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Thursday, April 2, 2015

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 2, 2015

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*English*]

COMMON SENSE FIREARMS LICENSING ACT

The House resumed from April 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Firearms Act and the Criminal Code and to make a related amendment and a consequential amendment to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak in support of the common-sense firearms licensing act, Bill C-42. This important legislation highlights our Conservative government's commitment to firearms policies that are safe and sensible.

This is a theme that is seen throughout the bill, and it is a theme that has been at the heart of how our government deals with issues related to firearms. In other words, we believe that we should punish lawbreakers, but we should reduce red tape for law-abiding Canadians.

I would like to briefly highlight the eight changes contained in this important legislation, but first I would like to give some context as to how we arrived at the situation we are in today.

While a variety of permits and documents to possess firearms have existed in Canada since 1892, licensing in the context that today's Canadians would recognize did not begin until 1979. The firearms acquisition certificate system existed until it was amended by the previous Liberal government in 1995.

Bill C-68 created the Firearms Act, which put new and onerous requirements on the licensing and transportation of firearms. This same Liberal bill also created the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

Following our Conservative government's election in 2006, we immediately took action to make sure that no one could be prosecuted for being in possession of an unregistered long gun. We

also took action to end the needless Liberal gun-show regulations. We deferred and are examining the repeal of the UN firearms marking regulations.

After many years of work, we ended the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry once and for all. Following an inappropriate and unacceptable decision made by unelected bureaucrats, our government took action to restore the property rights of law-abiding owners of Swiss Arms and CZ858 rifles.

It is clear that we are taking safe and sensible firearms licensing seriously, and that brings us to the important common-sense legislation before us today.

As I stated earlier, there are eight key measures in this legislation. As I have said, these measures are safe and sensible, and the bill could be broken down along those lines.

We are bringing forward measures that will keep Canada safe.

We will require all first-time gun owners to receive basic firearms safety training.

We will create a system for the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency, the CBSA, to share information on firearms smuggling investigations. Shockingly, thanks to loopholes in the Liberals' Firearms Act, these law enforcement agencies are barred from working together. This has led to literally thousands of firearms making their way into the black market and into the hands of thugs and criminals. Sharing would occur under Bill C-42.

We will make firearms prohibitions mandatory for serious crimes of domestic violence. We believe that the best indicator of future criminal behaviour is past criminal behaviour. In fact, nearly two-thirds of all those convicted of spousal homicide have a previous history of domestic violence. Taking firearms out of these volatile situations just makes good common sense.

To that end, we are also making firearms laws more sensible for law-abiding Canadians who work hard and play by the rules. We will streamline licensing by merging the possession-only licence and the possession-and-acquisition licence. This would give new purchasing rights to 600,000 experienced firearms owners.

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We will end the needless paperwork around the authorization to transport a restricted firearm. No longer will law-abiding sports shooters need to fill out endless reams of paperwork to do something their licences ought to have authorized them to do.

We will put a six-month grace period at the end of the five-year firearms licence. One will not be allowed to purchase new firearms or ammunition, or even use one's firearms during that time, but a person will not become an overnight paper criminal as a result of a simple, honest mistake.

• (1010)

We would end the broad and often arbitrary discretionary authority given to chief firearms officers. The Firearms Act is a Canadian law, and we believe that there ought to be similar standards from coast to coast to coast. Rules and procedures differing vastly between Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario is completely unacceptable, as is the troubling trend of unelected officials trying to make policy on the fly without consulting Parliament, and from time to time, by directly confronting Parliament.

Last, but certainly not least, we would create powers for the elected government to overturn incorrect classification decisions made by the Canadian firearms program. On the advice of independent experts, we will take steps to make sure that all decisions made regarding issues that impact the property rights of Canadians make good common sense. I can assure the House and all Canadians that the first of such measures would be to return the Swiss Arms family of rifles and the CZ858 to the classifications they had prior to February 25, 2014.

These measures are safe and sensible. We can see that from the broad support they have received. Front-line police officers are supportive. Police chiefs are supportive. Hunting groups are supportive. Sport shooting groups are supportive. I would like to quote the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, which said:

We support smart, cost effective firearms policy that keeps Canadians safe, but treats gun owners fairly. We applaud the [Conservative] Government's ongoing efforts to streamline firearms licensing in Canada to make it more effective and efficient.

Unfortunately, the other parties disagree. The NDP leader takes a different position on this issue, depending on whether he is in rural or urban Canada. Most recently, he said that he believed that the long-gun registry was useful. However, the Liberals take the cake when the member for Malpeque makes process arguments about who ought to be making decisions, which is simply a ruse to cover the real views of his party. Consider the quote from the member for Trinity—Spadina, who said that “emotional arguments” from firearms enthusiasts are not enough of a reason to justify the sale of ammunition. Can members believe that? The member would do away with the entire hunting and sport shooting industry in Canada in one fell swoop. We cannot allow that sort of reckless move to happen in Canada.

I can assure the House that our Conservative government will always stand up for the rights of law-abiding hunters, farmers, and sport shooters. I hope that all parties will support this legislation.

• (1015)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during his speech, the member basically said that the law should be

simplified and that certain unelected individuals, such as firearms control individuals and the police, should not have the right to control gun ownership laws.

This is a vast country, with different needs and very different attitudes about everything across it. I wonder if my colleague discounts the fact that the people on the ground have a better idea of how certain things affect their community. Should they not be in a position to say, “This is a problem in this community. It may not be in another community, but it is a problem in this community”? I wonder if he would like to answer that question.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague makes a very good point. That is why this bill is receiving so much support, as I said, from police officers, police chiefs, hunting groups, and sport shooting groups.

We always want to be cognizant of making sure that people are safe in their communities, and this legislation will not inhibit that at all. Those who are on the ground probably do have the most understanding of the situation in their small communities or in their cities, no matter where they are in Canada. That is why so many groups are so supportive of this common-sense legislation.

It is also why the changes have been made for the Swiss Arms family of rifles and the CZ858. They have certainly been proven to be weapons used for hunting and target shooting. That is why this is such a well-received bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are certain aspects of the legislation the Liberal Party supports. However, there are other areas about which we have some concerns.

The legislation would empower the ministry of the government of the day, through cabinet, to determine what classification a gun or rifle would have. I wonder if the member might explain to Canadians why he believes, or the government believes, that the government of the day and the minister responsible would be in a better position to determine what a restricted rifle is and what an unrestricted rifle is, for example, as opposed to having the current structure, where we have professionals who do that.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I would reiterate what I said in my previous answer.

First of all, the safety of Canadians has to be paramount in any decisions that are made. Regarding the weapons described by my colleague, all of them still have to go through very restrictive and thorough examinations. In these two particular cases, the Swiss family of arms and the CZ858, they were thoroughly examined and scrutinized and obviously were found to be very safe.

The situation we were faced with over a year ago, on February 25, 2014, is certainly the reason the legislation before us is a more common sense type of legislation that has been brought forward. It is very effective and certainly does not inhibit our police forces from doing anything in regard to keeping the public safe.

• (1020)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

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I am rising today to oppose Bill C-42 at second reading. I listened very carefully to the arguments being presented by the government, especially to my colleague who just spoke. I have not been persuaded by any arguments I have heard to date to support this piece of legislation, because I do not believe the bill would do what is being said it would do.

I am from the beautiful city of Surrey and my riding of Newton—North Delta over the last number of years has seen innumerable incidents of gun firings. Many times these are gang related. Just a few weeks ago over a 28-hour time frame we saw five, six, and then seven gang-related shootings. One can imagine that we are very sensitive when it comes to gun control, gun licensing, et cetera. We are also very concerned that the government has failed to deliver on its commitment for additional policing. We are not saying additional policing would take care of a lot of issues in my riding, but it is one of the components that would help, to have more men in serge out on the streets, keeping our streets safe.

As I was going through the bill, one of the first components that hit me was that we are looking at a grace period of six months when someone's licence expires. This seems so bizarre. For a gun owner it would still be perfectly okay for six months after one's licence expires. That would be legalized in this legislation. When my driver's licence expires, it expires on that date and I have to get it renewed beforehand. When my car insurance expires, I have to do that on time or there are huge fines. Here we have something unique being built in for firearms licensing, a grace period of six months.

Also, we know that, when people go for renewal of their licence, we are not just talking about paperwork. Firearm owners are screened for mental health issues, which we know are fast growing in our country right now across all the age groups. It is also a way of gauging any potential risks to themselves or others, yet the government sees fit to give a six-month grace period. I am just so shocked by that.

Then I looked at firearms transportation. With the firearms licence, the government would be authorizing automatically, without any special permission having to be sought, which it was before, the transportation of prohibited or restricted firearms to and from any gun club, shooting range, police station, gun shop, gun show, and any point of exit from Canada. This measure alone could make it more difficult for police to crack down on unauthorized firearms and transportation of firearms. This is happening at the same time that the government is reducing the 2014-2015 Canada Border Services Agency operational budget by \$143.3 million a year. At the same time that the government is cutting resources for the CBSA—and by the way to the police by \$195.2 million—it is also relaxing the rules around the transportation of guns. This just seems totally bizarre.

The other concern I have is over the classification of firearms. I absolutely believe that this process needs to be depoliticized. It should not be in the hands of politicians. I love all my colleagues in the House. I have a great deal of respect for the work done by many, but really, do we want to give cabinet the final authority as the decision maker on classification of firearms? Should that not be done by experts and people in the field who know a lot more? Should it not be done by the RCMP, et cetera?

● (1025)

Once again, there is a great deal of concern that we have a government that is trying to put more power into the hands of cabinet ministers and therefore escape scrutiny. We have seen this in other pieces of legislation as well. This bill would basically transfer authority over definitions and classifications to cabinet rather than putting an emphasis on public safety.

Another power that would be limited is that of the provincial chief firearms officers. This bill would limit, by regulation, the powers of the provincial chief firearms officers to attach conditions to a licence or to the authorization to transport; in other words, local provincial officers' hands would be tied behind their backs. This would also prevent provinces from setting their chosen standards in the implementation of firearms legislation.

As we can see, this is just not good enough. My fear is that all of these changes would put at risk not only our communities but also our men and women in uniform who serve us. We have seen the government do this time and again. It does not put public safety first; rather, it puts political pandering to its lobby groups ahead of what is good for Canadians.

I would now like to talk to members about Inspector Garry Begg, who lives in Surrey, and who has done an amazing job of serving our community. His son served in our community as well. At this point, I would like to recognize the remarkable patriotism displayed by RCMP Corporal Shaun Begg, the commander of the RCMP detachment in Kaslo, B.C.

One day last week, Corporal Begg, who plays recreational hockey on a Kaslo team, journeyed with his teammates by helicopter high up into the Purcell Mountains to play a game of shinny 8,000 feet up. It was a spectacular day and Corporal Begg, who describes himself as a proud Mountie and an even prouder Canadian, donned his regimental red serge and famous stetson for a few shifts of the game. A teammate snapped a picture of Corporal Begg in full dress uniform bearing down for a shot on goal, and the rest is history. The picture was tweeted and is now being described as the “most Canadian photo ever”. Being viewed around the world, it now shines a bright light on all that is Canadian. I am sure that most members of the House have seen the photo and will join me in saluting Corporal Begg, a proud Mountie and a proud Canadian.

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I want to reiterate that it is disturbing to me to have a government that is pandering to its lobby groups while failing to do the right thing, which is to protect Canadians. We know that the number of people who own handguns has increased incredibly. I understand the need with respect to hunters and farmers. We are not saying that no one should have guns, but we are saying that the kind of changes we are seeing in this legislation would do harm and would not bring peace to the streets of Surrey or to other communities.

The more I reflect on this piece of legislation, the more I am puzzled as to why a government that purports to be—and often states that it is—a crime-fighting kind of government would now bring in legislation that makes it easier for guns to be on the streets, while at the same time cutting resources to the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency so that we would have even less control over guns entering the country and have more relaxation with respect to the movement inside the country of weapons that can kill people.

• (1030)

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there were so many things wrong in that speech that I am not sure where to start.

Let me begin with the complete misunderstanding of the bill by the New Democrats, whether they are doing that intentionally and trying to mislead Canadians or not. I do not know and I do not care. I am looking forward to next fall's election on this issue and running against my NDP candidate simply because of what they are saying.

There are no cuts, proposed or otherwise. There are actually budget increases to both the RCMP and border services for myriad different reasons, one of them being the influx of gun crime in this country, and of course, we have passed a lot of legislation to address that. Just because New Democrats have voted against it does not mean it is not being effective.

The other thing she talked about is why there would be a six-month grace period after a licence runs out, when her driver's licence expires on the day. The difference is a criminal charge that goes along with firearms registrations not being kept up.

She also talked about how unfortunate it is that we would allow the transport of firearms so easily. The point being made is that all people, including me, are qualified and certified to move firearms around in a way that is guaranteed to be safe.

There is so much misinformation in that speech, but I know Canadians are much smarter than that and see right through the NDP's stance.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I find the defence really amazing for giving a six-month grace period for a licence to hold a gun. I do not see how one could actually defend that in any way, because once a licence expires, it expires, and that is when, as I said previously—and maybe my colleague did not hear me—a mental health assessment is done, a psychological assessment is done, and a licence is renewed. Surely, we are not saying that all of those things are unnecessary.

Let me read a quote from a gun group, which actually agrees with the NDP. It reads:

Turning a blind eye to gun owners who do not comply with the licensing requirements will put police officers and the public at risk. It will also hamper police investigations and in some cases hamper prosecution of gun crimes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to get the member's thoughts with regard to the timing of the legislation and the manner in which the legislation is being brought forward.

As we know, the government has instituted time allocation, once again, on a piece of legislation when there are differing types of opinions on both sides of the House. Yet we are being told that there is limited time and, in fact, it will end today after a couple of hours of debate.

The other issue is that here we are, once again, in an election year and we now have this particular issue being brought to the table. The bill was introduced late last fall, disappeared from the agenda, and then was put back on the agenda in the last couple of days, and the government is putting on a super rush to pass it.

I wonder if the member would like to comment with regard to the coincidence of having it in the lead-up to a federal election and the whole issue of time allocation.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I think it is no surprise to anybody that we are in another time allocation, another attempt by my colleagues across the way to shut down debate. They cannot say that they are short of time because, as my colleague just said, they have had since October and have not been in a hurry to bring this legislation forward.

However, yesterday in the House, I began to understand why this legislation was brought forward when my colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca asked a question of the minister and received a non-reply. The question was whether this is payola to the gun lobby for not testifying on Bill C-51. It was going to oppose it, and it then withdrew from that; so we have this legislation here.

Also, as we know, there is an election in the air. My colleagues across the way love wedge politics and want to drum up this kind of fear, to divide and conquer. New Democrats are not going to be silenced when we have serious concerns about ill-thought-out legislation.

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak to Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Firearms Act and the Criminal Code and to make a related amendment and a consequential amendment to other Acts.

This Conservative government bill cuts red tape for firearms owners. In my opinion, what it will really do is weaken Canadian gun control laws.

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Let us remember that the government had to put work on this bill on hold. It was supposed to have been debated for the first time on October 22 of last year, a day we will all remember for a long time. That day, a soldier was shot and killed at the National War Memorial not far from here. The gunman then stormed the Centre Block on Parliament Hill.

In my opinion, the government should have put this bill on hold indefinitely. Having solid, reliable data and laws that govern the use of firearms in Canada, together with giving police the resources and tools they need to enforce rules and laws, is of vital importance to public safety and stemming violence in Canada, particularly violence against women.

With this bill, however, the Conservatives are playing politics on the firearms issue. They are using this issue to play political games and divide Canadians, which jeopardizes public safety and creates additional challenges for police services in Canada. They are trying to shift the debate and make us forget that we are talking about public safety.

However, reasonable people from different parts of the country, both rural and urban, could very easily work together to come up with solutions to this problem rather than practising the politics of division, as the Conservatives are doing.

The opposition NDP members and I believe that any changes to the Firearms Act must be made with a certain degree of caution. Improving public safety must be the priority objective. Bill C-42 does not meet that criterion, however, and we cannot support it.

I want to talk about the measures that are actually in Bill C-42. First of all, this bill allows a six-month grace period when a five-year licence expires, for gun owners who have failed to renew their licence.

Right now, owners must have an authorization to transport in order to have the right to transport their firearms. They must apply to a provincial chief firearms officer. The authorization allows them to transport a specific weapon to and from a specific location. They must have the authorization with them when transporting the firearm.

However, Bill C-42 would make it possible for this authorization to be granted automatically with the firearms licence, thereby authorizing the transportation of prohibited and restricted firearms to and from a gun club, firing range, police station, gun shop or any other place where firearms are used.

The bill also gives cabinet a new power, namely, the power to change the definitions of the classifications of firearms set out in section 84 of the Criminal Code through regulations that make exceptions. Through a regulation, cabinet could classify firearms that would normally be defined as prohibited or restricted as non-restricted firearms. Right now, firearms are classified based on assessments conducted as part of the Canadian firearms program, which is administered by the RCMP. These classifications are then approved by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Let us look at the problems associated with that. First, the grace period is problematic because a firearms licence allows the police

and other authorities to access the latest information about the owner of a firearm. We talked a lot about this important topic when we discussed the firearms registry. It is important for the police to know who owns a firearm, what type of firearm it is and where these firearms are being taken.

As part of the licence renewal process, firearm owners are assessed to determine whether they have mental health problems. This is a way of detecting whether there is a potential risk for the owners themselves or for the public. This assessment makes it possible to determine fairly early on whether there is a potential risk and helps the police to intervene in the case of an accident.

• (1040)

The timeframe set out in the bill could delay access to that information and could pose very serious risks to public safety. The Conservative Party members will likely say that anyone who does not renew his or her licence will have a criminal record. In fact, failing to renew one's licence is considered criminal because it is a serious matter. It is not as though this licence has to be renewed every year. It is renewed every five years.

Licence renewal is mandatory and failing to meet that obligation is considered criminal as a way of addressing the risk that gun owners may have mental health problems. A lot can happen in a person's life in five years. It is therefore important that all licence holders be in good mental and physical health so that they can use their hunting guns properly.

The measure on transporting firearms could also cause problems for police forces in their fight against the unauthorized transport of firearms. Why is it so important to control the use of firearms, keep these data and make public safety the priority?

We are not here to attack Canadians living in rural regions or hunters simply because they own guns. That is not it at all. Our priority is public safety. We are talking about guns that can be used to attack and kill people. It only makes sense to exercise the best possible control, while allowing people to use their guns.

[English]

The problem is that in Canada, gun violence remains a factor in many domestic abuse cases, causing some women to stay in abusive situations out of fear of being shot by their partners. Unfortunately, the presence of firearms is a top risk factor associated with domestic murders of women in Canada. In 2009, nearly 75,000 incidents of violent crimes against women were by current or former spouses or someone with whom the women were otherwise in an intimate relationship. These are the incidents that were reported to police. It is estimated that over 70% of such incidents go unreported.

Women are three to four times more likely than men to be victims of a spousal homicide. According to the most recent data available from Statistics Canada, in the past decade, from 2000 to 2009, over a quarter of women killed by a current or previous partner were by means of firearms.

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Most women killed with guns are killed with legally owned guns. Family and intimate assaults involving firearms were 12 times more likely to result in death than intimate assaults that did not involve firearms. However, homicides of women with firearms dropped by over 63% with progressive strengthening of gun laws from 1991 to 2005, while murders of women by other means, such as stabbing and beating, declined by only 38% because we enforced the laws and put laws in place.

[Translation]

Twenty-five years have passed since the Polytechnique massacre, when 14 young women were violently murdered just because they were women. These events led to the creation of days of activism against gender violence, when we come together to reflect on the meaning of this attack against women. We also reflect on the fight for women's rights and the work that must still be done to achieve true gender equality.

This event of 25 years ago marked a turning point in the debate on gun control in Canada and spurred Canadian politicians to tighten access to firearms and start tracking legally purchased guns. The NDP has always proposed practical solutions to the legitimate concerns of the many Canadians who use firearms. We have always taken care to respect the rights of aboriginal peoples while ensuring that police services have the tools they need to protect Canadian communities.

Data on 1.6 million firearms in the province of Quebec will now be destroyed.

• (1045)

This bill would limit the powers of provincial chief firearms officers through regulations. By limiting the role of these officers, the federal government will make it more difficult for the provinces to set the standards they believe are necessary to implement the laws that govern firearms.

Unfortunately, the reforms introduced by the bill do not work for all Canadians. Therefore, we cannot support the bill.

[English]

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the safety of my daughter and my wife, but I am also a firearms owner. My daughter and wife have fired all my firearms very safely and soundly, and they are fine.

However, I would like to respond to the member's comments about Quebec and what Quebeckers think. The Quebec Hunting and Fishing Federation is thrilled with this initiative and has said:

Quebec hunters are very pleased with this bill because it simplifies the licence issuing process for law-abiding users, while reinforcing the concepts of safety and education.

Could the member respond to those Quebeckers and their concerns?

[Translation]

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we do not think that public safety is a priority in this bill. We must ensure that the use of firearms for sport hunting is put into perspective.

For example, the six-month grace period is dangerous since it makes firearms more difficult to track. We must all work together on addressing these issues.

As a Quebecker who grew up in a rural area and who represents a rural riding, I too have always been surrounded by firearms. My family did not own one, but all of my neighbours go hunting in the fall. That is normal for me. I recognize that this is a part of rural life for hunters, who want to be able to travel more easily with a firearm for use during the hunting season.

However, we do not know what might happen in someone's life. Something can happen suddenly and change them. We must therefore reassess everyone's mental health every five years. That can only improve public safety.

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the reciting of the safety that was achieved with sensible firearms control. In particular, you listed the impact it had on reducing domestic incidents of violence and homicide.

Do you have similar information about the reduction of suicides?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I would remind the hon. member and others to direct their comments directly to the Chair rather than to their colleagues.

The hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, the events at Polytechnique 25 years ago were really a turning point in how we saw gun control in Canada. In Quebec, we really see it more in that way still because it hit closer to home. Quebeckers tend to be a lot more understanding about public safety measures that need to be place. One of the things I have seen with the gun control measures that have been brought in over the past 25 years is that the rate of domestic violence with guns has gone down.

As to the number of suicides that have been prevented, I do not have the numbers in front of me, but they are radically higher, and that is very important. As I said, it is important to understand so much can happen over five years in someone's life. It is important to ensure we have access to good public health measures that are good for public safety.

• (1050)

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Sault Ste. Marie.

I am very pleased to rise today to discuss the common sense firearms licensing act. This bill is an important step toward strengthening the property rights of all Canadians and especially those law-abiding firearms owners.

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The people of Nipissing—Timiskaming know that a firearm in the hands of a trained and licensed individual is simply another piece of property. In North Bay, they know that registering a long gun will not stop someone bent on committing a crime. In Temiskaming Shores, Cobalt and Temagami, they know that serious prison sentences will stop crime with firearms.

In East Ferris and Bonfield, they know that it just makes sense that anyone owning a firearm should be trained on how to handle it safely. In Powassan, Callander and Nipissing, they know that red tape designed solely to discourage participation in Canadian heritage activities, like hunting or sport shooting, simply is not fair.

In Calvin and Chisholm, they know that the best way to reduce the risk of gun crime is to take guns out of the hands of domestic abusers. In Mattawa and Latchford, they know that nobody should face a three-year prison sentence just because they made a paperwork mistake.

My point is the good people of Nipissing—Timiskaming know common sense. In fact, I was pleased to welcome the Minister of Public Safety to Powassan on July 23 last summer to announce the very same safe and sensible measures that we are debating here today. I say “safe and sensible”, very deliberately, because that is exactly what our Conservative government's firearms policies are all about.

We believe that those who are predisposed to obey the law should not have to fill out mountains of paper or be inconvenienced by red tape, but those who break the law should be punished.

I would like to focus on one particular aspect of this important bill that has particular relevance to the people of my riding and indeed all of the people of Ontario. That issue is the limitation of the discretion of the chief firearms officers. For those who are watching at home and are not familiar with firearms legislation, a chief firearms officer is the bureaucrat who is responsible for the administration of firearms laws in a particular province. Some of these bureaucrats are appointed by the federal government, some by the provincial government. They all share one common characteristic: none of them have ever received a single vote from a single elector. In Ontario, and to a lesser extent in other provinces, the chief firearms officer has assumed less of an administrative role and more of a policy-maker role.

First and most notoriously, the Ontario chief firearms officer tried to establish a long-gun registry by the back door just weeks after this Parliament voted to end the wasteful and ineffective long-gun registry once and for all. This move was so outrageous that the government had to take regulatory steps to clarify the intention of the Ending the Long-gun Registry Act. More recently, the Ontario chief firearms officer concocted a plan to require law-abiding, restricted firearms owners to get a letter from any shooting club they visit to say that they are welcome.

I have not found any legal authority for this needless paperwork within the Firearms Act and its subordinate regulations. I have just recently been informed of a situation where the Ontario chief firearms officer has gone so far into interfering with the lawful enjoyment of private property that he has made the approval of a

particular shooting club contingent on it drastically altering its hours of operation.

This is clearly beyond limits. There is no added public safety value by trying to dictate the hours of a private business, and there is definitely no authority in law for this type of behaviour from an unelected bureaucrat.

• (1055)

This is why the common sense firearms licensing act would make it clearer that the discretion of the chief firearms officers is limited and can be curtailed by the elected government. It is against principles which are fundamental to Canadian democracy that an unelected bureaucrat should be able to make the decisions that, by one stroke of their pen, can adversely impact the lives of law-abiding individuals. This is a safe and sensible policy. Firearms laws are passed by this Parliament. They should not differ vastly from province to province.

That sounds like common sense to me and to the people I represent. Unfortunately, we have seen too well what the other party leaders think about the rights of law-abiding firearm owners.

While travelling in rural Canada, the Leader of the NDP said that he has changed his gun-grabbing ways, but when he is here in Ottawa, surrounded by the media elite, he says that he believes that the long gun registry was “useful”. Equally appalling is the position of the Liberal leader, who clearly emulates former Liberal justice minister, Allan Rock's policies on firearms. That Liberal minister said that he came to Ottawa with the firm view that only the police and military should have firearms. It seems that if the Liberals had their way, there would be no more hunting and no more sports shooting in Canada. In short, they would eradicate a fundamental part of Canadian heritage.

I am proud and honoured to stand in this House and truly represent the concerns and desires of my constituency and restore trust, unlike my Liberal predecessor who told the constituents of Nipissing—Timiskaming one thing and then went to Ottawa and voted the exact opposite.

Let me assure members as well as all Canadians that such nonsensical policies will never see the light of day under our Conservative government. We will stand up for the democratically-elected member of this House, making safe and sensible firearms policies. We will stand up for the rights of law-abiding hunters, farmers and sports enthusiasts.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

As I was going through the papers this morning, I was particularly shocked to see that a number of them reported that our Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness had cancelled his participation at a fundraising event that featured a gun as a door prize. I am sure that it came along with all the required permits.

Statements by Members

I had a question that I would like to ask my colleague. Is it not a problem that Bill C-42 gives the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness the power to reclassify certain firearms?

[English]

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, we believe that elected officials should have the power. We have seen the problem with this bill when unelected officials arbitrarily change legislation, contrary to the wishes of this Parliament. We will continue to reform this legislation and achieve the equitable balance as long as we are in government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time for government orders has expired. The hon. member for Nipissing—Timiskaming will have three minutes remaining for questions and comments when this matter returns before the House.

Statements by members, the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

LIONS BAY

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, small towns and villages bring out the best of Canadians: the sense of intimacy, caring for one's neighbour and the pursuit of excellence at individual and community levels.

Lions Bay, B.C. is one of those great Canadian municipalities known for its resilient, talented people; people small in number who like to dream big. Lions Bay was one of the first Canadian municipalities to proclaim national health and fitness day. Its people take care of safety for a long swath of Highway 99. Its search and rescue volunteers and firefighters are legendary. We will not hear louder cheers for events than at Lions Bay, like the annual GranFondo bike race from Vancouver to Whistler.

This is a community that works together, laughs together, and when tragedies occur, like the death of lovely little Erin Moore just before Christmas, cries together.

Last Saturday, I had the honour of joining many Lions Bay residents to celebrate the official opening of its updated community centre, supported by our government's western economic diversification fund. This centre is a place where individuals and families will gather to exercise together in body, mind and soul.

* * *

MISTISSINI

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is usually with great honour that I stand in the House, but not today. I rise today with deep pain, deep sorrow and deep sadness.

The community of Mistissini, the entire Cree Nation and the whole of northern Quebec are mourning the loss of five young men

in a fire while out on the land. There is no greater loss than a family and a community can face than the loss of youth. Sadly, today, Mistissini, the Eeyou Istchee and northern Quebec are mourning and crying for five of them.

It is, therefore, with a heavy heart that I express in this chamber my condolences to the families and friends of David Jimiken, Emmett Coonishish, Chiiwetin Coonishish, Kevin Loon and Charlie Gunner.

As a father, I cannot even begin to imagine the pain that families and friends are feeling today, so today I want to send my support, my love and our prayers in these trying moments and in this dark time of need.

May their memories be a blessing as we collectively attempt to come to terms with this sad and horrible loss. My friend Jason Coonishish, who lost a son, brother and three friends in this fire, said it best:

[Member spoke in Cree as follows:]

Tshe manndu weetshinan mishuhwa.

[English]

May the Great Spirit stand with us.

* * *

CANADA-INDIA RELATIONS

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents in Don Valley East, I look forward to welcoming the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, on his first trip to Canada. As a Canadian of Indian origin, I am thrilled to see this important visit happen.

This is an example of the ever-expanding ties between our great countries. Canada and India are negotiating a free trade deal that will create jobs, grow our economy and create long-term prosperity. Right now, trade between Canada and India is expected to be valued at \$15 billion by year's end. With this visit, we expect that our trade will continue to expand.

Canada and India have long-standing bilateral ties built upon shared values of democracy, pluralism and strong people-to-people links.

I am sure that Prime Minister Modi's visit will be successful and that the relationship between Canada and India will continue to be strengthened.

* * *

STEPHEVILLE UNDER-12 FEMALE HOCKEY TEAM

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the achievement of a team of under-12 female hockey players from Stephenville in my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's.

Statements by Members

Two years ago, they decided they wanted to play hockey. They had limited skating experience and holding a hockey stick was not something with which they were familiar, but they were determined. That first year, they played in the provincials and, while they ranked 16th out of the 16 teams entered and came away without a win, everyone who witnessed them was blown away by their team spirit.

Last year, with some experience under their belt, their play improved and they ranked 6th out of the 19 teams that competed, which brings us to this year. They played in three tournaments before taking part again in the provincials, which included 20 teams. This same group of girls who lost every game they played two years ago showed this year what commitment and determination can do. They went undefeated in every tournament in which they participated, winning the title of provincial champions in their category.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating them and thanking the coaches who helped guide them to their newfound success.

* * *

• (1105)

POPE JOHN PAUL II DAY

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the first Pope John Paul II Day in Canada.

We will forever celebrate and honour Saint John Paul II on April 2 each year. Pope John Paul II was a champion of freedom and human rights. His legacy goes far beyond his role as pope. He was vital in promoting international understanding and peace-building. He was a bridge-builder between faiths and a champion of youth.

He was central to defeating Communism in Europe and has left a profound and lasting impact on the world. I had the honour to meet him and to help bring World Youth Day to Canada in 2002, a memory I will always carry with me.

I would like to thank my colleague from Mississauga East—Cooksville for introducing the bill and for allowing me the honour to second it.

Today, April 2, also marks the 95th birthday of my father, Lieutenant-Colonel Zdzislaw Opitz, a soldier of General Wladyslaw Anders' 2nd Polish Corps and a gulag survivor. I wish my dad *sto lat* today.

* * *

PASSOVER

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the federal caucus of the New Democratic Party, I wish to extend warmest wishes to members of the Jewish community as they gather to celebrate Passover with songs, wine, and a meal shared with family and friends.

Families will gather to retell the powerful story of the exodus of the Jewish people out of slavery and celebrate the victory of freedom, faith, and hope over oppression, persecution, and hate.

As families and friends gather together across the country at their Seder tables to share the story of their rich culture, faith, and traditions, it is also a time to reflect on the many blessings we have

here in Canada and to remember those around the world who are still struggling to find the peace and security we enjoy at home.

On behalf of Canada's New Democrats, we offer our best wishes for a happy holiday to families celebrating Passover across the country and around the world.

[Member speaks in Hebrew, as follows:]

Chag pesach sameach.

* * *

BRAMPTON UNITED ACHIEVERS' CLUB

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend was the 19th annual Celebrity Chefs: Men Who Can Cook event to be held in my home town of Brampton. This is an event that brings together both professional and amateur chefs to compete for the title of Best Celebrity Chef.

In the past three years I have always enjoyed competing but have never even come close to winning. Sometimes it is just the participation that counts.

The United Achievers' Club raises funds for great causes in our city. Funds raised from that event will provide scholarships for young people in our community, and the balance of the funds will go into sickle-cell research at the Brampton Civic Hospital.

Please join me in thanking and celebrating the United Achievers' Club of Brampton for all the good work they do in our community.

* * *

NATIONAL DENTAL HYGIENISTS WEEK

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next week is National Dental Hygienists Week.

In Canada, 59% of Canadian children and 96% of adults have experienced cavities, and 21% of Canadian adults have experienced periodontal issues.

Research shows a direct link between oral health and overall health and well-being. For example, periodontal disease has been linked to a number of serious illnesses, including lung disease, diabetes, and heart disease.

Dental hygiene is the sixth-largest registered health profession in Canada, with 26,800 registered dental hygienists working in a variety of settings.

Greater awareness of proper oral health practices and regular visits to a dental professional are paramount in ensuring Canadians lead healthier and happier lives.

Promoting the importance of the issues and celebrating the successes of the profession as well as the contributions of dental hygienists will lead to increased public awareness. Members should make their appointments today.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

REFUGEE RIGHTS DAY

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Refugee Rights Day, let us remember the courage of those who come to Canada to give their families peace and security.

Let us also remember Canada's humanitarian duties toward asylum seekers. Over the past few years, the Conservative government has made some disappointing decisions in that regard.

This year, the government promised to bring in 10,000 more Syrian refugees over the next three years. We will see if it can keep its own promises.

[English]

When we know that the government has only now reached its 2013 objectives of just 1,300 refugees two years later than promised, we have reason to be concerned.

On this Refugee Rights Day, the NDP urges the Conservative minister to present to us a credible plan to meet his promise to reach refugee targets.

* * *

• (1110)

EBOLA VACCINE

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been at the forefront of the Ebola response since the earliest days of the outbreak in West Africa. Canadian health care workers remain on the ground assisting with international aid efforts, and Canadian scientists have discovered one of the most promising Ebola vaccines in the world.

We are supporting unprecedented clinical trials all over the world to ensure this vaccine can be deployed as quickly as possible, and I am very pleased to report that the most recent results are in. According to *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Canada's vaccine has proven to be both safe and effective in a phase I clinical trial and is closer than ever to being widely deployed to stamp out the remainder of this current outbreak and prevent others from ever occurring.

We should all be proud of our Canadian scientists and their work to develop this crucial vaccine that is bringing the world ever closer to ending this outbreak and protecting the health and safety of the global community.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today across Canada people are coming together to call for justice for Cindy Gladue. By doing so, they are calling for justice for all missing and murdered indigenous women.

Lauren Crazybull, an activist from Alberta, said it well:

Cindy's case is so visibly unjust. Our community doesn't want to wait for another case to happen or another woman to go missing or be found murdered. This is our breaking point.

People and systems have tried to dehumanize Cindy Gladue, but today's calls for justice honour her memory. Like never before, communities are speaking out and standing up against systems' failures to address the high rates of violence faced by indigenous women in Canada.

Today thousands are gathered to send a direct message: no more missing and murdered indigenous women. Today they and we are calling for justice for Cindy Gladue and for all missing and murdered indigenous women.

* * *

CHILD CARE

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that the family tax cut and enhanced universal child care benefit will put more money in the pockets of every Canadian family with children. The PBO also confirmed that these benefits will help low-income families the most.

Sadly, the New Democrats and the Liberals disagree with our approach. Instead, they have insulted millions of Canadian families by claiming that unless they use a licensed daycare space, they are not providing child care for their children and they do not deserve support. That is completely false.

It is clear that the New Democrats and the Liberals are so blinded by their ideology that they simply do not understand what Canadian families need. What families need is more support from the government for their choices, not less support and higher taxes, as the opposition wants. Our Conservative plan supports every single family with children because we trust moms and dads with their child care choices.

* * *

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow will mark the 50th anniversary of the Canada pension plan, which, along with the Quebec pension plan, was created to ensure that all working Canadians had the opportunity to retire with dignity. It sounds like common sense today, but at the time it took extraordinary vision, diplomacy, and the persistence of Prime Minister Lester Pearson to get it done.

However, in the 1990s the plan's future was in doubt, and major renovations were required to save it. Former finance minister Paul Martin Jr. built the business case, the social consensus, and the national momentum to rejuvenate the plan. As a footnote, the plan received strong support across Canada, except for the provincial NDP governments in B.C. and Saskatchewan, and our current Prime Minister and his federal Reform Party voted against it as well.

The CPP was a historic accomplishment. However, retirement income insecurity is a growing fact of life for far too many Canadians. All this is to say that Canada is once again in need of a government that will honour Lester Pearson's ambition to ensure a fair, efficient, and adequate system of retirement income for all Canadians.

* * *

TAXATION

Mrs. Pat Perkins (Whitby—Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is focused on the priorities of Canadian families. That is why we have introduced the family tax cut and the universal child care benefit, which will put more money in the pockets of every Canadian family. This is in stark contrast to the NDP and the Liberal plan to raise taxes for all Canadians and take away both the family tax cut and the expansion of the universal child care benefit.

Just this week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that our plan will benefit 100% of Canadian families with children under the age of 18. Canadians know they can count on our Conservative government to ensure that we give money back to the real child care experts. Their names are Mom and Dad.

* * *

• (1115)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite all the criticism we have heard regarding the lack of oversight and the erosion of our freedoms, the Conservatives are ploughing ahead and will pass Bill C-51, which jeopardizes our rights. The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness even wanted to celebrate by attending an event featuring a draw for a rifle. How mean-spirited.

The Liberals, meanwhile, are trying to find some backbone, which they will not find any time soon. Clearly, you have no backbone when you say you are against a bill, but you plan to vote for it anyway, because of the polls and the upcoming election. Even the Bloc members have finally seen the light. They have changed their minds and plan to vote against the bill.

All of the opposition parties, except the third party, agree and will vote against the bill. All of the progressives are now behind the only party, the only leader who is showing some fortitude and resisting the Conservatives' pressure, the only one who has been standing up and defending our rights and freedoms from the beginning, the next prime minister of Canada, the leader of the NDP.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday evening the anti-terrorism act, 2015, was passed by the public safety committee. This is thanks to the hard work of our Conservative members. If the Liberals and the

Oral Questions

NDP had their way, our national security agencies would be deprived of important tools and resources.

The New Democrats introduced dozens of amendments that were needless. In fact, they even had to withdraw one because they had not taken the time to understand the practical impact. Not to be outdone, the Liberals voted to allow free reign for terrorist travellers to get on aircraft with law-abiding Canadians.

Clearly, only our Conservative government can be trusted to keep Canadians safe from terrorists.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first the Prime Minister cannot deliver a budget on time, even though all the provinces can. Then we learn that the first item in the budget is \$7.5 million to promote the budget and the Conservative Party. Then the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance both flee the nation's capital to avoid answering questions.

We know the budget will take billions from the middle class and give it to the wealthiest few. Is that why the Prime Minister will not answer questions about his budget because he is balancing it on the backs of the middle class?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important that Canadians from all regions of Canada are aware of our recently announced tax relief and benefits for Canadian families and know how to access them, important tax breaks, such as the doubling of the children's fitness tax credit, the increase to the child care expense deduction, the new family tax cut and the enhancement of the universal child care benefit.

It is our government's responsibility to inform Canadians how to access these important tax breaks before the opposition tries to take them away.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the Conservatives chose Canada Goose to make their announcement about the budget date. Remember who suggested serving Canada goose to the hungry homeless? It was none other than Camembert Conservative Nancy Ruth. Of course, this budget will only make the income gap worse.

Jim Flaherty, Preston Manning and the parliamentary budget office all said that the Prime Minister's idea of taking billions from the middle class to give it to the wealthiest few was atrocious. His own speech writer said that it was socialism for the wealthy. Which is it, let them eat Camembert or let them eat goose?

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Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased that we will be introducing a low-tax budget that will increase benefits to families, consistent with what we have done since we came to government.

Not only are we creating jobs and economic stability for the country, we have faith in Canadian families, we have faith in Canadian seniors, we have faith in Canadian businesses and we are showing that faith by putting money in their pockets. We will continue with that. We will not follow the NDP high-tax plan.

* * *

● (1120)

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of thousands of good jobs in the manufacturing sector have been lost under the Conservatives' watch since they came to power. In the past few months, tens of thousands more jobs have been lost in the retail sector. Just last weekend, 1,500 jobs were lost at Future Shop. There is a reason why the Governor of the Bank of Canada is forecasting atrocious quarterly results. That was the word he used: "atrocious". That is the Conservatives' record.

Instead of complaining about the temperature of the Camembert on their first-class flights, when are the Conservatives going to help the middle class?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are helping the middle class by putting money directly into families' pockets.

This week, the leader of the NDP said that families whose children do not attend government day care, have no child care costs. He thinks that families who keep their children at home, or send them to relatives or neighbours have no child care costs. He should apologize to those families.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, some members of the Senate are apparently cheesed off.

[English]

While Canadians worry about paying for child care, Conservative and Liberal senators are worried about the appropriate temperature for serving Camembert. Senator Ruth is telling us that Canadians just do not understand how hard it is for her to "fly around the world to get here to Ottawa". Get this, she lives in Toronto, so why are we being stuck with her flights?

Does the government really believe it is appropriate that taxpayers get stuck with the bill for these globe trotting aristocratic senators?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have answered that question a number of times.

Yesterday, I found out that the member for Scarborough Southwest in Toronto owes the taxpayers \$144,000 for an office in Montreal. As opposed to having his staff work in his office in Scarborough, he sent his staff to Montreal, and owes the taxpayer \$144,000. I hope he will do the right thing and repay that \$144,000.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. Before I go back to the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay, I would remind all hon. members that questions ought to relate to the administration of the government and answers ought to be directed back toward the question.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Exactly, Mr. Speaker, this is Parliament. We are dealing with the business of government and the member is acting like a shopkeeper in a Monty Python cheese shop sketch.

While we are talking about it, we have one senator with \$250,000 in bogus claims and another with \$100,000. We are talking about taxpayer accountability.

Next week Mike Duffy goes on trial on charges of accepting a bribe that no one is charged with giving him. The bribe involved the Prime Minister's lawyer and chief of staff. Therefore, we ask the Prime Minister to clarify for Canadians how this can be. Will the Prime Minister agree to speak at the trial?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have said on a number of occasions, we will continue to provide all the assistance that is needed by the Crown in order to prosecute Mr. Duffy. He is accused of taking illegal expenses and if he is found guilty of that, he should face the full extent of the law.

The only leader in the House who will be testifying in front of a court is the Leader of the Opposition, who owes \$400,000 to the people of Canada for illegal office expenses. He can bring 67 other members of the NDP with him when they explain to Canadians how they will repay the \$3 million they owe them in illegal expenses.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to TD Bank, the unemployment rate will be 7% by year-end. Unfortunately, many Canadians are simply abandoning their job search. If the number of Canadians looking for work was the same as it was at the start of the economic crisis, the unemployment rate would be 9%.

The government should invest in infrastructure right now, not in five years. The government's priority is to give tax breaks to the wealthiest, such as the Prime Minister's family.

When will this government stimulate growth and employment?

•(1125)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the best way to stimulate employment is to put money directly into the pockets of families. That is what we have done by lowering taxes for families and increasing the child care benefit.

The Liberals voted against the child care benefit. They do not support it and want to take this money away from families by increasing taxes.

We will continue to create jobs. More than one million jobs have been created since the recession, and we will continue to create them.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while Canadians wait for the budget, the Minister of Finance is actually cutting funds for his department's fiscal and economic analysis unit by more than a third. The minister has a history of making mistakes and introducing bad policy. There is his so-called small business job credit, which rewards firing workers. Then there is his \$2 billion a year income splitting plan, which manages to be unfair, fiscally irresponsible and bad for growth.

Why is the minister getting rid of the evidence that might prevent him from making more mistakes?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no mistake that we are giving families tax cuts and tax benefits. It is also no mistake, and Canadians know, that just as we are giving them those benefits, if the Liberals had the chance, they would end the income splitting for families, they would end income splitting for seniors. They are going to vote against the expanded and increased UCCB, so we know what they are going to do with that.

We will continue to give money back to Canadian families, Canadian seniors, Canadian job creators. The Liberals can try to take it away and increase taxes. We will never do that.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are more focused on advertising the budget than they are on writing it. Now they are spending \$7.5 million tax dollars on budget ads this spring. Meanwhile, young Canadians are struggling to find summer jobs.

A single ad during the hockey playoffs could help pay for more than 30 jobs in the Canada summer jobs program. When will the Conservatives stop wasting tax dollars to promote themselves and when will they start investing in summer jobs for Canadians and help young Canadians get the jobs they need?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians are always amused when the Liberal Party talks about government funding for advertising. We are still looking for the missing \$40 million from over there.

What our advertising will tell Canadians is that they are entitled to claim \$1,000 for the children's fitness tax credit to help soccer moms and hockey dads, that they will get an increased universal child care

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benefit of almost \$2,000 for kids under 6 and \$720 for kids 6 through 17, and that income splitting for families and pensioners will put money directly into the pockets of the middle class.

The Liberals do not want people to know about it because they would take that money away.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the senators are complaining about having to answer the Auditor General's questions. According to Senator Ruth, investigators do not understand senators' obligations. She thinks that taxpayers should have to pay for her in-flight meals because she cannot be expected to eat the airline meal of cold Camembert with broken crackers. Poor her. What a shame. She thinks that people do not understand, but Canadians do in fact understand that senators are unelected and unaccountable. People understand quite well that senators are the privileged friends of the Liberals and Conservatives.

Mr. Speaker, when will the Senate be abolished?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you know, it was the Senate that invited the Auditor General to examine all of the senators' expenses.

[English]

At the same time, there has been an investigation in the House, and it has been discovered that the NDP owes \$2.7 million for illegal offices and over \$1 million for illegal advertising. I would encourage the NDP members to repay the millions of dollars in illegal expenses that they incurred. They should not wait.

That party has a history of being found guilty, whether it is accepting illegal union donations or robocalls. Here it has an opportunity to repay the \$3 million.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a major disconnect between what we hear coming out of the Senate and the serious issues that Canadians face on a daily basis.

Very soon the government will face a situation where many senators may end up in the same boat as Mike Duffy and Pamela Wallin. What is the government's plan? What is it planning to do to the Senate?

•(1130)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was the Senate that invited the Auditor General to review all of the expenses of the Senate. I thought that was a good step to take.

Oral Questions

At the same time, we also know that 67 members of the NDP have been found guilty of illegally using House resources. I would encourage them to repay it. I know a lot of them think is actually funny, that owing the taxpayers close to \$4 million is a funny thing. Taxpayers do not think it is funny. They think they should simply do the right thing and pay it back.

* * *

[Translation]

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are making progress. They finally set a date to deliver the budget. Now all they have to do is find some real solutions to help Canadian families.

The promise to enhance the universal child care benefit is nothing more than smoke and mirrors. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, it is families with no child care expenses at all that will benefit the most.

Why not invest that money in a child care program that would really help families?

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the insult to Canadian families just does not stop from that side of the House.

To somehow suggest that families that are not using licensed daycare and paying a specific bill are not incurring costs to themselves, they are completely out of touch with Canadian families.

We are going to increase it and expand it. We are listening to Canadian families.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, talk about being out of touch.

Canadian families know they will not be getting the help they desperately need from the Conservative budget. Instead of moving forward with the NDP's plan for affordable child care available to all families, the Conservatives are happy to push forward their income splitting scheme that will only see the wealthiest families in the country benefit.

Will the Conservatives drop their regressive income splitting plan and put forward in their budget a solution that helps all Canadian families?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the evidence shows that only about 10% of all Canadian families use licensed or regulated daycare spaces. Those are the only people their plan would help.

Our plan helps every Canadian family, because Canadian families want to use a variety of options when it comes to caring for their children. They are all incurring costs.

To suggest that Canadian families, when they decide one parent will stay at home or they will use another family member, are not incurring costs is absolutely absurd. It is wrong.

Our plan helps every Canadian family with children.

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' actions often raise more questions than answers. The National Energy Board laid off 15% of its staff, yet the number of energy projects in Canada continues to grow.

Canadians' trust in the safety of oil transportation is eroding, largely as a result of this Conservative government's cuts to environmental standards.

How can the government justify new cuts when Canadians' safety is at stake?

[English]

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Consular, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should quit misleading Canadians.

To be clear, there are no cuts to the National Energy Board. Our government has a proven track record of increasing funding to the NEB and providing it with the resources it needs to operate.

What does the member opposite have a proven record of? It is for voting against the increased funding for the NEB every time it has been proposed.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are cuts, and it does not make any sense. Cutting 24% of the National Energy Board's resources, when it actually needs more oversight and more resources, is just plain wrong. Provinces have serious concerns about the NEB's capacity, and so do local communities across this country.

How can Canadians trust that their safety is the number one priority of the Conservative government when these cuts are going ahead?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Consular, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, there are no cuts to the National Energy Board.

What do the member's opposite do? They voted against increasing inspections. They voted against increasing audits. They voted against implementing fines against companies that break the law.

We will take no lectures from them about the proper regulatory structure we need in this country to protect these projects and the environment.

* * *

●(1135)

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Éloïse Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence continues to make gaffe after gaffe. Yesterday he was even forced to admit that he had fabricated information to justify Canada's participation in the mission in Iraq and Syria, but for an issue as important as this one, Canadians expect a basic level of professionalism from the minister.

Oral Questions

The cost of the war will hit \$528 million by the start of next year. Will the minister finally take his job seriously and at least check his information before making statements?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I disclosed the estimates of the cost of Operation Impact against the terrorist and genocidal Islamic State. We believe that the additional cost of about \$400 million is completely justified to respond to the threat that the Islamic State poses to the safety of Canadians and to the world. We must obviously combat this threat, and that is what we are doing right now in Iraq with our air force.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence says he regrets the inaccurate information he put into the public domain regarding Syria. Well, he made no apology for his statements nor about his claim that Canada was asked to extend the mission to Syria because we were the only country with precision-guided munitions, even though there are actually a dozen.

Who made this request to the minister? Did it even happen? Why did the Conservative government use false information to justify Canada's decision to expand bombing into Syria?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, I reported publicly the information that I received in briefings from the Canadian military. As the Chief of the Defence Staff has said, when new information came to light, he corrected the record. As minister, ultimately I am responsible for all information provided to the department, and I do regret that inaccurate information was provided.

Having said that, the real reason, of course, that we are now preparing to strike ISIL targets in Syria is so that this genocidal terrorist organization does not have a safe haven in which to plan terrorist attacks against Iraq or other countries, including Canada. We are doing the right thing by taking on this genocidal terrorist organization.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the recent legislation brought forward by the government, when it comes to caregivers for our veterans, is, unfortunately, woefully inadequate.

The Conservatives identify that possibly 250 caregivers by 2020 may be able to receive a \$7,000 grant. However, if a woman has to quite her full-time job to provide 24-hour round-the-clock care for the heroes of our country, she requires more financial resources than a \$7,000 stipend.

Would the parliamentary secretary for veterans affairs please advise if the Conservatives would be willing to not only change their criteria of the definition of a caregiver but also increase the amount—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the family caregiver relief benefit is an important new benefit that recognizes the vital contribution of informal caregivers to the health and well-being of veterans with severe and permanent service-related injuries. The proposed new family caregiver relief benefit will provide veterans with an annual tax-free grant of more than \$7,000. This new benefit will require little to no paperwork, and it will not require receipts. It will provide the informal caregiver relief while ensuring that veterans continue to get the support they need.

This is an important new initiative that the opposition should support.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we discovered a \$9-million cut to the youth employment strategy, and in other news, Conservatives found \$7.5 million to spend on more wasteful ads. Conservatives seem set on a strategy that moves money from helping the unemployed to phony ads that tell the unemployed that they are being helped.

Conservatives spend widely on self-promotion during hockey playoffs and the Super Bowl yet cry poverty when it comes to real job creation. When are the Conservatives going to stop being more interested in selling themselves than in helping find real—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. Minister of Employment.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are two parts to the question.

Let us start with jobs, jobs for young people. Our government brought in place the Canada apprenticeship grant, which helps young people get into the trades, high demand fields that pay good salaries to our young people and give them a brighter future. There have been half a million of these grants that have already gone out to help young people. The Liberals opposed that.

On advertising, we are advertising the increased universal child care benefit and the thousands of dollars families will save through income splitting. The Liberals do not want those families to know about those benefits, because the Liberals would take them away.

* * *

● (1140)

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the health of retail spending is a sign of economic confidence.

Oral Questions

In my riding, a Future Shop and a Target are closing their doors. The two stores are located less than a kilometre apart. These closures have left a void in the local economy. The government has eroded consumer and business confidence with its too little, too late approach.

When will the government do something to address the economic challenges facing Canadians?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the worst way to help retailers is to raise taxes on families. If families have more money in their pockets, they will be able to purchase goods and services from the retail sector, and that will create jobs.

That is why we increased the universal child care benefit to nearly \$2,000 per child under 6 and to \$700 for children aged 6 to 17.

The Liberals voted against that. They want to take that money away and raise taxes. We will not let them do it.

* * *

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's failure to create jobs over the last couple of years has led to Canada's economy shrinking. That is the bottom line. That has been very hard on the middle class of Canada. When I drive around Winnipeg, I see that Safeway stores are disappearing, Target stores have closed down, and Future Shop has closed down. The government does not even understand the importance of economic growth and creating jobs.

When are the Liberal Party and Canadians going to start to see a plan that is going to generate the jobs that are so important to our middle class?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, their only plan is to raise taxes on families that shopped at these retailers. We do not create jobs for retailers by taxing the people who buy their goods. We are doing exactly the opposite on this side of the House of Commons. We have lowered taxes for small businesses so that they can afford to hire more. We have lowered taxes for families so that they can afford to spend at their local businesses, and we are training our young people for the jobs that actually exist—good, solid, well-paid jobs for our young people—through quality training. The Liberals are opposed to all of it, and that is why Canadians side with us.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the more people hear about Bill C-51, the more they oppose it.

Ninety per cent of the witnesses who appeared before the committee agreed that Bill C-51 jeopardizes our rights and freedoms. Members of other parties have even changed their tune and plan to

follow the NDP's lead. Only the leader of the third party would rather let the Prime Minister win than stick to his principles.

Is the minister so easily distracted by clay pigeons that he really cannot see the consensus against his flawed legislation and the need to withdraw Bill C-51?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the committee members, who did important work over the past few weeks and heard from dozens of witnesses over many hours.

Everyone agrees that it is important to ensure that terrorists cannot take advantage of our inability to share information between the various government agencies, to prevent terrorists from boarding planes, to shut down terrorist propaganda websites and to allow passport officers to report suspicious individuals to police.

We are taking appropriate measures to keep Canadians safe.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder the Conservatives rushed Bill C-51 through. They could not stand the opposition coming even from their own base. The more Canadians have heard about Bill C-51, the more they oppose it. Even the Bloc has seen the light and will not vote for this dangerous legislation, and maybe even the Liberal leader will follow.

My question is for the minister. After hearing overwhelming evidence that Bill C-51 is ineffective and poses a threat to our civil liberties, will he listen to Canadians and abandon this fatally flawed bill?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are so many good measures and checks and balances in this bill. I want to thank the member for having taken the time to listen to witnesses, such as the sister of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent, members of the Muslim community, the security sector, and academics. All agree that it is important that we ensure that we have threat management measures so that we are able to prevent terrorists from using the gaps in our laws to arm Canadians.

We can reassure Canadians that we are taking the measures necessary to protect them from terrorists.

Oral Questions

• (1145)

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Toronto mayor John Tory and 17 Toronto city councillors whose constituents border the CP Rail line have written to the Minister of Transport expressing their concerns about the transportation of dangerous goods through their neighbourhoods. With about one million barrels of oil going through Canadian towns and cities daily, with derailments across this country continually in the news, with Lac-Mégantic never far from our minds, is the minister going to listen to the concerns of Torontonians, implement the recommendations in this letter, and prevent another catastrophe?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that we have received the letter.

We have encouraged the municipality to work with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, with whom we have a very strong relationship in working on its rail advisory group. I meet with it at least three to four times a year, taking its concerns into great consideration as we continuously improve rail safety in the country. We have acted on its recommendations, it has indicated that it is in agreement with the direction we are taking, and I value the relationship.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are once again dragging their feet. To prevent further derailments like the most recent one in Gogama, the fourth in northern Ontario since the beginning of the year, apparently CN plans to reduce speed limits across the country for any of its trains that are transporting crude oil in highly populated areas. CN, for one, seems to have learned from its mistakes.

When will the minister finally show some leadership and impose similar measures on the entire rail network?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of what we have accomplished as a government with respect to the improvements in rail safety in this country. It really has been unprecedented. I would encourage the hon. member to actually read what we have done so far, because it would save me the embarrassment of having to point out to him that we already did exactly that in an emergency directive last year.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to protecting our streets and communities, Canadian know who they can trust. Since 2006, we have toughened laws, held violent criminals to account, and most importantly, have stood up for victims of crime. In response to the Supreme Court's decision on Bedford, we brought in new criminal provisions to protect vulnerable Canadians from the harms of prostitution. The opposition dragged their feet and ultimately voted against the legislation.

Could the Minister of Justice tell the House the kind of impact our legislation is having on communities?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate members of the RCMP, who recently conducted raids to break up an international prostitution ring. They identified hundreds of potential victims who were being forced into prostitution, an inherently dangerous life. At least 500 victims, mostly young women, were moved around the country and forced into sexual slavery in many Canadian cities. Through the investigation, although it is ongoing, six individuals have been charged with charges recently enacted by our government.

Canadians trust this government to protect Canadians in our communities, where they work, live, and raise their families.

* * *

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec is to support job creation in our regions. The report on plans and priorities tabled yesterday by the government shows that the Conservatives plan to cut another \$20 million from the budget for the Economic Development Agency of Canada between now and 2018. That is almost 10% of the agency's total budget, and it is on top of the tens of millions of dollars left unused by the government every year.

How can the minister justify these continued cuts while millions of Quebecers in the regions are losing their jobs or are unemployed and unable to find jobs? There is no excuse for this. How can he justify such a decision?

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with my colleague an overview of what the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec has achieved since 2006.

It has supported 5,381 projects and provided over \$2.4 billion in contributions, with over \$9 billion in planned investments. The Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec is doing its job to improve Quebec's economy.

• (1150)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we do not have the same figures.

Quebec needs its regions to prosper, but the Conservatives are going to cut nearly \$12 million from the business development program under the budget for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, nearly \$2 million from entrepreneurship support and \$3 million from programs that support the CDECs and community economic development in Quebec.

Why are the Conservatives doing everything they can to kill SMEs in the regions?

Oral Questions

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Economic Development Agency of Canada was allocated nearly \$1.5 billion in funding for the period from 2011 to 2014. Of that amount, 98% was invested by the agency based on community needs and its ability to invest.

Unfortunately, the NDP has always voted against the budgets that provide money for economic development in Quebec.

* * *

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new report from York University legal researchers says that Hungarian Roma who came to Canada claiming refugee status have encountered systemic bias at Citizenship and Immigration Canada and unfair treatment by the government, despite increasing persecution and danger in their home countries. Between 2008 and 2012, only 8.6% of the more than 11,000 Roma refugee claimants were successful. These systemic failures must be fixed.

Will the government stop mistreating the Roma and denying them refuge?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada continues to have the most generous immigration and refugee determination system in the world. Every country on the designated country of origin list demonstrates respect for human rights, offers state protection to those whose human rights are violated, and has mechanisms for redress if these rights are infringed.

It is not an accident that almost every country of the European Union is on the DCO list. The decisions that the member is talking about were made by highly trained civil servants who follow our immigration laws. Our just immigration rules are applied impartially, based on the facts. We are not going to politicize these issues, as the opposition would have us do.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a family in Vancouver Kingsway is attempting to adopt its orphaned nephew who lives in Delhi, India. This child has no relatives left in India, and his uncle and aunt have already waited a year since applying to reunite their family. Unbelievably, Citizenship and Immigration Canada says that the adoption process will take another 31 months.

An immigration system that forces families to wait four years to adopt an orphaned child relative is simply unacceptable. Will the minister look into this case immediately and fix this broken system for all Canadian families? It does not sound generous to me.

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows very well that he does a disservice to families affected by individual cases, worried about their files, when he raises those issues before the House of Commons. We cannot talk about those issues in this place, rightfully, due to the restrictions of the Privacy Act. If he wants to talk about these issues, he should raise them outside of the House.

Canada has the most generous immigration system, and we are among the leading countries in the world making adoptions happen and resettling refugees. The hon. member knows that.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has just renewed an anemic housing agreement with the Province of Ontario. The province said thanks because it has good manners, not because it is a good policy.

In Toronto, this policy means that only 60 new units of apartments will be built in the next year, even though there is a waiting list in the city of 92,000 people waiting for housing. The mayor of Toronto said this week that he needs more help, not the status quo. In fact, the city is now losing almost 250 units of housing a year while it waits for the federal government to act.

The question is this. Why is the Minister of Finance going to Toronto and speaking at a private club, making one of his colleagues rich, instead of being in the House, providing housing money, and helping people in need?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I did not realize that the member now speaks for the provincial Government of Ontario, because I can tell him that when I met and signed agreements with the minister of housing from Ontario, they were very pleased with our housing agreements. Do members know why? It is because we provide funding, it matches funding, and then it decides where the funding goes.

It is called working with the provinces. It is called making our role as the federal government have the greatest impact, but working with provinces. I would like to explain that to the member. I think he would understand it if we had a little more time to explain that simple matter to him.

* * *

● (1155)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month, I asked about reservist Leading Seaman Robyn Young.

She was misdiagnosed and injured by a military doctor. She lost her health, she lost her job, and she lost her benefits.

The minister said he would do everything possible to help, but he did not. Last week, I asked again. The minister said he would do everything possible to help, but again, he has not.

This brave soldier and her mum will be homeless in just two weeks. Why does the minister not just keep his word to Robyn?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have instructed the armed forces to cover all of Ms. Young's medical expenses relating to her present condition, going back to before DND was even aware of that condition.

My instruction was clear. This is to continue regardless of the outcome of the current review. In fact, the armed forces covered the cost of her relocation to British Columbia and provided her with interim housing upon her move.

If there are any other outstanding medical claims, we encourage her to submit them to the armed forces, which is providing full support for medical and rehabilitation costs.

I have also instructed officials to treat all of Leading Seaman Young's requests as priority and provide her with everything that can be made available to her.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Thunder Bay city officials have announced that the federal government has rejected a gas tax fund request for the proposed Thunder Bay event centre.

This rejection comes despite the federal government already spending more than \$800,000 on the project. The FedNor minister says the city is confused.

Will the infrastructure minister provide clarification about his decision, and will he pledge to work together with the city council so that Thunder Bay can access gas tax funding for this or other projects?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Consular, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's building Canada plan is the largest infrastructure program in our country's history.

We have provided the City of Thunder Bay with the finances necessary to complete the detail, design, and schematic for the proposed new event and convention centre, and further support will be contingent on the proposal being consistent with the criteria for funding established by the Province of Ontario and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which came into effect last year.

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[Translation]

SHIPPING

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the excessive speed of boats travelling on the Richelieu River is a nuisance and is unsafe for people engaging in water sports; most of all, it is making the riverbanks erode more quickly.

All the mayors from the Richelieu valley stand with me and my provincial colleague in calling on the Minister of Transport to simplify the federal regulatory process, which is far too complex.

Will the minister help us, abide by the regional consensus and implement a speed limit for the Richelieu River?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I should let the hon. member know that I have brought this up with my officials already. They are looking into the matter with respect to process.

I would also like to say how refreshing it is for the member of the opposition to seek less red tape and less regulation—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The hon. member for Pickering—Scarborough East

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, our government introduced the support for veterans and their families act, to recognize and fulfill the obligation of the people and Government of Canada to show just and due appreciation to members and veterans for their service to Canada.

However, veterans and their families are already seeing results. Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs please update this House on the progress we are continuing to make for veterans and their families?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Pickering—Scarborough East for his hard work for our veterans.

Of the five great initiatives announced by the Minister of Veterans Affairs to improve benefits for injured veterans, two have already come into effect. Effective April 1, we have expanded the eligibility criteria for the permanent impairment allowance, so more veterans are eligible for financial support each month.

Also effective April 1, the earnings loss benefit is now calculated in the same way for reserve force veterans as it is for regular force veterans, and this is all about respect for veterans.

I encourage the opposition to support these initiatives and our other government initiatives.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just yesterday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs sought clemency in the Raif Badawi case, but a simple call for clemency does not mean he will be immediately and unconditionally released and reunited with this family in Quebec.

Will the government explicitly call for the immediate and unconditional release of Raif Badawi, as required by the motion adopted unanimously by the House yesterday, so that Raif can be reunited with his family here in Quebec?

Oral Questions

• (1200)

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the passage of the motion, that is exactly what we are doing. We consider the punishment of Mr. Badawi to be a violation of human dignity. There have been representations made to the ambassador and to the government, and the government will continue.

* * *

*[Translation]***CO-OPERATIVES AND MUTUAL COMPANIES**

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, mutual insurance companies are worried about the Conservatives' proposed new regulations, which would create two classes of policy holders.

Why is the government refusing to require that all policy holders be treated equally and that capital be invested in the community? Why are the Conservatives bringing in regulations that would jeopardize the future of mutual insurance companies by introducing incentives that could lead to demutualization?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that the mutual insurance industry has made its concerns about this issue very clear to the government. Of course, the primary questions here are of a provincial nature. However, we are in dialogue with the industry, and I know that the Minister of Finance is following this very closely.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that our family tax cut and universal child care benefit would put more money into the pockets of every Canadian family with children. The PBO also confirmed that these benefits are progressive, helping the lowest-income families the most.

Can the Minister of State for Social Development please inform the House about why the government believes that all families deserve support?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vancouver South for the great work and the very good question.

The PBO did report definitely that our benefits would help lower- to middle-income families the most, which is what we have been saying. He also confirmed that every Canadian family with children would benefit.

We recognize that there are no two families that are alike in Canada when it comes to their needs and the decisions they make regarding child care. We will continue to support all Canadian families. While the NDP plan would leave out 90% of Canadian families, we will support all Canadian families with real assistance.

*[Translation]***HEALTH**

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, most Canadians do not have access to palliative care. Currently, only 15% of Canadians have access to a palliative care bed in a hospital. The budget 2011 initiative known as "The Way Forward: Moving Toward Community-Integrated Palliative Care in Canada", ended in March.

Now that the work and consultation have been going on for three years, can the Minister of Health tell us when she and her provincial counterparts will introduce their strategy for organizing palliative care?

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a really good point around palliative care and the real challenges that are faced by families as they deal with this difficult time in their lives.

It is important to know that the provinces are responsible for health care, and we have record-high transfers. They are going to be \$70 billion by the end of the decade. However, the federal government also has an important role. Since 2006, it is important to know that we have invested more than \$43 million in research, and that is going to provide much-needed support and information for the provinces.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the period for consulting is now over. Action needs to be taken. End-of-life care is an essential health care need. If the health minister needs help, Quebec has already legislated in Bill 52 that palliative care should be a legislative right. Canadians should be guaranteed palliative care when they need it, and the consequences of failing to provide such care should give Canadians grounds for legal action. Several countries, like Germany, France, and Italy, have legally provided citizens this right. It is urgent that the current government offer more support for nursing homes, caregivers, and home palliative care as our hospitals are unable to meet demand. When will the Minister of Health take action?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again there are record-high transfers to the provinces so they can actually deliver, which they are constitutionally obliged to do. On top of the money we have spent on research, we play an important partnership role. Another example of something we have done is the \$6 million to the Pallium Foundation, which provided palliative care training for health care providers.

Again, it is important for us to work in partnership with the provinces who deliver health care, but we can provide them with much-valued information around research and, again, things like the recent budget in terms of the Pallium Foundation.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

•(1205)

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we certainly learned this week what Conservatives are really concerned about.

Is it the 400,000 manufacturing jobs that have been lost in this country? No, it is not that. Is it the lack of access to child care across this country? No, it is not that.

What concerns Conservatives, as reported by a member of the national Conservative caucus, is the temperature of their cheese. These Camembert Conservatives are more interested in that than they are in fundamental issues.

What we would like to suggest to them is that they should be more concerned about the “atrocious” state of the Canadian economy, as the head of the Bank of Canada said. They should be more concerned about the record debt load that Canadian families are experiencing. People say that Tory times are tough times, and there is proof for the average Canadian family.

The Conservatives should of course be concerned about cuts to food safety and rail safety on their watch, which tragically led to the death of dozens of Canadians. They should be concerned about 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women. Those are issues that I think most Canadians believe the government should be concerned about.

The good news is that as of today, there are only 200 days to the end of the government on October 19. There are only 200 more days before Canadians will be able to judge the government on its lack of concern for these issues of concern to Canadians.

I have the utmost confidence that on October 19 Canadians will make the right choice and say “no” to this government and “yes” to a new NDP government that will actually put their priorities first.

With that, we have been told the date for the budget. It was not announced in the House, of course, but somewhere far away from here. We have not seen the Minister of Finance respond to questions here for months. I do not know if it is because he did not like the temperature of the cheese or what, but he has not been here.

I certainly hope he will actually be here to present a budget and we hope that the budget will reflect Canadians' priorities. On that note, I would like wish you, Mr. Speaker, and all Canadians a very happy Easter.

[Translation]

I would like to wish everyone in Canada and of course you, Mr. Speaker, a happy Easter.

Could my colleague tell us what the government's priorities are for the week after the Easter break?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we will conclude the second reading debate on Bill C-42, the common sense firearms

Business of the House

licensing act. This bill will reduce the red tape faced by law-abiding hunters, farmers, and outdoors enthusiasts.

Then we will return to our constituencies for the Easter adjournment. When we come back on Monday, April 20, that day will be the first allotted day. The House will debate a proposal from the New Democratic Party. I expect this proposal will be the 81st time-allocated opposition day debate since the last election.

As we know, notwithstanding the option available to them to allow many days of debate on any issue they raise on opposition days, the NDP has always chosen to limit the debate to the minimum of a single day of debate. What is more, this will be the 179th time-allocated opposition debate since the government took office.

On Tuesday, we will debate and ideally conclude third reading of Bill C-12, the drug-free prisons act. Then we will move on to the report stage of Bill S-2, the incorporation by reference in regulations act.

As to my hon. friend, the Minister of Finance this week, I do not know where the opposition House leader was, but I quite enjoyed the Minister of Finance's answers this week in question period. I know why he does not remember it; it is because he does not want to remember that the finance minister laid on the table the clear choice before Canadians. It is the choice between a government that is focused on the priorities of Canadians and lower taxes for families versus the priorities of the New Democrats, which are to raise taxes on families, reverse the tax reductions our government has delivered, and deliver higher debt, higher deficits, and bigger government.

It is a clear choice. That is why we look forward to the budget on Tuesday, April 21, that the Minister of Finance has announced will take place. That will be at 4:00 p.m.

On his behalf, pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), I will be asking later that an order of the day be designated for the purpose of that budget.

I am looking forward to that balanced budget, because it will continue our focus on creating jobs and supporting Canadian families. Over 1.2 million net new jobs have been created since the economic downturn, and that is a remarkable record, especially when contrasted with every other developed country in the world. It is something I know Canadians are remarkably proud of.

Canadians recognize the importance of the economic leadership we have had from the Minister of Finance and our Prime Minister in delivering those results. That, of course, is why there is such strong support for our economic agenda in contrast with the agenda offered by the New Democratic Party.

•(1210)

[Translation]

The budget debate will continue on Wednesday. Subject to discussions with my counterparts, the second day of debate will be on Friday.

On Thursday, we will debate Bill C-51, the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015, at report stage. This important bill provides our law enforcement and security agencies with crucial tools to tackle new and emerging threats posed by terrorists.

Routine Proceedings

Over the last several weeks, our hard-working public safety committee held many hours of meetings, hearing from dozens of witnesses, and then spent a very long day on the bill's clause-by-clause consideration.

Let me congratulate and thank the committee for its efforts.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

THE BUDGET

DESIGNATION OF ORDER OF THE DAY

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83 (2), I request the designation of an order of the day to allow the presentation of a budget speech at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, April 21.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of International Trade, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) and in accordance with Standing Order 109, I am pleased to present, in both official languages, the government's response to the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food entitled "Canadian Agriculture and the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement", which was tabled in the House of Commons on December 10, 2014.

The government response addresses the motion adopted by the House on November 19, 2014, which asked the committee to reconsider its earlier report on the Canada-EU pact now that the final agreement had been reached.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 12 petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in relation to Bill C-51, An Act to enact the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act and the Secure Air Travel Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other

Acts. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments,

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in relation to Bill S-219, Journey to Freedom Day Act. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

* * *

[Translation]

BANK ACT

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-663, An Act to amend the Bank Act, the Cooperative Credit Associations Act and the Trust and Loan Companies Act (charges for keeping an account in Canada).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to introduce a bill to amend the Bank Act, the Cooperative Credit Associations Act and the Trust and Loan Companies Act. More specifically, we want to reduce bank charges, which we consider to be excessive.

First, banks will have to be more transparent. Every bank will have to provide an annual report that shows all fees charged to clients and the real costs of those services.

The banks will also have to communicate more with clients by establishing a set period of time before fees can be charged for transactions with insufficient funds. Our goal is to regulate the banks in order to stop them from charging excessive fees to everyone who is having difficulty making ends meet. We must do better for our families.

I hope that this initiative will garner the enthusiastic support of our colleagues.

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

* * *

● (1215)

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ACT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-664, An Act to amend the Department of Health Act (drinking water standards).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to introduce this bill, which would strengthen the federal government's ability to show better leadership by ensuring that Canada has the strictest drinking water standards.

In particular, this bill requires that Health Canada review the drinking water standards adopted by member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to determine if those standards provide a greater level of health protection than Canadian standards.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

[*English*]

BANK ACT

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-665, An Act to amend the Bank Act (international remittance transfer fees).

She said: Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to introduce my bill, an act to amend the Bank Act (international remittance transfer fees).

When newcomers come to Canada, they leave behind family members, children, spouses and siblings. They often work for low wages and yet they take some of those low wages and send it back to their country of origin. This act would cap the fees banks can charge on personal remittance transfers to 5% of the total value of the transfer.

When Canadians send money back to their relatives and loved ones, they face fees of often 10%, 15% or even 20% of the value. This takes money away from their meagre wages and often forces them to work extra hours to pay the fees. By capping the rates charged at the percentage of the total cost, low-income Canadians sending small amounts of money will not have their remittances eroded, allowing more money to be received for education, food or even a toy for their children.

When the bill comes up for debate, I urge all members to support it.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by hundreds of people from Sherbrooke.

The petitioners are calling for the release of Raif Badawi and, most importantly, they are calling on the federal government to use all the diplomatic means at their disposal to pressure the Saudi Arabian government to ultimately release Raif Badawi. Mr. Badawi is in prison simply because he expressed his views in a blog.

I am presenting this petition on behalf of these people from Sherbrooke. I hope to get a response, but more to the point, I hope to see the government take action on this matter. That is what the petitioners are calling for.

● (1220)

[*English*]

JUSTICE

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

The first petition has over 1,000 signatures from British Columbian residents, as well as Ontarians, and quite a few from my own riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands.

The petitioners urge the House to reject the so-called anti-terrorism act, Bill C-51.

I heard moments ago the chair of the committee say that it had studied the bill. I sat through the hearings and I do not think the bill was properly studied at all. I think this petition should get the attention of all present here.

FALUN GONG

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has thousands of signatures from across Canada, particularly in the Victoria area.

The petitioners call for justice and respect for the human rights of Falun Gong practitioners who are subject to extraordinary abuse and imprisonment in the People's Republic of China.

ABORTION

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions signed by Canadians, many of whom are from Caronport, which is within my riding of Palliser.

The first petition outlines that Canada is the only western nation without a law on abortion, which puts it in the company of China and North Korea. The petitioners state that the Supreme Court of Canada has declared that it is the responsibility of Parliament to enact abortion legislation.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon Parliament to condemn the discrimination against girls through sex-selective abortions and to do all it can to prevent sex-selective abortions from being carried out in Canada.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today in support of a national urban agenda. The signatories to the petition note that it is through our cities that we connect to and participate in the global economy; yet our cities are places of increasing income inequality. They further note that 80% of Canadians live in urban communities and that we cannot have the Canada we want if we do not have the cities we want. Therefore, they call upon the Government of Canada to do its part to build into our cities the infrastructure necessary to ensure that Canada's cities are prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable.

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions.

Routine Proceedings

The first petition calls upon the government to adopt aid policies and programs in support of and in consultation with small family farmers, especially women, and to protect the rights of small family farmers in the global south to preserve, use, and freely exchange seeds, which are being replaced and imperiled by patented industrial varieties.

DENTAL CARE

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon the government and the House to examine the possibility of public dental care in Canada parallel to the private system. The petitioners remind us that as many as six million Canadians are not able to afford the dental care they need and that oral health care can be a matter of life and death.

CANADA POST

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from hundreds more petitioners to add to the thousands of Canadians across Canada who are calling upon the government to preserve Canada Post's home delivery program and to stop the plan for reduced services, including the elimination of home delivery for five million households, as well as a dramatic increase in postal rates.

The petitioners point out that taking away home delivery of mail increases the risk of theft of mail, and it harms seniors and people who have mobility issues. They also point out that Canada Post has helped taxpayers by making a profit for 17 out of 18 of the last years.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I have is from people who are concerned about the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in the People's Republic of China. They call upon the government to uphold the principles of human rights and the ability of people to freely practise their spiritual and religious faith wherever they may be.

AUTISM

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, autism spectrum disorders, or ASDs, affect 1 person in 88. These disorders are characterized by social and communication challenges and a pattern of repetitive behaviours and interests. They are lifelong, affect development and life experience, and exert emotional and financial pressures on families.

Petitioners call upon the government to work with the provinces, territories, and stakeholders to develop a pan-Canadian strategy for autism spectrum disorder.

* * *

• (1225)

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. 1055 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 1055—**Ms. Elizabeth May:**

With regard to the decision to share information provided by RADARSAT-2 with the Ukrainian armed forces: (a) when was this decision made; (b) what justifications

were provided for the decision; (c) who initiated discussions regarding the possibility of information sharing with the Ukrainian armed forces; (d) what are the details about all stakeholders involved in the period of consultation, indicating, if applicable, their department, institution or agency and their position; (e) were any concerns regarding the terms of the agreement with the Ukrainian armed forces, raised by (i) the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, (ii) the Department of National Defense, (iii) the Canadian Space Agency; (f) what was the length of the period of consultation and discussion prior to the decision being made; (g) were any foreign governments consulted in this decision, and, if so, which ones; (h) what are the exact terms of the agreement to provide information to the Ukrainian armed forces from RADARSAT-2, including, but not limited to, (i) the period for which Canada has agreed to provide information to the Ukrainian forces, (ii) the frequency of this information sharing, (iii) the form and extent of the information being shared with the Ukrainian armed forces, (iv) the capacity of the Ukrainian armed forces to direct the information being collected by RADARSAT-2; (i) has the decision to direct RADARSAT-2 to collect information over Ukraine had any effect on other projects involving RADARSAT-2; and (j) if the answer to (i) is in the affirmative, what are the details of the projects affected, including, (i) the name of the project, (ii) the activity of RADARSAT-2 under the terms of the project, (iii) the financial impact of the project being affected?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, the decision to share information provided by RADARSAT-2 with the Ukrainian armed forces was made in December 2014.

With regard to part (b), the Government of Canada has demonstrated its support for Ukraine and efforts to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Specifically, the Government of Canada has taken a number of other steps to help the Ukrainian people as they work to restore political and economic stability, most notably through electoral assistance, support for economic and social development, and military training and non-lethal security supplies to Ukraine's armed forces.

With regard to part (c), inquiries were made by the Embassy of Ukraine in Canada during the summer of 2014.

With regard to part (d), officials from the Canadian Space Agency; the Department of National Defence/Canadian Armed Forces; the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development; and the Privy Council Office participated in discussions on the possibility of sharing RADARSAT-2 imagery products with Ukraine.

With regard to part (e), the Government of Canada deliberated carefully and thoroughly before reaching its decision to share information of this nature with the Government of Ukraine. This included prioritized consideration of Canada's defence and security needs.

With regard to part (f), extensive consultations have been held among the above listed departments since the summer of 2014.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to parts (g) and (h), in processing parliamentary returns, the Government of Canada applies the Privacy Act and the principles set out in the Access to Information Act. Information has been withheld on the grounds that it refers to confidential third party information as well as information that would be injurious to international relations and the defence of Canada.

With regard to parts (i) and (j), the decision to share imagery products with Ukraine has had no negative effect on Canada's ability to use RADARSAT-2 for other purposes, including those supporting the defence and security of Canada.

* * *

[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. 1058, 1060, 1062, 1064, 1065, 1070, 1073, 1082, and 1085 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1058—Hon. Mark Eyking:

With regard to federal departments operating within Nova Scotia: what was the number of employees for each department, broken down by fiscal year from 2005-2006 to 2013-2014?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1060—Mr. Ted Hsu:

With regard to Employment and Social Development Canada's January 2015 advertisement entitled "Canada's Apprentice Loans," available on the Employment and Social Development Canada's Youtube page at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_3dpdC_Rr4: (a) what labour market data, reports, studies, economic analyses or statistical analyses support the assertion in the advertisement that the Canadian economy will need "one million skilled tradesmen and women" over the next decade, broken down by (i) title, (ii) source, (iii) author, (iv) date; and (b) what was the total cost of this advertisement to (i) produce, (ii) place on the air?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1062—Mr. François Choquette:

With regard to the Old Age Security program: (a) how do government policies define someone who "makes his home and ordinarily lives"; (b) what criteria are used to calculate the number of years of Canadian residence; (c) what is the process for calculating the number of years of Canadian residence; (d) what instructions do public servants have for calculating the number of years of Canadian residence; and (e) how is the duration of travel outside the country estimated in cases where proof of travel is not available?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1064—Mr. Adam Vaughan:

With respect to employment at the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA): (a) how many positions at CRA have been cut as part of the government's plan to eliminate 19 200 jobs from the federal public service as of 2015, broken down by (i) number of actual positions cut, (ii) number of full-time equivalent (FTE) positions cut, (iii) divisions where these cuts have been made, including the total number of positions and FTEs cut from each division, (iv) locations of these cuts across the country; (b) are 3 008 FTE positions still the estimated number of cuts to be made at CRA as part of the plan referred to in (a); (c) in which divisions are the 3 008 FTE positions, or revised target number, anticipated to take place; (d) are any auditors in the

Aggressive International Tax Planning (AITP) division to be cut as part of the estimate in (b); (e) how many auditor positions at CRA have been cut as of January 31, 2015; (f) how many auditor positions have been cut from the AITP division as of January 31, 2015; (g) how many auditors were working in AITP before cutbacks, if any, took place; (h) how many auditors are currently working in AITP; and (i) how many auditors were working in AITP, broken down by fiscal year, for each of the past five years, including the current fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1065—Mr. Adam Vaughan:

With respect to the Advisory Committee on Vice-Regal Appointments: (a) how many people are employed by the committee; (b) what expenses have been incurred by the committee since its creation; and (c) what expenses have been incurred by individual members of the committee since its creation, broken down by (i) member, (ii) year, (iii) type of expense?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1070—Mr. Alain Giguère:

With regard to the investment plan and restructuring plan for Canada Post, and its \$1 billion pension deficit: (a) what are the implications of this deficit for the government; (b) what are the risks associated with implementing the turnaround plan; and (c) what is the government's pension liability forecast?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1073—Ms. Linda Duncan:

With regard to the Western Innovation Initiative (WINN) for each fiscal year from 2012-2013 to 2014-2015, year-to-date: (a) how many applications were submitted to Western Economic Diversification Canada's (WD) WINN initiative; (b) what is the total amount of funding awarded, broken down by (i) fiscal year, (ii) federal electoral riding, (iii) date the funding was approved, (iv) date the funding was actually provided to each successful applicant; (c) what outreach activities were used to acquire potential applicants and what are the details of individuals or entities invited to briefings organized by WD; (d) what is the success rate of funding applications, broken down by (i) fiscal year, (ii) federal electoral riding; (e) what is the average amount of funding granted, broken down by (i) fiscal year, (ii) federal electoral riding; and (f) what are the requirements imposed by WD for financial commitments by other sources in order to qualify for a WD award?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1082—Ms. Yvonne Jones:

With respect to staffing at the Canada Revenue Agency: what is the number of personnel, broken down by job title and year, working on aggressive international tax planning from 2003 to 2015, inclusive?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1085—Ms. Judy Foote:

With regard to the Atlantic Pilotage Authority: (a) what is the staffing level for each pilotage area, broken down by fiscal year from 2011-2012 to present; (b) how many reviews of pilotage requirements are in progress; (c) what are the details of the reviews identified in (b), and, specifically, (i) what are the reasons for the review, (ii) when is the report on potential changes due, (iii) how many pilots are currently employed in the area under review, (iv) how many would be required under proposed changes, (v) what is the rationale for proposed changes, (vi) who requested the review?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Privilege***PRIVILEGE**STATEMENTS BY MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE REGARDING
MILITARY CONTRIBUTION AGAINST ISIL

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise on a question of privilege pursuant to Standing Order 48 of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. This is a question of grave importance. It concerns misleading information the Minister of National Defence provided to the House regarding the expansion and extension of the Canadian military engagement in Iraq and now Syria, information meant to form the basis on which members of Parliament would decide, and decided, how to vote on one of the most important questions parliamentarians face: whether to put Canadian military personnel in harm's way.

This is an extremely serious matter. As I have said before, misleading and false statements are not only a breach of the privileges MPs must rely on in the performance of their duties as parliamentarians but are a breach of the trust of Canadians who elected this Parliament to govern responsibly. Therefore, I will ask that you find that a prima facie case of privilege exists so that the matter can be further investigated at committee.

The House has spent much of the last two weeks debating the expansion of the government's war efforts in Iraq and Syria. Of course, the Minister of National Defence was briefed extensively on the mission and Canada's role therein. Those who briefed the minister are the very capable men and women of our armed forces as well as those from the departments of National Defence and Foreign Affairs.

As we must, the House and its members had been relying on the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Prime Minister, to provide the facts on which members of Parliament made their decision to support the extension and expansion of the mission. That motion passed earlier this week.

Sadly, the information provided by the government on this mission over the past six months has far too often been proven false. Just two short months ago, I asked the Prime Minister to be held to account for his misleading statements on the initial six-month deployment of our troops in Iraq. We remember that he told the House last year, in direct contradiction of the truth, that Canadian Armed Forces personnel would not be accompanying Iraqi forces to the front line. Of course, we now know that not only are Canadian military personnel accompanying local forces to the front line, they are also painting targets and taking fire on the front lines in direct combat with the ISIL forces, also contrary to the assertions of the Prime Minister.

Today we are faced with yet another example of the government playing fast and loose with the truth and the facts on the issues surrounding Canadian involvement in the war. On Monday of this week, the very day members of Parliament were asked to perform our most sacred duty of authorizing the deployment of Canadian Armed Forces into combat, the minister said the following in response to direct questioning from the NDP:

...the hon. member is wrong because the United States and Canada will be the only allied countries using precision guided munitions to strike targets dynamically. That is a very important asset.

That is one of the reasons why the United States encouraged Canada to broaden the scope of its military mission against the genocidal terrorist organization known as

the Islamic State, namely so that we can hit these dynamic targets using our precision guided munitions, which are among the best in the world.

He also said, in response to a question from me, in my capacity as defence critic for the official opposition:

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the member for St. John's East is incorrect. The statement of the Chief of the Defence Staff confirmed what I said, which was based on the advice I received from the military indicating that currently only the United States is using precision-guided munitions of this nature against ISIL targets.

As we all know now, it was not me who was incorrect, it was the minister. What is so disturbing about these misleading statements is that the Minister of National Defence was using this cold fact as a key piece of evidence in the case for Canada's bombardment of Syria. On March 25, he told the Canadian public:

● (1230)

There are only five coalition partners doing air strikes against ISIL terror targets in eastern Syria. The United States is the only one of those five that has precision-guided munitions. That is a capability the Royal Canadian Air Force has, so one of the reasons our allies have requested we expand our air sorties into eastern Syria is because with those precision-guided munitions our CF-18s carry, we can be more impactful in the strikes we make against ISIL.

The truth is that each and every state that is currently engaged in air strikes in Syria is using precision-guided munitions—every single one.

In response to this assertion from the minister, it was reported yesterday:

But according to a spokesperson for the CJTF, which is leading the coalition bombing in Syria and Iraq, that's not even close to the case.

It is not even close to the case. How could the minister possibly have got that key piece of information so wrong?

The CJTF spokesperson went on to say:

All coalition partner states doing air strikes in Syria and Iraq are using precision guided munitions and nothing else.

The spokesperson went on to say that in Syria, that includes four nations other than the U.S., and that in Iraq it includes eight nations other than the U.S., namely Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, Jordan, the Netherlands, and the U.K., in addition to Canada.

All Canadians, including the loved ones of our soldiers and the parliamentarians who are being asked to send them into harm's way, had a right to know the truth. The minister withheld that from them, instead providing information that even he now admits was 100% false.

It is difficult to imagine what could possibly have happened to lead us to the point where the minister was making such patently false assertions about the state of play in the theatres of engagement into which he was recommending we send our forces.

The minister has a duty to provide parliamentarians with accurate information on the mission. In your ruling, Mr. Speaker, against the member for Mississauga—Streetsville on March 3, 2014, it was stated that there exists a "primordial importance of accuracy and truthfulness in our deliberations." Never could this be more so than when facing a question of whether or not to send the Canadian Forces off to war. In this case, the minister has a sacred duty to ensure that the statements he is making are true.

Privilege

Now that it is clear to the House that there has been such a terrific breach of trust between his department and the Canadian people, including his colleagues here in the House of Commons, we too have a duty to find out what happened and why. I am asking you today, Mr. Speaker, to defend these rights and our democratic institution by finding that there is a prima facie case of privilege and contempt of Parliament.

For the sake of clarity, let me remind everyone here of the rights afforded to members of Parliament to carry out their duties on behalf of Canadians. On page 75 of the 23rd edition of Erskine May's *Treatise on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, parliamentary privilege is defined as:

...the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively...and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions...

Parliamentary privileges are of the utmost importance not only for parliamentarians but also for Canadians, who have put their trust and faith in Parliament to legislate on their behalf and to hold their government to account. It is actually the essence of the democracy that we hold so dear. Canadians trust that we can perform our tasks unimpeded and unobstructed, and they trust that their government will provide truthful answers in the House. These are basic principles of paramount importance for Canadians to continue to believe in and engage in our democratic process.

Breaches of privileges can take many forms, but the one we are dealing with today—misleading the House—is one of the most serious. Page 111 of Erskine May states:

The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.

The second edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, by O'Brien and Bosc, also tells us on page 111 that the provision of deliberately misleading information constitutes a prima facie case of privilege.

If, as you have indicated in the past, we must take an hon. member at his or her word, we must believe that the minister was, in fact, misled by his staff. While there is room to be personally skeptical about that fact, accepting it does not diminish the Speaker's ability to find that members' privileges have been breached.

● (1235)

As you will know, Mr. Speaker, on December 6, 1978, in finding that a prima facie case of contempt of the House existed, Speaker Jerome ruled that a government official, by deliberately misleading a minister, had impeded the member in the performance of his duties and consequently obstructed the House itself. As you will also know, this is not the first time Conservative MPs have been caught trying to validate their policies in the House with falsified information.

When the member for Mississauga—Streetsville testified that he had personally witnessed electoral malfeasance in very specific ways, only to stand a few days later to say that he had made the whole thing up, the Speaker found that the privileges of the House were violated.

Yesterday, we witnessed the same routine from the Minister of National Defence, standing in his place to say what he had asserted just two days earlier was in fact false. The minister told us on

Monday that our allies called to say that they needed Canada, that they needed our uniquely precise munitions because they simply did not have any of their own, and that Canada's moral duty was to step in and fill in this gap in the war effort: 100% false.

The most difficult element we face here today is that the House has already voted on the salient issue to which the minister's misleading comments apply. That bell cannot be unringed. The minister did take a moment yesterday to, figuratively, throw the Chief of the Defence Staff under the bus, but the minister still has not apologized for anything, including his role in advancing this monumental breakdown in intelligence.

He said yesterday that it was all someone else's fault, that he, as the minister, simply regretted that the information was placed in the public domain. I regret it, too. In fact, I am appalled, and all MPs should be. We listened to the minister heap scorn on those who dared question the veracity of his claims and then were required to rely on his false evidence to make our individual decisions as members of Parliament to either approve or oppose dramatic the expansion of this war effort. Surely we can all agree that this is a huge and serious problem.

Perhaps, if it were a one-off occurrence, or even a two-off, Canadians could be persuaded to believe that it was an honest mistake. Frankly, the government and the minister, in particular, have a well-established track record of playing fast and loose with the truth. Having done so once again in a debate over whether to send Canadian troops into battle, the time for reckoning is now upon us.

Mr. Speaker, in your rulings on the various ways that the government has misled the House over the years, you have often emphasized the importance of the time-honoured tradition of accepting a member's word in the House, but that, I submit, is the very tradition that we are at risk of losing under the watch of the Conservative government.

Obviously, when faced with tough questions from opposition or media, ministers have often found very creative ways to avoid inconvenient truths. Obfuscation, omission of facts, bluster, bravado and simply refusal to answer questions are all time-honoured traditions of this legislature and others. They are tactics that have been mastered by previous Liberal and Conservative governments for generations. However, providing what is patently false information is quite a different matter. It is not only unethical, but against the rules of this place.

The minister came into this place armed with faulty information and used that information as a key plank in his case for why Canada had to join in the war effort in Syria. Members of Parliament used that faulty information to make their decision on whether to send Canadian troops into lethal combat. That cannot stand.

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The minister says that the fiasco is the result of him being given a bad briefing or bad information. The Chief of the Defence Staff has issued multiple and contradictory public statements to try to explain away this catastrophic failure of the minister in the information being provided to the public and the House.

• (1240)

Surely this warrants a study by the appropriate committee of this House to hear from the minister, the Chief of the Defence Staff and others to determine exactly how members of Parliament could have been left in such a compromised position ahead of a vote to send Canada's brave men and women into battle in our names. They deserve no less.

Those are my comments in support of my request to have you, Mr. Speaker, determine that there has been a prima facie breach of the privileges of this House, and that it be studied by an appropriate committee of this House. I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion if you so find, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I respectfully submit in response to my hon. friend from St. John's that there is nothing approaching a prima facie case of privilege in the submissions that he just made to the Chair. I would be happy, Mr. Speaker, for the record and for your consideration, to offer a brief summary of the relevant facts in response to claims made by the member opposite.

As Minister of National Defence, in preparing to make recommendations to the Governor-in-Council with respect to a prospective expansion or extension of our military operation against ISIL, known as Operation Impact, I was briefed that the Royal Canadian Air Force was furnished with precision-guided munitions that would be particularly useful in striking ISIL targets in Syria and that currently only the United States military was using similar munitions in Syria. It is true that I repeated the information that I received and I have to take responsibility for that.

The Governor-in-Council, the cabinet, considered advice that I provided and made a decision on expansion and enlargement of the mission based overwhelmingly on the government's view that we ought not to allow the so-called Islamic State to have a safe haven to operate in eastern Syria in an area where it has de facto sovereignty, an area from which it has launched an invasion of Iraq and terror attacks against Iraq and indeed where the capital of ISIS is found. That was the basis upon which the government made its decision to expand and enlarge the mission, as reflected in the motion tabled in this place, which was adopted recently, expressing majority support for the government's decision.

It is true that in debate questions and comments in this place and in some media interviews, I reiterated the information that I received from our military with respect to unique capabilities of RCAF munitions. Last week, military officials contacted my office to indicate that they had received new information indicating, with greater nuance, that the precision-guided munitions of the RCAF were more specifically useful against dynamic as opposed to static targets. Consequently, the Chief of the Defence Staff issued a letter, I believe initially to the *Ottawa Citizen*, to convey the new information that had come to the military's attention.

Again, I accepted the veracity of the information with which I was provided. While I am responsible for all information conveyed either by me or by my department, obviously the minister is in a position to accept the information briefed by military commanders.

This week, military officials again contacted my office to indicate that the letter issued by the Chief of the Defence Staff was not accurate and that indeed we are aware of at least two other countries in addition to the United States that have used precision-guided munitions against ISIL targets in Syria. Consequently, the Chief of the Defence Staff sent the following correction to the *Ottawa Citizen* on March 27, saying that:

Since the publication of the letter below, in which I stated that the United States was the only nation that used advanced precision-guided munitions in Syria, new information has come to light. A coalition ally has in fact used advanced precision-guided munitions in Syria on at least one occasion. The information contained in the letter, and which was provided by the Canadian Armed Forces to the Minister of National Defence, was based on the best information available at the time it was written. This error is sincerely regretted.

• (1245)

At the earliest opportunity I stood in the House, yesterday afternoon, to table the letter I just cited and to take responsibility as Minister of National Defence. Again, even if I receive inaccurate information, according to the principle of ministerial accountability, I am responsible for that. I conveyed it and I regret it. I do take responsibility.

Yesterday I said:

As the Minister of National Defence, I am ultimately responsible for all of the information provided by my department. Therefore, I regret this inaccurate information having been put in the public domain and would like to table this to correct the record.

There are two points I want to emphasize. First, at no time was information withheld. To the contrary, my approach has been to be transparent. It has been to share information. Typically the opposition criticizes the government for being insufficiently transparent and not sharing enough information. Nothing was withheld and, as soon as the military saw that new information had come to light, steps were taken to correct the record. As soon as I became aware of that, I stood in this place and did the same, so no information was withheld.

I can absolutely assure the hon. member that neither I nor the military, I believe, at any point purposefully or deliberately misled this place or the media. I have absolutely no doubt that the military believed the veracity of the information I was given, and I accepted the source credibility of those briefing me in conveying that to this place and to the public.

Again, it is regrettable that inaccurate information was provided, but that was not done with any mala fides, with any deliberation, or with any intent to falsify information, as the hon. member alleges.

Second, I do not believe that the member's privileges were in any way infringed. He implies that this one piece of inaccurate contextual information may have caused him to vote in a certain way on this motion. I know that is not the case because the New Democratic Party, including the member, made it patently clear months ago that it opposed any element of the military operation in which Canada is engaged against ISIL. It made it patently clear that it would vote against this matter in any event. Moreover, as I have said, the government's decision, the decision of Conservative members in this place, to support the extension of the mission was based on our belief that we must deny ISIL a safe haven.

Yes, this information was inaccurate, but it was offered as contextual information not critical to the motion adopted by this place to support the government's decision.

I would further remind the hon. member that the Standing Committee on National Defence has scheduled to hear from the Chief of the Defence Staff, I understand, as soon as this place reconvenes after the Easter constituency week. As the member knows, I am always happy to appear before committee. Therefore, if the member would like to question me, the Chief of the Defence Staff, or other officials on this matter, we would be happy to make ourselves available, as is the normal practice.

In sum, I submit that there is no prima facie case of privilege here. I stood in this place and accepted responsibility for the errant information, which was not relevant to the government's or the House's decision in the vote earlier this week. I will certainly, in accepting that responsibility, work with my military advisors to be doubly sure of the veracity of any information we put into the public domain.

• (1250)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised by the response from the Minister of National Defence. I would have much preferred if he was a little more transparent in what actually has taken place.

There is reason to believe there is a prima facie case here, and there is a very strong argument that this matter should go to committee and that the House should in fact take it very seriously.

The issue of the extension and expansion of the mission into Syria and potentially beyond is one of a very serious nature. The Conservatives would argue that when we ask our men and women of the Canadian Forces to engage, it is one of the most important, if not the most important, decisions we have to make as a collective House. Therefore, the information that is provided is of critical importance. Even if we already know how a particular party or individual member will vote on the resolution in question, it is still just as important that the Minister of National Defence provide accurate information.

The Minister of National Defence went out of his way to clearly indicate that one of the reasons we were being brought into this extension was because of the need for precision-guided munitions that only Canada and the U.S. had the capability to provide, at least that was the context, and I will expand a little more on that. However, either the minister did not understand the briefing that would have been provided to him by his department or he

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intentionally attempted to mislead the House. I believe the minister was in fact told the full details,

I will give an example of the confusion.

Members will recall, whether it was the Leader of the Liberal Party or other members of the caucus, the issue being raised that the government needed to be more transparent, honest and forthright with Canadians on this mission. In fact, the leader of the Liberal Party raised this in the form of a question, and the Prime Minister answered that our mission on the ground in Iraq "It is to advise and to assist. It is not to accompany".

What did the Minister of National Defence say? How did he respond?

Well, the Minister of National Defence justified that front-line combat by saying, "I am not sure we could train troops without accompanying them". However, on September 30, the Prime Minister explicitly ruled out combat on the ground when he said in question period that "It is to advise and to assist. It is not to accompany". This is not the first time this has happened with regard to the Minister of National Defence.

We now have very serious media reports, and it seems as if the Minister of National Defence wants to throw departmental officials and members of the Canadian Forces under the collective Conservative bus as opposed to taking responsibility for his mistake.

I will cite a story, which is very important. This story was published on March 30.

Last week, [the Minister of Defence] claimed that Canada was needed in the Syrian bombing campaign because it and the U.S. are the only members of the coalition who have precision guided munitions.

The minister explained to CTV that, "There are only five coalition partners doing air strikes against ISIL terror targets in eastern Syria".

He further stated in the media:

The United States is the only one of those five that has precision guided munitions. That is a capability the Royal Canadian Air Force has so one of the reasons our allies have requested we expand our air sorties into eastern Syria is because with those precision-guided munitions our CF-18s carry we can be more impactful in the strikes we make against ISIL.

• (1255)

That statement was not true. Whether it was made inside the chamber or outside the chamber, the Minister of National Defence was wrong. Either he intentionally misled Canadians and misled this House, or now he is trying to say in a roundabout way that his department did not provide him with the appropriate briefing, the briefing that would have better informed the minister. I challenge the minister on that. Maybe he had selective hearing. I believe that the military provided him with the right briefing.

We need to go further down in the story. We always have to take care a little bit when it is anonymous, but there is a lot of truth when individuals who know the truth can only talk in a very limited way because of the position they might be in. I found this to be an interesting statement that was in the same story:

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When [the minister] made his false claims on TV, there were some inside National Defence headquarters who couldn't figure out why he was saying what he was saying. After all, [the minister] had been thoroughly briefed about the Syrian mission, so he either didn't understand the basic information he had been told or he was just ignoring what he had been told, sources pointed out to Defence Watch.

I am more inclined to believe that than to believe the minister's comments that he just finished putting on the record. If we take a look at the history of the confusion, the mass confusion in this very important issue, I believe that Canadians would agree with what I and others are saying. Is there any doubt why more and more Canadians are getting a better appreciation of what is being pointed out about the government and its approach to this mission?

As the leader of the Liberal Party has consistently said, the government has failed to be honest with Canadians in regard to this very important issue at hand, and it has not been able to demonstrate its case.

The minister has to understand that he has an obligation—whether we are voting in favour or against the expansion into Syria—and a responsibility to be straightforward and honest not only to members of this chamber, because by speaking to this chamber he is speaking to all Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and he has not lived up to that responsibility.

That is why Liberals believe that there is merit, that there is in fact a prima facie case to be made that this matter be referred to a standing committee where we could possibly entertain looking at hearing some of those individuals who were involved in this matter.

I believe it is of a great, serious nature. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, we will await your decision, and at some point in the future I suspect there might be a need to add further comment as we get a better understanding of just how the government is trying to twist its way through some form of justification that it has not been able to clearly demonstrate to Canadians by its behaviour in regard to this whole matter.

• (1300)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. I think the very lengthy and very detailed submission of the member for St. John's East speaks for itself. We know that over the next two weeks, you will have due time to properly consider the points that have been raised by the member for St. John's East, which, of course, are fundamental points, extremely important points. You will also have the ability to check the blues.

Over the next two weeks, you will have the ability to respond. It is really not for any other member of the House to stand and try to push you one way or the other in terms of the important decision to be provided to this House.

The member for St. John's East has provided a very fulsome and very detailed submission. I would suggest that comments from the Minister of National Defence have not been helpful at all. They were political. They certainly did not respond to the facts of the matter and certainly did not respond to the two key points I wanted to reiterate, because those are the two key points you will be considering over the next two weeks before bringing back to the House a decision on this matter.

Over the next two weeks, I am sure many Canadians will be very interested in knowing what will be brought back to the House at that time.

On page 111 of *Erskine May*, as my colleague from St. John's East mentioned, it states: "The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as contempt".

Mr. Speaker, that is a key part of the deliberations to be made over the next two weeks.

Also, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, O'Brien and Bosc, our procedural bible, the rules under which we are guided, tells us on page 111 that the provision of deliberately misleading information constitutes a prima facie case of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, I think the case has been laid out by the member for St. John's East. We respect the time you will take over the next two weeks to properly consider the evidence put forward by the member for St. John's East. We look forward to your ruling in due time, in two or two and a half weeks, when we reconvene after the Easter break.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question of privilege you are being asked to rule on is one that has been well tilled, as you might imagine, and there is a very clear set of rules. There is a three-part test to determine if there has been a breach of privileges.

I know it was clearly established and cited in O'Brien and Bosc at page 86, and this might be an outdated version from 2009 that I am looking at, but in any event, in 2002, in the decision when Art Eggleton as defence minister was accused of providing misleading information, the Speaker in this Parliament has of course continued that test forward, restating it definitively back on May 7, 2012, at page 7469 of *Debates*.

That three-part test is this. First, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; second, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and third, in making the statement, the member intended to mislead the House.

These are not separate tests, they are three that have to be met together. I think there is no dispute that the first of those three tests was an incorrect statement; this is obviously the case. The member so much as acknowledged that himself and in fact conducted himself very appropriately in doing what all members should do when they become aware that they made an incorrect statement. He came back to the House and tabled on the record documents correcting this and setting out what the actual facts were, all of which was done before any question of privilege was raised.

The member had conducted himself appropriately. In so doing, by its very nature, we see that there is no evidence whatsoever that the member knew at the time that his statement was incorrect. In fact, he said in the House that at the time he made it, he believed it to be correct. As soon as he had information to the contrary, he corrected that to the House.

Privilege

The rule is that we take a member at their word. There is no reason why we should not here. In fact, the sequence of events suggest veracity in his statement of the facts and recovering of the facts. As such, the question of privilege that has been raised obviously fails on that second test, that being that it has to be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect. I think all the evidence points in exactly the opposite direction, that at the time he made that statement to the House, he believed it to be correct.

As such, on the second point, there is a failure of the three-part test. The third part is that in making the statement the member intended to mislead the House. Obviously if what he believed genuinely, and I think we all accept that that was true, that what he was saying was correct, there is no way that he could have been making the statement with the intent to mislead. Again, the evidence and the course of evidence and the fact that he did come to the House and provide documents and correct the record as soon as that came to his attention, I think establishes beyond any doubt whatsoever that he had no intention of misleading the House and conducted himself according to his obligations appropriately.

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that two of the three tests that have to be met in order to establish a prima facie case of privilege are not met in this circumstance. There is no question of the member's privileges having been offended.

I do want to take on the further question. The member for St. John's East seems to have tried to establish a new fourth test. I do not know if it stands on its own independently or it is an additional test, but that being one of reliance, that in some way, somehow, the House or he himself since he is claiming that his privileges have been offended, that his privileges were offended because he relied on that information. There might be merit in an argument like that, however novel, but there is no evidence of any such a rule in our rules and in previous decisions of the House that I have seen. I do not think that such a rule exists.

If he is making the case that the Speaker should create a new rule of reliance, because we are now past the vote and it is too late to correct the record because members voted on this, that might have some merit if there were a member standing and saying he or she voted in favour of what the minister wanted on the reliance of what he said, but now that they have new facts, they would have voted differently.

That is not the case for the member claiming that his privileges have been offended here. He in fact has been clear from before the minister made any such statements how he would vote. He was consistent throughout and his arguments in the House in debate and so on, how he would vote. He voted exactly that way and he continues to stand by that position, the exact same position, even now that he has been provided with the proper facts.

• (1305)

Therefore, there is no argument of reliance for the member that his privileges have been offended. It would be a novel one, but even if one were to accept that, he is not in a position to make that argument here, because the fact is that he simply did not rely upon that.

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is not a good test and it should not be established, but if he is putting to you that it should be a test, he is not in a position to rely on this new and novel test. It is a fairly simple, open and shut case. There is no question of the privileges of the House or any member having been offended here and, therefore, I think you could rule on it quite quickly and dismiss the matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I understand the member for Vancouver Quadra is rising on the same point of order, but before I go to her, I would encourage all hon. members, if they have relevant or new information on the point, to make their points succinctly and not go beyond that to debate the points that have been made by others.

The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

• (1310)

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an incredibly important point of privilege. It is a very important issue because it goes to the heart of whether Canadians can trust the minister and the government with their serious responsibility around taking Canada into war. The Liberals believe it is simply not credible that the minister was inadvertently incorrectly briefed and did not know what he was saying. I think the timeline actually supports that.

It was already on the public record. U.S. General Dempsey had publicly congratulated two other countries for their use of precision missiles in Syria, before the statement was made by the minister, the statement that so conveniently alleged that Canada was asked to expand our bombing mission into Syria. I would ask the minister to table any documents supporting the fact that Canada was asked to enter that bombing mission in Syria based on, as he alleged, the fact that Canada was the only other country with precision missiles.

After the public record was corrected by a journalist that what the minister said was false, several days later the Chief of the Defence Staff wrote a letter to the *Ottawa Citizen* confirming the minister's story. I would like to ask the minister if he or his office requested that the Chief of the Defence Staff or the Chief of the Defence Staff's office send that letter to back up the minister.

Lastly, because it is so difficult to believe that the minister made a genuine mistake, and although he has apologized—and apologized while blaming the staff—a third request I have is that the minister table all—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The matter before the House is a question of privilege. It is not debate or question period to the minister. If the hon. member would like the minister to table certain documents, she has ample opportunity in other fora in this place to do that. This discussion, specifically on a point of privilege, I think has proceeded and the facts are on the table. As I said, if the member would like to pose those questions to the minister, she will have opportunity to do that.

The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, should the minister accept my request that he table his briefing notes, it would help the Speaker in making a determination about this point of privilege.

Private Members' Business

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The Chair thanks all hon. members for their input into this matter. As they might expect, the Speaker will consider all the facts and return to the House following the Easter break.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

COMMON SENSE FIREARMS LICENSING ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Firearms Act and the Criminal Code and to make a related amendment and a consequential amendment to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): There are two minutes remaining for the member for Macleod before the question will be put.

The hon. member for Macleod.

Mr. John Barlow (Macleod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to speak to Bill C-42, the common sense firearms licensing act. This is a fantastic step forward for law-abiding firearms owners across Alberta and across Canada. I am proud to stand and support it.

On behalf of the law-abiding firearms owners in my riding of Macleod, I would like to thank the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness for moving this important legislation forward. I would be remiss if I did not also thank the member for Yorkton—Melville. The member has carried this torch for years and has been standing up for law-abiding gun owners and eliminating needless red tape.

We have heard comments from many hunting and sport shooting groups across Canada that support this legislation. We have heard from the Canadian Police Association, which supports this legislation. I have heard from residents in southern Alberta who also support this legislation. They support it because it follows our Conservative government's views on firearms policies, policies that are safe and that should also be sensible.

Overall, the bill continues to focus on pursuing common sense firearms legislation, something that has been lacking for far too long.

Some have asked why these changes are being made now. The pundits seem to say that this bill is simply pandering in advance of an election. That could not be further from the truth. The bill is not about hobbies; it is about an important economic driver in our country. In fact, hunting and sport shooting is a billion dollar industry. It is also a way of life, both in rural Canada and urban communities. Millions of Canadians in all walks of life enjoy participating in these Canadian heritage activities. For them, this is not a so-called gun lobby; this is about enjoying a treasured part of life.

Some have asked why we are combining different licenses and giving new rights to possession-only license holders. Some have argued that the effect of this proposal would only be that one would be required to take a mandatory training course—

•(1315)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): With apologies, it being 1:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made Wednesday, April 1 it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the 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 Thursday, February 26 the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, April 20, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it, you would find agreement to see the clock at 1:30 p.m.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

(Bill C-644. On the Order: Private Members' Business)

December 8, 2014—Second reading of Bill C-644, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (failure to comply with a condition)—Mr. Jim Hillyer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Lethbridge is not present to move the order as announced in today's notice paper. Accordingly the item will be dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

It being 1:18 p.m., pursuant to an order made Thursday, February 26 the House stands adjourned until Monday, April 20, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:18 p.m.)

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