |
| Gosal | Gourde |
| Grewal | Hawn |
| Hayes | Hiebert |
| Hoback | Holder |
| James | Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission) |
| Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's) | Kenney (Calgary Southeast) |
| Kerr | Komarnicki |
| Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings) | Lake |
| Lauzon | Leef |
| Leitch | Lemieux |
| Leung | Lizon |
| Lobb | Lukiwski |
| Lunney | MacKay (Central Nova) |
| MacKenzie | Maguire |
| McColeman | McLeod |
| Menegakis | Miller |
| Moore (Fundy Royal) | Nicholson |
| Norlock | O'Connor |
| Opitz | O'Toole |
| Paradis | Payne |
| Poilievre | Preston |

*Government Orders***PROHIBITING CLUSTER MUNITIONS ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, An Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-6.

● (1520)

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

(Division No. 224)

Raitt
Reid
Richards
Seeback
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Tilson
Troost
Valcourt
Van Loan
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 131

Rajotte
Rempel
Schellenberger
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Allen (Welland) | Angus |
| Atamanenko | Aubin |
| Bélangier | Bennett |
| Benskin | Bevington |
| Blanchette | Blanchette-Lamothe |
| Boulerice | Boutin-Sweet |
| Brahmi | Brisson |
| Brosseau | Caron |
| Casey | Cash |
| Chicoine | Christopherson |
| Cleary | Comartin |
| Côté | Crowder |
| Cullen | Davies (Vancouver East) |
| Day | Dewar |
| Dion | Dionne Labelle |
| Donnelly | Doré Lefebvre |
| Dubé | Dubourg |
| Duncan (Etobicoke North) | Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) |
| Dusseau | Eyking |
| Freeland | Garrison |
| Genest | Genest-Jourdain |
| Giguère | Godin |
| Gravelle | Groguhé |
| Harris (Scarborough Southwest) | Harris (St. John's East) |
| Hsu | Hughes |
| Julian | Larose |
| Latendresse | Laverdière |
| LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard) | Leslie |
| Liu | MacAulay |
| Mai | Marston |
| Martin | Mathysen |
| May | McCallum |
| McGuinty | McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood) |
| Michaud | Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue) |
| Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord) | Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine) |
| Morin (Laurentides—Labelle) | Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot) |
| Murray | Nantel |
| Nash | Nicholls |
| Nunez-Melo | Pacetti |
| Papillon | Pilon |
| Quach | Rafferty |
| Rankin | Ravignat |
| Raynault | Saganash |
| Sandhu | Scarpaleggia |
| Scott | Sitsabaiesan |
| St-Denis | Stewart |
| Sullivan | Thibeault |
| Tremblay | Trudeau |
| Tumel | Valeriotte— 98 |

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

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

YEAS

Members

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Ablonczy | Adler |
| Aglukkaq | Albas |
| Albrecht | Alexander |
| Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac) | Allison |
| Ambler | Ambrose |
| Anderson | Armstrong |
| Ashfield | Aspin |
| Bateman | Benoit |
| Bergen | Bernier |
| Bezan | Blaney |
| Block | Boughen |
| Braid | Brown (Newmarket—Aurora) |
| Brown (Barrie) | Butt |
| Calandra | Calkins |
| Cannan | Carmichael |
| Carrie | Chisu |
| Chong | Clarke |
| Crockatt | Daniel |
| Davidson | Dechert |
| Devolin | Dreeshen |
| Duncan (Vancouver Island North) | Dykstra |
| Falk | Fantino |
| Findlay (Delta—Richmond East) | Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) |
| Fletcher | Galipeau |
| Gallant | Gill |
| Glover | Goguen |
| Goldring | Gosal |
| Gourde | Grewal |
| Hawn | Hayes |
| Hiebert | Hoback |
| Holder | James |
| Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission) | Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's) |
| Kenney (Calgary Southeast) | Kerr |
| Komarnicki | Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings) |
| Lake | Lauzon |
| Leaf | Leitch |
| Lemieux | Leung |
| Lizon | Lobb |
| Lukiwski | Lunney |
| MacKay (Central Nova) | MacKenzie |
| Maguire | McColeman |
| McLeod | Menegakis |
| Miller | Moore (Fundy Royal) |
| Nicholson | Norlock |
| O'Connor | Opitz |
| O'Toole | Paradis |
| Payne | Poilievre |
| Preston | Raitt |
| Rajotte | Reid |
| Rempel | Richards |
| Schellenberger | Seeback |
| Shipley | Shory |
| Smith | Sopuck |
| Sorenson | Stanton |
| Sweet | Tilson |
| Toet | Troost |
| Trottier | Valcourt |
| Van Kesteren | Van Loan |
| Wallace | Warawa |
| Warkentin | Watson |

Business of the House

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country) | |
| Weston (Saint John) | |
| Wilks | Williamson |
| Wong | Woodworth |
| Yelich | Young (Oakville) |
| Young (Vancouver South) | Zimmer — 130 |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Allen (Welland) | Angus |
| Atamanenko | Aubin |
| Bélangier | Bennett |
| Benskin | Bevington |
| Blanchette | Blanchette-Lamothe |
| Boulerice | Boutin-Sweet |
| Brahmi | Brisson |
| Brosseau | Caron |
| Casey | Cash |
| Chicoine | Christopherson |
| Cleary | Comartin |
| Côté | Crowder |
| Cullen | Davies (Vancouver East) |
| Day | Dewar |
| Dion | Dionne Labelle |
| Donnelly | Doré Lefebvre |
| Dubé | Dubourg |
| Duncan (Etobicoke North) | Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) |
| Dusseauit | Eyking |
| Freeland | Garrison |
| Genest | Genest-Jourdain |
| Giguère | Godin |
| Goodale | Gravelle |
| Groguhé | Harris (Scarborough Southwest) |
| Harris (St. John's East) | Hsu |
| Hughes | Julian |
| Larose | Latendresse |
| Laverdière | LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard) |
| Leslie | Liu |
| MacAulay | Mai |
| Marston | Martin |
| Mathysen | May |
| McCallum | McGuinty |
| McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood) | Michaud |
| Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue) | Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord) |
| Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine) | Morin (Laurentides—Labelle) |
| Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot) | Murray |
| Nantel | Nash |
| Nicholls | Nunez-Melo |
| Pacetti | Papillon |
| Pilon | Quach |
| Rafferty | Rankin |
| Ravignat | Raynault |
| Saganash | Sandhu |
| Scarpaleggia | Scott |
| Sitsabaiesan | St-Denis |
| Stewart | Sullivan |
| Thibeault | Tremblay |
| Trudeau | Turmel — 98 |

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since this is the last Thursday statement before we break tomorrow for the summer, I would first like to pay tribute to the NDP caucus. For the past four weeks, we have been having evening sittings. The Conservatives and the Liberals missed about 200 opportunities to speak. However, the NDP members were always there for their shifts. What is more, they did the job of the Conservatives

and the Liberals. The NDP has a strong and extraordinary caucus. I want to recognize the hardest working caucus that Parliament has ever seen.

I am not finished because I also want to say that I really appreciate the work of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. He is very knowledgeable and has a lot of energy. I hope he has a good summer. I would also like to thank the House Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Beauséjour, who has a lot of experience as an MP and as the House leader of the Liberal Party. I wish both of them a good summer.

As my colleague from Hamilton Mountain did two years ago, I would also like to recognize all those who keep the House running. Canadians watching at home might not realize it, but there is a huge network of talented and professional staff who work tirelessly to make this place run like clockwork.

First, there is you, Mr. Speaker, and your staff, along with the procedural experts in the clerks' offices, the table, the journals branch, the committee directorate staff, the Library of Parliament staff and, of course, all of our incredible pages, who do a wonderful job.

There is the Sergeant-at-Arms and everyone from security, as well as traffic operations, the drivers of our green buses, dispatch operators, mail room staff and messengers.

There is the cafeteria staff and the food services and catering team.

There is the maintenance staff, the tradespeople in the Parliamentary precinct, materiel management and room allocation.

There is everyone in information services, including telecom, ISSI, printing services and the broadcasting team.

There are the people who deal with HR, finance, travel and pay and benefits.

There are the folks at *Hansard* who transcribe and edit all of our words and those who translate and interpret them from one official language to the other. Given that the NDP is a bilingual caucus, we really appreciate all the work that is done by the interpreters and translators.

[English]

The official opposition wishes to one and all a happy summer with lots of door-knocking.

[Translation]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after this proceeding, we will start the second reading debate on Bill C-21, the Red Tape Reduction Act. I know that my hon. friend, the President of the Treasury Board—a man with firm views on paper documents—is very keen to get this debate started.

Business of the House

Tonight, after private members' hour, the House will resume the third reading debate on Bill C-8, the Combating Counterfeit Products Act. Once that is done, I look forward to picking up where we left off this morning with second reading of two bills to create new parks: Bill C-40, An Act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park, in the greater Toronto area, and Bill S-5, which will establish a new national park reserve in the Northwest Territories.

● (1525)

[*English*]

If we have time left before midnight, we will continue debating Bill C-35, the justice for animals in service act, or Quanto's law; Bill C-26, the tougher penalties for child predators act; Bill C3, the safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act; and Bill C-21 if we do not finish that by 5:30 today.

Tomorrow will be the sixth and final day of second reading debate on Bill C-32, the victims bill of rights act, a bill that, despite lengthy debate, all parties agree should be studied by our hard-working justice committee.

However, the highlight of this week will of course come later this afternoon. The Usher of the Black Rod will knock on the door and summon us to attend the Governor General in the Senate chamber where, with the three constituent elements of Parliament assembled, we will participate in the ancient ceremony of royal assent.

Based on messages read from the other place, and messages I anticipate later this afternoon, 14 new laws will be made upon His Excellency's imperceptible, or barely perceptible, nod. This will mark a total of 25 bills passing through the entire legislative process since October's Speech from the Throne. Of these, 20% are private members' bills, further underscoring the unprecedented empowerment of members of Parliament under this Prime Minister's government.

Speaking of the time passing since October, we are also marking the end of the academic year. This means the end of the time with this year's fine class of pages. Here I know that some in the chattering classes have concerns about the length of my weekly business statements, but I hope they will forgive mine today.

As we all know, the pages work extremely hard and do some incredible work, both in the chamber and in the lobbies. They perform many important duties, which in some cases go unnoticed, or at least so they think. They show up before the House opens each morning and stay until after it closes at night. We all know that over the past few weeks, it has meant much longer days than usual, but even then, the pages have remained professional, respectful, and have started each day with a smile, and ended it with one too, although that occasionally required a bit of encouragement on my part.

I would first off like to thank them for their service. Without them and their support, members of Parliament would not be nearly as effective and efficient in performing the duties that Canadians sent us to Ottawa to undertake.

I do have some insight from being married to a former page, from the class of '87 actually, and she often refers to her year as a page as the best year of her life. Here I can say that the experiences the pages

have had at the House of Commons is something they will remember for the rest of their lives.

In addition, I know that in my wife's case, some of the friends she made in the page program are still good friends to this day, including, in fact, the chief of staff to the current leader of the Liberal Party. I hope that will be the same for all of you, that is being friends for life—not that other thing.

I am sure that the pages are looking forward to the summer break so they can all take their minds off of school and visit with friends and family to share their many stories and experiences, some of which are even funny, with us here in the House. I will not be surprised one day if we find some of them occupying seats in this chamber, something that happened for the first time in this Parliament with the hon. members for Etobicoke—Lakeshore and Mississauga—Brampton South, both having been elected to sit here in this Parliament.

Some of the pages may also find employment on Parliament Hill working for members, and I know that I have, without fail, been impressed by the high calibre of ambitious young people who have worked in my office during stints as page.

Over the past three years, the House has worked in a productive, orderly, and hard-working manner, and this has not been possible without the help of the pages. I believe it is safe to say that I speak on behalf of all members of the House when I thank them for their dedication and service, and finally, give them our best wishes for success in all their future endeavours.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Of course, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not join my counterpart in giving thanks to your fellow chair occupants, the clerks at the table, and the countless staff behind the scenes who support all that we do here, especially all that we did during the four weeks of extended sitting hours. On behalf of the government and the Conservative caucus, I thank them.

With respect to the schedule of business before the House during the week of September 15, I will ensure that we will, through the usual channels, advise my counterparts of what that will be.

In closing, I want to wish all hon. members and everybody in this place all the best for a happy and restful summer, and I regret that I have no motion to present at this time.

● (1530)

The Speaker: I would like to thank both the opposition House leader and the government House leader, and of course our hard-working pages to whom I extend my own words of thanks. I have got to know quite a few of them over the course of the year and they are, as both House leaders indicated, a very professional and dedicated group of young individuals who, I am sure, have bright futures ahead of them.

The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel on a point of order.

Government Orders

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the pages on behalf of the Liberal Party. I thank the staff, the personnel, and my colleagues as well. I know it has been tough sitting until midnight, and sometimes later. I thank everybody involved in making this place run, including you, Mr. Speaker, and all your personnel, and obviously our personnel.

On behalf of the Liberal Party, I would like to wish everybody, not a merry Christmas, but a good summer.

* * *

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT

Hon. Michelle Rempel (for the President of the Treasury Board) moved that Bill C-21, An Act to control the administrative burden that regulations impose on businesses, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to speak in support of this ground-breaking legislation to reduce red tape, one of the first of its kind in the world.

The legislation before us would put strict controls on the growth of regulatory red tape by enshrining the one-for-one rule in law, which means that in order to change it, the government of the day would have to go to Parliament.

The one-for-one rule is the centrepiece of our package of regulatory reforms aimed at cutting red tape that can stifle businesses' productivity and their overall success. Under the rule, regulators must offset any administrative burden that increases from regulatory changes with equal reductions in existing regulation. That is not all. When a brand new regulation is introduced that adds to the administrative burden, an existing regulation must also be repealed. We have been implementing the one-for-one rule since April 1, 2012 through the cabinet directive on regulatory management. However, we are definitely not stopping there.

With the bill before us today, Canada would be the first country in the world to give the one-for-one rule the added muscle of legislation. This would make it one of the most aggressive red tape reduction measures in the world. The health, safety, and security of Canadians would still be protected. In fact, the preamble of this bill is very clear that the one-for-one rule must not compromise health, public safety, or the Canadian economy.

After more than two years of experience, we know that the rule is working. Before we look at the success of this measure and of our entire package of regulatory reforms, I want to talk first about why reducing red tape is so important.

Red tape impacts the livelihoods of all Canadians. It directly affects our ability as a country to create jobs, to grow, to innovate, and to compete. There is a direct connection between red tape and our long-term prosperity. Unnecessary red tape puts a wrench in the smooth flow of trade and bogs down the dynamic exchange of goods and services that is the lifeblood of a healthy economy. It also costs. A 2008 study by Statistics Canada reported that the cost to comply with the information obligations of 12 of the most common federal, provincial, and municipal regulations in five sectors of the economy

worked out to a stunning \$1.1 billion per year. In that same year, the Canada Revenue Agency calculated that the average annual time spent per establishment to comply with legislative tax requirements was 15 hours, at an annual average cost of \$1,724.

As the Prime Minister has stated, red tape is a hidden tax and a silent killer of jobs. It is a cost business owners, who are already competing tooth and nail, simply cannot afford. We know this because our Prime Minister had the foresight to launch the Red Tape Reduction Commission in January 2011. The Prime Minister asked the commission to identify irritants to business that have clear detrimental effects on growth, competitiveness, and innovation. The commission was also asked to recommend ways to address those irritants and to reduce the compliance burden on a lasting basis, without compromising the environment or the health, safety, and security of Canadians.

For a year, the commission criss-crossed the country, talking to companies, small-business owners, and associations like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business about what most frustrated them and what they would like to see changed. It hosted a total of 15 round-table sessions in 13 cities, attracting some 200 participants. There was also an online consultation and a dedicated website. Hundreds of ideas were shared, and our red tape reduction action plan, with the one-for-one rule as its cornerstone, is the result.

• (1535)

It is my honour today to share with the House how successful the implementation of the rule has been. During its first year of implementation, the one-for-one rule provided successful system-wide control of regulatory red tape impacting business. As of June 1, 2014, under the rule we had reduced the administrative burden by over \$20 million and had achieved a net reduction of 19 regulations.

Allow me to demonstrate by way of a few examples.

Statistics Canada has amended regulations under the Corporations Returns Act used to collect financial and ownership information on corporations conducting business in Canada. With these changes, only corporations with revenues of more than \$200 million, assets worth more than \$600 million, or foreign debt and equity of more than \$1 million will have to report financial and ownership information. As a result, more than 32,000 businesses will no longer be required to fill out a complex government return. We expect that this will reduce the administrative burden by about \$1.2 million a year.

Here is another example. Employment and Social Development Canada is reducing the red tape burden and the cost to business by repealing a set of regulations that imposed unnecessary administrative requirements on construction companies awarded federal government contracts. With these changes, the estimated annual savings for business is more than \$900,000.

Government Orders

We are also seeing savings at Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, which has undertaken a project to modernize the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Mining Regulations. The proposal was recently pre-published in *The Canada Gazette* part I and will result in estimated annual savings for business of more than \$600,000.

It is estimated that to date, the application of the one-for-one rule has saved businesses well in excess of 100,000 hours per year in time spent dealing with regulatory red tape.

Treasury Board enforces compliance with the rule, and I am pleased to report that compliance has been strong.

With these kind of results and more than two years of experience under our belts, it is time to make the rule a permanent feature of the federal regulatory system.

The Prime Minister has endorsed the one-for-one rule. The 2013 Speech from the Throne committed our government to putting the rule into law, and with the bill before us, we are delivering on that commitment. With this legislation, we are sending a clear signal that our government has an unmatched resolve to cut regulatory red tape for business while continuing to ensure the protection of Canadians and our environment. What is more, this legislation would backstop the one-for-one rule with a strong commitment to transparency and accountability through annual public reporting on its implementation.

We are not the only ones who think enshrining the one-for-one rule in law is a good idea. Here is a quote from Laura Jones, the executive vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, “The government implemented the one-for-one rule last year. Legislating it shows they are really serious about regulatory reform. It’s important because it makes it much harder to undo.”

Cutting red tape and making regulatory processes as pain-free as possible is one of the most important things government can do to help Canadian businesses thrive, particularly in this time of global economic uncertainty. That is why the red tape reduction action plan gets rid of business irritants in areas such as payroll, labour, and trade and introduces time-saving measures like a single window and electronic submissions.

• (1540)

The red tape reduction action plan, which is being rolled out over three years, is one of the most far-reaching and ambitious red-tape-cutting initiatives in the world today. It encompasses a half-dozen fundamental systemic reforms in the way government regulates as well as some 90 specific changes individual departments will undertake.

Allow me to highlight the systemic reforms that are truly game changers for doing business in Canada. I have already spoken about the one-for-one rule, which has successfully controlled and even reduced the administrative burden in Canada, but I am pleased to add that our action plan also ensures that the needs and concerns of small businesses are considered when we regulate.

We are talking about businesses with fewer than 100 employees or with between \$30,000 and \$5 million in annual gross revenues.

These businesses represent over 40% of Canada's private sector GDP and almost 50% of all the jobs in the private sector.

Small businesses are at the heart of Canada's entrepreneurial drive, yet because of their more limited resources, small businesses often feel the weight of the regulatory burden more acutely than others. We are tackling that reality by requiring regulators to use the small business lens for regulations that have a significant impact on small business. That will happen when a regulatory change imposes over \$1 million in annual nationwide costs and has an impact on at least one small business.

Regulators now have to put themselves in the place of small business when they regulate. They have to ask themselves these questions: Is the information we are asking them for already being collected by another government department? Is there another way to regulate that is less burdensome? Most important, are we communicating in plain and understandable language?

I also want to emphasize that the burden of proof is not on business. It is up to the regulators to prove that they have done everything they can to minimize the costs for small business. All in all, there are 20 small business checklists that regulators have to fill out, publish, and have signed by their ministers as part of the submission package. This ensures that the impacts of new regulations on small businesses are considered in the earliest stages of design, and, if need be, are mitigated.

Because departments will have to post these completed checklists online, small-business owners will be able to judge for themselves how effectively the government is minimizing the regulatory burden. The one-for-one rule and the small business lens will bring a new discipline to how government regulates and how it is creating a more predictable environment for businesses.

This is part of our broader commitment under the red tape reduction action plan to improve service and become more accountable. We are introducing service standards for high-volume regulatory licensing, permitting, and certification processes. Businesses will now know how long they have to wait to receive these decisions.

As a former business owner, I have to interject that certainty is crucial to business potential. If entrepreneurs see opportunity, they must have certainty when they strike out. Specific timelines will help small businesses the most. Departments will publish these time-frames on their websites, and they will have to report on their website whether these targets are being met or not. For all these authorizations, businesses will also have access to a feedback mechanism they can use to register a complaint.

I am pleased to report that so far regulators have created service standards for 24 of these high-volume regulatory licensing, permitting, and certification processes, which cover more than 60,000 transactions with business each year.

Government Orders

• (1545)

One of the things that businesses often complain about is being surprised by unexpected changes to regulations that impact their investment plans. As part of the action plan, we are addressing that by requiring regulators to publish forward regulatory plans. These plans would identify anticipated regulatory changes over the next 24-month period. Business and consumers would be given an early warning of the government's intention to regulate. It gives that all-important predictability that they need to plan. It also allows businesses and consumers to provide their input into the design of new regulations.

Again, regulators are delivering, and so far, 32 forward regulatory plans from departments have been posted. In these plans, regulators have to identify if they expect the one-for-one rule and the small business lens to apply.

Treasury Board Secretariat is making it easy for business to find these plans through its government-wide roll-up page. That is to ensure that Canadians and Canadian businesses have a heads-up on regulatory changes that are of interest to them. I encourage all businesses to stay abreast of these anticipated regulatory changes and to get involved in these consultations to make sure they are designed with their input.

None of these commitments are worth anything and an action plan is only a pile of paper unless we can prove we are fulfilling our promises, which is why we are keeping scrupulous track of just how much red tape we are cutting.

In January, the President of the Treasury Board had the honour of releasing the first annual scorecard on the red tape reduction action plan, so Canadians can know just how much progress we are making. The scorecard reports on system-wide changes to the regulatory system, particularly on the implementation of the one-for-one rule, service standards, forward planning and, of course, the small business lens. The scorecard is vetted by a regulatory advisory committee, and yearly results are provided to the Auditor General. These external business and consumer experts have reviewed the report, provided their unvarnished advice on its fairness and reliability, and endorsed it as a reasonable account of the progress made.

These are some of the top regulatory reforms in our action plan. Taken together, our government's red tape reduction action plan ensures that cutting red tape is part of the government's DNA. It goes further than we have ever gone before to meet the needs of business and to be accountable when we regulate, and it cements Canada's reputation as one of the best places in the world to do business and invest.

Tackling regulation is just one of the many fronts we are working on to create the conditions for businesses to succeed. From fiscal to tax policy, from regulation to immigration, we are empowering businesses to make the most of what they can be, but most importantly, collectively, to make the most of what Canada can be.

Our government understands that the way to create jobs and growth is to reduce barriers for businesses, not raise them. The bill before us today does that. It frees businesses to do what they do best: innovate, invest, grow and, of course, create jobs, which means it is a

bill that would benefit all Canadians. That is why I strongly encourage all members to support the bill moving forward.

• (1550)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the speech from my colleague; however, I have a question for him.

We regularly speak to people across Canada. I know that many of the small businesses in British Columbia are in the fishing and tourism sectors. I know from reading a letter from a gentleman from Penticton, Lloyd Creech, they are worried about the menace to the small businesses in fishing and tourism due to the approval of the northern gateway pipeline.

The government waited until the eleventh hour to do something for small and medium businesses. It spent the past two years concentrating on helping the oil lobby approve this terrible pipeline through British Columbia, against the interests of British Columbians.

Even though we are supporting this bill at second reading, I would like the member to comment on the worries that small businesses have because of the approval of the northern gateway pipeline in British Columbia.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, what I would start with first is I think it behooves this country and all Canadians to have a process in place to take advantage, the best advantage for everyone, of the estimated \$650 billion of potential investment that can come through responsible resource development.

We need to have a process to separate the wheat from the chaff so that we know what projects can go ahead that are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

I have heard from people in my riding, some who advocate for the pipeline, some who advocate for its denial. Ultimately, we want to see jobs and the economy grow. When I talked to Mayor Litke at Penticton City Hall, he spoke of the need for infrastructure. Councillor Jakubeit has said that small businesses need to have a strong environment for them to grow.

The Red Tape Reduction Commission that travelled all across this country, 15 cities, 200 people, all those round tables, actually heard from British Columbia that we need to see interprovincial barriers to wine removed. Bill C-311 actually opened up that interprovincial transit of wine. This comes back to our strong steps on regulatory red tape.

We are supporting Canadians. We are making sure that good things happen for Canadian businesses.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his speech, but given the somewhat self-satisfied tone, one would think the Conservatives had created heaven on earth in this area, when in fact, for each carefully selected example of reduced red tape, we can come up with one or two of increased red tape. I will name two quickly, both in immigration.

Government Orders

In terms of waiting time for citizenship, the bureaucracy is such that the waiting time has doubled to two and a half years. If anyone has the misfortune of filling out this huge residency questionnaire, it goes up years and years more.

Perhaps even more telling, Mexican officials say that Canada is the hardest country in the western world for Mexicans to come into given the enormous amount of red tape surrounding the government's visa system.

Canadian officials take away passports when other countries do not. Canadian officials, by the department's own admission, have a stack of documents they have to fill in, way worse than other countries and with questions that are totally irrelevant. It has cost the tourism industry hundreds of millions of dollars. It has damaged business and diplomatic relations with Mexico simply because the government is drowning the Mexican tourist and individual entry system in red tape.

How can the member talk about reducing red tape when he is doing exactly the opposite in a very important area of public policy?

• (1555)

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, the approach the government is taking is to acknowledge the impact of red tape on all Canadians, particularly Canadian businesses, and that when government seeks to regulate, it should find the level of regulation that has the least amount of burden on businesses.

When a new regulation goes in, one of equal value has to come out, and this is done by a monetizing system to make sure that compliance is not onerous.

The member is part of a party which, when it had power, put the immigration system in such a state that Canadian businesses could not count on it and the backlogs were quite huge.

I think all Canadians want to ensure that when government puts things in place it recognizes that the Canadian taxpayer cannot end up paying for it.

We are recognizing that red tape has a cost. We are trying to take the burden off as much as possible. We are also making sure that we are accountable to taxpayers.

If the member had listened to my speech, he would see how the accountability mechanisms are very clear and even he could find them on the website.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to speak at a utilities forum in Washington, DC. Prior to my speech, there was an entire panel devoted to lamenting the regulatory state in the United States because of some of the issues that my colleagues brought up, including non-predictability, such as new regulations affecting capital investments, because it becomes a new determinant to capital investment. Also, there is the cost of not reviewing regulations on a regular basis, because there can actually be overlapping regulations which increase the compliance burden to industry.

I am wondering if my colleague could speak specifically to how this particular bill could actually provide a competitive advantage for foreign direct investment into this country, because we will have a

predictable regulatory review system. As well, perhaps he could speak to how the ongoing review of regulations can actually provide a better economy, because we have a clearer system by which industry can see that regulations are reviewed for efficacy on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the minister for her work in making sure that our economy in the west is diversified and strong.

First of all, as I mentioned in my speech, the passage of this particular piece of legislation would send a signal that Canada is open for business and that we recognize there are legitimate costs that are borne by small and large businesses when the federal government regulates.

Again, I would go back to the three questions that the small business lens will ask.

Is the information we are asking for already being collected by another government department? This would reduce red tape.

Is there another way to regulate that is less burdensome? There are many ways to skin a cat, and I think this bill acknowledges that we should be looking at other options.

Are we communicating in plain language? Small business owners do not have time to research every rule. They need common-sense language so that they can know what they are doing.

Last, for foreign direct investment, nothing says opportunity than having low taxes and having an educated, strong workforce, but they also need to have regulatory certainty.

In British Columbia we have developed a number of coal mines. I have heard that Australian companies are looking at Canada because of our low taxes, because we have coal that they can mine, but also because of our regulatory certainty. They know that this government understands their needs and will regulate so that they and Canadians benefit, that their health and safety is protected, and that there are jobs and economic growth in British Columbia.

• (1600)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the preamble to the bill suggests that the only exceptions to this rule would be in cases where public health and safety or the Canadian economy are affected. Which one would win when it is both? If we are making a regulation for public health and safety, but to make that regulation would hurt, say, a railway company, which in turn would hurt the Canadian economy, do we then abandon the regulation? Which one would win?

Government Orders

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the one-for-one rule does not apply to areas of the Minister of Finance, so they can make sure that our regulations are strong in regard to the economy and on health and safety. Let us just take a step back. This is not the actual regulation of those areas. This is the compliance. For example, one could have a piece of paper with 20 pieces of information on it, some of which are not actually necessary in order to show compliance. By adding the small business lens, by adding the one-for-one, we are trying to make sure that when our regulators do regulate, it is done in as convenient and efficient process as possible, such as going to the single window for service or email submissions, which reduce costs. Again, this is not in dealing with health and safety like the member has said.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before getting to the substance of my speech, I would like to say a few words about the fact that the NDP is the only party that takes advantage of all possible speaking opportunities in the House. As we know, we are sitting until midnight on weekdays to debate various issues.

The Conservatives must have missed about 200 opportunities to speak. The Liberals have also missed a lot. They are absent from the debates. I find that deplorable. It is really too bad that we are not using all the speaking and debate time we have to discuss and duly represent our ridings, voters, constituents and people.

As you know, I am the small business deputy critic. I therefore have the pleasure of speaking to Bill C-21, An Act to control the administrative burden that regulations impose on businesses.

Bill C-21 includes the one-for-one rule. This rule requires the government to eliminate a regulation every time it adopts a new one. The government must also offset any new burden on small businesses, that is, time and money spent by businesses to demonstrate compliance with amendments to existing regulations, in order to ease the burden for businesses.

In addition, Bill C-21 stipulates that the president of the Treasury Board may establish policies or issue directives respecting the manner in which the rule is to be applied. He may also make regulations respecting the period within which measures must be taken to comply with the regulations, the manner of calculating the cost of an administrative burden, how the law will apply to regulations changed when the one-for-one rule came into effect, and the power to grant exceptions.

Although Bill C-21 claims to reduce red tape for businesses, it will actually make the president of the Treasury Board the arbiter of eliminating regulations. A very important point here is that the government claims to deal with something that is actually not that simple. When we meet with small and medium-sized businesses, we know that they would really like to be able to reduce red tape. However, we must be careful because this bill claims to reduce red tape, but, in fact, it is giving yet another discretionary power to the president of the Treasury Board.

Personally, I remember seeing other similar bills whose intent is often to provide greater authority and greater flexibility. For instance, Bill C-31 was meant to give greater discretionary authority to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. However, when a

minister is given greater discretionary authority, this means that the rules may be good for some, and not so much for others. That is when things begin to fall apart and then, ultimately, things begin to get far more complicated and a lot harder to track. The minister has the authority to say yes in some cases and no in others, when in reality, the situations are identical. We cannot clearly rely on the rules.

Unfortunately, we cannot trust the Conservatives; we have seen this in the past. They have a habit of deregulating without any regard for the health and safety of Canadians. These are vital issues; there is no denying that. The Conservatives, and the Liberals before them, did not manage to defend the regulations protecting the health and safety of Canadians.

• (1605)

I must refer to the events that allow me to say today that the Conservatives are not there when it comes time to regulate appropriately. I will now bring them up. It is not easy to talk about these tragic events, but I need to.

The Lac-Mégantic tragedy put the important issue of rail safety in Canada back on the agenda following decades of Liberal and Conservative deregulation.

Let us look at other issues such as the maritime search and rescue centre in Quebec City, which was ultimately kept open. For over two and a half years, the Conservatives wanted to close it down. After they threatened the centre with closure, they realized that what mattered was saving lives and that by looking to close the centre, they were endangering the lives of Canadians. In the next election, I will be sure to remind voters that the Conservatives hesitated for two and a half years. That is unacceptable. We cannot take shortcuts when people's health and safety are at stake.

Let's talk about another issue, again in Quebec City. As we know, the Port of Québec went through periods when the city's air was contaminated with nickel dust. Once again, we need to ensure that there are regulations to protect the public. Normally, businesses are proud to be involved in making and enforcing regulations that benefit the public.

XL Foods was another big one. If the government cuts the number of food inspectors, such incidents should come as no surprise. There are fewer people on the ground doing inspections. When it comes to regulations, the government needs to think twice and make sure it is doing the right thing because it cannot make mistakes that could have a direct impact on the health and safety of Canadians.

In Bill C-21, only the preamble states that regulations affecting the health and safety of Canadians will not be affected. No mention is made of the environment. It is not in the bill at all.

The same thing happened with the free trade agreements the government signed. Human rights and the environment were relegated to the sidelines even though we expected the federal government to sign free trade agreements containing clear measures. Now human rights and the environment are an afterthought. I think we can have economic development that prioritizes people's health and safety as well as their environment.

Government Orders

If the Conservatives really care about the health and safety of Canadians, why did they not specifically guarantee the application of the bill and the regulations that protect people's health and safety? That could have been done. The government should make it a priority to implement regulations that protect the health and safety of Canadians and their environment. This bill seems to completely disregard that obligation. We need more than the government's promises and the preamble of a bill because that could leave room for interpretation in the years ahead.

We want a guarantee that deregulation will not apply to those provisions, and we want it now. We have not been given that guarantee yet. Regulations that are in the public interest should be preserved. The idea is not just to limit, in theory, the number of regulations and determine which are good for Canadians and which are not. There has to be a reasonable way to undertake public administration. Giving more powers to the president of the Treasury Board is definitely not the way to ensure good public administration.

The many small business owners I have talked to agree that there should be less useless red tape.

• (1610)

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, an organization that I have met with on a number of occasions, estimates that business owners pay \$30 billion in hidden taxes in the form of the time and money they spend completing forms and following government rules, and it believes that this needs to change.

I am proud to tell this organization that the NDP is always open to helping small businesses by eliminating useless red tape and letting them focus on what they do best: growing their business and creating jobs. The NDP remains a partner to SMEs.

Red tape is not the only thing that small business owners come to me about. They also regularly tell me that the Conservatives boast about helping small businesses by eliminating red tape, but that they did not renew the hiring credit for small business. It was not in budget 2014. However, businesses have been clear: this hiring credit is important. It gives them some breathing room. Even though it had the means to do so, the government deliberately decided to ignore SMEs and eliminate the credit. That is not surprising, coming from the Conservatives. This is a very important measure to help SMEs grow and to create more good jobs.

SME owners are unanimous in asking me when this government will finally take serious action to regulate the anti-competitive credit card fees that merchants must pay to card issuers. If the Conservatives truly wanted to help SMEs, they would support the NDP's proposal to regulate the fees that credit card companies charge to merchants.

I meet with SME representatives and they show me their bills. They have been crippled by banking fees this year and their profits have decreased considerably. They sometimes even have to reconsider their decision to go into business. This goes for SMEs that have been in business for several years and those that are just getting started. Banking fees have gotten so high that SMEs have no choice but to take them into account. These fees cut into their profits and wages so much that owners start to wonder if they have made the right choice. That is not insignificant.

The Conservatives did diddly-squat. While small businesses are the ones creating most of Canada's new jobs, they get very little attention from the Conservative government. In fact, this government preferred to give away billions of dollars in corporate tax breaks, starting with the oil companies, obviously. Even though they produce oil, they apparently need tax breaks. I have always thought that oil producers do not need any public money.

They gave away billions of dollars instead of supporting small businesses, the real job creators. This is why the NDP decided to support small business. There is nothing better than small businesses to turn around the economy of a region or a community. Profits made by a small business generally go toward developing the region. This money flows through the town or community where the small business is located. That also means local jobs. There is a lot less of a chance of outsourcing as well. This is why supporting small businesses pays off.

The Conservatives say they want to cut red tape, but they did quite the opposite with the Building Canada fund.

• (1615)

Rather than helping municipalities and small businesses start their infrastructure projects within an acceptable time, the Conservatives created a long and cumbersome bureaucratic system for any project over \$100 million. That will result in delays of 6 to 18 months, holding back major projects. Furthermore, this government has done nothing to make it easier for small businesses to secure government contracts. We saw it in committee; this should be made easier. Several associations have done their job and tried to make the government aware of this, but contracts should be broken up so that small businesses can access them. It would be worthwhile to make improvements in this area. It is practically impossible for our small businesses in Canada to compete with big corporations when bidding on government contracts, which are so long and complicated.

Over the coming months, the member for Sudbury and I intend to continue taking part in consultations with small businesses. Young entrepreneurs and family businesses are the key to a prosperous economy in Canada. That is why New Democrats will continue to work toward a pragmatic, common-sense solution in order to contribute to their success.

If the Conservatives sincerely wanted to help small businesses, they would not drag their feet and would take action against the excessive fees that credit card companies are charging merchants. Neither would they have, as I previously mentioned, eliminated the small business hiring tax credit in the 2014 budget. In this respect, I encourage all small business owners to write their MPs to let them know how important this tax credit was to them. The NDP intends to contact small businesses in all ridings and encourage them to help us make sure that the government understands once and for all that this tax credit helped create and maintain a lot of jobs. These are not unstable part-time jobs that will end in three months, but good solid jobs.

Government Orders

Again, the NDP believes in common-sense solutions for cutting red tape for small businesses. Allow me to mention something that the government should bear in mind: when we meet with SMEs they often tell us about the lack of collaboration between the different government bodies. We know that this Conservative majority government has a hard time getting along with its provincial and municipal counterparts. That is a serious problem. SMEs sometimes have to fill out forms at both the federal and provincial levels. There needs to be an agreement to make it easier and ensure that SMEs do not have to fill out the same form 10 times, send them to a number of different places and follow different criteria. Those who work 80 hours a week for their SME might not have the time in the evening to figure out how each body operates and so forth. To make things easier for the SMEs, we need a government that listens, that does not say that it does not care and then goes ahead without listening to a word anyone else has to say. We need a government that will listen.

When various situations came up in Quebec, I would have liked the federal government to listen more closely. Listening closely can pay off and make life easier. Today, we are all saying we would like to improve things. I think that the current approach is not exactly the one that should be used and I hope that the government will understand that. We will not approve the additional discretionary powers for the ministers. That is not what is needed here. We need to simplify the process.

• (1620)

If we get rid of one approach and replace it with another then the rule of “one plus one plus one minus one plus one” might further confuse the SMEs. They want us to decide on one way of doing things and keep it that way for 10 years so that they do not have to read a new instruction manual every time they have to fill out a form.

I will now take questions.

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. We could talk about it for a long time. She clearly outlined the problem of government support for SMEs. She rightly mentioned that one of the major problems brought to our attention was credit card fees, which directly reduce SMEs' liquidity.

I would like to know whether my colleague believes that the one-for-one rule is the ultimate panacea, as we heard in the previous speech. Are there not better ways to promote small business development?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague for his comments. I know that the member for Louis-Hébert is very interested in the challenges facing businesses. He has also looked at important issues such as how businesses can use the Internet to increase their exports. He has done great work on that issue in recent years. I would like to congratulate him because he has some good ideas regarding SMEs that could be included in the NDP's new platform.

His question was about the one-for-one rule. I believe that there are better approaches. For every regulation that is eliminated, another is added. That is very confusing for people and SMEs that have to apply the rule. In my opinion, the government has not properly addressed the desired objective of cutting red tape. The Conservatives have missed the mark. This rule could be revisited

because I believe that it does not take into account the health and safety of Canadians, as I mentioned several times. We are concerned about the fact that this is barely mentioned in the bill's preamble, which also does not mention the environment.

• (1625)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk credit cards with my colleague. When I meet store owners or people in my riding who have small businesses, they also talk to me about red tape. However, most of the time they talk about credit card fees and not much else. Some of them have even decided not to accept credit cards because it costs too much. It is hurting businesses. Fewer people are paying with cash these days, meaning that fewer people will do business with those companies. It is harming consumers and businesses.

I am imagine that it is the same in my colleague's riding. Does she see that as a problem? The NDP already suggested that an ombudsman regulate credit card fees. Could that be a solution?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, the issue of banking fees is important, and it unites all Canadians, small and medium-sized businesses, consumers—basically, anyone with a credit card.

Here is a little known fact: when someone eats out at a restaurant, a large portion of our money goes to the banks, depending on the credit card used. It even comes out of the restaurant owner's pocket. That is the reality. It may be a small percentage here and there, but when you add up all those transactions, it comes out to a huge amount. It has become a serious problem.

Moreover, points cards are increasingly popular. Companies such as American Express take a significant percentage. When businesses decide to accept a certain kind of credit card, they cannot get rid of it just because it costs too much or because they prefer another card. It is a package deal. That reality is causing a lot of problems.

However, in 2009, the House of Commons passed a motion calling on the government to adopt legislation to put an end to excessive credit card interest rates. Five years later, the government still has not introduced a bill addressing this issue. I find it odd that the Conservatives have not taken action when they must realize that bank fees are a serious problem. It is shameful.

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech, and I commend her for her passion. She spoke about the issue of red tape for small businesses.

There are two dairy farmers and cheese producers in my riding. When the government announced the Canada-EU agreement on various products, including dairy products, a problem emerged for dairy farmers. Most of the cases involve small family businesses, since the property values sometimes get so out of hand that it is very difficult to transfer small businesses unless it is from one generation to another.

Government Orders

One aspect of the dairy industry, in my riding in particular, and in many regions in Quebec, is that dairy farmers are required to keep producing higher quality milk. When I visited farms in my riding, I was overwhelmed to see how much time farmers spent filling out forms because a cow seemed to be faltering, instead of milking the cows and taking care of the animals' health. They have to make a report every time the dairy animals seem to have a health problem.

On the one hand, the government is requiring better quality dairy products in order to compete with products from the outside, but on the other hand, it is claiming that it will cut the red tape.

I would like my colleague to talk about this persistent contradiction, namely that the government is claiming to cut red tape but then requires more paperwork to ensure we are more or as competitive as the new markets opening up outside Canada.

● (1630)

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saint-Jean for his question. He very clearly explained how contradictory this is.

It is worrisome that Bill C-21 puts so much power in the hands of the president of the Treasury Board, making him an arbiter who can make whatever decisions he chooses when it comes to eliminating regulations. We do not know whether the health and safety of Canadians will be protected.

If the Conservatives really cared about the health and safety of Canadians, they would have explicitly protected the regulations concerning health and safety in the bill. However, that is not what they did, and that is worrisome. This bill is flawed and does nothing to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

These issues must take priority. If not, there will be other incidents like the one that occurred at XL Foods, more controversy over the maritime search and rescue centre in Quebec City and other incidents related to nickel dust, all because we will not have adequate regulations.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to debate Bill C-21, An Act to control the administrative burden that regulations impose on businesses.

I hesitantly support this bill. My reticence has nothing to do with the objective of the bill but about the government's reputation of saying one thing and then failing to abide by its own bills.

I am in favour of the bill for the following reason. The one-for-one rule shows businesses that every time a new administrative burden is placed on them, another will be lifted. That is a start. We are telling businesses that their administrative burden will not grow heavier in the future.

That is why the Liberal Party supports this bill. We sincerely hope that Canadian businesses will not be hindered or penalized by too much red tape. However, much more ambitious measures could have been implemented to help companies reduce their paperwork and administrative workload. Judging by the many bills that the Conservatives have introduced to date, the government is creating more paperwork, not less. We are in favour of this bill, but the government could have been a bit more ambitious. It could have

ensured that every time a regulation was imposed, there would be 1.1 or 1.2 times less paperwork.

On the one hand, the government wants to seem co-operative by introducing a bill like this, and on the other hand, its actions show that all it does is keep increasing administrative measures, whether it is through personal income tax measures or through various government programs that never reach their targets.

There are a number of initiatives that would make the administrative process more efficient for businesses and, at the same time, for individuals. For instance, the government should ensure that all the forms that businesses and individuals need are electronically available and that government websites that provide services to the public are more in line with the needs of the public. The information should be easily accessible and the documents should be easy to find and download.

All services that can be provided through the Internet should be available through the various departmental web portals. Businesses should not have to go to several offices or to make several phone calls to obtain documents or information that they need. Since red tape has a negative impact on businesses as it makes them waste time and money, we have to do everything we can to reduce it. Efficiency is paramount for businesses and that is what often makes them successful.

According to a 2013 report from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 68% of Canadian businesses feel that red tape lowers their productivity significantly. According to the same report, the total cost of regulation to Canadian businesses was estimated at \$31 billion in 2012. Those are huge costs and we are just talking about small businesses. Instead, businesses could use that money to raise the wages of employees or to lower the prices of goods and services for Canadians.

As stated in the 2012 recommendations of the Red Tape Reduction Commission, it is important to remove information-sharing barriers related to business across departments. As we know, various forms from various departments often ask for the same information over and over again. A more conciliatory and respectful measure for businesses would be to ask for information only once and to improve the sharing of information across departments. As a result, the government would reduce red tape for businesses and provide an improved and more modern service.

● (1635)

There are ways to respect privacy while providing more streamlined, efficient communication between government agencies. Some administrative procedures are needed, and that is not a problem.

In the vast catalogue of current regulations, some of them could easily be eliminated without any impact. That is where the focus is needed, and in fact that is why the government is not afraid to proceed with Bill C-21. It is aware that there are a bunch of regulations that could be done away with.

However, the government should do more if it really wants to help businesses and individuals and to cut red tape. It should come up with a plan that is much more ambitious and comprehensive than what is in Bill C-21.

Government Orders

Furthermore, there is a lot of room for improvement when it comes to the client service provided to individuals and businesses. Red tape can be cut, but more efficient service is also needed, since wait times have the same impact on businesses as the administrative burden.

The quality and efficiency of service to individuals and businesses need to be reviewed. For example, with respect to the time it takes to deliver licences and certificates, the priority should be on setting target processing times. In 2012, during consultations between the government and businesses on red tape, businesses felt this was a priority.

The government is also talking about aiming to reduce the number of complaints and to resolve existing complaints more quickly. These improvements are an integral part of the assistance to be provided to businesses — which is completely normal — to make them more efficient and avoid needless delays, whether in terms of red tape or delays in obtaining documents.

• (1640)

[*English*]

If we look at what I have been saying up to now, a simple example would be when the government first was elected. It decided to introduce, as members well know, an income tax credit called the fitness tax credit. It announced it as being a \$500 tax credit to families. Everybody was excited. As a parent, I was excited, as well. I was going to get \$500 because my kids were going to be involved in a sports program. There was a lot publicity and hoopla surrounding the announcement.

All of a sudden, we realized that it was a \$500 tax credit that resulted in \$80.00 of actual money in our pockets. However, in order to get that tax credit, our kids had to be enrolled in a sports program, which is perfectly normal. However, the sporting association, whether it was a profitable sporting association or not or if it was a school group, had to provide us with a receipt. It had to keep track of the money, which is totally fine. It needed to have a certificate number, an attestation number, then be able to print out the receipts and balance their books. Most of those sporting organizations took two to three years to provide an adequate receipt so we were able to receive a measly \$500 non-refundable tax credit. Most of the parents in areas where they had difficulty paying their bills were unable to take advantage of this because these tax credits were non-refundable. The non-profit organizations, even the ones that were profit-oriented like sports camps or privatized specialized sporting schools, were unable to generate the proper receipts that were returned by the tax department.

This is one example where the government, while introducing an initiative to reduce taxes, increased the administrative burden for all individuals involved.

Then the government also came out with the public transit tax credit, which again, was a great initiative on paper. However, even the large transport companies were unable to generate receipts. They had to change their software. They had to ensure the receipts were issued in the proper format. They went to an electronic format. My kids pay for their bus passes electronically, but they have to sit there and wait for a receipt, then they have to provide me with the receipt

and I have to file it. If they do not find the receipt, then they have to go back to the bus company and ask for a proper receipt.

Again we were stuck with administrative challenges. Perhaps the government only added one extra line on the income tax return, but it created all sorts of paperwork for the people having to respond to the criteria the government implemented.

When it comes to other things, I can give a whole bunch of examples from the Income Tax Act. Any professional accountant will tell us that the Income Tax Act has grown by more than 20% in just the last five to six years. If we look at the size of the Income Tax Act, we can see why it is not printed anymore. It is so voluminous it is not even possible to print it.

I sit on the trade committee, and a couple of examples come to mind from there. We are hearing how the government loves to sign free trade agreements, but the biggest complaint is that when the goods come in, all of a sudden they are stuck there because of the paperwork. The government says it is open for business for importing and exporting, but the biggest complaints we hear are about goods getting stuck at customs or that goods are having a hard time coming in or getting out.

As one example I sort of laugh at, someone said that if we bring in a pickle, it is pickles. However, if it is pickled pickles or jarred pickles, they are determined to be in a different duty category. By the time the duty rate is decided on, the cost can have increased by 10% or 15% or 20%. Sometimes fresh pickles expire in terms of their freshness date, so there is a whole big hoopla around that. This is all an extra administrative burden that the government has created.

There are tons of other examples. We heard about the paperwork and lack of proper scheduling when the government tried to get grain shipped across the country throughout the winter. Other departments that I am not an expert on also have administrative burdens that we need to deal with.

Earlier I saw the former immigration minister in the House. When we export our services to certain countries, we need to get visas. Conversely, my colleague from Markham, the immigration critic, cited the fact that if someone wants to bring in labourers from Mexico, there are tons of problems. They are asked for their passports and they are not given back their passports. There are a whole bunch of problems when it comes to getting visas and work permits, whether it is to go or to come back.

These are all things that businesses have to deal with. Sometimes the fact that they only need a temporary worker for a temporary amount of time just defeats the purpose of getting someone, and the owners end up having to work 20- and 30-hour days, if that is possible.

The government says it is going to reduce one administrative burden before it puts in a new one. However, has anyone here ever decided to automate their bills? It is great. Now we do not get our bills in the mail anymore, but we get an email. Now we have an email added to the rest of our emails. We do not know if they are good or bad emails because there is so much spam that we may not be sure if it is a legitimate email or not.

Government Orders

However, let us assume we get the proper email. Now we want to get our bank statement. We have to log on. We have to make sure we log on with the right password, with exactly the right number of upper-case and lower-case letters and the right alphanumeric numbers. Once we have logged on, there is a security password and then a security question to determine if we are the proper person. Then we are logged on.

We look at our statement online and decide to print it. Then we realize that our printer is not attached or has not been downloaded or has run out of toner. Maybe we realize the kids have taken all our paper, so we have no paper. It used to take half a second to open an envelope and find our bank statement, but all of a sudden it now takes a lifetime. It takes forever.

This is what the government is doing. It is doing the same thing big business is doing: transferring the administrative burden. I just hope the government is cognizant of that fact.

I am hoping we can work toward getting the bill into committee. We are going to vote in favour of it to get it out of the House at second reading and into committee, where we will see if we can improve it. Based on our experience with this government, we have not seen much openness to improving bills or accepting amendments, but we will see. That is why we work in this place. We try to make it a better place.

•(1645)

One more area I would like to also get onto the record is this. The CRA has gotten its act together for a few things, and as an accountant I have to admit that, but one of the areas where it is still having difficulty is with respect to businesses that have non-resident employees. In that case, employers have to open separate non-resident accounts, which have nothing to do with their corporate account. They have to deal with a lot of paperwork in terms of withholding. They have to send in the paperwork to tell the CRA that they are withholding. They may not have a withholding tax, but because they have promised to withhold, they have to withhold at a certain rate. That rate may change based on the country the person who has been subcontracted is doing business in. The rate also depends on the tax treaty and the type of service. Then if the business is one day late in making that withholding payment, they are stuck having to pay a fee, even though they may be expecting a refund elsewhere.

Therefore, with respect to the non-resident aspects, the CRA is still lacking in certain areas. I would like the committee to study some of the issues with respect to the CRA, because that is one of the big complaints we get.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, the Liberal Party will support the bill, which is intended to limit the administrative burden that regulations impose on businesses. However, we believe that this is just one small step in the right direction and that it provides very little to businesses. The bill is fine in itself, but it is incomplete.

I call on the government to commit to helping Canadian businesses by instituting additional provisions, and I urge them to consolidate the possible administrative changes that could improve service to businesses. I also believe it would be worthwhile to review

all regulations imposed on businesses and individuals to ensure that each regulation makes sense.

Each small step toward reducing paperwork will have a real impact on the productivity and efficiency of Canadian businesses. We need to put ourselves in the shoes of small business owners, who constantly have to fill out forms and often run into red tape. We need to streamline the entire process and make it much more efficient.

•(1650)

[*English*]

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the member has a great deal to offer with this legislation. He has cited a lot of good examples showing why we need changes made to the regulations, because it is a burden.

I found his comments on computers and passwords interesting because I too am frustrated with trying to access my receipts and bills. I find it all frustrating. However, lately I also had quite an incident over bills that come in the mail as well, so I am not sure if Canada Post is a good option either.

That said, I believe that the member has good things to offer, so I am surprised he did not mention the interprovincial barriers that are also causing small and medium-sized enterprises a great deal of grief. The hon. member could look to the big picture, as we are. The industry minister's next challenge is to try to sit down with the provinces and see where we can start cutting red tape between borders. I would like to ask the member if he has any suggestions on that to kick off what I think will be good legislation for breaking down some of the interior barriers, because he did mention some areas that he feels are good with respect to this kind of legislation.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question from the member. I want to thank her for it.

I do not know where to begin. One of the first things small businesses require is a harmonized tax system, not just the sales tax system that we now have pretty well in all provinces across Canada. There are still some issues with Quebec, but it is getting there. Harmonized sales tax and corporate tax and tax on individuals are all items that help small businesses.

Interprovincial barriers are a further issue. I am on the trade committee. When I was on the finance committee, one of our first recommendations was always with respect to interprovincial barriers. The government should be bringing down interprovincial barriers aggressively. This issue should not even have to be mentioned at the trade committee, because it should be a fait accompli.

We just tabled a report with respect to Canada and Europe, and there was no mention made by the government members or the NDP that we should bring down interprovincial barriers. The only party that mentioned it in the supplementary report was the Liberal Party, and I am the only member of the Liberal Party who is on the committee.

Government Orders

Bringing down the interprovincial barriers is probably the best initiative we can have, because if we do not do that, it is almost impossible for this country to be more efficient and more productive or to be able to take advantage of some of the free trade agreements that the government has signed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the bill too because lots of the individuals and businesses in my riding complain about red tape. However, there are also groups that are not small businesses that have to cope with a lot of red tape issues.

For example, an organization in my riding called Ateliers bon débarras does social reintegration work with young people. They used to apply for funding from the skills link program every year. Now they have decided to stop applying because the red tape got to be overwhelming. It got too complicated. It was a very good program though.

Plenty of other community organizations do not always have the time to apply to programs because they do not have enough people to do it. Just like small businesses, many groups could benefit from this kind of bill.

We saw a great example of increased red tape recently. Bill C-2 on supervised injection sites uses red tape to make sure that this kind of service is not offered. It contains so many criteria that it will be impossible for anyone to create such a centre.

What does my colleague think of all this?

• (1655)

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, who is from a riding adjacent to mine. Our ridings are both in the eastern part of Montreal, one to the south and the other a little farther north.

I know that the member is new, but she must not get discouraged. It is the government's strategy to make these forms more complicated by demanding more information. Organizations will miss deadlines to submit applications, and then they will be denied funding.

In our office, we tell organizations not to get discouraged. We tell them that we will try to help them as much as possible. My colleague is absolutely right. Many organizations have been denied funding because they submitted their applications too late because of all the paperwork.

I tell people that we will not let the government intimidate us and we will not give up. These organizations do not have a lot of money, and they need it. We will fill out the paperwork.

One thing is for sure though. When the next Liberal government is in power, we will cut red tape and we will help organizations because they deserve it.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to have an accountant in our caucus to explain issues that consume time and resources for small businesses and explain what government could do to improve the situation.

In my riding of Kingston and the Islands, accountants have complained to me about the federal government's closure of a window at the CRA office so that there is no public access now.

I was wondering more generally if my colleague, who is an accountant, has any ideas on how the CRA could be improved to better serve small and medium-sized businesses.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I can speak from a Quebec point of view. The CRA has improved, but sometimes when a small business is audited by the CRA, after the business goes through hoops and provides all kinds of information to the CRA, a month later the Minister of National Revenue comes calling and the business is subject to a whole bunch of other audits.

That is one of the big problems we have in Quebec, but it has become better. They have been able to talk to each other and it is better.

One area where the CRA can help out is when there is an amount owing. I have seen small businesses that have owed a small amount, maybe less than \$1,000, and the government hounds them for collection. The business may be waiting for a refund on something else, such as a corporate tax R and D refund in the thousands of dollars, but meanwhile it may owe a couple of hundred dollars on a penalty charge that is not warranted. A DAS payment may have been late or a form may have been filled out incorrectly and the business is contesting it, but in the meantime the CRA is hitting them with all kinds of penalties and seizing their bank account for a small sum and no one is working to help them get a refund on the other side.

That would be the first thing, collections.

The windows are helpful more for individuals; for businesses, as long as they can get access to their file and get someone on the phone, it is an improvement. I do not think too many businesses need a window. They need to have access to their file and to be able to talk to someone who can take action on the file.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to ask my colleague a question, because I know that, in his constituency, there is a very impressive European, and especially Italian, community. Like a lot of Europeans, they are cheese lovers.

I am interested in my colleague's comments. As I stated in a previous question, dairy producers are being asked to fill in more and more paperwork about milk quality and about the safety of their dairy cows, in order to get better quality milk. I am seeing that in my region. Ironically, the government says it wants to reduce red tape. This poses problems for small businesses and farmers with family businesses. They have to fill in more and more documents that they did not have to fill in a year or two ago. Now they have those constraints. Ironically, the government claims to want to reduce the paperwork required from small businesses.

Could my colleague give me his opinion about this contradiction?

• (1700)

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Jean for his question.

Government Orders

Actually, it is not just dairy producers. Take the Canadian Food Inspection Agency as an example. Instead of having more inspectors to ensure that our products are safer—the fresher the products, the less danger for people's health—the government is asking people to fill in more paperwork and provide more information. If they can, they will ask for more. These business people will have more difficulties, not fewer.

Instead of helping our producers and our manufacturers, the government is putting obstacles in their path. That is a problem that the government is not really going to solve by claiming to reduce red tape. Instead of being out in the field, the inspectors will be tied to their desks.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*English*]

While we support the idea that unnecessary regulatory burdens and regulatory burdens that create unnecessary paperwork are a good thing to remove from small businesses in particular, which as the parliamentary secretary earlier noted are part of the driving force behind job creation in Canada, we are concerned that this notion of somehow magically replacing one-for-one in a bill would do that job without harming health and safety or the economy generally. That is somewhat worrying to us.

We can think of numerous examples of this notion that businesses have a cost associated with regulation. When a new regulation comes forward, that cost must be calculated and a regulation of equivalent cost removed somewhere in the spectrum. We do not know if that regulation needs to be removed from that same type of business, whether it is a small business or a large business. There is no distinction in the bill as to whether or not it would apply only to small business. It would appear that it would apply to anything, including the big oil companies. We could have situations in which regulations for big oil companies, regulations that the Canadian public deem appropriate for the health and safety of Canadians, are somehow going to cost them money and therefore an equivalent regulation would have to be found somewhere else that could be removed if we want to regulate these companies.

I will give the House the example of rail safety. This past year there have been four significant accidents involving trains, one of which caused 47 lives to be lost in Lac-Mégantic. The minister has issued protective directions to, in theory, prevent some of the mechanisms that were in place, but are they regulations? If so, are those regulations going to harm the Canadian economy?

The bill itself suggests that if a regulation harms the Canadian economy, then it cannot be put in place. It says that right in the bill. We cannot amend or remove a regulation dealing with health and safety or the Canadian economy. Which wins, health and safety or the economy? I could not get a straight answer out of the minister when I asked him. We have some serious reservations about the clarity of this legislation.

Another example of the lack of clarity of this legislation is the suggestion that the environment is not something for which we can demand that there be adequate regulation. Right now, Bill C-21 is

silent on whether or not regulations affecting the environment would somehow be exempt from this one-for-one rule replacement.

As a result, I need only go so far as to look at the example of the bill itself, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, which was amended in 2012 by the government. Much of the authority of the Minister of the Environment in the act itself was removed. We went from thousands of assessments down to a handful. Even in the promulgation of that bill, a portion of the bill is still empty. That is schedule 2, which theoretically would be promulgated as a regulation by the government. It is still not there.

Schedule 2 is the definition of the components of the environment that would be studied by an environmental assessment. How can we have an environmental assessment if we do not even know what we are studying, and it has to deal with several subparagraphs of the bill? If this legislation takes effect, would the government be prohibited from putting forth regulations under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act that would perhaps harm some big oil company? Would that company then be subject to more regulation, or if those regulations were to come forward, would something equal have to be removed from somewhere else?

• (1705)

It is a staggeringly thin bill. It is only a handful of pages. While that makes it easier to read, it also means there is not a whole lot of meat to it. There is not a whole lot of protection in it.

Essentially, it just says that if we are going to put in a regulation, we have to take one out. It does not say whether that is to small business or large business. It does not say whether that can include the environment. We on this side of the House have some serious reservations about where the government is going with the environment, particularly with the northern gateway pipeline approval that went through just this week against the wishes of many Canadians, including most British Columbians.

We have the labour issues. There are significant regulations in the labour world. The government has already removed some regulations in the labour world in some of its omnibus bills. However, if the government were to receive some suggestions from business that these labour regulations were somehow a burden, it might then be convinced to remove them as a part of the one-for-one deal. The government could put a regulation over here on rail safety, and as a result it would then have to remove one on labour issues from all businesses in Canada.

Does this make any kind of sense? It is so wide open. It boggles the mind. It is apparently left up to the President of the Treasury Board to decide.

I want to give a specific example. In my riding, where regulation is needed, it will show that this regulation could be simple and effective, but it would have a cost for some businesses and a savings for others. Will the cost for some businesses offset the savings for others, or will there need to be a regulation somewhere that needs to be removed?

Government Orders

I come back to the example I gave the other night of the small business in my riding that produces gluten-free bread for consumption by local citizens of the city of Toronto. The advantage this gentleman has is that he is producing it fresh. He is producing it daily, with a wonderful mixture of grains and other ingredients that are gluten free. All of a sudden, his business is starting to dry up, because CFIA, a regulator that is effectively imposing regulations on other businesses, has decided to allow big American companies to ship frozen bread to Toronto. It can be taken out of the freezer and stuck on the shelf to thaw; then a best-before date is stuck on it, and it is sold as fresh.

These businesses have said to this gentleman that the consumer does not need to know that this stuff is not fresh and the consumers should be kept in the dark. We on this side of the House do not think the consumers should be kept in the dark. We think there may be a necessity for a regulation to deal with this issue.

However, let us come back to the bill. How would that regulation work? It would harm the bottom line of the big companies that are selling cheap, imported bread and calling it fresh, even though it is frozen, but it would help the little company, the small businessman in my riding. There is no definition of what a small or large business is. I do not know whether the government would ever impose such a regulation. I do not know whether the government would actually take steps to stop the deception that is being imposed on Canadian consumers by the CFIA.

There is a real-world example of an issue that is crying out for regulation, but with this notion that it has to have a costing to it and the notion that the cost has to be offset by a savings in some other regulation. It boggles the mind how the government, any government, could ever figure this out in a way that is right and just.

We are concerned about the notion of how this one-for-one regulation trade system could somehow be effective and just and done in an effective and transparent way. We are also concerned about whether or not the environment would be harmed, whether or not small businesses would be harmed, and whether or not, in effect, we would be just giving the government licence to start removing regulations from large businesses and oil companies and the like. The track record speaks for itself.

I invite other members to ask me questions.

* * *

● (1710)

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that messages have been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bills: Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts; Bill C-489, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (restrictions on offenders).

[*Translation*]

I also have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate

has passed the following bill to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-218, An Act respecting National Fiddling Day.

* * *

[*English*]

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-21, An Act to control the administrative burden that regulations impose on businesses, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Langley.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague across the way as he addressed the importance of environmental assessments. I would agree that environmental assessments of any project in Canada must be considered and that we respect these assessments, because they are important. They should be science-based. When an environmental assessment takes place, it is important that we consider it. We do not have to agree with the assessment, but we should show respect for it. It is important that we make decisions based on logic and science.

The reason I bring this up is that the member highlighted the importance of these assessments, and yet, just two days ago, the northern gateway pipeline was referred to. There was an environmental assessment that started over four years ago. There were 1,450 intervenors who spoke, over 9,000 letters and correspondence received, and first nations were consulted. After this environmental assessment was completed, the government considered the report and its recommendations, and the independent judicial body that did this assessment recommended that the northern gateway pipeline go ahead, provided it met 209 criteria. The government has considered this carefully, and, after careful consideration, we have agreed with it.

My question is this. The NDP ideology is that we are going to ignore an environmental assessment like that. When will the NDP recognize science-based environmental assessments and when will their ideology get in the way?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of ideology; it is a question of representing the people of Canada. The people of Canada, and particularly the people of British Columbia, are very much opposed to this pipeline, the government having weakened and eliminated the environmental assessment process entirely in the bill in 2012, as well as having removed from the Navigable Waters Protection Act the previous requirement that any pipeline that crossed navigable waters must have a shut-off on either side. There are almost no navigable waters left in Canada anymore, by regulation and by part of the act, and therefore pipelines can cross them without any safety measures.

That is the law, that is the regulation, and that is what New Democrats are opposed to in this bill. We are opposed to situations in which, by regulation, the environment can be harmed by the lack of regulation on the part of the government. We on this side of the House believe that government has a duty to protect Canada, Canadians, the environment, and where we live. If we abandon that in some misguided attempt to balance the interests of the Canadian economy, we are not doing Canada or Canadians any service whatsoever.

• (1715)

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned fair decisions in his speech. I would like to ask him whether he thinks that giving more powers to the President of the Treasury Board is the solution that provides healthy public administration and fair decisions.

[English]

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, every time we turn around, we are handing absolute power to ministers of the crown. There is the absolute power of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to strip Canadian-born citizens of their citizenship and to decide which countries he feels are safe. We are now giving absolute power to the President of the Treasury Board to decide which regulations should and should not be implemented. It is beginning to sound a bit like a banana republic when ministers of the crown and leaders are taking it upon themselves to create laws and make decisions like that without parliamentary oversight. New Democrats do not like this at all.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak on behalf of my constituents and especially to be able to provide them with information on this bill. It is important that the government stop preventing members from speaking. We are now at our 75th time allocation motion. All members of Parliament must be allowed to express their opinions on bills.

First of all, I am going to talk about my vision of sustainable development. Sustainable development involves three aspects: social, economic and environmental. Those three elements cannot be separated from each other. We can no longer talk about a pure economy if we do not think about the environmental costs. We cannot talk about the economy and ecology if we do not think about the social aspects and the people involved, for example, how the first nations and the people in western Canada will be affected by Enbridge's proposed development. Ignoring these aspects causes us a lot of problems.

The government must change its way of thinking and its ideology. We are no longer dealing with a no man's land where we can say "the economy or bust" and sweep everything else before us. We know full well that, when we build a pipeline or start a new industry in the far north, for example, we have to take into account that there will be implications. We may move the pipes a little further from caribou routes. We will also try to get consent from the local population so that no one is harmed.

Government Orders

Canada is a large country, the second largest in the world in surface area, but our population is only 35 million, compared to 330 million, I believe, in the United States. Canada is not a densely populated country; we have the space and we are able to make quality choices environmentally, economically and socially. We must never bypass those three criteria when we are working on economic development.

There are many young entrepreneurs and family businesses in my riding. That is one of its features. These entrepreneurs are trying to make their businesses work as well as possible. Obviously, their problem is the famous red tape. The Conservative government was elected in 2006 and, since then, it has had many opportunities to regulate and even cut the red tape that harms businesses. Small family businesses have very few employees, and time is money. They must optimize their production since they are in business. They do not have time to deal with all of this red tape.

Bill C-21 claims to cut the administrative hassle for businesses. However, that means that the President of the Treasury Board becomes an arbiter in eliminating the regulations. This trend that the government has of giving a minister these decision-making powers concerns me greatly. There is always a minister who must decide and choose. Without going so far as calling it a "dictatorship", because that is a little strong, the government is minimizing the role of people who can make decisions within the system. A lot of power is being put in the hands of a few of our ministers, in a country as vast as ours.

Our local businesses are dynamic and innovative. Bombardier is one that comes to mind. Bombardier began developing products in a small garage and is now a multinational company. I am also thinking of multimedia businesses, which are becoming more and more renowned. There is also the optics sector in the Quebec City area. It has significant value internationally and also came from modest beginnings, with industrial clusters. It is now internationally recognized.

I am also concerned about the one-for-one rule. The government wants to cut red tape, but it is removing a regulation in order to add one. I do not think this resolves much. One plus one, or one minus one, does not equal much. One minus one equals zero, and one plus one equals two. If we create one regulation and it replaces one other, we still have one regulation.

• (1720)

Red tape has therefore not been reduced. There are many entrepreneurs and small businesses in my riding and they are always telling me that there is no end to the paperwork that they have to fill out, whether it is for the GST, the QST or quarterly remittances. That is a major problem for them. If they have the misfortune of making a mistake, it is even worse. Then they have to go back through everything, which requires a lot of time that they do not have.

The NDP is open to ways of helping small businesses by eliminating unnecessary red tape, and letting them focus on what they do best: growing their businesses and creating jobs. SMEs create the most jobs.

Government Orders

Regulations that are in the public interest should be maintained. It is not just a question of managing the number of regulations on the books, but of focusing on real measures to help small business owners grow their business, rather than on half measures through a gimmicky bill. That is extremely important because our businesses need that help. Many chambers of commerce and economic development businesses serve as a liaison to help our businesses and entrepreneurs.

Bill C-21 implements a promise the government made in 2006. It has taken quite a long time. The one-for-one rule was adopted by the government in April 2012 as a result of the work of the Red Tape Reduction Commission. In 2011, the commission consulted the public and businesses to identify what was working, what was not, and what were the so-called “red tape irritants” that had negative impacts on growth and innovation for small businesses, so that these things could be eliminated or improved. The government adopted a red tape reduction action plan that outlined 90 actions and six systemic reforms, including the implementation of the one-for-one rule.

Giving the president of the Treasury Board greater powers is definitely not sound public administration. That power needs to be broader and we need more stakeholders who can help our businesses. The New Democrats want to reduce the administrative burden on SMEs. Young entrepreneurs and family businesses are important because they are key to a prosperous economic future for Canada. Often businesses are handed down from father to daughter, mother to son or vice versa.

If the Conservatives truly wanted to help small businesses, then they would not have gotten rid of the hiring tax credit for small businesses in budget 2014. This was very unfortunate. The NDP platform would support small businesses by giving them this tax credit.

The Conservatives claim to want to reduce red tape, but they are doing quite the opposite when it comes to the Building Canada fund. Instead of helping municipalities and SMEs to start infrastructure projects in a reasonable timeframe, the Conservatives set up a long and cumbersome bureaucratic process for every project over \$100 million.

The hiring credit for small businesses gave employers tax relief on their employment premiums. It is important to take care of employment insurance. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business agrees with the NDP on this. It estimates that entrepreneurs pay roughly \$30 billion in hidden taxes in time and money spent on filling out forms and meeting various government requirements.

In closing, I would say that if the Conservatives really wanted to help SMEs they would have supported the NDP's idea to have an ombudsman to control credit card fees, among other things. Businesses pay a lot of fees. There has to be a ceiling. This would give them the room to manoeuvre that they need to grow.

• (1725)

[English]

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC): Mr. Speaker, before the member gets carried away blaming the federal government for all of her small and

medium enterprises in her province, perhaps she should go back to her SMEs and find out what burden the province itself is creating, because I think that, as was mentioned earlier, if we can find an area that is an imposition on small and medium enterprises, it is the internal barriers between the provinces. I would like to see if the member could perhaps survey her small companies and see what a burden that might be.

I do think that the member and her party should learn a little more about what this one-for-one rule is. It is not the Treasury Board's call. It is the department that is instilling it. It is not a one plus one and it is not to be aggregated. It is to be something that is no longer a useful regulation or something that is no longer a regulation that applies, and it does not compromise safety and does not compromise any business.

I think the member should be a little more honest in her speech, rather than blame the federal government for her SMEs having problems with burdens. I think it could be her own jurisdiction.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the hon. member misspoke when she said I should look at what the provinces are doing because the provincial and federal jurisdictions are quite separate and we do not mix jurisdictions.

However, I know full well that when businesses increase production and engage in research and development activities, they become more competitive. As such, they have competitive advantages that help them contribute to the development of this country.

As far as consultation is concerned—perhaps the hon. member does not know this—I was the director of a chamber of commerce. We held a lot of consultations with small businesses, very small businesses, medium businesses and big businesses, including paper mills. According to these consultations, one of the biggest problems was red tape.

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is what I would like to ask my colleague.

Since the parliamentary secretary said earlier that the rule has been in place for two years, is this bill not just legislative red tape?

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I will not have a lot of time to respond to that. I will certainly have an opportunity to talk about it with the member in the lobby.

There is administrative red tape and we have to reduce it. That is this government's objective, and that is why we will support this bill.

• (1730)

[English]

The Speaker: It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CONFLICT MINERALS ACT

The House resumed from April 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-486, An Act respecting corporate practices relating to the extraction, processing, purchase, trade and use of conflict minerals from the Great Lakes Region of Africa, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been waiting patiently to speak to Bill C-486 respecting the extraction of conflict minerals.

As the official opposition energy and natural resources critic, I am especially interested in this bill. The Great Lakes Region of Africa is currently plagued by chronic political and economic instability. Paradoxically, the abundance of natural resources is one of the causes of this instability. In fact, these natural resources should be driving the socio-economic development of the people living in this region. Resources are plentiful and financial opportunities abound, but instead of enabling the community to develop, these resources create instability. That is very unfortunate.

This brings me to the bill. In addition to this situation, it is unacceptable that future profits earned by Canadian mining companies will help fund extremely violent internal conflicts and will contribute, whether directly or indirectly, to the suppression of basic rights. For this reason, Bill C-486, which was brought forward by my colleague for Ottawa Centre, provides for mechanisms to thoroughly monitor the movement of a mineral from the extraction site to its incorporation in the final product for end consumers.

The bill also provides for the participation of an independent third party that would produce a report on the exercise of due diligence. This process would ultimately depend on the co-operation of the companies involved, the expertise of the third party and on Natural Resources Canada's duty to inform the public.

More specifically in this instance, the bill allows the government to endorse Canada's traditional position on responsible supply chain management. As a signatory to the OECD's Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises, the government has, by extension, supported the OECD guide on due diligence.

The bill in fact formalizes the main points of the OECD guide. It is highly contradictory to ratify an international agreement while at the same time refusing to adopt it in the form of a federal bill. Unfortunately, this is not the first contradiction of which this government is guilty.

I would like this government to act logically when it ratifies international conventions and I would like to see it apply these conventions in its bills. This is not the case here and for that reason, we need to take action and to lend Bill C-486 our support.

This bill is in line with the New Democrats' position that companies should act in a socially responsible manner while allowing consumers to make more informed choices. The government equates transparency provisions with administrative formalities that can hinder investment and impede economic growth in the states located in the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

Royal Assent

This rhetoric, central to the Conservatives' position, clearly has no basis in fact. The bill sponsored by my NDP colleague calls for a responsible, progressive course of action.

● (1735)

ROYAL ASSENT

● (1750)

[English]

A message was delivered by the Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Mr. Speaker, it is the desire of His Excellency the Governor General of Canada that this honourable House do attend him immediately in the Senate chamber.

Accordingly, the Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

And being returned:

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that when the House did attend His Excellency the Governor General in the Senate chamber, His Excellency was pleased to give, in Her Majesty's name, royal assent to the following bills:

Bill C-217, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischief relating to war memorials)

Bill C-444, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (personating peace officer or public officer)

Bill C-34, An Act to give effect to the Tla'amin Final Agreement and to make consequential amendments to other Acts

Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts

Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and other Acts and to provide for certain other measures

Bill C-20, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras

Bill C-38, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2015

Bill C-39, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2015

Bill C-394, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (criminal organization recruitment)

Bill C-25, An Act respecting the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band Order

Bill C-37, An Act to change the names of certain electoral districts and to amend the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act

Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures

Bill C-489, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (restrictions on offenders)

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[Translation]

CONFLICT MINERALS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-486, An Act respecting corporate practices relating to the extraction, processing, purchase, trade and use of conflict minerals from the Great Lakes region of Africa, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I was in the process of explaining, unfortunately when the government refers to this bill, it often equates these transparency provisions with red tape that will impede investment and economic growth in the countries in question.

Sadly this rhetoric, which is central to the Conservatives' discourse, has no basis in fact. The bill sponsored by my NDP colleague calls for a responsible, progressive course of action and brings to the forefront the issues of human rights protection, the right of consumers to be informed and environmental protection.

Given the Conservatives' refusal to exercise due diligence, their blind partisanship and their belief in the benefits of deregulation, controlling the supply chain of extractive sector companies is a responsible course of action. Conflicts within the Great Lakes Region of Africa, fueled by mining companies, and their repercussions place a heavy burden on a government that, unfortunately, is only concerned about passing legislation that benefits lobbyists.

Some UN experts have called on the federal government to hold an inquiry into mining companies that fail to comply with OECD principles regarding ethical practices. In March 2009, the government announced its building the Canadian advantage strategy, which called for the appointment of an ethics counsellor devoid of any power.

Without a requirement to exercise due diligence, the activities of Canadian extractive sector companies will continue to fund social injustice and human rights violations in conflict areas. In the absence of regulations, companies seeking short-term returns on their investments will be a lightning rod for instability and will hinder direct foreign investment. Long-term investment projects are tied to the stability of political institutions.

However, the proliferation of armed groups chases away foreign investment and isolates this region, which is plagued by serious political unrest and devastating economic stagnation. In terms of foreign policy, Canada has acquired expertise in providing humanitarian aid and managing peacekeeping operations.

The development of this expertise rests on Canada's faith in strengthening international legal instruments. As a result, Bill C-486 introduces the principle of corporate social and environmental responsibility, as well as legal provisions aimed at protecting civilian populations.

Bill C-486 contains provisions that are consistent with traditional principles of Canadian diplomacy, principles that this government is unfortunately dismantling through the excessive deregulation of the activities of Canadian companies operating abroad. A stable market,

one that is conducive to investments, requires a state of law and strong political institutions, at the very least, hence the need for responsible supply chain management.

According to the French organization Coface, the prevailing political climate is one of the determining factors for a company that is seeking to invest. In the absence of regulations, activities will continue to fuel political instability, to the point where this region of the globe will become a region of bankrupt states where anarchy reigns, a region with the potential to become fertile ground for international terrorism.

Finally, when it comes to minerals, we have to understand that Canadian consumers have no way of tracing their movement. For instance, when we buy a toaster made of metals and other substances, we do not know where each of the metals came from. The same can be said for many consumer goods. There is no way of knowing exactly where the metal used was mined or processed. If consumers knew that the goods they were purchasing were manufactured with conflict minerals, and by purchasing them, they were perhaps contributing to the climate of political instability or fuelling unrest in certain areas of the world, I honestly believe they would not buy these products.

● (1755)

For this reason, I believe it is important to require Canadian extractive sector companies to be more transparent and more open about the movement of products. This would help to ease the instability and decrease the incidence of human rights violations in these regions.

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today and participate in the second hour of debate on Bill C-486.

First I would like to reiterate that the government fully agrees with the hon. member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre on the importance of finding ways to address the issue of conflict minerals. Indeed, the first hour of debate demonstrated that there is a shared concern over how the illegal trade in minerals fuels conflicts. The good news is that Canadian companies, civil society, and government have shown significant leadership and have been at the forefront of creating global consensus on responsible mining and sourcing practices in the gold, tin, tungsten, and tantalum sectors. I know that the hon. member for Ottawa Centre appreciates Canada's active engagement, because he cites many of our activities in the preamble to Bill C-486, such as our participation in the development of the supply chain due diligence guidance at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

This government believes that the extractive sector has demonstrated that it can be a positive force not only here at home but around the world by helping create sustainable economic growth and development in countries where it is active.

Private Members' Business

At a recent event co-hosted by Canada and the World Economic Forum, the hon. Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie stated, "Canada is well known as a world leader in responsible resource development. We have robust strategies that support economic growth and diversification, that promote responsible business conduct, that ensure environmental sustainability and that strengthen community engagement so all stakeholders can benefit from natural resource development."

Our efforts to stop the trade in conflict minerals are a part of the same narrative. Our engagement at the OECD, where we work with relevant actors in government, the private sector, and civil society, is emblematic of the constructive approach our government has taken to enhance the positive contribution of the extractive sector to social and economic development. Indeed, the Government of Canada is committed to working with partner countries to help them develop and manage their natural resources in a responsible and sustainable way that benefits all of their citizens. It is only by putting the right systems in place on the ground that we can hope to address a multi-faceted problem like conflict minerals.

There is more that can and should be done to curb the trade in conflict minerals. The Government of Canada is actively engaged on this issue, and we are always looking at ways to improve our efforts. However, the approach outlined in Bill C-486 is, in our view, fundamentally flawed. To be more specific, the government believes that Bill C-486 is questionable in its efficacy, overly broad in its application to companies throughout the expansive supply chain, and unduly limited in its geographic focus.

Allow me to elaborate on our concerns in more detail.

First, on the question of efficacy, simply put, there is no evidence to date that mandatory reporting on due diligence activities would actually stop conflict minerals from entering international markets. As noted in the first hour of debate, Bill C-486 is modelled after U.S. legislation, specifically section 1502 of the Dodd-Frank Act. This legislation has been around since 2010, but the first reports were not due until June 2, 2014. Why should we blindly follow a model that has not yet proven that it actually works?

Some may argue that we should not sit around and wait for results in order to take action, but what about unintended consequences? One of the concerns related to the U.S. legislation is that companies have simply avoided buying designated minerals from the Great Lakes region as it is estimated that the region may account for as little as 15% of the global supply of tantalum and much smaller percentages of the other minerals.

• (1800)

Companies can and are sourcing these minerals from elsewhere, which is having a significant economic impact on the region in general and the people of the DRC in particular. The risk of Bill C-486 reinforcing this de facto embargo of minerals from this region is real. Some may argue that this is not a problem. Indeed, they might argue that this will only help the fight against conflict minerals. Unfortunately, the reality is that while investment in the region may have declined dramatically, the illicit trade has continued.

Questionable efficacy is not the only problem with Bill C-486. Our second concern relates to the bill's overly broad application.

According to the bill, any company incorporated in Canada that extracts, processes, purchases, trades and or uses any of these minerals from the Great Lakes region of Africa could be required to provide an audited report on an annual basis. To use the example of the gold supply chain, this could include miners, refiners, bullion banks, gold exchanges, alloy processors, manufacturers, importers, wholesalers, artisans, and retailers. Moreover, gold is used in numerous industry sectors, including jewellery, medical supplies, aerospace, automotive, and of course, electronics.

As a result, an extremely wide range of companies of varying sizes, functions, and sectors would potentially be implicated by the bill and saddled with significant costs associated with reporting. Indeed, if one's dentist has an incorporated company, he or she may be required to submit an audited report on the activities undertaken to demonstrate that the use of gold fillings has not inadvertently contributed to armed conflict in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Interestingly, the implication of the entire supply chain is not an approach favoured by other initiatives, including the U.S. legislation, which is only focused on companies involved in manufacturing processes.

The requirement of an independent third party audit of the report also differs from the OECD due diligence guidance, which recommends audits at the smelter and refiner level, not at every point along the supply chain. Even the proposed directive by the European Union is focused on one particular point in the supply chain, importers of designated minerals. Moreover, while Bill C-486's proposed mechanism is legislative in nature, the approach the Europeans are taking is a voluntary one.

Imposing a potentially significant reporting burden on the entire mineral supply chain may be great news for auditing companies, but is generating a mountain of reports really an efficient way to address the issue of conflict minerals?

Can we really hope to tackle a global issue if we only focus on the Great Lakes region of Africa? This is the third concern I would like to raise with respect to the bill. Taking a narrow approach that only focuses on a particular region risks stigmatizing conflict minerals as an exclusively African problem, and they are not. Trade in conflict minerals is an issue with a global reach in terms of the repercussions on peace, security, and democratic development, as well as on local communities and multinational companies in countries around the world.

Through our participation at the OECD, we are actively trying to expand the promotion and implementation of guidance, which applies to all conflict-affected and high-risk areas in relevant country contexts.

Private Members' Business

This government believes in working with, not against, our partners in both the public and private sectors to foster an enabling environment for meaningful engagement and change. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Bill C-486 would hinder these efforts. Canada's continued involvement in international initiatives related to conflict minerals will help identify the most promising and effective way forward. When that happens, we will undertake the necessary consultation and analysis to ensure we can achieve the desired impact on the ground.

• (1805)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Newmarket—Aurora, because I am forever standing in this place saying that we should be working together, sharing information, and trying to make bills better. I hate to use the word “conflict” when we are talking about this issue, but oftentimes, between the two sides of the House, there is more conflict than co-operation.

I would like to commend the member for the speech she gave. Now, after saying that, I take issue with a couple of points, but I will address only one. Perhaps the sponsor of the bill, the member for Ottawa Centre, will discuss later with the government other areas they seem to have concerns about.

When we say “voluntary”, to me that fails the test of true due diligence. I come from farm country, and that is like saying to the fox that we trust it not to come near our henhouse. It would likely not work there.

Again, it is very important in the House, especially as this session is winding down, that there be a glimmer of a possibility that all sides will work together on an important issue.

For the viewers who are just joining us now in this important debate, I would like to reiterate the fact that Bill C-486, once passed, would require Canadian companies using minerals from the Great Lakes region of Africa to practise public due diligence. I stress that word. It would ensure that no armed groups that are engaged in illegal activities would benefit from the extraction, processing, or use of these minerals.

In my past speeches I have often referred to Hollywood versions of stories. There was a movie made in the last five to eight years called *Blood Diamond*. It highlighted in a very personal way the particular problems in that part of the world.

The most important feature of Bill C-486 is that it would allow Canadians to know whether minerals that may have contributed to funding or fuelling a conflict are in the products they have purchased. It would empower them, as consumers, to make an informed choice. It would not order them to do anything, but it would be guidance that an awful lot of responsible Canadians would appreciate having.

This bill would continue the NDP's agenda on corporate social responsibility. It would have an important role in enhancing, as I said, consumer knowledge and control of purchasing choices. As the critic for international human rights, I can tell the House that New Democrats have long supported transparency and accountability by Canadian industry abroad.

I will step back for just a moment. The member for Newmarket—Aurora mentioned the Dodd-Frank bill. I had the pleasure a couple of years back of spending two hours with Barney Frank in Washington and listening to his passion. The member was fairly critical of aspects of his bill, such as the length of time and the delay. That would be an area I would suggest the member for Ottawa Centre discuss as well. If there is a better way of doing it, we would certainly want to look at it.

I remember that not that long after I was elected in 2006, we had Bill C-300. There was excitement in our activist community about the potential the bill had for holding Canadian companies to the same standards in foreign countries they are held to in Canada. As I recall, sadly, the bill failed by about 12 votes. More sadly, there were 15 Liberals who did not come into the House to vote. That bill was sponsored by a Liberal at the time, so there was significant disappointment.

Because Canadian extractive companies are among the most successful in the world, a fact that we are proud of, we believe that it is important that they lead in responsible, sustainable, and transparent management practices in the world's extractive sector.

In my role as the critic for international human rights, I met, in a three-week period, indigenous groups from five countries. They were from the Philippines, Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, and Guatemala. When they came before me, they made suggestions that bordered on accusations that Canadian mining interests in their countries were complicit in pushing them off their lands.

• (1810)

I do not think Canadian companies would do that with deliberate intent, but certainly the governments they deal with in their daily business often have people in charge who are prepared to do nearly anything for money, for greed. Therefore, when something comes before us that would make sure that Canadian companies are responsible and do not allow practices such as pushing people off their land, that to me is very satisfying.

Bill C-486 at its best is part of an international trend toward due diligence and corporate responsibility. Again, the member opposite, in her speech, referred to the OECD, the United States, and other countries. If legislators enforced regulations, it would no doubt lead to a more level playing field for all Canadian companies.

One of the fair arguments that could come from the government side is that if we put restrictions on Canadian companies that are not put on other international companies in that part of the world, that could be seen as handcuffing them and holding them back. Now that there is a broader consensus out there about the need for this particular type of legislation, there is less possibility of that.

Further, I believe that this bill would go far in ensuring environmental, labour, and human rights protections of which all Canadians can be proud. We know that when we talk to Canadians and listen to them, their expectation is that in Canada our corporate citizens will abide by all these laws, and for the most part they certainly do. However, they also expect that these companies will do the same thing abroad when they are working in other countries.

Private Members' Business

At its worst, the international illegal exploitation and trade of minerals from the Great Lakes region of Africa is funding and fuelling one of the deadliest armed conflicts, I would say, since the Second World War. Canadians are just now coming to understand that many of these conflict minerals, as various speakers have mentioned, end up in many of their products, such as cellphones and even tin cans and medical devices. One of the things I kind of smiled at was that they are in jet engines. I do not know quite how they would wind up there, because they are certainly not technically inclined in that area.

Clearly Canadians need support and guidance if they are looking to understand what products they should avoid.

Members no doubt know that mineral profits in the conflict zones provide revenues from trade, taxes, bribes, and fees imposed by armed groups, and those are substantial. Conflict minerals account for up to 95% of the revenues of these groups. Clearly, those minerals literally keep some armed groups in business.

More than half of all the mines, and all but one major mine in the eastern DRC, are controlled by armed groups that may also impose illegal taxes on minerals transported through the territory they control, which brings to mind what is happening in Iraq today. The insurgency in Iraq has taken over part of an oil field, and they are actually selling that oil and getting money, even though they illegally took it over. It is being reported in the news.

Much of the DRC's mineral output is smuggled into countries. Again, that goes to the heart of what the member across the way asked. Where do we do the audit, upstream or downstream? That is something to consider.

One of the things I am pleased to say is that virtually all the main technology companies are now watching where they purchase their materials, such as BlackBerry—a good Canadian company that I hear today is doing a little better than it had been—Microsoft, Apple, and Nokia. These companies are starting to take steps to avoid using conflict minerals in their products. As was said, the OECD also made moves, I believe, in May 2011.

• (1815)

It is very important that a country like Canada maintains its international reputation and takes a lead in this area.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for a very balanced and thoughtful presentation. I also wish to thank my colleague from Ottawa Centre for the work he does for his constituents, the incredible work he does in his capacity as critic for international affairs, and the very steady, compassionate, and solution-oriented work he has done with regard to conflict minerals and the impact the struggle to finance war, insurgency, and militia groups has on vulnerable, innocent victims and communities.

This debate and this bill are about human beings, human beings who are trapped and terrorized by those who wreak havoc in many regions of the world. This afternoon I am going to speak about the violence in places like the Great Lakes region of Africa; the victims, many of whom are women and children; and the purpose and possibility of Bill C-486, standing in the name of my colleague from the New Democratic Party. It is a very important discussion.

Briefly, the illegal exploitation and trade in minerals in the Great Lakes region of Africa is, as has been said, funding and fuelling a brutal and deadly armed conflict. This is a war that had its origins in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Refugees from that horrific slaughter flooded into the eastern area of the Democratic Republic of Congo, an area formerly known as Zaire. During the Congo wars from 1996-1997, and later from 1998-2003, the conflict involved nine countries and more than 40 rebel groups.

At the present time, there are about three main armed groups operating in eastern Congo, all of them competing for the resources they need to continue fighting by exploiting the illegal trade of minerals in this region. We have to remember how very lucrative the minerals are. They include cassiterite, coltan, wolframite, tin, tantalum, and tungsten. The profits from these illegally traded minerals are estimated at between \$140 million and \$225 million, and as has been said, they provide up to 95% of the money that keeps these armed groups going.

The human cost has been horrific. More than 5.4 million deaths are directly attributable to this trade, and the devastation goes beyond death and murder at the hands of combatants. That devastation comes in the form of sexual and gender-based violence. It has become a weapon of war, and it is used as such in the Democratic Republic of Congo. There are at least 40,000 survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in the DRC. No one knows how many women and girls have died at the hands of their tormentors, these armed men who rape.

All of this violence, all of it, is to instill fear in communities and is used as a form of vengeance. Women and children are the stable base of society, and in this case, they are specifically targeted by these militia to undermine the very fabric of that society to destabilize communities and make it easier to pillage them for those valuable minerals we have been talking about. The result is traumatized women who are often marginalized because they are forced to bear the children of the enemy. These women, some as young as 13 or 14, are rejected by their communities, and so are their children. No one is safe. Women are raped and men are subjected to torture and humiliation. The victims include children as young as four and adults as old as 65.

For many, the injuries never heal. The survivors suffer from a number of health problems, including damaged reproductive organs; fistulas, in the case of women; sexually transmitted diseases; and HIV-AIDS. Many survivors have also been robbed of their possessions or can no longer work as a result of their injuries, and they cannot afford medical care. The DRC is one of the most dangerous places in the world, particularly for women.

Private Members' Business

●(1820)

Locals in mining communities are forced to take part in the illicit mining economy. Money earned from the sale of these minerals, as I have said, is used to further the violence. Minerals are smuggled out of the Congo through neighbouring countries and are shipped to smelters around the world for refinement.

Once minerals are processed in this way, it is really difficult to trace their origin. Conflict minerals easily make their way through the United States to Canada and to consumers in our countries. This underscores the purpose and the importance of Bill C-486.

It is supported by a wide range of Canadian and international civil society and corporate organizations. Consultations were a part of the drafting of this legislation. My colleague has done many consultations, including with representatives from Partnership Africa Canada, BlackBerry, KAIROS, the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Enough Project, and Global Witness.

Bill C-486, quite simply, requires Canadian companies using minerals from the Great Lakes Region of Africa to practise due public diligence to ensure that no armed groups engaged in illegal activities benefit from the extraction, processing, or use of those minerals.

The bill would allow Canadians to know whether minerals in products they purchased may have contributed to the funding and fuelling of conflict and to the horrific crimes against human beings. It would also empower Canadian consumers to make more informed choices.

The New Democrats have long supported transparency and accountability by Canadian corporations overseas, including those in the extractive sector. The bill complements other legislation and efforts made by the New Democrats to encourage responsible, sustainable, and transparent management practices in all sectors, including the extractive sector.

Bill C-486 is part of an international trend toward due diligence and corporate accountability. Enforced regulations—and it is important that they be enforced regulations—will create a level playing field for all Canadian companies while ensuring environmental, labour, and human rights, the protections of which we can be proud.

As we know, there is a vast trade in these minerals. They support electronics and jewellery companies. We simply have to know that the products we are buying are not financing atrocities. We, as Canadians, deserve to know that.

It is critical to build a clean mineral trade in the Congo so the people who live there and the miners who work there can have decent living conditions and know that their region is a place where they can eventually build safe communities, conflict free, where people can survive and live in harmony.

Unfortunately, as we have heard, the government is primarily focused on voluntary industry and government initiatives in regard to the extractive industry. That is unfortunate. It is also unfortunate that we have seen opposition to bills like Bill C-300 that would

require Canadian extractive companies to behave as they do in Canada when they work abroad.

Canadians want to choose products that do not fund war and human rights violations. Canadians need to know that companies that provide electronic products and jewellery are not funding those wars, that there is corporate transparency, and that Canadians can absolutely rely on the products that we have in our homes and know that they are not causing undue harm and terror for those people living in areas like East Africa.

●(1825)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill C-486, An Act respecting corporate practices relating to the extraction, processing, purchase, trade and use of conflict minerals from the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

First of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Ottawa Centre for his excellent work on this issue. It is important to highlight this work that has been so well done. My colleague's bill requires Canadian companies using minerals originating in the Great Lakes Region of Africa to exercise due diligence to ensure that no armed groups engaged in illegal activities benefit from the extraction, processing or use of these minerals.

More than half of the mines located east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are controlled by armed groups that place illegal taxes on the minerals passing through areas under their control. The DRC's mineral production is for the most part smuggled out to other countries. Subsequently, these minerals end up in products such as cell phones, tin cans, medical devices and jet engines. This is how the illegal exploitation and trafficking of minerals in the Great Lakes Region of Africa finances and perpetuates the most violent armed conflicts since the Second World War. The media do not talk about it enough, but what is happening in the Congo is really tragic. There have been millions of deaths and there are millions of refugees. It is important to show concern for them and worry about the consequences of our actions.

This bill is part of the NDP agenda to support corporate social responsibility while allowing consumers to make more informed choices. In fact, one of the most important aspects of the bill is that it will make it possible for Canadians to find out whether the minerals contained in the products they buy may have helped finance and perpetuate conflicts so that they can make better informed and more knowledgeable choices as consumers.

As the deputy critic for consumer protection, it is very important for me to give Canadian consumers an opportunity to make informed choices. In order to do so, companies must tell them whether the minerals they use in manufacturing their products help finance wars. The situation is far from trivial or insignificant. To explain how conflict minerals can cause harm, I will give you a few facts.

Conflict minerals generate \$180 million per year for armed groups, literally keeping some militias in business. In fact, conflict minerals account for up to 95% of the income of armed groups.

In addition, up to 40% of those working in the mines are children, who are exploited and abused. They then become prime targets for recruitment by armed groups. We all know the story of too many child soldiers.

Finally, it is estimated that 5.4 million people have been killed either directly or indirectly in the conflicts in the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

I would like to take a few moments to mention that I met with people from my riding and the Quebec City area who are working with Development and Peace and who are doing an outstanding job. Just like myself and the NDP, their aim is to make our Canadian companies socially responsible, both at home and abroad.

I have received messages from hundreds of constituents in my riding who support an approach similar to that of my colleague, that is, to ask Canada, as a major player in the international extractive sector, to promote responsible management practices. I would like to thank them for their support and I would ask that they continue writing to me, as this is precisely how we can bring pressure to bear on the government, to ensure we are heard and that we can make the government listen to reason.

• (1830)

I still need the support of the people of Quebec City and elsewhere to do this.

In other words, the constituents of the Quebec riding that I represent here in Parliament think that Canada and Canadian businesses must exercise due diligence, responsibility and especially transparency in their operations abroad. I am proud to say that the bill being debated today will help guarantee that the international activities of Canadian businesses comply with a standard that we can all be very proud of.

Members of the NDP have long advocated for greater transparency and responsibility from Canadian businesses that operate in other countries, primarily in the mining industry. This bill forms part of the NDP's legislative efforts to encourage responsible, sustainable and transparent management in the mining industry.

My colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île has also put forward a bill that would create an ombudsman for the corporate social responsibility of extractive corporations, specifically. This demonstrates how active we are. The NDP wants to ensure that companies that exploit minerals in developing countries are not only, as I said, socially responsible, but also ecologically responsible.

Canada must take the initiative internationally on this matter. Canadian mining companies are leaders in the global market and it is now high time for Canada to also become a leader in corporate social responsibility. Almost every high technology company, from Microsoft to Apple to Nokia, have already adopted measures to avoid using conflict minerals in their products.

Private Members' Business

In May 2011, the OECD adopted a due diligence recommendation and guidance. In August 2012, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission announced rules requiring corporations to show reasonable due diligence in their use of tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold. I will quote, the former U.S. Secretary of State, the esteemed Hillary Clinton, on the subject of conflict minerals:

With respect to corporations responsible for what are known as conflict minerals, I believe that the international community must start looking at steps we can take to try to prevent the mineral wealth from the DRC ending up in the hands of those who fund the violence here.

It is time for Canada to join this international movement and play a leading role in efforts to put an end to the conflict in the DRC. The bill would incorporate the OECD guidance in Canadian legislation, which would be a first for the OECD. It would be good to show initiative and take the first step. That would be a change.

In closing, this bill could be another step in the right direction leading to an end to a conflict that, as I mentioned, has victimized more than 5.4 million people and is financed and fuelled by revenue generated by the minerals in the products we buy.

Canada has a duty to be at the forefront when it comes to efforts to put an end to conflict mineral trafficking. I am listening to what the people of Quebec City are telling me and they want our companies to be successful, responsible representatives of our country. They want our companies to comply with international standards. We want consumers to be given the information they need so that they can buy products that do not finance war. I truly believe that they have that right. That is why our proposed bill is so worthwhile. I sincerely hope that this bill gets passed with the full support of the House, and I hope that it will restore our international reputation abroad. That reputation has been badly tarnished in recent years.

• (1835)

This initiative would give the organizations that we work with a renewed sense of hope. We would get the feeling that this is the Canada that we used to know, the one that made us proud. I am talking about the Canada of Lester B. Pearson, who won the Nobel Peace Prize.

I sometimes think about that Canada. I would like Canada to be a country that is fairer and more responsible, an example on the world stage. That is the direction we should be headed in. I invite my colleagues to move forward with this bill and give it their full support.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking all of my colleagues, in particular my colleagues on this side. I particularly want to thank the parliamentary secretary for her comments. I will deal with her concerns in a minute, but I first want to say how proud I am to stand to speak on Bill C-486, the conflict minerals act.

Private Members' Business

Five years ago, as I have mentioned many times in this House, I was in the Congo. I saw the exploitation of mineral resources and their contribution to violence. As I have said before, all of us have these little devices that we carry around, and thus we carry a little piece of the conflict with us—unknowingly for many. That is really what this is about. I am tying the purchases that we make to the conflict that is happening in the Congo, which, as has been stated before, is the rape capital of the world. It is where rape is used as a weapon of war, and where 5.4 million people have died since 1998. It is a tragic war.

I want to say that the bill has already helped. We have had an incredible dialogue here in the House and around the country about the connection between minerals and conflict. We have heard some of that debate tonight and an acknowledgement from the government that this is a concern.

Thousands of people across the country have signed petitions and written letters in support of this legislation. Groups as diverse as the Grandmothers Advocacy Network, the Jane Goodall Institute of Canada, Students Taking Action Now, the Canadian Fair Trade Network, the Enough Project in the States that is partnering with us here in Canada, Engineers Without Borders, and many church and faith groups have got behind the Just Minerals campaign in support of Bill C-486. I am so thankful for their advocacy on this important legislation.

The bill has made parliamentarians in this House take note of an often forgotten and overlooked crisis in Central Africa. The last time the bill was debated, all parties agreed that further action was needed by Canada. We have a consensus on that, which is important. In the words of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs:

I am pleased to say that this government agrees wholeheartedly...that further engagement by Canada is warranted to find effective and efficient ways to address the issue of conflict minerals.

I could not agree more. That is an important consensus. We heard it from the parliamentary secretary again tonight, and I take note of that.

Moreover, all parties agree on the principle of the bill, the crucial point that Canada can help to disconnect the minerals in Canadian products from the conflict in the Congo. However, I have to underline that this is not about Canadian mining companies. In fact, I am engaged right now with the Mining Association of Canada, and if the government sees the agreement, I hope to get support from them. This is actually about bad actors, about those who are mining in the eastern Congo and controlling the mines with conflict, using child soldiers and rape as a weapon of war. This is not about Canadian mining companies; this is actually to give Canadian mining companies a good reputation, so let us put that aside. While it is not about Canadian mining companies, it is about the supply chain of those companies.

I will now address some of the stated concerns of my friend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development.

She is concerned about the scope of the bill. She said its scope is too big. To address her concern directly, what we are saying is that we need reporting along the supply chain. That would simply be

about keeping tabs on a computer about where people are sourcing their supplies. It is very simple. It would actually help.

That addresses her second concern, the focus of the bill, which is the Great Lakes region. Why? It is because that is where the conflict is and that is where the minerals are. That is why the bill is focused on it, just as the OECD was and just as the legislation in the United States was. It is because we can make a difference if we focus here.

The parliamentary secretary said that the bill is too narrowly cast on the Great Lakes. The good news is that we learned from the Dodd-Frank Act that the reporting would not just be here in Canada, but that we would also share it with the people in the Congo so that the government there could track and trace where these minerals are coming from. That would help build up their capacity and help people in the Congo.

Second reading is about agreeing on principle. I would ask that the government look to the consensus, and if second reading is about taking it to committee to improve the bill, then I would ask the government and members to consider that. If we want to take conflict out of our devices and give Canadians a clear choice on what they are buying, I would submit that we have to get this bill to committee and third reading, so we can improve it, save lives, and stop the horrendous conflict in the Congo by doing our fair share. That is the least we can do for the people of the Congo.

● (1840)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 6:43 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 17, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1845)

[Translation]

COMBATING COUNTERFEIT PRODUCTS ACT

The House resumed from January 31 consideration of the motion that Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Copyright Act and the Trade-marks Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

[English]

We are now switching from the situation in Congo, but I want to finish pleading with my colleagues across the way to really consider that issue. If there is one issue that is not partisan, it is this one about what is happening in Congo. I think we can somehow find a way to agree on how to stem the violence in Congo.

The bill that I am now addressing is Bill C-8. Members will know that this legislation has quite a lengthy history. I do not mean just Bill C-8, but the whole issue of copyright and the Trade-marks Act and making consequential amendments to other acts.

This issue requires caution. It requires an understanding of not just the law but enforcement of the law as well.

Many people are concerned about how international treaties and copyright interplay. They are concerned about the fact that we are in the midst of finishing negotiations on CETA and how that agreement would relate to copyright. It is important to note that the international agreement dealing with counterfeiting also comes into play here. Many have noted that while a treaty to combat counterfeiting presently exists, not many countries have signed on to it, about which there is some concern. It is this international context, and how it would apply to this legislation, that we are dealing with.

If we abide by certain rules made by legislation such as this and there are trade deals or other treaties we have to contend with, it is important that we understand what those trade deals and treaties mean. In the case of CETA, it is important to understand how it would apply.

I am pleading with the government yet again to at least tell us what is going on with respect to CETA, because it would affect trademark and copyright legislation. My understanding is that there could be consequences from the CETA deal for copyright and trademarks. I would like to hear about what action the government is taking. I would like to know what success, or lack thereof, the government has had with respect to CETA, and the sooner the better.

Here we are trying to find a way to help people create in an unhindered and legal way, while also making sure that the creative class will be able to access technology and ideas and material and will not be suppressed. The law has to find a balance. By the same token, we want to make sure that what we are creating and what we have copyright protection for will not be usurped or be taken and used without the creators benefiting from their work. It is obviously a delicate balance.

Government Orders

I would like to go over some of the aspects of the bill and what it proposes to do.

As I said, this legislation has a long history. I remember previous Parliaments that attempted to deal with the copyright issue. It should be noted that many of our trading partners have been pleading with us, particularly our friends south of the border, to get this done and get it right. The new ambassador brought it up in a recent meeting with us. He indicated that this was an important issue for the United States because most of our trade is done with that country.

Bill C-8 deals with counterfeiting and infringement, which is important. It proposes to add two new criminal offences to the Copyright Act for the possession of and export of infringed copies. The bill would also create offences for the selling or offering of counterfeit goods on a commercial scale.

There is some contention as to the degree of the export and import of counterfeit goods.

● (1850)

I cite Michael Geist, because he is the expert in the country on this issue. His testimony at committee raised some questions about the extent to which there is counterfeiting. He should be listened to, because he is an expert. He asked this very good question: what is the scope of the studies that are referenced by government and officials? In other words, do we have accurate data?

That said, it is important that we have legislation that would deal with counterfeiting and the trade of counterfeiting materials, as contemplated in this bill.

That is the first part. The bill adds two new criminal offences under the Copyright Act for possession and exportation of infringing copies and creates offences for selling or offering counterfeit goods on a commercial scale.

The other aspect is that it creates a prohibition against importing or exporting infringing copies and counterfeit goods. It introduces some balance to that prohibition by creating two exemptions. One is personal use. As I referenced earlier, it relates to the creative class and those in the knowledge industry. I will use educators as an example.

I come from the business of teaching. As educators, it is important that we have access to knowledge and make it available to students. There is a balance that has to be struck so that we will not arrest teachers if they are just sharing materials with their students to allow them to gain knowledge. That is one of the areas we have to keep in mind.

The other one we have to look for is items in transit control.

Government Orders

Finally, the bill would grant new *ex officio* powers to border officials to detain infringing copies or counterfeit goods. That is a significant policy shift, because until now border officials required these private rights holders to obtain a court order before seizing infringing copies or goods. The bill grants new *ex officio* powers to the Minister of Public Safety and border officials to share information on detained goods with rights holders. It also widens the scope of what can be a trademark to the features found in the broad definition of “sign”, which includes all sorts of things: shapes, colours, scents, et cetera. What we want to see on this side is that we strike that balance. These are fairly important new powers that are being given to the government.

I will finish by saying that it is fine to pass laws on copyright and trademark to make sure that we deal with what we are focused on—that is, those who decide to get into the business of knock-offs and use the creations of others to benefit themselves when they have not had any input into the creation of any goods, ideas, or products. By the same token, how do we enforce these measures?

Members will hear from my colleagues tonight about some of the problems we have with the government's cutting of border services in this area. On the one hand, it is fine to give powers to border agents to say, “Here it is; you make sure that you deal with the infringements on copyright”, but on the other hand it has cut the budgets of those who are responsible for dealing with this authority.

This is an issue with our friends south of the border. They are aware of this. We have had issues with our friends south of the border regarding regulations. Let us make no mistake, this is a trade issue. They want to know if we are serious about this issue and will bring in laws that are modern and up to date with current copyright thinking. That means little unless we have an enforcement mechanism, to say the least. It is not only about passing laws; it is also about ensuring that we have resources on the ground to enforce them.

Members will hear from my colleagues and me that we have to get it right and make sure that we do not go too far in terms of infringing on those in the creative class, those in the knowledge business, and those who need to have access to materials, while on the other side making sure that if we bring in new responsibilities for our border agents, we do not cut their budgets. It is important that we give them support and training as to what these new powers mean and how they will exercise them.

• (1855)

At the end of the day, we will be supporting the bill to ensure that we do our bit as a country, that we have a balance in terms of the copyright obligations, that those in the creative and knowledge classes have access to the materials they need to create, and that, on the other hand, we provide our border agents with the proper support that they need in material supplies and training.

ROYAL ASSENT

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we proceed with questions and comments, I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

The Secretary to the Governor General and Herald Chancellor
Rideau Hall
Ottawa

June 19, 2014

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 19th day of June, 2014, at 6:07 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace

The schedule indicates the bill assented to on June 19, 2014, was Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

COMBATING COUNTERFEIT PRODUCTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Copyright Act and the Trade-marks Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to congratulate my colleague for his bill on conflict minerals. His speech was very eloquent. I congratulate him on this initiative that all members strongly support.

With respect to Bill C-8, my colleague spoke at length about the lack of available data. Experts have pointed that out as well. It is very difficult to determine the impact of counterfeiting. It certainly has an impact, but the data are lacking. As he mentioned, we support the bill.

My colleague spoke about resources and mentioned Mr. Geist, who said that it was not always easy to detect counterfeit goods.

Have we allocated the resources needed for border officers to be able to detect counterfeit goods?

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would like to tell a very quick story about my father, who worked for his entire career with Customs and Excise. He worked on the GATT side, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. It was really important that everyone understood the nomenclature and that when we had to enforce copyright, our trading partners agreed on the rules and understood that nomenclature, such as we declare that a book is a book. It sounds simple, one would think, but these debates often go on in trade agreements. In the case of GATT, it was really important to get it right.

Government Orders

I would say to my colleague that if we are handing these powers over to our border officials to use these powers to crack down on counterfeiting, they need to understand exactly what the legislation means. These resources for Canada Border Services agents are absolutely critical. They need to have the proper training so that this legislation will actually work.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, counterfeiting is clearly a criminal activity sometimes. We do not talk nearly enough about the fact that these people can not only counterfeit a product but also sell a dangerous product.

At the international level, if we integrate these products into products made in Canada, our entire production chain loses its value.

Could my distinguished colleague tell us about the impact of counterfeiting on our international image?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

[*English*]

It is an incredibly important one. I think of the example in aerospace. Recently there were some investigations in the United States about certain parts for planes. When some of them were examined, they were found to be counterfeit. This is very serious. Imagine if planes have counterfeit parts and there is no oversight as to the quality. We are talking about putting people's lives in danger.

An hon. member: The Hercules.

Mr. Paul Dewar: My colleague just reminded me of the Hercules. These are the workhorses for our military. If we find we have counterfeit materials in the supply chain, this is very serious. That is an extraordinarily important question.

The other aspect relates to very small items, such as pills and prescription drugs. In the European Union there was a crackdown by Germany in the whole area of counterfeit medicines. Again, people's lives hang in the balance if they are provided with counterfeit drugs that are not effective.

It is an extraordinarily important question. We have to get this right, because it is important to make sure that we create things to very high standards and with proper oversight. We could criticize the government about the need to strengthen the oversight it provides, but we have to make sure we get this right. We want to fight counterfeiting because it can affect people's lives.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party will support Bill C-8 at third reading, because the fight against counterfeiting is so important to our economy.

First of all, it is a matter of respecting the economic rights of creators and copyright or trademark owners, who have invested their research into developing their product. This requires time and money. Very often, they invest in advertising and marketing for their product, to demonstrate its quality and the significance of buying it.

Some people pay the bills, while the counterfeiters run off with the profits. This is a great recipe for making a respectable company go under. In addition, when the counterfeit items are of poor quality, both the company's market and the value of its trademark collapse. If we want to protect our businesses, we must ban this kind of practice.

We must make sure that consumers are really buying the product they are paying for. If you pay \$3,000 for a beautiful Rolex watch, you expect it to contain a little bit of gold and silver. If you pay \$15 for it in a back alley in New York, of course there will not be any gold or silver in it. It cannot be anything but a toy. Nonetheless, the brand of the watch is being undermined.

Let us imagine that a counterfeiter makes an almost exact copy of a watch but replaces the gold and silver with lower quality metals. First of all, he increases the amount of profit he makes from this inferior product. Then the legitimate company loses the sale and the brand value declines, because the owner believes the watch should last a lifetime but it stops working after six months. It is the value of the brand name that takes a hit. It is important to preserve it.

Very often, it is just a question of keeping the public safe. For instance, children's toys cannot have lead paint in them. All the major brand companies know this, and the counterfeiters do as well. However, the counterfeiters sometimes like to make a little more money and do not comply with essential international public health standards. They use hazardous products.

If these people started making prescription drugs, there would be a problem. In Canada, we feel it is absolutely awful that prescription drugs we import may be of poor quality, depending on the plant where they were manufactured, even within a company. The plant manager lowers the quality of the brand-name product. This has happened in the United States, where some companies have been banned from selling prescription drugs. We hope of course that control will happen in Canada. It is a matter of public health.

If we expect a prescription drug to contain 70% of active ingredients, and there is a problem if it only contains 50% or if it contains 115%. Doctors write their prescriptions for medications whose properties they know. If someone starts playing around with them, it becomes a public health issue.

With regard to food, Canada bans a certain level of pesticides. If this level is exceeded, the food in question is not safe. The counterfeiters will use poor quality products in their cans and stick on a label from a company that has a good reputation to sell them. They do not meet the standards and this also poses risks.

• (1905)

This is why the NDP is in complete agreement with Bill C-8. We have to make sure this protection is provided in order for food, toys, drugs and even construction materials to have real value. This is the era of globalization, and very often we receive by-products that are incorporated into our own national production. That is what the problem of contamination is all about. If a contaminant enters our production chain at some point, then when the product comes out the end, our chain of production will have a lower value. The estimated value of our product will not be what we had hoped because we will have been duped. This is therefore important. It is a question of security, not just physical but also economic.

Government Orders

One major flaw must be noted, however. It is all very well to enact the finest laws in the world, but if there is no one to enforce them, then things are not going to work. Unfortunately, in recent years, a significant amount has been cut from the budget of the Canada Border Services Agency. That has led to 549 jobs being cut. That is a huge number. We can imagine how many containers inspectors can check and how many long-term investigations they can do into counterfeit products that appear on the market. Those investigations are important. Legislation is nothing if there is no structure to ensure that it will be enforced.

We recently discussed a free trade agreement with Honduras. The problem I raised at the time was that there is no point in having a law that prohibits murder in that country if the leaders of the country can go around killing people with complete impunity because the police will never bother them for it. This is somewhat the same problem.

Prohibiting counterfeiting in a piece of legislation is all very well, but it is not going to stop a fraudster from trying to do it. What is really going to stop them from doing it is telling them that all the lovely dishes from China with lead paint that we find in their container are going to be destroyed with a crusher and the container is going back to China. If we do that once or twice, I guarantee that the third time, they are not going to be interested in bringing in a container with dishes that have lead paint. That is the border. That border is important. It is called the law and the justice system. It is not just thinking that because we are pure of heart, everyone is going to have the same ethics as we do. Ethics have to be protected.

Obviously, it goes without saying that this is difficult to quantify. As I said, we do not have the number of inspectors we need. We know that counterfeiting exists and is here. We have a general idea because companies say their sales are down. How do we determine the value of an underground activity when it is hidden and there is no one to ferret it out? We have seen it grow. The RCMP says that in 2009 it seized \$7.6 million worth of goods, and that in 2012 it seized \$38 million worth. That is just the tip of the iceberg, because we cannot determine the extent of this underground activity. It is hidden and we do not have the personnel we need to shed light on it.

I will quickly conclude by saying that giving our customs officers the powers they need and instituting civil and criminal penalties for counterfeiting trademarks enables them to share information with the owners of the trademarks and the products. These are things that the NDP and the international community agree with entirely.

We are going to support the bill and we are even going to try to improve it in committee.

●(1910)

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his very eloquent and very enlightening speech. I would like to take advantage of his qualifications as an economist and get some further information about one of the last points he made. In my opinion, the issue of counterfeiting or piracy, is similar to the issue of under-the-table work in the construction industry, for example.

We can roughly estimate the revenue that society loses as a result of people working under the table. Although it is difficult to do, because of its illicit nature, has anyone been able to put a value or a number on the extent of the problem for the Canadian economy?

●(1915)

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, we have a general idea.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has indicated that it amounts to \$250 billion per year, which is a huge amount. Here, we know only about the portion that we catch, but we know it is enormous and that it is important. The companies that are the victims tell us. They see their market shrinking even though their product is still just as popular. There are therefore commercial indicators, namely, the fact that the sales of the companies that sell the products are affected. There is economic harm. Does it have to be measured within Canada? No. That is the problem, and it relates to our credibility with our own market and our financial and economic partners. They tell us that things are not going well in our country and we are causing them to lose money. For example, Adidas says that it sees its products everywhere here, but it is not selling any, so something is not quite right. Obviously, an ambassador is going to be called in and is going to be told that his country is turning a blind eye to fraud. Canada must not get this reputation. In fact, that is the reason why Bill C-8 needs to be implemented quickly and effectively.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my colleague briefly addressed the issue of counterfeit drugs. Since I am a nurse, the subject is of particular interest to me. At the international level, it is a veritable epidemic. In some African countries, there are more counterfeit drugs than legally produced drugs. When the counterfeiters started out, of course, they had a very shoddy way of doing things. Now, they go so far as to reproduce the packaging and holograms. It is very disturbing. Canadian hospitals have unknowingly bought counterfeit drugs and doctors have prescribed them to their patients, thinking they were the real drugs.

I would like to hear my colleague's opinion on this epidemic. How can we solve the problem? How much of a risk do counterfeit drugs represent for Canadians' health?

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, this is a danger for Canadians and it is also a danger for those who buy Canadian products.

In the United States, they sell a drug made from a flu medication. One of the ingredients of that medication is basically freely available in Canada. Sometimes it is also imported from foreign countries.

If that product is tainted, it will affect the entire production chain for Canada and the United States, where people take it legally. In addition, and this is the worst part, some of the production is misappropriated so that the illicit drug can be made.

Clearly, we are on thin ice. However, it is important to understand fully that not having absolute control over the quality of medications is harmful to people's health. Even worse, in this age of globalization, we import medicinal ingredients that are reassembled chemically to make another medication. If one of those ingredients is not good, we are selling medications that we think are of high quality when, in reality, they are not. That is the crux of the problem.

Government Orders

I would like to remind hon. members that counterfeit medications are rarely quality medications. They are produced by illicit activity and the people who engage in it have no scruples. Selling tainted medications does not bother them.

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House for a third time today, this time to discuss Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Copyright Act and the Trade-marks Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. It is the NDP's intention, of course, to support it at third reading.

We in the NDP could not agree more with protecting consumers. It is only right to support bills of this kind that have that intent. It is important for Canadian companies and consumers to fight counterfeiting, which, we must remember, is a breach of intellectual property rights. That is no small thing. It is particularly important when the counterfeit products can jeopardize Canadians' health or safety.

The reason I have risen three times today in the House to speak on various bills is because they have one thing in common: the health and safety of Canadians. We can never be too careful to make informed decisions and to really make sure that everything is being done with respect to health and safety because, ultimately, lives are at stake. Once again, this is the issue here.

It is hard to see how a bill such as this one could be implemented when, last year, the Conservatives cut \$143 million from the Canada Border Services Agency. That, of course, reduced the number of front-line officers even further and undermines our ability to control our borders.

The Conservatives added to the agency's responsibilities while cutting its funding. That is where we are risking problems and where that is a concern. That is why we are here tonight in the House to raise this concern and express these well-founded fears.

This government has refused several times to take a balanced approach on copyright. The NDP believes that intellectual property requires an approach that strikes a balance between the interests of rights holders and the interests of users and consumers.

When we look more specifically at Bill C-8, we need to point this out. It adds two new criminal offences under the Copyright Act for the possession or export of infringing copies and creates offences related to the sale or offering for sale of counterfeit products on a commercial scale. It prohibits the import or export of infringing copies and counterfeit goods, and it ensures a balanced approach to this prohibition by creating two exceptions. One is for personal use and the other is for copies in customs transit control.

It gives customs officers new powers to detain counterfeit goods and copies. That is an important policy change, since up until now, border officials required copyright holders to first get a court order before they would seize infringing copies or counterfeit goods.

It gives the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and border authorities new powers enabling them to share with rights owners information relating to the detained goods. Lastly, it expands the scope of what can be registered as a trademark, as described within the broader definition of "signs", including colours, shapes, scents and tastes.

In June of 2012, I rose in the House to ask the government a question. I referred to a report by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce stating that one-third of all products pose a real threat to the health and safety of Canadians. That is why we have to take action against counterfeiting. This is not just about jeans and handbags.

My colleague said that whenever we talk about counterfeiting, people think we are talking about a handbag sporting a recognizable trademark that someone saw in some back alley in New York. That is the kind of thing most people think of. However, we are also talking about drugs, and that is very serious. They can contain uranium and lead.

• (1920)

We are talking about safety and security because it can be that serious. It is important to have the necessary resources to keep one-third of products from being hazardous to people's health and safety. It is really important for us to take action on this.

Many people support our position, and that is an important thing to add to the debate. Jean-Pierre Fortin, national president of the Customs and Immigration Union, commented on the 2012 budget cuts to the Canada Border Services Agency. He explained how those cuts would reduce border officers' ability to do their work:

These proposed budget cuts would have a direct and real impact on Canadians and our communities across the country: more child pornography entering the country, more weapons and illegal drugs will pass through our borders, not to mention terrorists, sexual predators and hardened criminals.

Mr. Speaker, before I talk about some more of the support we have been receiving, I would like to indicate that I will be sharing my time with the wonderful member for Trois-Rivières.

According to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's Canadian Intellectual Property Council, the Canadian system has no tools to track and report the instances of counterfeiting that are actually detected in the country. According to European Commission regulation 1891/2004, customs authorities in all EU member states are obliged to report statistics on customs seizures, and the Canada Border Services Agency does not have a mandate for reporting on intellectual property crime at the border. That is another important source of support.

We also have support from the World Customs Organization, which published *Model Provisions for National Legislation to Implement Fair and Effective Border Measures Consistent with the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights* at the WTO. In its introduction, the World Customs Organization indicates that model provisions ensure the effective enforcement of intellectual property rights at the border without undue restriction of the flow of trade in legitimate goods. The extent and effectiveness of customs interventions are dependent upon the resources available for customs administration.

Government Orders

We have the support of Michael Geist, a law professor at the University of Ottawa and Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-Commerce Law, a field in which we will most certainly have to make some major progress. In relation to Bill C-8, he said that officers are not experts in intellectual property. The purpose of the assessment is to determine whether one of the exceptions in the Copyright Act may apply. This is a complex process. The courts often have a hard time deciding. Nevertheless, the bill still plans to give these powers to border officers without judicial review or a limit on the types of goods concerned.

I could cite more examples of support, but I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Trois-Rivières. It is important to do something about counterfeiting. It is not just a scourge. Counterfeiting results in economic losses, but it is also a health and safety issue.

We cannot allow drugs to be sold on the Internet when we do not have any information about them and they might contain uranium or lead. Honestly, we must absolutely make sure we have better legislation to truly fight counterfeiting.

● (1925)

I think that we have the full support of various players across the country, people who think that it is high time we do something about this.

As the deputy critic for consumer protection, I have risen in this House a number of times. I would obviously like us to move forward with this.

● (1930)

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. As the deputy critic for small business, she has raised a number of important points about the damage counterfeiting does to the Canadian economy.

Although we do not have any conclusive data and it is not always easy to determine exactly what impact counterfeiting is having on the Canadian economy, I think the testimony we have heard shows that there is an impact on small and medium-sized businesses.

My colleague also said that resources are needed to be able to protect consumers and ensure that imported products are safe and healthy. I would like her to talk about the fact that this government is constantly cutting funding, whether for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency or for all sorts of programs that protect consumers. Could she talk about that and about the resulting impact on the health and safety of Canadians?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I think she did a good job of summarizing the key points that are keeping our debate going tonight.

It is difficult to measure the impact of counterfeiting, because it is illegal. Industry Canada points out that the retail value of counterfeit goods seized by the RCMP increased from \$7.6 million in 2005 to \$38 million in 2012. That is quite a substantial amount. I think action is long overdue.

In terms of health and safety, I know that the government has overlooked a number of issues. Must I repeat this? I have said it several times today in my remarks. In the case of XL Foods, the

government did not take the appropriate action by cutting the number of inspectors. Inevitably, consequences, such as the tainted meat crisis, ensue. There is also the maritime search and rescue centre in Quebec City, in my riding. Clearly, being understood in their own language is a question of safety for people using the river. In short, these are health and safety issues.

I could name a whole host of issues that the government has failed to address, but I know that there will be other questions, so I will leave it at that. I want people to take action on this.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since my colleague has spoken a lot about counterfeit drugs, I would like to make a comment. I do not know what she will think of it. Some scientific and medical articles I read indicate that, currently, 75% of the Viagra on the market is counterfeit. Since men are embarrassed to ask their doctors for this drug, they try to get it without a prescription. An enormous amount is counterfeit. There are even pills that are blatantly counterfeit: somewhat handcrafted, they are simply painted blue.

I would like her to talk about the risks associated with counterfeiting when it involves products that people are a little embarrassed to ask for or go and get, even if they could probably do so legally. If they took the time to see a doctor, they would not get a counterfeit product.

Could my colleague share her observations with us?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I am imagining the scenario of a man who decides one night that he would like Viagra. He has the choice of going to the pharmacy or going on eBay. Since it would be more discreet to get it on the Internet, perhaps he would choose that method. However, it would really be unfortunate for him to end up with a counterfeit product after placing his order. Instead of getting any kind of benefit from the drug or pill, he might only have a negative reaction, because the government did not legislate as it should have.

Obviously, his plans for the evening would be much different. I agree. Let me give a very specific example, Mr. Speaker.

● (1935)

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether I will be finishing my session with this speech on Bill C-8, but I am always pleased to take part in this democratic exercise, too often abused in the House, of exchange or debate among parliamentarians on the various bills introduced by the government or by private members.

However, I cannot help but note that we set an extraordinary record of 76 time allocation motions a few days ago. I get the impression we will soon need an Excel file to follow all the bills that have been subject to a time allocation.

Speaking of software, or rather counterfeit software, obviously none of the examples I will be citing involve the members here. No one here buys counterfeit products, and no one encourages piracy. However, everyone knows someone who has done so and who has had problems. I will come back to that subject later.

Government Orders

Getting back to my 76 closure motions, unless the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons rises in the next few minutes to make the traditional announcement and trigger the 77th closure, Bill C-8 seems headed for an open, democratic debate in accordance with the rules of the House. I should be happy, but, after 76 closure motions, you will allow me to feel somewhat pessimistic and to say I am skeptical of that prospect. Why? Obviously because government members are probably glad and very much aware that the NDP, a dynamic and structured official opposition if ever there was one, agrees with most of the bill's content and is preparing to support the bill at the this stage, still hoping that a few improvements can be made at the final stage.

What are we to understand from that? The Conservatives allow all members to speak if they think as they do or if their thinking is similar to their own. However, the axe falls the moment we have a different opinion to express on another bill.

I can cope with closure personally, but I do not think our Canadian democracy can afford that luxury or option. Even if my remarks were not true, there is still a perception. As they say in the advertising industry, perception is very often reality. I hope that the Canadians and Quebecers who vote and re-elect their members to the House of Commons will have a perception that corresponds to reality. That is the end of my comments on that subject.

The subject before us is the bill entitled An Act to amend the Copyright Act and the Trade-marks Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. I would have been more comfortable debating the part of the Copyright Act that deals, for example, with artistic creations such as musical works, artworks, choreographies and many other things. Where intellectual property or value are at issue, I must admit I always join the debate because that was a battle I waged for a very long time in my previous careers.

The same is therefore true of products of all kinds. To ensure that a trademark that is valued and used by consumers can continue surprising them with its creativity and affording them the means to pursue their objectives, we must combat counterfeiting and piracy to the best of our ability.

Of course, no one in the House has done this, but we all know someone who has travelled to a city in or outside Canada and not exactly scoffed at items offered to him or her at absurdly low prices.

● (1940)

We may think of watches that in all respects resemble watches by Gucci and Tag or Swiss brand watches. We may also think of handbags that our spouses dream of but that we cannot afford to give them. The prices of these products are absurdly low. Most people know very well that these are counterfeit products, and the booths where they are sold obviously provide no invoices. We can imagine that the after-sales service, long-term guarantees and product quality vanish, not to mention the fact that, on every occasion, we are undermining the original product.

Counterfeit products sometimes seem real to the eye. With wear, however, everyone knows that the quality is not there and that someone is trying to take advantage of someone else's creative process to make a fast buck, without offering any after-sales service

or reinvesting in the business whose product has been copied. This is also the case of sunglasses.

There has been a wave of flea markets over the past 10 years, particularly in Quebec, although they have recently been somewhat less popular. I do not know whether that was the case in the other regions of Canada. People thought that, by going there often, they would unearth the find of the century at an absurdly low price. Of course, someone may once have picked up a Renoir for \$150 because he found it in the closet of a grandmother who did not know the value of the work she owned. Most of the time, however, what people found were counterfeit pieces.

Counterfeit works can be particularly dangerous. I have heard my colleagues speak at length about drugs. Although people did not shop at flea markets to buy a lot of drugs, equally dangerous things could be found there. I am thinking, for example, of electrical components found at lower prices than at regular hardware stores. These were not used items. They looked new and were properly packaged but did not meet CSA standards. CSA standards are the Canadian standards that, according to the government, are the responsibility of the provinces, for example where pyrrhotite is concerned, but that is another debate I do not want to engage in.

Let us imagine that, to save a few pennies, someone buys switches that do not meet Canadian standards and installs them on his electrical panel. While he sleeps peacefully, parts of the electrical panel could overload and cause a fire that, at best, might result in material damage or, at worst, could have a serious impact on the health and lives of the people living in the house. This is a common occurrence.

Another example is those hunting jackets that were purportedly made of goose down. They were comfortable and very warm. After getting the coat caught on a tree branch, someone realized that what was supposed to be goose down was instead a kind of padding that was hard to identify and probably highly inflammable. That made the product dangerous.

I will now skip right to the conclusion of my speech since time is short. I hope to have the opportunity to discuss these matters at greater length when I answer my colleagues' questions.

In conclusion, I would like to echo the sentiment expressed in the title of the report that the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology prepared in 2007. The title of that report was, "Counterfeiting and Piracy are Theft".

I believe the title was very much inspired by a campaign that was designed to make music users more aware of the fact that not only was copying theft, but also that theft takes money away from the creators who allowed consumers to enjoy the products of their creativity.

It is not easy to strike a balance between rights holders' interests and those of users and consumers. My NDP colleagues and I believe that that balance should serve as a guide for all of the suggested improvements to the wording of this bill.

I will stop there and will be pleased to answer my colleagues' questions.

Government Orders

● (1945)

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

He did not have time to discuss a particular aspect of counterfeiting and piracy: the question of information. By definition, any criminal activity is very difficult to measure. Criminals do not declare their activities. It is always difficult to get a true picture of a criminal activity, and the only numbers we can refer to are the ones from actual seizures. I would therefore like my colleague to explain how reducing the resources available to carry out more seizures has a direct impact on the number of seizures actually carried out. It necessarily has an impact on the quality of the information and statistics. Reducing the resources available for carrying out actual seizures has consequences not only for the seizure, but also for the presumed statistics about the criminal activity in question.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker that is a very complex and important question. It would definitely deserve a longer answer than I am able to give in the time available to me.

I will say two things in reply. First, I think that the theory that we will have to do more with less has to stop. Let us draw the curtain on cost-cutting.

Another point is particularly worth mentioning. In this area, secrecy reigns supreme. That is one reason why the NDP had proposed an amendment that I thought was very wise, appropriate and intelligent, which was to require that an annual report be submitted to Parliament containing information about the goods forfeited. Unfortunately, it was rejected by the Conservatives. We would have been able to create a database, with incomplete data, of course, but data that would then have been used for making relatively credible extrapolations about seizures carried out by the RCMP in Canada.

We would thus have started to take the measure of the Canadian counterfeiting and piracy market. This was a brilliant amendment, but it was rejected for some reason I find hard to explain. I hope that in the hours of debate we will continue to hold this evening, someone on the government side will rise and explain to me what the reason was for rejecting this amendment, other than pure partisanship. I admit that I do not see an angle from which such a sensible amendment could be rejected.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech because, once again, he brilliantly explained certain aspects of this bill. As well, he told us about his personal experience, particularly in relation to copyright, which is important. Our creators should be paid and should receive royalties when they create.

My colleague also mentioned the current dysfunctional state of the House of Commons, in terms of the repeated gag orders imposed by the government. I would also like to note that in the monster bill, Bill C-31, the budget implementation bill, division 25 deals with amendments relating to international treaties on trademarks.

Could my colleague explain why the government did not split this bill? We could have examined this part of Bill C-31 in greater depth. I would like to hear his comments on that.

● (1950)

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, the answer I would like to give my colleague from LaSalle—Émard is essentially found in the final words of his question.

Why is the government not allowing us the resources and the time to examine this bill in depth? The answer is in the question. This is what we have been seeing for three years now: bills that can be termed monster, mammoth, dinosaur or omnibus bills.

Whatever we call them, the result is always the same: we do not have the time that we, as opposition members, need. The same is true for the witnesses who come before the committee and are often asked to focus on a very specific aspect of the question they are asked, rather than sharing their expertise with us, which would allow for a thorough examination. When you say thorough examination, you are saying New Democrats rather than Conservatives.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to continue working in the House and to continue talking about the NDP's proposals and vision on a variety of subjects. In this case, it is about copyright, counterfeiting, smuggling and intellectual property rights.

Since the Conservatives asked all parliamentarians to sit in the House later, that is, to debate and work until midnight every night, they have set a record of 157 or 160 missed turns to speak, if not more, because they refuse to rise in the House and debate and speak. However, we in the opposition are doing the work. They ask us to sit but they refuse to speak, to debate or even to ask us questions. They sit speechless and silent, kind of like the 21 members from British Columbia who for two days now have refused to give interviews about the approval of the northern gateway pipeline project. That is rather significant. I think we can talk about a deafening silence. Blaise Pascal himself would be a little terrified if he were aware of the silence of these infinite spaces. It has been very revealing.

I have the pleasure of rising to speak to Bill C-8, which, it must be acknowledged, contains some good provisions and good intentions. Some parts of it are on the right track, which does not happen often. There are quite a few problems that are going to cause us concern, in particular a certain inconsistency. First, they are going to impose more measures to reduce smuggling and counterfeiting at the borders, but at the same time they are going to eliminate hundreds of positions for employees who enforce those measures. I will try to come back to this a little later.

Government Orders

We are talking here about intellectual property and trade law. My father is a writer and my brother is a musician; consequently, coming from a family of artists, I am very aware of copyright, smuggling and counterfeit issues. Artistic creation is the bread and butter that brings in income every day. People work and the fruit of their work brings them an income and results. If the fruit of their labour, their inventiveness, their artistic genius, their innovation, or their creativity is stolen, this represents money that is not coming in to pay their mortgages, send their children to school, travel or buy clothes. When I think of them, I tell myself it is important to have measures that will curb and fight against smuggling and counterfeiting, because this has an impact on the people who create, think, innovate and bring new products and new ideas to the marketplace, whether we are talking about artistic works or commercial products. These two elements are not incompatible.

The NDP and I are pleased to note that Bill C-8 also establishes a balance between the rights of creators and respect for consumers, so that we do not have a police state that will interfere in private life. When the trade considerations in the massive transfer of goods are not involved, but it is rather a matter of individual consumption, the bill will ensure that there is also some balance and some moderation.

My wife and I have two daughters, Marianne and Aurélie, and they have iPods that they use to listen to music. I do not always know where their music comes from, or which Internet site they visited to get it, because they listen to a lot of music. It is even difficult to talk to them because they always have their earphones in their ears. I would not want them to be punished because they are music lovers. The Internet today allows you to access files for which the creator has not received compensation, unfortunately. We must think about this balance and have an Internet that is accessible and free.

• (1955)

That being said, we must look at how Bill C-8 responds to the issue of copyright and to the issue of contraband and counterfeiting. My colleague from Trois-Rivières spoke earlier about products that can sometimes be found on the sidewalk or in public markets. It is very difficult to know how many of these products are legitimate and whether they have come from the real company that invented the product or whether it is a really exciting cheap copy.

I once was a young student in New York and I was shown a lot of different things. Today I am quite sure that those were not real Guccis for \$10. However, it is extremely difficult to assess the scale of counterfeiting and copies in Canada, whether for digital files or real objects such as a tie, a jacket or a shirt.

It is difficult to understand how we are going to be able to fight against counterfeiting if we do not have a real idea of the scale of the phenomenon and exactly what it is we are fighting against. Industry Canada states that the retail value of counterfeit goods seized by the RCMP increased from \$7.6 million in 2005 to \$38 million in 2012.

My colleague from Saint-Jean—and I must point out that Saint-Jean is my home riding, where I spent my childhood and my teenage years—said earlier that this is a somewhat simplistic view that we must be careful about, because these are only the goods that were seized by the RCMP. There has been an explosion in the number of goods that have been seized. However, what percentage of all the

contraband or counterfeit items on the marketplace do the goods that were seized represent? There is no way of knowing.

I am seeing some frantic waving. I have a confession to make, Mr. Speaker. I am going to share my time with my eminent colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, who has just come to my rescue in an extremely professional way.

We cannot rely solely on the number of goods that were seized by the RCMP when determining the full extent of trade in contraband or counterfeit good in 2009. However, we can say that, in 2009, the OECD estimated that international trade in counterfeit and pirated goods could account for up to \$250 billion. That is huge. What methods has this government implemented to address this problem?

We see that Bill C-8 is a step in the right direction, but we do not know how the enforcement scheme it proposes will be financed. This is a small problem. There are a lot of bills that have good intentions, which could even be called wishful thinking. I am referring, for example, to the Victims Bill of Rights, which contains no budget for training, compensation or support for families who might need it. It is good that some political progress has been made over the past eight years on victims' rights and on the fact that opposition members are bad guys who control and always defend the criminals, but sometimes it is necessary to put some money into the proposals that are made.

In the 2012 budget, the Conservatives cut \$143 million from the Canada Border Services Agency. Border officials are the ones who are going to be enforcing the rules set out in Bill C-8. The Conservatives say that they are going to crack down on smugglers and counterfeit goods, but then they make budget cuts of \$143 million over three years, which includes a loss of 549 jobs by 2015.

I would like to hear my Conservative friends and colleagues say again that they are tough on crime and tell us how they are going to be able to limit contraband and counterfeit items at our borders—as the United States has asked us to do, by the way—with 549 fewer jobs by 2015. It means squaring the circle. They have increased the responsibilities and set even higher objectives and, at the same time, they have slashed the resources available in the field to do the work. Unfortunately, this is the Conservatives' trademark.

• (2000)

If they do not walk the talk, or vice versa, there is a problem.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his excellent speech on Bill C-8.

Although he said the official opposition would be supporting this bill, he pointed to some significant deficiencies. The first one that comes to mind is the lack of funding despite the government's good intentions. I am trying to imagine how such a bill could be implemented when the Conservatives cut \$143 million from the Canada Border Services Agency's budget last year.

Government Orders

I know my colleague closely monitored the last Conservative budget and saw that many budget cuts were made to numerous services, which affected various departments. Now, once again, we have been presented with a bill that is inconsistent with the budget envelopes and the cuts made by the Conservatives. I would therefore like to know how my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie feels about that.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I do not really feel very good about it.

The Conservatives do not put their resources where their mouths are. This is a kind of betrayal or pointless political game. They make people believe they will act, but they do not act. That will have very bad consequences for the Conservatives.

According to Ken Hansen, Superintendent of the RCMP and former co-chair of the Interpol Intellectual property crime action group, the RCMP can investigate only 25% of the goods that the Toronto office of the Border Services Agency flags as being fake.

Consequently, even when the goods are reported as potentially fake, the RCMP, which has also undergone cuts, can investigate only 25% of the cases reported to it. We can very well thump our chests and say we are going to make sure the law is enforced and the bad guys go to prison, but, when cuts are made to the Border Services Agency, 55 jobs are cut, and the RCMP then tells us only 25% of cases reported as potentially dangerous will be investigated, there is a major problem.

The Conservative government cannot be serious.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. I am going to pretend I am a Conservative for 15 seconds, but not for very long or else I will feel sick.

If a Conservative dared rise to justify his position, I believe he would tell us that it is okay to cut staff because the technology is so advanced that they can now use sophisticated rays to see through containers more quickly and effectively.

The word “counterfeiting” always conjures up an image of containers on a dock in a port with a customs agent on hand. However, counterfeiting increasingly involves an individual behind his computer ordering a product that will come from outside the country, probably via Canada Post. The product will likely not be shipped in a container or involve all that technology.

Will there still be employees to monitor parcels that pass through the Canada Post network?

• (2005)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Trois-Rivières for his question.

One may legitimately ask that question since 549 jobs will be cut from the Border Services Agency by 2015 and Canada Post will lose 9,000 jobs over the next five years, according to what my colleague from Alfred-Pellan tells me. I am satisfied that her figures are absolutely reliable.

When public services and monitoring are cut to that degree, we open the door to potential criminals, fraudsters and smugglers, who

will cheerfully go about their business. This shows the full extent of the carelessness and inconsistency of the Conservatives, who would have us believe they will be tougher, whereas they remind us of the anti-doping agencies that are always two or three steps behind because they do not invest enough to determine exactly what future fraud artists will be doing. That is extremely harmful.

If we equipped ourselves with the resources we need to act, I am convinced we could not only enforce copyright and intellectual property rights, but also protect the safety of Canadians. Many of these counterfeit and smuggled products pose health and safety risks for the people who buy them. This is a concern that we in the NDP have.

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their incredible support. It really is an honour to be part of the NDP.

We support this bill, but I am pleased that a gag order has not been imposed and that we now have the opportunity to express our opinions. Since the beginning of this Parliament, 76 gag orders have been imposed. That makes 76 bills that we have not been able to debate appropriately. That is deplorable. I am therefore pleased that no gag order has been imposed this time, although, at the same time, we are not too sure what is coming.

I also find it deplorable that the party opposite and the third party have not taken part at all in the debates that have been held in the evenings for several weeks. We sit until midnight and we are the only ones rising to speak. I want to take this opportunity to speak out against that situation. I find it particularly galling.

We support Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Copyright Act and the Trade-marks Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, despite its imperfections. However, we still feel justified in questioning certain aspects of it. The government will therefore not be able to say that we are opposed to everything.

Bill C-8 is designed to strengthen the enforcement of copyright and trade-mark rights and to curtail commercial activity involving infringing copies and counterfeit trade-marked goods.

Clearly, we always support companies, consumers, authors and musicians—my colleague was talking about music earlier on—and the whole area of the intellectual property of scientists, for example. There is also considerable mention in this bill of the health and safety of Canadians. I feel that the bill has a lot of merit in this area.

When we talk about counterfeit medication, for example, it can be a serious matter. A person ordering medication online for some kind of problem could choose the wrong product. If the person is allergic to that product, problems arise. That is one of the reasons why we support this kind of measure, which will help to keep Canadians healthy and to protect them.

Bill C-8 creates two new criminal offences under the Copyright Act, prohibiting the possession or export of infringing copies; it also creates offences for selling, or engaging in commercial activity with, counterfeit products.

Government Orders

It also creates a criminal offence prohibiting the importing and exporting of infringing copies and counterfeit goods, while introducing some balance by creating two exemptions, one for personal use, that is, items that a person has in their possession or in their luggage, and another for items in customs transit control.

The bill also gives customs officers new powers to detain counterfeit goods and copies. That is an important policy change, since up until now, border officials required copyright holders to first get a court order before they would seize infringing copies or counterfeit goods.

The bill also gives the Minister of Health and border authorities new powers that allow them to share with rights owners information relating to the detained goods. These are meaningful and significant changes that needed to be made to fight the counterfeiting of all kinds of items that could harm the health and safety of our fellow citizens.

The bill has also expanded the scope of what can be registered as a trademark, as described within the broader definition of “signs”, including colours, shapes, scents and tastes.

• (2010)

What concerns me as I read this bill is the fact that several million dollars have been cut from the Canada Border Services Agency. The bill gives border authorities new powers, but how will everything be appropriately financed? How can they continue to be effective and to do their jobs? We agree that counterfeiting is a scourge and that something must be done about it. We also agree that they have other responsibilities as well. Are they going to be asked to work twice as much? I am not sure how it is all going to work. Are we going to clone them? I do not know. In short, this is something that really must be given particular attention. This is not the only situation where there have been budget cuts and increases in responsibility for the staff of an agency.

Take tax havens, for example. They say they want to fight against tax havens and allocate more resources to doing so, but the Canada Revenue Agency has undergone budget cuts. The same applies to Canada Post and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. The number of inspectors has been cut but they are being asked to provide the same level of service. That is particularly worrisome to me. I am curious and I would really like to know how this is all going to be implemented.

Naturally, we support political and legal tools that will combat counterfeiting and copyright violation effectively. Such violations can have a negative impact on Canadian businesses and consumers. As I said earlier, that is especially the case when the health and safety of Canadians are at risk, which often happens when counterfeiting is involved. On the other hand, intellectual property calls for an approach that strikes a balance between the interests of rights holders and the interests of users and consumers. We have to strike a fair balance there too.

We also need better ways to share information about counterfeiting with people. We have to implement measures to ensure that border services agents use their new law enforcement powers appropriately. That also includes better information about the extent of the problem. We have to raise people's awareness about what

counterfeiting, intellectual property and copyright are. We have to explain that in terms people can understand. These are things of importance to society that I think have been somewhat neglected over the past few years.

Bill C-8 does not feature the same lack of balance as other copyright bills this government has come up with. It is a good improvement even though it is not perfect. Nothing is perfect, after all.

As I said earlier, we still do not know how the bill will be enforced. We would like the Canada Border Services Agency to have enough resources to carry out this work without interfering with its priorities. Those people have a lot of work to do, and cuts will not help them do more work. If we overload them, it will not work.

It is in the interest of Canadian businesses and consumers to combat counterfeiting, especially, as I said earlier, when counterfeit goods can jeopardize the health and safety of Canadians. To do that, we have to give those involved the tools they need. There has to be money for that. I see no other way. It will not happen if the government puts some relevant provisions in a bill but continues to make cuts.

I would like one of my colleagues opposite to share some thoughts about this. That would be really interesting.

• (2015)

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for a very informative speech on this topic.

She talked about person-years and the employees who will be lost between now and 2015, totalling 549. What is interesting about this number, along with some facts and figures that I have here, is that the budget cuts introduced in 2012 amount to \$31 million in the first year, \$72 million in the second year, and \$143 million in the third year. The number is going up, doubling each year, so that the big impact is going to be in 2015, when this new responsibility will likely be passed on to the border guards.

It seems to be a pattern throughout. Agencies and departments and all aspects of government are going to be hit with this all in one year. How is it that the government, which wants the border agency to do more to enforce this legislation, would ask it to do the job with 549 fewer employees? That pattern is going to occur throughout the entire public service.

Would the member care to comment on that phenomenon and the Conservative government's approach?

[*Translation*]

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

Government Orders

I must admit that I am rather confused by the way this government is working. I do not really understand how it intends to achieve its goals while cutting funding, eliminating positions and preventing competent people from doing their job. It is particularly appalling. The government should work on this problem.

I understand perfectly that choices must be made. However, there are necessities in a budget, and when something is added, more funding is needed. The government wants the Canada Border Services Agency to do more but it is eliminating 549 jobs. That does not really make sense. We have no choice but to find a solution.

Mr. Alexandre Boulrice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for her fine speech and for so kindly agreeing to share her time with me.

I would like to come back to my concern about the resources that are not made available to the government to enable it to concretely apply the measures set out in Bill C-8. I would also like to remind honourable members that money supposedly allocated for the border infrastructure fund two or three years ago ended up being used to build arenas and gazebos. Once again, the government did not allocate the resources needed to secure our borders.

Now the government is saying that it will make an additional effort to fight contraband and counterfeiting and will cut \$143 million and 549 jobs. I would like to know what the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot has to say about that and whether she shares my concerns.

● (2020)

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question that I believe is very relevant.

I absolutely share his concerns on this. I am wondering where we are going with this kind of ideology. We were talking about arenas and gazebos in some committees where it related to votes from certain people. I find it particularly appalling. In whose interest is this being done? Our constituents are the ones being penalized. These are people who have been on the job for a long time, competent people, who will lose their jobs. I find that particularly worrisome.

2015 cannot come soon enough.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to speak to this bill without being restricted by the time limits that the Conservative government usually has in store for us.

Bill C-8 is important to me because the riding of Saint-Jean is in southern Quebec, on the United States border. The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and Jacques Villeneuve were born in this riding. It is a riding that has to deal with the problem of smuggling and trafficking in illegal substances. This mostly involves counterfeit cigarettes and drugs.

Although there is no real border crossing between the riding of Saint-Jean and the United States, in practice two government agencies are responsible for controlling the flow of goods between the United States and Canada. There is the RCMP station in Venise-en-Québec, in the riding of Brome—Missisquoi, and the border crossing at Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle, which is in the riding of

Beauharnois—Salaberry. Those are the two main points of entry for certain goods.

Goods are transported by standard means through Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle, because they arrive by truck, even though some goods are counterfeit. However, the RCMP is responsible for monitoring the boats on the river. We are obviously not dealing with cargo ships, but individuals with small boats transporting goods they are not authorized to move. These two situations are different and are managed by two different government agencies that each have their own mandate: the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency.

This is why it is also important for our riding. A certain number of people living in our riding work in Montreal—even though that city is not in our riding—in businesses where piracy and counterfeiting have serious consequences. As was mentioned earlier, there is the pharmaceutical industry.

There is another example, which is also important for those of us living in Quebec and in the Montreal area in particular, and that is the video game industry. This industry is very aware of piracy because millions of dollars are invested in research and development. Montreal companies need these protections to earn a return on their investments, which are investments in intellectual property. People working in these industries live in the greater Montreal area and therefore in my riding.

If I were also to digress and talk about the Conservative government, I would say that the people in my riding who are going to work in those industries—and who are therefore very sensitive to the issue of piracy and counterfeiting—are obviously using the famous Champlain Bridge, which the government has unfortunately neglected for a number of years. What the government, through the Minister of Infrastructure, has repeated today is unacceptable to the constituents in my riding. It is the infamous “no toll, no bridge”. That sounds a bit like the famous Asterix and Obelix quote: “No stones, no construction. No construction, no palace. No palace...no palace.”

● (2025)

This type of mindset assumes that, when there is no P3 project, residents will be asked to pay for infrastructure that they already use, national infrastructure used not only by Quebecers, by people in the region, but also by our American friends when they trade goods with the Montreal area. Contrary to what the Prime Minister said in a speech in the Quebec City area, the Champlain Bridge is not local infrastructure, it is not a small bridge over a small river, it is national infrastructure, as highways 10 and 15 converge on the Champlain Bridge, where Brossard is. That is why it is major infrastructure.

I will end my digression by saying that the NDP will oppose the toll for replacing the Champlain Bridge. In fact, the NDP has always been opposed to a toll.

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This part of my speech had to do with the economic consequences of counterfeit and piracy in general. Clearly, the economic consequences for the Montreal area and for Quebec are critical, because the Montreal industry relies on high tech.

We are also talking about aircraft manufacturing. As surprising as it may seem, there is also counterfeiting of high-tech components, which are vital to aircraft safety. There are two aspects to consider here. First, companies that manufacture the parts are losing money. Second, there is the issue of health and safety. If an aviation accident is caused by a defective part, both of those consequences of counterfeiting come into play.

I would like to come back to information and statistics for a moment. It has already been said that various agencies have figures on counterfeiting. That is the case in Canada as well as the United States and Europe. Government agencies provide figures. As I said before, there is a paradox in that the figures we have are just a snapshot and not the entire picture. Criminals obviously do not fill out packing lists when they ship counterfeit items, let alone when they traffic drugs. If only criminal organizations did fill them out, check the box marked “counterfeit goods” and then send them to the Canada Border Services Agency when shipping counterfeit toys, medication and so on. All we know about this type of crime is the information that has been gathered from seizures. It only makes sense that the amount of goods being seized would be proportionate to the effort being put into seizing them.

If the number of people working to seize goods is reduced and those who remain are no more productive than before because no one has found a new way of seizing goods, it is only logical that the snapshot will not be as good. If we extrapolate based on the quantity of counterfeit goods that are being moved and add in the fact that the number of people working on these investigations is going down, it only makes sense to assume that the market is larger than we envisioned.

● (2030)

This is not being taken into account, and when you look at the raw numbers, you can see that the number of goods seized increases considerably—exponentially, even. We can only conclude that the statistics we have are not representative of how this fraud has evolved and that the statistics are under-estimated.

We know that the Conservative government does not particularly like statistics. We saw evidence of that in 2010 when it decided to get rid of form 2B, Statistics Canada's long form census. That is a classic example.

For decades, we had continuous knowledge of populations and communities, since form 2B enabled us to ask more specific questions to 20% of the population, which is a more-than-representative sample. No other Statistics Canada study asks specific questions to 20% of the population. Form 2A was sent to 80% of the population and form 2B was sent to 20% of the population.

This provided specific information. The survey asked questions about language spoken at home, modes of transportation—which is very useful for projecting public transit needs—and other important topics such as the representation of age groups, which is useful when municipalities are creating schools, daycares or sports facilities. This

enabled us to get a detailed and localized view of the needs of the population.

Unfortunately, in 2010, when the Conservative government made the decision to stop collecting the data we had been collecting on an ongoing basis for decades, we lost our ability to learn specific information about our communities. It spoke to the fact that the government had only a short-term vision and did not have a long-term vision for how crucial this accurate, specific, and localized information was to making extrapolations about the public, its needs and the infrastructure required by different communities.

This is a pattern. We are seeing the same thing with how the government deals with skills training needs, particularly in the case of the renewal of labour market agreements with employment insurance. That information is missing. I am obviously not going to talk about information from Kijiji, since I am not in the know about that. However, we know that information is missing.

The Conservative government has this strange logic of not gathering information and statistics from reliable sources that use a proven methodology, such as Statistics Canada. The statistics used by the government are usually concocted out of thin air or wildly unrealistic. We also saw that with Bill C-36 on prostitution. The statistics used are bogus because the government does not want to know what is really happening on the ground. When they do not have statistics, they make up their own. This is like the old saying, “give a dog a bad name and hang him”.

It is always the same thing. They make up their own statistics to support their views and to introduce bills that reflect an ideology, rather than the statistical reality measured with scientific means and representative samplings, like Statistics Canada does with its social surveys.

● (2035)

That covers the part on information.

I will now return to a point raised by several members, namely the issue of resources. Investigations are conducted by the RCMP, among others. As recently as May 22, operation Pangea VII was conducted in 111 countries and led to the arrest of 237 individuals. During this operation, more than 9.5 million unauthorized pharmaceuticals with an estimated value of \$35 million were seized.

These specific examples show the need for resources to conduct such investigations. This operation is an example of an international investigation completed in May 2014 that required the co-operation of 111 countries. It is really a huge operation. We are talking about 140,000 counterfeit pharmaceuticals seized at the Canadian border alone. There were also seizures in other countries. Between May 13 and May 20, a total of 2,282 packages were seized.

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Incidentally, these packages are often delivered by Canada Post. The corporation does not have the mandate to monitor the content of these packages, or to determine whether the pharmaceuticals are genuine or not. This requires special expertise that Canada Post employees do not have and that border services officers do not all have.

As was mentioned earlier, counterfeit products are very sophisticated. They look so much like the real products that, in the case of drugs, some holograms are the exact replica of genuine security holograms. Therefore, it becomes increasingly complicated for law enforcement agencies, for the Border Services Agency in particular, and for the RCMP to detect counterfeit products when they arrive at the border. Counterfeit products are increasingly sophisticated. This means that more advanced investigations relying on international co-operation are required.

This example shows that resources are necessary. We need the same number of trained resources, not less. The government did the opposite in 2012, when it announced that over 500 members of the Border Services Agency would lose their jobs. In fact, the number is higher. Indeed, in 2012, more than 1,000 employees received notice that their position was potentially threatened by the restructuring of the Canada Border Services Agency.

Since I have one minute left, I will end my speech here and take questions from my colleagues. There is a contradiction between wanting to move forward with this bill, which would target counterfeiting and piracy, and wanting to cut the amount of resources allocated to doing so. This is a contradiction that the NDP has pointed out.

Unfortunately, the government has set a goal to reduce spending, as part of its opportunistic attempt to garner votes in 2015. It wants to be able to claim to be a government that balances its budget, when in reality, it is balancing the budget at the expense of Canadians' safety, whether we are talking about medications or the profitability of our businesses that invest in research and development. We need to speak out against this.

• (2040)

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and for sharing his statistical expertise. He clearly showed us how important conclusive data are, whether we are talking about getting a snapshot of the Canadian economy or a snapshot of all Canadian communities. He showed that Canada is now missing data as a result of the massive cuts made to Statistics Canada.

When the bill was studied in committee, the NDP suggested that a report be drafted every year to assess the results of the measures in this bill.

Could the member tell me how important it is to accurately assess the effectiveness and results of the new measures this bill would implement at Canadian borders, and how this assessment can be done?

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

As I was saying, it is not easy to measure the flow of illegal goods, because criminals do not necessarily make official declarations.

It is true that if we cut resources, we will see a proportional decrease in the number of seizures that could be carried out. I cannot believe that this government does not want to collect more information on the existence of contraband and counterfeit goods, but at the same time it is pushing to implement more heavy-handed measures.

I think that it does not want to have information about the impact and the effectiveness of these measures. If that information does not exist, the government can always claim to have its own statistics to support the fact that the direction it took was the right one.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Saint-Jean for his excellent speech.

He raised issues I certainly would not have thought about.

I want to go back to the aerospace industry. I found it very relevant that he mentioned the counterfeiting of highly technical parts in the aerospace industry.

My mother works at Bombardier Aerospace, at the finishing facility located in Dorval. I am thinking about all these highly specialized jobs in the manufacturing of private aircraft or bigger jets such as Boeings. It worries me to know that highly specialized parts can be counterfeited.

Could the hon. member elaborate on this issue and tell us what it could mean for jobs in the Montreal area? Could he comment on that?

• (2045)

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Mr. Speaker, I think there are two aspects to this.

First, for the past 10 or 20 years, some airlines have begun relocating activities related to the maintenance of their aircraft. Some European or American companies have relocated these activities to Persian Gulf countries, where costs are lower because workers' safety and working conditions are also lower. This is the first aspect.

Relocating to these countries also allow these companies, which are subcontractors and which do aerospace maintenance, to get parts that do not necessarily come from manufacturers such as Boeing or Airbus, the two largest builders. This allows them to do business with subcontractors from China, who supply them directly with parts that are not always of good quality.

There are then two aspects. The relocation of technicians results in a loss of revenues and skills on the maintenance side. Then, there is the fact that, in these countries, it is easier to use counterfeit parts that do not have the same safety characteristics.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Saint-Jean, who has clearly done his homework, as we saw during his remarkable and enlightening speech.

Government Orders

I am so confident in his knowledge of the issue that I am going to ask a question a little outside his remarks to get his views. We are dealing with a bill on trademark protection and we have also seen the quiet emergence of that infamous trademark of the Conservative Party, namely increased powers for the minister.

I think every bill introduced in the House by the Conservative government includes increased ministerial authority. Here, the legislation grants the Minister of Public Safety, as well as border authorities, new *ex officio* powers allowing them to share information with rights owners about detained goods.

Does my colleague think this expansion of the minister's powers is necessary under this legislation?

Mr. Tarik Brahma: Mr. Speaker, I think that each time the Conservatives give more power to a minister, they should have to prove that the legal process, for example, is ineffective or inefficient.

Bill C-24, on immigration, is often cited as an example where a minister is being granted more power. The government has not proven that the courts were overrun with terrorism or high treason cases. With respect to Bill C-24, I did not hear that the courts were being flooded with high treason cases because Canadian officers were committing high treason and giving information to foreign powers every five minutes.

They did not prove that the legal system was overrun with cases and that the minister needed to be granted more powers. This is no different. They have not proven that the minister needs this additional power because the courts would be overwhelmed with cases that would not be heard in time.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Saint-Jean for his speech.

I would also like to point out one part of his speech that may have gone unnoticed. He reminded the House of a famous quote from an animated film: "No stones, no construction. No construction, no palace. No palace...no palace." What lessons should we be learning from that grandiose plan to build a fictitious Egyptian palace that we could apply to Bill C-8?

I would also like to give him the opportunity to tell us about the dangers related to counterfeit products and children's toys in particular. For example, I am thinking about cases where there is too much lead in the paint or it does not meet Health Canada's health and safety standards.

What are the potential consequence for our children, for Madeleine, for example, if Bill C-8 is not backed with enough resources?

● (2050)

Mr. Tarik Brahma: Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie on his vast knowledge of Asterix. Indeed, this saying describes more the Conservatives' philosophy on infrastructure planning. This philosophy is aptly represented by the saying he used.

As far as safety is concerned, there are two major aspects to the negative consequences of mismanaging counterfeiting, which I mentioned. There are economic consequences, because there are

revenue losses for businesses that invest in research and development and do not enjoy the fruits of those investments. Unfortunately, as I was saying, there are also consequences for health and safety.

It is true what the member says about toys. There were a number of cases of major companies such as Mattel, that were copied and the copies contained toxic products. Indeed, it seems obvious that any responsible government, whether in Canada or anywhere else, has to provide enough resources to deal with this counterfeiting, which is dangerous for children.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to debate Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Copyright Act and the Trade-marks Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, the short title of which is the Combating Counterfeit Products Act.

In fact, I am also surprised to be speaking, because I remember very clearly that the Conservatives have had a lot to say about this issue over the years. In 2007, the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology submitted a rather lengthy report that said specifically that counterfeiting and piracy were theft. The committee made numerous recommendations to that effect.

What surprises me this evening is that not one Conservative has spoken on this important government bill. This is a bill that was introduced by the Minister of Industry, which is somewhat rare. As well, during the time for questions after each speech, there have been no questions from the government.

As the member for LaSalle—Émard, when I debate a bill, I always ask myself whether it affects the people in my riding. The riding I have the honour and pleasure to represent is very diverse. It is a residential riding, but it has a very large industrial park. There are a lot of businesses in my riding and a lot of small and medium-sized businesses. When I look at this bill to combat counterfeiting, I wonder what impact counterfeiting has on the people in my riding.

There are numerous examples of counterfeiting that I will talk about briefly and that were discussed earlier. There are certain counterfeit products, and a number of cases in the media have shown this, that affect people's health and safety. Combating counterfeiting means preventing products that could be hazardous to the health and safety of my constituents in LaSalle—Émard from coming in and circulating, and that is very important to me.

There is another perverse effect of counterfeiting: when counterfeit products are in circulation, there are consequences for our economy and intellectual property owners, Canadian companies and companies from elsewhere, that have invested in research and development to create a product, a trademark or a new product for which they hold the patents and the intellectual property—which they own, in a word. If those products and trademarks are copied, there is an economic loss for the owner of the intellectual property.

That is why I rise today to speak to Bill C-8, a bill to combat counterfeiting. I do it on behalf of the people of LaSalle—Émard.

Let us look a little more closely at what the bill is going to do.

Government Orders

• (2055)

(2.11) It is an infringement of copyright for any person, for the purpose of doing anything referred to in paragraphs (2)(a) to (c), to export or attempt to export a copy—of a work, sound recording or fixation of a performer's performance or of a communication signal—that the person knows or should have known was made without the consent of the owner of the copyright in the country where the copy was made.

This bill has a long history. As I said, there was the big report after which the Copyright Act was changed. That was a very long process. In the last session, the bill was introduced as Bill C-56. Then it was sent to committee. Now it is Bill C-8.

I have been in charge of several files since being elected. I was the science and technology critic and the industry critic. I was a member of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, where I participated in a very long study of intellectual property. During that long study, we had the opportunity to hear from many experts and many witnesses who talked about the importance of protecting intellectual property. They talked about how we could improve that protection. They also emphasized the importance of intellectual property to the Canadian economy, especially in that it stimulates innovation. Intellectual property is often the result of research and development, which is what can make Canada a leader in innovation.

Over the past few years, unfortunately, Canada has lost ground on the innovation front and is no longer a leader. The Canadian Intellectual Property Council pointed that out recently. It mentioned the importance of having a solid framework for protecting intellectual property.

I believe that the copyright bill and Bill C-8, which we are talking about now, are a step in the right direction toward greater protection for intellectual property. The Canadian Intellectual Property Council also says that it is important for small and medium-sized businesses. In Canada, a lot of them do not exercise their rights. They develop innovations, but they may not be aware that their innovations can be patented and can be considered intellectual property. The Canadian Intellectual Property Council would like small and medium-sized businesses to take advantage of this tool, which can help them continue to innovate and profit from intellectual property.

Bill C-8, which was studied in committee, is a step in the right direction to stop counterfeit goods at the border. Now, how does that work in practice?

• (2100)

We noticed that the bill gives increased powers to border services officers so that they can seize counterfeit products. We stressed that this desire to give new powers to border services officers should not just be put in writing, but should also come with the necessary resources.

Some experts wondered what tools should be given to these officers to recognize counterfeit products and what exceptions exist for these products. Also, will expanding their powers give officers the necessary resources to effectively combat counterfeiting?

It is very important to combat counterfeiting effectively, but we must also provide the means to do so in order to protect people's

health and safety. I am not sure the current government is prepared to give the Border Services Agency the necessary means to do that.

What will happen once the bill is passed? Will it produce the expected results? Will border services officers be able to shoulder the burden and effectively combat counterfeiting?

As I mentioned, we support the bill because we feel it is important to the health and safety of Canadians. We do not want counterfeit products to be used in Canada and to affect the health and safety of Canadians. We also recognize the impact of those products on the Canadian economy, on certain businesses, and on copyright violations. However, the necessary means must be available.

It is difficult to get a clear idea of the situation with the data from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, for example, or the Canadian Intellectual Property Council, which produced a document on how to stop counterfeiting in the Canadian market. What types of products cross borders? Which products do we manage to intercept?

The NDP made a very good recommendation in committee on how to measure the impact of this bill. Indeed, after its implementation, we will have to find out whether Canada is really combatting counterfeiting effectively. Unfortunately, that recommendation was ignored.

• (2105)

However, I must admit that when the bill was studied in committee, the government agreed to amendments that would clarify the bill. I commend the government for working with us. This shows once again the importance of studying these bills properly in committee in order to make them better. That was done with this bill when it was studied in committee.

This bill deals with imports and exports. It does not deal with the fact that, without realizing it, a person could cross the border with a counterfeit product for his personal use. This bill only deals with large quantities of goods that would be held at the border when they arrive in Canada. We have to make that distinction when debating this bill.

Recently, when I was researching a bill on a free trade agreement, I took note of Canada's trade imbalance. In the past 15 years, Canada's imports of manufactured goods have been increasing steadily.

There used to be manufacturers in Canada. There were foundries and factories that made industrial machinery. In the region where I was born, for example, there was a manufacturer of large industrial machines. At that time, Canada was much more self-reliant in terms of manufacturing production. Instead of relying on imports, Canada was independent, that is to say it had a very strong manufacturing sector. We made the clothes we wore, and we built the machines used to make telephones and all kinds of parts.

Government Orders

In the town where I was born, there was a die casting plant that made parts for snowmobiles, cars and so forth. We no longer have this large manufacturing sector. We import more and more parts from other countries. The trade imbalance is due to the incredibly large number of all kinds of parts that we import, and this makes it increasingly difficult to know under what conditions they are manufactured. These are things I wonder about.

That is why we need a bill like this to fight counterfeiting. Canada is becoming increasingly dependent on parts of all kinds that are used in the manufacture of the equipment we use. Bill C-8 adequately addresses the problems I just raised. It helps protect us from some of these counterfeit parts, drugs and trademarks.

• (2110)

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her remarks. We are always acknowledging the skill of my colleague, who does good research and provides relevant examples throughout her presentations. However, there is one image she evoked in her speech that struck me and stayed with me for the 20 minutes that she spoke.

In the very first words of her speech, she said that Bill C-8 is a first step. We have heard this expression many times. The image that came to mind is that with a first step we are not actually going anywhere. We need to take at least two steps to move forward. One step can be used to pivot and skirt around the subject, but it does not move us forward.

In the case of Bill C-8, it seems to me that the second step was proposed by the NDP in a very good amendment, which called on Parliament to produce an annual report based on RCMP seizures, in order to have the clearest possible picture of a situation that is hard to grasp, as it has to do with the black market.

Given the Conservatives' refusal to adopt the proposed amendment, why have they not managed to come up with a plan to collect better data, which would allow us to take the second step and give us the sense that we are making progress?

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for such a relevant question. While he was asking his question, I was reflecting on the lack of data.

How will this bill actually be enforced? How much money will be invested? If we keep flying by the seat of our pants, how will we know what impact counterfeiting is having on the Canadian economy? What effective measures could we be using? Did we listen to the people who will have to enforce the legislation?

When the bill was introduced, I met with people from the Canada Border Services Agency. They said that right now they do not have the means to tackle such a broad, complex issue.

A number of questions remain unanswered. Will the government move forward? Will it allocate the necessary resources? We have our doubts.

• (2115)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

Since her arrival in the House, she has done a wonderful job with the economic development files, which can be extremely complex at times. She is one of the MPs who knows the most about industry and co-operatives. I want to commend her on the extraordinary work she is doing.

Her speech was both very detailed and very impressive, and in it she mentioned cuts and the possibility of strengthening the legislation.

Could she share her thoughts on the cuts to border services and the public service, which are eroding the public sector as a whole?

Could she also talk about strengthening the bill's provisions?

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his encouraging words and his compliments. I also thank him for being here with us during the long nights we have spent here in the House.

We have some interesting numbers about cuts to border services. What we have to keep in mind when we are talking about counterfeiting is that this is a very complex world that operates internationally. We have major ports like the ones in Vancouver and Montreal. We have to know what goes on with investigations there. Are resources provided for that both upstream and downstream? Have appropriate techniques been developed?

Personally, I think that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Do we have ways to fight counterfeiting effectively? The question is not whether counterfeiting is a problem we have to solve. There have been some very well-known cases affecting people's health and safety. What tools do we have not only for detecting and preventing counterfeiting, but also for prosecuting counterfeiters and enforcing penalties when necessary?

This bill gives border services and the minister more powers. That is because the government is focused more on reacting than on preventing.

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent speech.

I was very interested in the part of her speech where she said that in the town where she was born there were industries that have probably disappeared today. I was born in Laval. I still live there and there are many pharmaceutical companies.

If we do not pass this bill, I am wondering if the same thing could happen and if the pharmaceutical companies in Laval will disappear.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting question.

I am pleased that my colleague asked it, because we have seen a lot of research centres and pharmaceutical research labs shut down. This is a huge loss for Quebec, and particularly for the Laval region. These are good, well-paying jobs.

Government Orders

This provides just a little window on the complex nature of intellectual property and on the impact of agreements. I want to talk about the infamous agreement that has not yet been ratified. With great pomp and fanfare, the government went to Belgium to sign an agreement, but we still know nothing of the content and scope of that agreement or what kind of impact it will have. We do not know what impact it will have on pharmaceutical research centres. That was one of the contentious issues with the Canada-EU free trade agreement. For example, we did not know how long patents would be valid for. Apparently, pharmaceutical companies have already closed several research centres, which resulted in job losses, to our great dismay.

• (2120)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions between the parties, and I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 12 midnight.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Therefore, pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, 2014, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9:22 p.m.)

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