



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 163 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, October 17, 2012

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 17, 2012

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in our country and in the House, we have discussed the struggles of young people who are bullied or depressed and in need of help.

One of the issues touched by this conversation is the abuse of prescription drugs, a growing problem identified by doctors, pharmacists and police officers in my riding and across Canada. Painkillers or opioids, stimulants and sedatives are types of drugs commonly abused in Canada, often by youth.

In recent years, the problem has grown exponentially and Canadians have become the second largest customers of prescription opioids. Additionally, drug overdoses and deaths have risen at an alarming rate.

Supported by West Vancouver Police Chief Peter Lepine and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse has committed to create a strategy to address this issue, including the creation of a national drug take-back day to highlight the safe disposal of unused prescription drugs.

I urge fellow members and all Canadians to work together to achieve the right balance between appropriate therapeutic use of these drugs and the prevention of their misuse.

ST. AIDAN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the largest and wealthiest city in this country, homelessness is up. The waiting list for affordable housing is up. Poverty is up. The number of working poor is up. The number of people on the brink of homelessness is up.

The only thing down these days, apart from federal funding for affordable housing, is the temperature. For the seventh year in a row, the doors of St. Aidan's in my riding are about to open, every Monday night through to March, to welcome guests seeking warmth and a safe space for the night.

It is not a home, certainly, but it is a refuge for a night from harsher environments and hunger. It is a place where dignity is recovered or retained.

This is provided by the Out of the Cold program, led at St. Aidan's by Dr. Michael Chambers, his wife Margaret Betts, Susan Snow, Flo Cook and many more volunteers.

With this statement, I want to recognize their generosity of spirit and time, and thank them with all of my heart.

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IRAN

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week Iranian TV featured riots in the streets, Indian reserves described as concentration camps and state-sponsored extermination of the disenfranchised.

That is the disparaging image of Canada being promoted by two errant former first nations leaders, Terry Nelson and Dennis Pashe, before the state-run media in Iran.

Canada listed Iran as a state-sponsor of terror for very good reasons: Holocaust denial; genocide promotion; training, equipping and supplying arms to terrorist organizations bent on blocking any peace in the Middle East. Arrest, imprisonment, torture and execution of dissidents top the list of flagrant human rights abuses.

These ignorant emissaries have insulted the memory of Holocaust survivors and thousands of Iranian Canadians who know the realities of this brutal regime. Zahra Kazemi, Canadian photojournalist, was arrested outside the infamous Evin prison in 2003, tortured, raped and beaten to death. Her family in Montreal would still like to have her body returned for a proper burial.

This sad spectacle speaks to an ancient proverb:

Statements by Members

If...the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

* * *

POVERTY

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the international community marked World Food Day, and today the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Poverty rates in Canada remain unacceptably high. The fact that we continue to let children in Canada live in poverty is inexcusable. Over 20 years ago, Canada promised to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000 and to ensure access to nutritionally adequate and safe food.

Today, one in every seven Canadian children still struggles to have his or her basic needs met. One in four first nations children grows up in poverty and over 300,000 children rely on food banks.

Each of us has a responsibility to stop the betrayal of Canada's children. Our children do not want excuses that this is a provincial problem. Our children need food to feed their bodies and their minds.

The Chief Public Health Officer for Canada has described the lifelong impacts of child hunger in detail. When will the Minister of Health take action?

* * *

AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, something fishy is happening in Middlesex County. Last week I was delighted to attend the grand opening of Sand Plains Aquaculture in Mossley, Ontario.

In the middle of southern Ontario farmland, miles from any body of water, this former mushroom compost facility has been converted into a state-of-the-art fish farm.

Owned and operated by the McLaughlin brothers, Sand Plains Aquaculture uses innovative technology to raise and market fresh fish. The plant will supply tilapia for the Toronto market, which currently imports exclusively from the United States, and is a great example of a locally owned business serving local markets. At its peak operating capacity, the project will create up to 30 new jobs for our community, with an opportunity for expansion.

Development like this is key to regional diversification and economic prosperity. I look forward to watching Sand Plains Aquaculture grow and thrive in our community. I wish them all the best in this exciting endeavour.

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100TH ANNIVERSARY OF REVUE CINEMA

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour the 100th anniversary of the Revue Cinema at its Roncesvalles location in my riding of Parkdale—High Park. This year not only marks the Revue's 100th anniversary, but also five years of it operating as Toronto's only not-for-profit community-based cinema.

The Revue was briefly closed in 2006, but the residents and cinephiles of the Revue Film Society raised close to \$130,000 to support a rescue effort for their much loved theatre. In 2007, the Revue reopened its doors under a new motto, "Reel Diversity, Real Community".

Starting this Friday, the Revue will celebrate with a week-long series of great movies, from *Singin' in the Rain* and the *The Wizard of Oz* to *E.T.* and *Saturday Night Fever*.

I congratulate them and I know this week will pay fitting tribute to this important Toronto landmark.

* * *

● (1410)

CANADIAN FARMERS

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, Canadians gathered to enjoy Thanksgiving dinner. Today I rise to thank those who put the turkeys on our tables: Canadian farmers.

Farmers not only feed cities, they drive the Canadian economy.

Our government understands the importance of the agriculture sector for the Canadian economy. That is why we will continue to make agriculture a key priority, especially in parts of the country like my riding of Perth—Wellington where so many are employed in the agricultural sector. We are helping farmers by developing markets overseas to promote Canadian food and agricultural exports and to strengthen our agriculture sector.

Growing up in a rural community has given me a strong appreciation for the work farmers do. I know hon. members will join with me in offering Canadian farmers the thanks they well deserve.

* * *

CANADIAN TOURISM AWARDS

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to rise and congratulate the Rocky Mountaineer Train Company for its nomination in the "social media initiative of the year" category at the Canadian Tourism Awards.

In Canada, tourism is a \$78.8 billion industry that generates \$15 billion in exports every year and employs over 600,000 hard-working Canadians. Tourism remains a viable source of economic stability throughout the country and it accounts for more of our GDP than agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing combined.

In 2011, Rocky Mountaineer used a new social media strategy touching on every aspect of the customer experience. Highlighting Jasper National Park especially, it showered much of its attention on Canada's natural splendour. Jasper is the jewel of the Rockies and I invite all members of the House to come and see for themselves.

I congratulate Rocky Mountaineer and wish it all the very best at the awards in November.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT OF COOPERATIVES

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, Quebec City hosted the International Summit of Cooperatives, a celebration of the amazing power of co-operatives.

I was very proud to be able to participate. Let us not forget that the NDP epitomizes the co-operative movement.

[English]

The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, CCF, brought people together to face the economic hardships of that time.

[Translation]

These days, co-operatives can be found in so many spheres. These innovative businesses are creating jobs and meeting the needs of local communities, all with a democratic governance process in which every member has a voice.

Co-operatives are part of our future. They fit perfectly into a plural economy and exemplify NDP values, the kinds of values that we need to bring back to the forefront to achieve a modern, fair and equitable society that leaves no one behind.

Over 2,800 participants from around the world all agreed: co-operatives are here to stay, and it would be in everyone's best interest to capitalize on their amazing power. I could go on and on about co-operatives.

* * *

[English]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great disappointment that I rise today to inform Canadians that yesterday the Liberal Party shamefully voted against the faster removal of foreign criminals act, an act which would remove the endless appeals currently available to dangerous foreign criminals that allow them to delay their deportations, during which time, they can commit more crimes.

With this bill, we can help prevent another tragedy like that of Todd Baylis, the young Toronto Police officer who was shot and killed by a violent drug dealer who should have been deported years earlier.

I urge the Liberals to listen to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Police Association and Victims of Violence, which are some of the many organizations that support this bill.

I implore the Liberals, just once, stop putting the rights of serious criminals ahead of the rights of victims and law-abiding Canadians and stop trying to kill this bill.

* * *

POVERTY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. It is a day designated by the United Nations as a day of reflection on poverty worldwide in order to promote awareness and seek solutions for its eradication.

Thousands of Canadians already engage in this fight and are contributing their time, talent or treasure.

However, let us be blunt. Citizen engagement cannot do it alone. Poverty is still pervasive, even in a country as wealthy as Canada. Governments must step up to the plate and use the tools at their disposal to end poverty now.

Here in Ottawa, the Conservative government has the ability to improve income supports, create tax fairness, support family-sustaining jobs and expand public services. We know what the solutions are. However, what is missing is the political will.

That is why, as one of the co-chairs of the all-party anti-poverty caucus, I call upon MPs from all sides of the House to get engaged in the fight to end poverty. I ask them to please join our caucus. Let us show Canadians that we can work together and that we do have the political will to reach our shared goal of eradicating poverty here and abroad.

* * *

● (1415)

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, border services officers are quite literally on the front line of Canada's national security. This frequently puts them in contact with criminals, terrorists and other dangerous individuals.

Yesterday, at the Peace Arch border crossing in my riding, Canadians received a sobering reminder of the risks that face the CBSA each and every day. For this first time in Canadian history, a border services officer was shot in the line of duty.

On behalf of the government, I would like to wish border services officer Lori Bowcock a full and quick recovery. Our thoughts and prayers are with her, her family and her friends.

We thank all our border services officers for the work they do to help keep us safe.

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GLOBAL DIGNITY DAY

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, 350,000 participants in 50 countries, including thousands of students from 41 schools across Canada, are commemorating Global Dignity Day.

Global Dignity empowers young people by inspiring respect, self-esteem and openness to diversity, as well as by promoting the idea that every human being has the universal right to lead a dignified life.

This year, there is a special focus on the role that bullying can play in denying dignity, a reality that, as we have seen, can lead to tragic outcomes.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Today I sat down with students at Rivière Castor Public School to have a discussion with young people from across Canada about their role in the fight against bullying and the importance of dignity for all. As a parent and former teacher, I know that we can conquer bullying through inclusion and mutual support.

Congratulations to everyone involved in marking Global Dignity Day in Canada.

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NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the NDP member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier is recognizing our government's hard work.

Indeed, much has been achieved in my riding and across Canada thanks to our economic action plan.

However, we cannot warn Canadians enough about the inherent risks of the NDP's policies.

It is my duty to inform the public about the disastrous consequences that implementing a carbon tax would have for all sectors of the economy. The NDP's carbon tax will increase the tax burden on Canadians, cause countless job losses and increase the price of electricity, gas and almost everything else.

Only our Conservative government is working to ensure that Canadians have more money in their pockets by focusing on jobs, economic growth and long-term prosperity.

* * *

*[English]***MEMBER FOR BRANT**

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the House returned this fall, the member for Brant has yet to use his statements to talk about his riding. He has used all three of his member's statements to deliver talking points from the Prime Minister's Office about the NDP.

The people of Brant deserve some representation, so I would be glad to help out.

Here are two events that happened in the member's riding.

There was the 20th annual Take Back the Night walk in Brant. He did not attend. He did not raise it in the House.

There was also the Bob Bell lecture series, where 100 local students learned about and debated health care issues. The member did not take part. He did not raise it in the house.

The member is like all the other Conservatives over there. They just mouth whatever talking points come from the PMO.

I am sure the constituents of Brant are going to ask soon when he is going to represent them and why he only reads out the partisan falsehoods that come from the Prime Minister's spin doctors.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this chamber the NDP member for Halifax quoted the Prime Minister as stating in November 2008, "our Government has opted not to apply carbon taxes". We will not impose a carbon tax on Canadians. In fact, we have continually lowered taxes for Canadians.

● (1420)

[Translation]

Why has the NDP leader not been clear about his plan to put a tax on carbon?

[English]

The New Democrats' platform shows in black and white on page four that they expect they will bring in \$21 billion in revenues because of this tax. The NDP leader has even clearly stated, "I have a cap-and-trade program that will produce billions".

[Translation]

Why will the NDP not admit that they want to raise the price on everything through their sneaky carbon tax scheme?

[English]

In sadness, more than in anger, I call on the NDP leader to step forward today and admit that the New Democrats would impose a carbon tax that would cost Canadians \$21 billion.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***FOOD SAFETY**

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 44 days after the start of the tainted meat crisis, more products have just been recalled. Yesterday, the Prime Minister completely ignored the principle of ministerial responsibility by saying that it was not the minister's fault because he is not the one who does the inspections.

Does the Prime Minister realize that the Minister of Agriculture is responsible because it is his program and his approach that have put the lives of Canadians in danger?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, Canada has one of the best food inspection systems in the world.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is responsible for inspections. As a result of the information it collected, it decided to take a series of actions, up to and including shutting down the plant. It will not allow the plant to reopen until such time as it is convinced that the plant can operate safely.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on September 13, the CFIA shut down beef exports from XL Foods. The Minister of Agriculture determined that beef from XL was not safe enough to be sold to American families, but he allowed that same contaminated beef to be sold to Canadian families for another 14 days.

I have a straightforward question. Does the Prime Minister stand by his minister's decision to allow contaminated beef to be sold to Canadian families for another 14 days after the CFIA had determined it was not safe for Americans?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the Canadian Food Inspection Agency that makes these decisions based on science, not on political decisions. The reality in this situation is that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has taken a series of actions, up to and including shutting down the plant. Obviously, it will not allow the plant to open until such time as it is convinced the plant can operate safely.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, contaminated beef from XL Foods was first discovered by American inspectors on September 3. By September 6, the minister knew that XL was withholding E. coli testing data from Canadian inspectors. By September 13, the minister had determined that beef from XL was not safe enough to be sold to American families, yet the Minister of Agriculture withheld this information from Canadians. He let Canadians buy and eat contaminated meat.

Since the minister will not accept his responsibility and resign for this scandal, why will the Prime Minister simply not fire him?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are many statements there that are clearly erroneous.

It is the Canadian Food Inspection Agency that takes decisions based on the scientific information available to it. It has taken a number of steps, up to and including shutting down the plant. As I have said, the plant will not be opened until the agency is convinced it can operate safely.

In the meantime, as part of the reforms the government has put in to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, there is always an expert review of the processes followed in all of these matters.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on another issue, in 2008 the House voted to end Canada's presence in Kandahar. The Minister of National Defence told the House that combat operations had ended and that Canadians were not involved in combat. However, yesterday the minister's own spokesperson admitted that Canadian troops were "permitted to be in Kandahar province and to serve in combat roles".

Time and again the Prime Minister stood and said that Canadian soldiers were no longer going to serve in combat, but they do. Why did he break his word to Canadians and to Parliament?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has no combat mission in Kandahar. That

has been made very clear, as the minister said very clearly yesterday, and has been known in the House for a very long time.

There are ongoing exchanges that do take place among small numbers of members of the Canadian Forces and their counterparts in the NATO alliance. I believe this involves less than half a dozen people who we are talking about. There is no combat mission. This is a simple exchange program of a handful of individuals.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence can try to play with words and talk about professional development and an exchange program as much as they want. The truth is that there are Canadian soldiers involved in combat in Afghanistan.

In spite of the motion Parliament adopted and in spite of the Prime Minister's promises, they authorized the use of Canadian soldiers in combat roles. This is a political decision that they hid from Canadians.

I am therefore calling on the Prime Minister to immediately withdraw all Canadian troops who are still involved in combat missions in Afghanistan.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for some time now, our operations in Kandahar have been training operations. Clearly, there is no Canadian combat mission—

*[A child heard crying in the gallery.]**[English]*

The Speaker: Order, please. The right hon. Prime Minister still has the floor.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper: Mr. Speaker, I have heard much worse noise here from adults.

[Translation]

To finish my answer, I would like to add that exchanges with other NATO allies have been standard practice for a long time. We are talking about half a dozen people.

[English]

There are no black helicopters here. There is no secret combat mission.

* * *

CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister is so confident, as he says is, that Canada has the best food inspection system in the world, I wonder why his government would not accept the very simple amendment that is now being considered in the Senate that would allow a third party, namely, the Auditor General, to do the review with respect to the activities of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the whole system, instead of asking the minister to do the review, because the minister has already said that everything is working fine, everything is just great.

Oral Questions

Why not let the Auditor General do that job?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party, as an experienced parliamentarian, should know that the government does not direct the work of the Auditor General. The Auditor General can audit this and any number of other agencies. In fact, as part of the government's performance stemming from the Weatherill report, there will be an expert review of the events here and to ensure the processes of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency remain the best in the world.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Prime Minister could now tell us exactly what his standards are with respect to the conduct of ministers.

There is substantial evidence now that there was overspending in the last election by the member for Labrador, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, by over \$20,000 in a campaign that had a limit of \$80,000.

This is not simply a question about Elections Canada. This is a question about the standards of the Prime Minister of Canada with respect to the conduct of his candidates.

Instead of buying elections, why not a byelection?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as was conceded some time ago, there were errors in the filings of the official agent in this case. That was the individual responsible. A new official agent was named. That agent has been working for some time with Elections Canada to correct these problems.

If the hon. gentleman wants to talk about standards, it was the Liberal member for Guelph whose campaign was found to have made \$5,000 in illegal robocalls. That was a clear decision. No action was taken.

The member told us that Adam Carroll would no longer be a staffer and he had no sooner said that and they brought him back into the Liberal Party.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the official agent mentioned by the Prime Minister was just appointed to an important federal government board. Those are the kinds of standards they have. That is the issue. This is not about a few dollars. We are talking about \$20,000 that was illegally spent in excess of the limit established by Elections Canada. It is obvious that the election in Labrador was bought. What is the Prime Minister going to do?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have known for quite some time that there were errors in the Elections Canada filings. That is why a new official agent was named. The official agents are responsible in such cases.

However, the leader of the Liberal Party wants us to adhere to a completely different standard to his own. His party accepted a

member whose staff broke the law by making robocalls during his campaign. He also accepted an employee who had to resign.

* * *

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, XL Foods has told its employees that they will soon be unemployed again. In response, Brooks city council is releasing its plan to deal with the crisis. It is making plans and consulting the people affected. That is what a responsible government does and that is what the minister should be doing. Instead, he evades questions and makes up answers.

What will the minister do to help workers and farmers now bracing for the fallout from this crisis?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, food safety remains our first priority and rebuilding consumer confidence after these issues have been dealt with at the Brooks plant. CFIA is conducting an in-depth analysis as we speak.

Having said that, I met with a lot of the industry participants yesterday in ongoing meetings. We are meeting at least two or three times a week to discuss these issues and find alternative movement for our cattle stocks.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, their first priority is actually buying television ads and then cutting food inspection. That is the real reality of their priorities.

I know many members opposite count the Alberta leader of the opposition as their friend. Yesterday, she said that this made-in-Ottawa fiasco was becoming a humanitarian crisis.

Are the Ottawa Conservatives so out of touch that they cannot even hear the warning sounds coming from their friends in Alberta? Why is the minister ignoring farmers, ignoring cattlemen, ignoring local communities and ignoring the concerns of Canadian families?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are doing no such thing. I have been working on a daily basis with the member representing the Brooks area. He has been in touch with his folks at home. We have extra staff in there from human resources to make sure all these folks have applications in for their EI. Some 500 or 600 have been processed already.

I continue to meet on a biweekly or triweekly basis with the cattle industry to ensure it has the ability to move forward on this issue. We are very positively and proactively working on these issues.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they have money to spend on propaganda, but not on farmers.

Oral Questions

Yesterday, the Prime Minister gave the minister a free pass. According to the Prime Minister, the minister is not responsible for food safety because he does not personally inspect the meat. Setting aside this ridiculous statement, the minister is responsible for defending farmers' interests. Farmers are worried by the inaction of the minister, who is doing nothing but defending his own reputation.

Where is the assistance plan for the cattle industry?

[*English*]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not just talk, we actually act. I had a conference call with my provincial counterparts as late as yesterday afternoon. We talked about the issues in the pork sector, as well as the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Agriculture has the floor.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Definite leadership material there, Mr. Speaker. We look forward to that.

Having said that, we continue to work with all parties affected throughout this issue and we look forward to solutions very soon.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the failures keep coming.

The last time the Conservatives introduced a budget implementation bill, there were hundreds of things hidden in it: attacks on the environment, on seniors, on the unemployed, on the Auditor General.

Will the Conservatives be honest with Canadians for once, or will they table yet another Trojan Horse with disastrous consequences?

• (1435)

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question, which is the first question I have had this session, not that the economy is not important for our country.

When we do a budget we follow it up with two budget bills, and we do that every year. The second budget bill is ready and will be introduced shortly. It contains, not surprisingly, measures that are in the budget.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hate to attack the minister's fragile ego but Parliament still goes on when he is not here. The opposition has been asking questions despite his lack of attendance.

Let us try this challenging line of logic. Budget bills should be used for what things that are in—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. There is far too much noise on both sides today. The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has the floor.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, budget bills should be used for things that are in the budget, but last spring the Conservatives—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. Let us not have a repeat of yesterday. The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley still has the floor.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the foreign affairs minister has a certain set of skills that are unique to his position.

Last spring, the Conservatives presented a bill that not only killed more jobs than it created, it weakened environmental protection, gutted the Fisheries Act and further cut EI to Canadians. Across the country, people were clear in saying that this was not how Parliament should work.

However, it is not too late for the Conservatives to do the right thing. Will the government work with opposition parties and respect Parliament, do what even the Prime Minister used to believe and allow parliamentarians to do their jobs?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): As the member opposite knows, Mr. Speaker, the budget this year is an economic action plan for 2012 and beyond that. We have had the first budget bill and now we will have the second budget bill to complete the work that was outlined in the budget.

The results of all of this have been the creation of more than 800,000 net new jobs.

We will continue with the plan as will be contained in the second budget bill to create more jobs, more growth and more prosperity in Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ETHICS

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance's Machiavellian process of introducing mammoth bills is no more acceptable than the schemes used by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who completely ignored the spending limits during the last election. That reminds me of something. Oh yes, the thousands of dollars the Conservatives overspent in 2006. That is it.

We learned that an airline had to write off over \$15,000 in expenses so that the overspending would not be too excessive. This is getting close to buying an election.

I would like to know what the department promised in exchange for the miraculous disappearance of these invoices.

Oral Questions

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the official agent who made the mistakes has already been replaced and the new agent will provide answers to the unanswered questions.

[English]

We have disagreements all the time in the House of Commons over various issues. There is one very fundamental question that comes up, though, about a member of the official opposition donating 29 times to the hardest line separatist party in Quebec. It is a very simple question but a very important one. Does he believe in a united Canada? Is he a federalist?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I see that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities is concerned about the transportation problems of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, but he clearly is not taking this very seriously.

Clowning around is fun for a bit, but after a while, the person loses credibility—although he does not have much left to lose. They are not going to improve their reputation by covering their tracks. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs' campaign clearly made some serious mistakes.

Can the minister justify going over the Elections Canada spending limit by 21%?

• (1440)

[English]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I already answered that question and the answer remains the same. However, the member across refuses to answer the question that Canadians are posing to him. He donated, not once, not twice, but 29 times. He is the gift that keeps on giving. The problem is that he keeps giving to the separatists. He could put the whole matter to rest by simply rising and saying that he is a federalist and he believes in a united Canada. Why will he not just do that?

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no amount of baffle-gab can erase the unethical financing scheme that helped elect the member for Labrador in the last election: \$24,000 worth of flights for \$7,000 is clearly not fair market value, and apparently this deal was brokered by the member's brother-in-law months after the election was over. All they could afford to pay was \$7,000 after all their misspending.

I want to know what the government is doing to hold the minister to account for his rule-breaking election campaign.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Labrador, the minister, is a man of tremendous integrity who was elected to serve the people of Labrador, and we stand behind him.

The member across the way is part of a party that funnelled illegal tax subsidized money to the Broadbent Institution which, this week, spoke about the NDP's plan, "Green taxes, such as a carbon tax, and higher taxes on natural resources".

Why will the member not recognize that the people in Labrador, in fact, people right across this country, want a low tax plan for jobs and growth, not high taxes that will put them out of work.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have an old refrain here, "Conservative Party stepping in to scapegoat a supposedly inexperienced official agent". He proved unable to competently run a local election campaign within the rules, but Reg Bowers was still so well regarded by the Prime Minister that he was awarded with a plum appointment to the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board. He is qualified, apparently, to help direct the billion dollar oil industry but not competent to keep a local riding campaign on budget.

Why did the Conservatives reward someone for breaking all the rules with a plum patronage post?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have already told the opposition that the official agent has been replaced by a new one, who will provide the proper information to Elections Canada.

With that said, the NDP engaged in an illegal process to forward tax-subsidized money to the Broadbent Institute. That same institute has revealed that the NDP's carbon tax plan would devastate, not Canada in general, but Newfoundland and its new prosperity in particular.

Why will a member for Newfoundland not stand up for the taxpayers and the hard-working people from his province?

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is more Conservative disregard for election laws. The plot thickens around the member for Labrador: overspending, corporate donations, fraudulent invoicing and illegal loans. The minister overspent by \$20,000. This guy lost by less than 80 votes. He bought the election.

Election spending is the responsibility of the candidate. Now that he has gotten rid of the official agent and given him a posh patronage job, he should fire him from the C-NLOPB as well.

I ask, will the member take responsibility for his own actions and resign?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has the audacity to ask about illegal loans. An illegal loan is when someone takes money from a powerful interest and refuses to pay it back. Then it becomes an illegal donation. Interestingly, there are four Liberal leadership candidates who have done just that over the last six years, amounting to almost a half a million dollars in illegal money.

Oral Questions

Why will that member not help clean up the half million dollar ethical mess and stop throwing rocks when he lives in a little red glass house?

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess that member has forgotten all about the in-out that he stood behind.

The government cannot humorously repeat that it is co-operating with Elections Canada. The member for Labrador is a cheater. He tried to fix—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1445)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte.

* * *

TREASURY BOARD

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

I would like to ask, is it consistent with Treasury Board policies and guidelines for the Government of Canada to continue to provide ongoing discretionary language training expenses, as well as ongoing travel status expenses, to a member of the public service who has been otherwise subject to a termination order by the Public Service Commission of Canada, and is it within Treasury Board guidelines to provide funds for legal services to an employee to assist the employee in contesting such a ruling by a federal institution at the Federal Court?

Would the Treasury Board president please answer this question?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to the hon. member's question, and the hon. member would know, number one, that this is not a political issue; number two, the public court record states that the commissioner found problems with the way the public service ran its hiring process but did not find any political interference by ministers or ministerial staff. He would also know that the matter is now before the courts.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the CNOOC-Nexen deal is going from bad to worse.

This week, the Conservatives announced that Simon Kennedy, the director of Investment Canada, will be replaced as soon as the takeover bid is approved, which is another way of ensuring that no one will have to answer for this decision.

The Conservatives have had an uncoordinated approach from the start. They have prevented Canadians from joining the debate and they have not defined the concept of net benefit. I have a simple question.

Do the Conservatives think that a foreign government should have control over Canada's natural resources?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear about this. The government has always, and will always, act in the best interests of Canada and Canadians. This transaction will be scrutinized very closely.

I will mention to the member opposite that the Investment Canada Act already provides for issues to protect national security.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have good reasons for doubting the government, because it has failed Canadians every time.

Take Hamilton, for example, where U.S. Steel broke promises to employed Canadians and, when meekly challenged by the government, was able to get the Conservatives to give way simply by making more promises. What about the broken promises of Rio Tinto, the broken promises of Vale? Time after time after time the government backs down, rolls over and does not enforce conditions.

Why are Conservatives asking Canadians to trust them on Nexen when they cannot get it right anywhere else?

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP sent an anti-trade mission to Washington to advocate against Canadian jobs. The NDP has opposed every trade deal we have ever brought before this House, including free trade with the United States.

Let me be clear. The opposition members want to politicize this review so that they can impose their anti-trade, job-killing agenda on the country and scare away all foreign investment.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the majority of Canadians oppose this takeover. On this side of the House, we are actually listening to Canadians. The Conservatives should give it a try sometime.

Why would Canadians support this deal when the government simply will not give them any answers to questions like: will the Conservatives protect jobs, the environment and our resources? Why do the Conservatives never enforce conditions on any deal?

We do not know the answers because the Conservatives refuse to bring this deal before the public.

When will the Conservatives do the right thing and hold a full public review of this takeover? When will they listen to Canadians?

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we obviously have listened to Canadians, and that is where we bring up our economic action plan, which has produced 800,000 jobs in this country. It is about decreasing taxes.

We have listened to Canadians, who have said very clearly that they do not want a \$21 billion carbon tax that would hurt seniors, students and small business.

Oral Questions

We are in fact going to look at this bill very carefully and, as always, we will do what is in the best interest of Canada and Canadians.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that Canadians cannot trust Conservatives.

Companies are planning to hire as many as 2,000 temporary foreign workers to work in B.C. coal mines. Conservatives have encouraged more foreign workers by allowing companies to pay them 15% less than Canadian workers. This is from the same government whose junior minister of finance told out-of-work Canadians that they should go and get a job in the mines.

Why will the government not defend Canadian workers?

• (1450)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are doing exactly that. For any company to bring in offshore workers, they must first prove that there are no Canadians available to do the job. We want to make sure that Canadians get first crack at every job in this country.

There are rules in place to make sure the pay is comparable to what Canadians get paid, and those rules are very strictly enforced by the provinces. If a company breaks those rules, there are sanctions that will keep them from being able to bring in foreign workers in the future.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to know that the private information they entrust to government will stay private. That is why our Conservative government takes cyber security so seriously.

In 2010, we unveiled Canada's first cyber security strategy, which is something that the previous Liberal government failed to do.

Can the Minister of Public Safety please update this House on how our Conservative government plans to achieve a more secure, stable and resilient digital infrastructure?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is continuously working to defend against electronic threats, hacking and cyber espionage. That is why I announced significant new funding to further implement Canada's cyber security strategy. To ensure a continued secure reliable service, we have enhanced the security of government networks and systems to protect against malicious cyber threats.

More and more Canadians interact with their government online. We are committed to ensuring that the personal information of Canadians remains private and protected from those who wish to harm us.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always quite something to witness the government's ability to toot its own horn.

The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development has announced major changes to employment insurance that will result in lower salaries, have serious consequences for seasonal workers, and limit access to the program. The Conservatives have made changes without consulting anyone: not the workers or the employers who pay for employment insurance, nor the provinces that will have to fill the gaps with social assistance.

Will the minister finally commit to consulting Canadians instead of making unilateral decisions that are wreaking havoc on employment insurance?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had spoken to employees across the country, she would know that there is a labour shortage across the country.

Also, too many people are unemployed. What we are trying to do, unlike the NDP, is to connect the unemployed with the jobs that are available in their region so that they can have better living conditions for themselves, their family and their community. That is what we are doing.

[English]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for every job vacancy there are five unemployed Canadians. The unemployed do not need to be punished; they need jobs. However, instead of coming up with a job creation strategy, the government came up with punitive reforms that even the parliamentary secretary now admits will force Canadians to move across the country. Workers, employers and the provinces have all said that the proposed changes do not work. However, the minister did not consult any of them.

Will the minister now make things right and listen to Canadians instead of arbitrarily and unilaterally destroying EI?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is making it possible for people to work so they do not need EI. So far, over 800,000 net new jobs have been created in this country. They are high-quality jobs, and 90% of them are full-time. That is much better money than people can earn on EI.

We are helping Canadians who have lost their job, through no fault of their own, get access to other jobs, through significant investments for over a million people, in upgrading their skills for new jobs, by making them aware of jobs in their skill range in their areas.

We are helping Canadians get back to work. The NDP should try doing that for a change themselves.

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem with the Conservatives is that they make arbitrary decisions without consulting anyone.

Nine projects in my riding were supported for months by Canada Economic Development, but then the minister suddenly and arbitrarily changed the parameters, thereby depriving those projects of the necessary funding.

Instead of coming into our communities and posing for photo ops in front of budget propaganda signs, can the minister outline the criteria he uses when selecting projects?

• (1455)

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Canada Economic Development projects are assessed on their merit at regional offices, and I would like to congratulate the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada, who always makes Quebec's regions a priority, unlike the NDP with its plans to introduce a carbon tax, which will be bad for Quebec.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to cut ACOA while keeping a political appointee on salary. The Public Service Commission ruled against Kevin MacAdam's appointment, the appointment of the Minister of National Defence's buddy. Now the Conservatives' only defence is to quote from court documents filed by Mr. MacAdam himself.

If the Conservatives are so confident that the Public Service Commission report backs up their claims, why do they not release the report in full?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the answer is pretty simple. This is not a political issue. The public court records—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade has the floor.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, I am always surprised that they do not want to hear the answer, because the answer is the same every time.

The public court records state that the commissioner found problems with the way that the public service ran its hiring process. However, they did not find any political interference by ministers or political staff. The matter is now before the courts.

Oral Questions

Why is that not good enough for the hon. member?

* * *

FOOD SAFETY

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health finally, but lamely, answered a question on the E. coli outbreak, saying that the Public Health Agency was working with the provinces and the territories.

The National Advisory Committee on SARS stated that the Chief Public Health Officer should serve as the leading national voice for public health, particularly in outbreaks and other health emergencies. Such language is echoed in the Public Health Agency of Canada Act.

Where is the trusted voice of public health, and why is the minister not allowing the Public Health Agency of Canada to speak directly to Canadians about the safety of their food?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have done exactly that. CFIA began working on these issues on September 4. On September 6, the Public Health Agency of Canada became involved. We have had a number of technical briefings over the last two or three weeks. Public Health has been at every one and has taken part.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, E. coli has been in the food chain for over a month, but for question period after question period the Minister of Health sits in her chair playing on her iPad.

I have been asked if the minister has been playing *Angry Birds* and to let her know that Canadians are angrier than *Angry Birds*, because she has refused to tell worried Canadians the facts about this ongoing public—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. It is getting very difficult to hear both the question and the answer. There are a few seconds left for the hon. member for St. Paul's to finish her question.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, will the minister call a televised press conference and allow the Public Health Agency of Canada to speak directly to Canadians?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the member has been for the last three or four weeks. We have been doing exactly that.

There have been televised technical briefings. The media has been invited. We actually tried to put one together for the opposition members, and instead of taking advantage of that, they decided to have a silly emergency debate that went nowhere. We will certainly have another technical briefing, should they decide to do one.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

AVIATION SAFETY

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the 600 security screeners at the Montreal airport overwhelmingly rejected the latest concessions being demanded by their employer, Securitas. Negotiations with Securitas broke down after Conservative cuts of about \$19.4 million. In 2015, cuts will total \$60 million a year. If officers do not have the working conditions they need to do their job properly, passenger safety will be compromised.

Why are the Conservatives jeopardizing passenger safety?

• (1500)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, aviation safety is Transport Canada's top priority. That is why we are trying to properly manage available resources and ensure that they are distributed in the best possible way. The outcome, not the cost, of an activity is how we judge success.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there was another hard blow to the greater Toronto area yesterday when 700 workers lost their jobs at Loblaw's in Brampton. Now that is Conservative corporate tax giveaways working. It means 700 families will have to make ends meet with less, with less EI, in a very expensive city.

With the Ontario Liberals giving up on governing the province altogether, will the Conservatives finally take action and address the Toronto jobs crisis?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the Toronto area has done relatively well, particularly in the auto sector, which has made a remarkable comeback since our government made sure that the sector could survive in Canada. The financial services sector is also very strong in the GTA, and continues to grow and show the kind of strength that Canada has in that sector and internationally.

We will continue on the agenda for jobs, growth and prosperity. I hope the member will support the second budget bill.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government has introduced the faster removal of foreign criminals act, which would remove the endless appeals currently available to dangerous foreign criminals that allow them to delay their deportations. The bill has been praised by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Police Association, and Victims of Violence, among other groups.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration please update this House on the status of this important bill?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to provide an update on the bill itself, but I would like to express my disappointment and inform Canadians that yesterday the Liberal Party shamefully voted against the faster removal of foreign criminals act. They voted against ending the loopholes for criminals who come here to this country and delay their deportation, allowing them more time here in Canada to potentially commit more crimes.

The Liberals do not have to listen just to us on this issue. They can listen to police associations and victims' groups. They are the ones who have told us to move forward on this. I hope the Liberals listen to them.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the human resources minister accused northern Cape Bretoners of being criminals. Crystal MacKinnon is a widow from Bay St. Lawrence, with two small children. She has been working hard for 20 years on her uncle's boat. They are cutting her EI and many others', because they work for a relative. It is right here in these letters.

The minister accuses me of scoring political points. It is my job to fight for the people I represent and I will continue to fight against these attacks on the good people of northern Cape Breton.

Minister, what Atlantic fishing community is next on your hit list?

The Speaker: I will just remind hon. members to address their comments to the Chair and not directly at each other.

The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are definitely cases where family members can work for other family members, but they must do that according to the rules.

The situation that is going on right now, without getting into details, involves 60 people who are directly affected by a multi-year investigation into alleged fraud and deliberate misrepresentations in the use of EI, which may have bilked Canadians out of millions of dollars in EI funds.

This investigation is ongoing. However, if the results are proven to be true, then the appropriate authorities will be contacted and they will take the appropriate actions.

*Oral Questions***STATUS OF WOMEN**

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow on Persons Day, I will be hosting the Women's Forum at the government conference centre. The focus is women's equality in the economy, in society, and in our communities. Over 250 women from across Canada will be joining us, with many others following online.

We all need to work together to achieve gender equality.

Would the minister and the parliamentary secretary care to join us?

• (1505)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's invitation. I am aware of the forum and I am very pleased to see that it is being held. I will see what I can do to get there.

However, I would like to take this opportunity, and I am sure she would join me, to congratulate the recipients of the Governor General's Persons Award who will be receiving them tomorrow. We are very proud of them, and for the first time there are two youth recipient awards this year.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week is small business week, which marks the important contributions that small businesses make to the Canadian economy. These job creators employ the largest number of Canadians, which is why our Conservative government is constantly looking for ways to lower their taxes and help small business grow.

Would the finance minister tell the House how economic action plan 2012 is helping Canadian small businesses get ahead, unlike the NDP and its plans for a job-killing carbon tax?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government recognizes the importance of small business for job creation in Canada. That is why, since 2006, we have lowered their taxes to help them succeed, including reducing the small business tax rate to 11%, which the NDP voted against.

Even worse, the NDP voted against the jobs that are created by the hiring credit for small business. The NDP actually voted against making it easier for small business to hire new workers. The NDP should drop its high-tax agenda—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while his department has to make do with a budget that has been cut by \$200 million, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages is going to spend \$25 million to change what?

He is going to change a winning formula—that of the most popular museum in the country—something that, obviously, nobody wants.

The current Canadian Museum of Civilization already focuses a large portion of its resources on Canadian history, but that is not all it does. That is what people like and that is what makes the museum great.

The government's vision of archives, museums and culture is dangerously obtuse, narrow-minded and outdated. Why make cuts to the archives to change the purpose of such a popular museum?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, such is not the case. Library and Archives Canada will be involved in this process. However, unlike the NDP, we believe that we must celebrate Canada's history. We are proud of our heritage. We will now have an institution, the new Canadian Museum of History, that will do just that.

The executive director of the Canadian Museums Association, John McAvity, said that the renaming of the museum is essential, that it is good news and that it will give Canadians greater access to their heritage and history.

This is what we are going to do: we are going to proudly celebrate Canada's history and heritage.

* * *

AVIATION SAFETY

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives claim to be advocates of security, but they are neglecting basic precautions such as airport security. Blueprints of the Montreal airport terminal, which included specific security elements, such as checkpoints, were found in the garbage. The airport's administration saw no problem with that. I was even told by ADM that there was no security protocol for airport blueprints. It was a very flippant reaction.

What has the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities done to correct this lapse in security at the Montreal airport?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, security is our top priority when it comes to the aerospace industry and air transport. That is why we have invested in our security system. We have managed our security system well, and it is recognized as one of the best in the world. We will work to protect Canadians, and we hope that the opposition will work with us towards that goal.

Points of Order

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. At the onset I would like to invite the Minister of Agriculture to rise in his place and to apologize to the House and to you for his remarks during question period, which were “silly emergency debate”.

As all hon. members know in this place, only you, Mr. Speaker, can grant an emergency debate. All of us in this place can come to you to request it, but it is only you who has the authority to grant that emergency debate to those who would seek it.

I would suggest that the hon. Minister of Agriculture has not only impugned the House by suggesting that emergency debates are silly, but indeed has impugned you as the Speaker. I find that absolutely reprehensible and would hope that he would apologize not only to the House but to you and as well.

● (1510)

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, absolutely, I unequivocally apologize if I have impugned your motives in bringing forward an emergency debate.

In reviewing the blues, what I do have some concern with is some of the silliness that was brought by the opposition to that debate.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. Minister of Agriculture for that clarification.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have a document that I would like to table.

The member for Hamilton Mountain made a comment today that actually misrepresents me and I would like to clear the record based on submitting this article.

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have unanimous consent to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 13

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC) moved that a Ways and Means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be concurred in.

The Speaker: It being 3:10, pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, October 16 the House will not proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 13 under ways and means proceedings.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I ask that we proceed with the vote immediately.

● (1515)

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

*(Division No. 477)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Dykstra	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	Ohrai
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Raïtt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaties entitled “Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes Between States and Nationals of Other States”, done at Washington on March 18, 1965, and “Protocol Amending the Agreement Between Canada and the United States of America on Great Lakes Water Quality, 1978”, as amended on October 16, 1983, and on November 18, 1987, done at Washington on September 7, 2012.

An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

* * *

● (1520)

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 governments response to 21 petitions.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the eight days since the despicable Taliban beasts attempted to take Malala Yousufzai's life, the world has come together. Shock has turned the hurt and anger into action to honour the bravery of a young woman with tremendous courage.

Her inspiration is seen both in the peaceful protests on Pakistan streets and in the quiet vigil outside of her British hospital. As we hope and pray for her speedy recovery, let us reflect on what she has taught us. Whatever sacrifices we have had to make to uphold dignity, respect and humanity, each one of us can and must refuse to bow before evil. It is the collective duty of our shared humanity.

While few of us in Canada will ever know what it means to be targeted for simply wanting to go to school, to have our basic rights repressed or to have our communities hijacked by terrorism, this, sadly, is a real and present danger in Pakistan.

In a country where women leaders have been assassinated, where repression is condoned by power elements of an increasingly unchecked military, where some in the ruling class broker power with terrorists instead of standing for everyday people, the real victims of terrorism, we now see an irreducible call for dignity.

Tens of thousands of Pakistani men, women and children have turned out to publicly support Malala's cause. Like Malala, they are fearless in standing up to evil and setting an example for the rest of the world.

It took the courage of one brave child to unleash the will of the once silent majority. As she fights to recover, she lives as a reminder that the courage of life is a magnificent mixture of triumph and tragedy.

Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Warawa
Watson

Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 152

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Ashton
Aubin
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Boulerice
Brahmi
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Cotler
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Fry
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hughes
Jacob
Kellway
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Papillon
Péclet
Plamondon
Rae
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Sullivan
Tremblay
Turmel

Andrews
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boutin-Sweet
Brousseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Coderre
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau
Eyking
Freeman
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu
Hyer
Julian
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nash
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Quach
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stoffer
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote— 126

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Routine Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Malala is fighting for freedom, despite the consequences she suffers, and despite real threats to her life. She gives us hope and inspires us.

[*English*]

On behalf of the Government of Canada and on behalf of all Canadians, we wish her a speedy recovery and hope that her sacrifice will lead to genuine change for which she has fought so hard.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I thank the minister for his statement in support of Malala Yousufzai.

Today, our thoughts are with Malala. We support her and pray for her recovery. We salute her courage. We stand in solidarity with millions of people around the world who, like Malala, are struggling for equality.

Sixty-four years ago, the world community signed onto the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Sixty-four years ago, we reaffirmed our faith in fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights between women and men.

However, 64 years later, women are still not equal. Their bodies are strewn on the front lines of conflicts. A young woman's call for equal access to education is answered by bullets of hate.

It is obvious today that we, as a global community, have failed to promote and protect the fundamental rights which 64 years ago we declared to be universal. However, the violence of the extremists will not deter us.

Look how Malala's determination is echoed by millions in Pakistan and around the world. The forces of hate that shot a young woman in the head will not and must not be the ones that we listen to.

We must listen to her voice. Malala has a dream of equality, access to education and opportunity and a world where everyone's human dignity is recognized.

As Gloria Steinem once said, "Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities". Without those opportunities, we lose these things.

The extremists and reactionaries do not want a young woman to know the excitement of possibilities, but the excitement of possibilities is universal. We must strive for equality at home and abroad. In this struggle, Malala is not alone. We cannot let her be alone. We must not turn our backs now.

The minister spoke about Malala as a source of inspiration. Let this ministerial statement today mark the moment that Canada's Parliament stood united for women's empowerment. Let it be the start of a real and tangible contribution to realizing the dreams of millions for true equality and true human dignity.

• (1525)

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I begin by associating myself with the words of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the member for Ottawa Centre. Like all members of this place, I too was shocked and saddened to hear of the brutal attempt on the

life of Malala Yousufzai, the brave young Pakistani woman whose advocacy for access to education, for equality and for human dignity, as my predecessor said, inspires us all.

While deeply saddened, I should perhaps not be shocked. It was not long ago that I rose in this place in remembrance of Shahbaz Bhatti. Pakistan's minority affairs minister was tragically assassinated shortly after his visit to Canada where he met with our international human rights subcommittee. He told us then that he was under standing threats from extremists for his efforts. He was under a fatwa for seeking to protect minority rights and for seeking to repeal the blasphemy laws, which have been used to suppress the Christian minorities and where the mere accusation itself can incite hatred and even death.

In that regard, the House stood together as one to seek the release of Asia Bibi, the Pakistani woman jailed on such false allegations simply for giving someone water.

[*Translation*]

How tragic it is to see that we still live in a world where terrorists like the Taliban would target a young 15-year-old girl as she is going home from school, just because she believes in her most basic rights and stands up for them.

[*English*]

The Liberal Party joins with all others in this place in praying for Malala's recovery. We trust that the perpetrators of this horrific deed will be brought to justice with all deliberate speed. We condemn in the strongest terms possible the campaign now being waged against her in cyberspace and elsewhere by the Taliban, which seeks to paint this brave young teen, lying in a hospital bed in the U.K., as a spy, as a symbol of the West, as an enemy of Islam and worse.

Malala's vision and values, her courage and commitment, remind us all of that which needs to be done, not only in the struggle against terror and religious extremism, not only against those who would cruelly hijack religion in the name of religion, but also to ensure the equality, the dignity and the free exercise of belief for women in all spheres of life, and particularly in the realm of access to education.

This courageous young woman has become the rallying cry of a nation, the message and metaphor for the struggle for freedom in the most profound sense of the word. Her cause has mobilized her fellow citizens, who are now bravely standing up against the Taliban in common cause, putting their lives on the line in the hopes of a better tomorrow for their children. I share their hope that Pakistan can purge itself of religious extremists, of those who seek to subjugate women, of those who would engage in perhaps the most cowardly and despicable act of all, of attempting to assassinate a child, and are still seeking, as we meet, to assassinate a child.

I have had occasion to meet and work with inspiring women leaders from around the world, such as Massouda Jalal of Afghanistan and Pakistan's Asma Jahangir. I am convinced that countries will only succeed when women's voices are heard, when their fundamental rights are affirmed, when their dignity is respected and when their lives are secure.

Routine Proceedings

May we here in Canada add our voices to those in Pakistan, in the region and around the world, praying for peace, praying for justice and recognizing that indeed we are all Malala.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, since this is, in my view, a non-partisan situation, I would like to seek my colleagues' unanimous consent to present the Bloc's point of view on this unacceptable situation.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Ahuntsic have the unanimous consent of the House to respond to the minister's statement?

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: Agreed. The hon. member for Ahuntsic has the floor.

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to sincerely thank all my colleagues for giving us an opportunity to speak about this unacceptable situation.

When a girl, no matter where she lives, is attacked in what is the most precious part of her development, that is, education, the right to life or the right to live in peace, it is a direct attack on us as individuals. These children living in Pakistan, Afghanistan or elsewhere in the world where flagrant attacks are made on women's rights are also our children. This is how we have to look at them.

It is with a great deal of emotion that I am speaking today. When I see this young girl, who started fighting for the rights of women at such a young age, I am very hopeful. I have hope and a belief in a better world.

Some children are brave enough to fight in countries where the right of expression is a matter of life and death. They can be killed by any means at any time. They can be kidnapped. They can see their brothers, their sisters or their parents die because they dared to speak out for what they value most: the right to education, life, respect and human dignity. I tell myself there is still hope in this world, because there are still children who fight for their rights.

For justice to be served, we who are so far from Afghanistan, Pakistan and those other countries have to stand up and offer our solidarity to the children and the women who fight. It is of the utmost importance that we denounce these situations unanimously and courageously. We must talk about girls' education.

I would also like to address another aspect, another terrible scourge that women face, and that is violence against women. Whether we are talking about excision, trafficking in women and children throughout the world, the case of little Malala Yousafzai or the status of all girls, it is important that here in the House, regardless of the political party to which we belong, we send a message to the whole world that in Canada and in Quebec, violence against women is unacceptable and gender equality is a fundamental right.

I would like to thank all my colleagues for allowing me to speak today. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I can assure them that we will defend the rights of women and children, whether in Canada, in Quebec or anywhere else in the world.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands have a similar point of order?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take the floor to express the feelings of the Green Party about the current situation.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Does the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands have the unanimous consent of the House to respond to the ministerial statement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues on all sides of the House for the opportunity to speak as leader of the Green Party of Canada in the tragic situation of the shooting of Malala Yousafzai.

The fact that she was targeted, and we all feel this so keenly, I wish, as my friend from Mount Royal said, to associate myself with the comments of the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, the member for Ottawa South, my esteemed colleague from Mount Royal and my friend from the Bloc.

We stand in a non-partisan sense as Canadians whose values embrace the absolute right of young women to be the equivalent, the equals, of any man in their society. To have the right of education is something so fundamental that all of us are shocked to our core by what has happened to Malala.

It seems that in Pakistan the events have turned the tide against the Taliban, because people across various parts of that society recognize the evil in targeting a 14-year-old girl who wants nothing more than to be able to read, to write, to pursue her education and to pursue a life as a full-fledged member of that society.

Since there are very few words to add, I wonder if I could have the permission of my friends on all sides of the House to not think of Malala as a symbol but Malala as a 14-year-old girl who is lying in a hospital bed and, if we could, rise for a moment in contemplation and, if it moves us, in prayer, collectively as a House, to urge Malala's well-being and to pray for her health.

• (1535)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I understand that the hon. member wishes members to stand and observe a moment of silence. Is this agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

*Routine Proceedings***INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS**

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation in the following two meetings: the first is the 52nd annual meeting and regional policy forum of the Council of State Governments' Eastern Regional Conference, which was held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on July 20 to 23, 2012; second is the 67th annual meeting of the Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference, which was held in Cleveland, Ohio, July 15 to 18, 2012.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Health in relation to Bill S-206, An Act respecting World Autism Awareness Day. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

* * *

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-453, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (preventing and prosecuting fraudulent voice messages during election periods).

He said: Mr. Speaker, as MP for Toronto—Danforth and as the official opposition's democratic reform critic, I rise to introduce this private member's bill entitled, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act (preventing and prosecuting fraudulent voice messages during election periods). Seconding the bill is my hon. colleague the member for Winnipeg Centre. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to him and his staff for all of the work that they have done, which has been crucial in developing the bill.

On March 12, the House of Commons voted unanimously to adopt a New Democratic motion that called on the government to bring forward legislation within six months to amend the Elections Act in the way that the bill seeks to do. It is now well over six months and the Conservatives have not yet acted on the motion. Accordingly, the bill steps into the breach at least for the moment. It now proposes amendments to the Canada Elections Act to make it an offence, subject to severe fines, to knowingly transmit false information through voice messages. In addition, it creates certain obligations to report to Elections Canada in a mandatory framework.

The NDP has taken the initiative by doing the groundwork. No doubt the bill could be improved, perhaps greatly improved, through collaboration with all parties in the House. I look forward to such collaboration.

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

● (1540)

ALL BUFFLEHEADS DAY ACT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP), seconded by the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, moved for leave to introduce Bill C-454, An Act respecting an All Buffleheads Day.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it appears I am lightening the mood in this corner already with the news that I am presenting a private member's bill for October 15 to be declared a national All Buffleheads Day. I bring the good news that the most punctual duck in Canada is now back. The Buffleheads travel to far-flung places, but on the 298th day of the solar cycle, like clockwork, our smallest diving duck returns. This duck puts the swallows of Capistrano to shame and is a better weather predictor than the groundhog.

This is a wonderful duck to celebrate. All Buffleheads Day will be put forward to all members to decide whether we should mark it every year on October 15. We can come together for many things. The little Bufflehead duck is found across Canada and it is worth celebrating.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

CHILD AND YOUTH NUTRITION

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from citizens of my riding who are asking the federal government to provide national leadership in support of child and youth nutrition programs through the Departments of Health and Agriculture to recognize child and youth nutrition programs as a key health promotion strategy to reduce obesity and diabetes and to ensure Canadian children have access to healthy food as they need to thrive for their futures.

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition signed by hundreds of people, most of whom are from my riding, Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, strongly condemning the government's drastic cuts to Canada's international aid budget.

Canada ranks among the stingiest donor countries for international aid and is now ruthlessly slashing partnerships with NGOs despite their proven track record with regards to efficiency and quality of results in the fields of development and peace.

This International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, I present this petition calling on the government to set clear policy objectives regarding official development assistance and to meet these objectives once and for all.

ACCESS TO MEDICINES

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to present two petitions.

The first comes to us from a group in the Sackville area, which is in my riding, Tantramar.

[English]

It is a group of grandmothers and others who are petitioning this House with respect to the access to medicines regime and the private member's bill that was introduced, Bill C-398.

The petitioners are calling on the House to support this legislation, and it is certainly something I intend to do at the appropriate moment.

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition comes mostly from the people of Bouctouche, in my riding. These farmers, producers and others are worried about the government's bad move to close down the Hervé J. Michaud Experimental Farm in the Bouctouche area. This is a tremendously important facility for the agricultural industry; the petitioners all hail from the greater Bouctouche area. It is with pleasure that I present these petitions to the House.

• (1545)

[English]

KATIMAVIK

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present names from people in my communities asking that the government continue to allocate \$14 million per year in funding for Katimavik.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present a petition to the House today calling upon the Government of Canada to recognize the importance of the Experimental Lakes Area, the ELA, to the Government of Canada's mandate to study, preserve and protect aquatic ecosystems, to reverse the decision to close the ELA research station and to continue to staff and provide financial resources to the ELA at the current or higher level of commitment.

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I present to the House a petition of 650 signatures.

The citizens of Vancouver and the province of British Columbia draw the attention of the House that the large area served by the Kitsilano Coast Guard base covers the marine area stretching from the tip of the University of British Columbia north and east, including English Bay, False Creek, Burrard Inlet and to its extremities up to Indian Arm; that the Kitsilano base serves the largest and busiest port in Canada, the Port of Vancouver; that the Kitsilano base serves a large number of pleasure craft, canoes, kayaks, working vessels, tugs, fishing fleets, lumber barges, tourist vessels and cruise ships, as well as cargo ships; that the Kitsilano base performs an average of 300 rescues a year; and that the base at Sea Island will increase the response by 30 minutes to an hour which will put lives at great risk.

Routine Proceedings

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to rescind the closure of Kitsilano base.

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from many constituents in Toronto who are asking the federal government to make side guards on heavy trucks mandatory. They note that this recommendation has come from two chief coroner's reports in Ontario. The chief coroner has noted that pedestrians and cyclists are dragged under the back wheels of a truck and if there is a side guard then these senseless tragedies could be prevented. These kinds of side guards have been in place in Europe and have been shown to reduce fatalities of both cyclists and pedestrians.

THE ENVIRONMENT

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

The first petition is from residents in the New Westminster-Burnaby area and Vancouver, British Columbia, calling on the House to take action to institute a complete ban on supertankers along the British Columbia coastline and to ensure that it is permanent and legislated.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition relates to support for a private member's bill that I put forward, Bill C-442, that calls for a national Lyme disease strategy. The petitioners are from Mississauga, Fergus and other areas of Ontario.

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present three petitions.

The first petition is from thousands of Canadians who are petitioning the House to save the Kitsilano Coast Guard station, one of the busiest search and rescue stations in Canada. The highly-trained crews at the Canadian Coast Guard station in Kitsilano conduct an average of 300 professional rescues each year, saving hundreds of lives. In addition, these crews prevent many more emergencies through such actions as boater education, pollution response and aid to navigation, maintenance and escorting large ships through congested port waters.

The petitioners say that the government's decision to close the Kitsilano Coast Guard station is a grave mistake and will, undoubtedly, cost the lives of those in peril on the shores and waters near Vancouver harbour. They, therefore, call on the Government of Canada to rescind this decision and reinstate full funding to the Kitsilano Coast Guard station.

Government Orders

● (1550)

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from Canadians calling on the government to save the Experimental Lakes Area. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to recognize the importance of the ELA to the Government of Canada's mandate to study, preserve and protect aquatic ecosystems, to reverse the decision to close the ELA research station and to continue to staff and provide financial resources to the ELA at the current or higher level of commitment.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition contains dozens of signatures asking the House to consider the bill by the member for Trinity—Spadina.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to enact a Canada public transit strategy that seeks to provide permanent investment to plan for public transit, to establish federal funding mechanisms for public transit, to work together with all levels of government to provide sustainable, predictable, long-term and adequate funding and establish accountability measures to ensure that all governments work together to increase access to public transit.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with two petitions.

The first is a petition from the residents of Thunder Bay and Neebing in northwestern Ontario, as well as people from across Canada who are among the tens of thousands concerned about the closing of the Experimental Lakes Area. They are concerned that in the omnibus 2012 budget the government made a decision to close the ELA, one of the world's leading freshwater research stations, depriving Canadians of the groundbreaking scientific advancements it provided and economic benefit to northwestern Ontario.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition that I am presenting today is on behalf of the residents of Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Stoney Creek and Mobert in support of bringing back passenger rail service to the spectacular north shore of Lake Superior.

The petitioners are asking parliamentarians to support my Motion No. 291 to return passenger rail from Sudbury through White River, Thunder Bay and on to Winnipeg and beyond.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by many residents of Manitoba and my riding of Winnipeg Centre, some of whom work at the ELA through the Freshwater Institute. They call upon the Government of Canada to reconsider the cancelling of the funding for the ELA, to recognize the importance of the ELA to the Government of Canada's mandate to study, preserve and protect Canada's aquatic ecosystems, reverse the decision to close the ELA research station and to continue to staff and provide financial services to the ELA at the current or higher level of commitment.

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition that I have introduced many times before. It calls upon the House of Commons to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known.

The petitioners point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial or occupational causes combined and they call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all of its forms.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement and the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will today be extended by 22 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

COMBATING TERRORISM ACT

The House resumed from October 15 consideration of the motion that Bill S-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Security of Information Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When this issue was last before the House, the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue had 11 minutes left.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Government Orders

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before running out of time on Monday, I was speaking about the witnesses who oppose this bill because they believe it is pointless and violates various civil liberties and human rights. They appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in 2011, when it was studying Bill C-17, the previous version of Bill S-7, in another Parliament.

This is what Denis Barrette of the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group said:

The coalition believes that the provisions dealing with investigative hearings and preventive arrests, which are intended to impose recognizances with conditions, are both dangerous and misleading. Debate in Parliament on these issues must draw on a rational and enlightened review of the anti-terrorism law.

The first provision makes it possible to bring individuals before a judge in order to provide information, when the judge is of the view that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the individual has information about a terrorism offence that has or will be committed. A refusal to cooperate may result in arrest and imprisonment for up to one year. Furthermore, the provision dealing with investigating hearings gives the state a new power of search. Not enough is being said about this. The fact is that this provision can compel an individual to produce an object before a judge or tribunal, which will then pass it on to the police.

Furthermore, the current provisions encourage racial profiling and profiling on religious, political and ideological grounds. In its report on Canada in November of 2005, the U.N. Human Rights Committee noted its serious concerns with respect to the excessively broad definition of terrorist activity in the Anti-terrorism Act. The committee stated...“The State party should adopt a more precise definition of terrorist offences, so as to ensure that individuals will not be targeted on political, religious or ideological grounds, in connection with measures of prevention, investigation and detention.”

This shows that alarms were already going off about a number of problems in Bill C-17 with respect to civil liberties and how such a bill could be used. These problems remain in Bill S-7. This bill clearly has a problem balancing security and fundamental rights. What worries me is that I see no valid reason for these provisions.

These provisions have been expired for five years, so how can they all of a sudden have become so important and necessary, when they never proved to be useful when they existed? None of the witnesses was able to think of a case that would require this kind of law. None of the witnesses said that these provisions were necessary. On the contrary, witnesses clearly told the Senate committee that there were major problems with respect to human and children's rights.

I would like to talk about what Ihsaan Gardee of the Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations had to say:

We are mindful of the increased emphasis on public safety and national security in response to the threat of terrorism during the last decade... We are also cognizant of the real risks to our free and democratic society posed by overreaction and fear when they are used as the basis of public policy and legislation. At the end of the day we risk eroding the foundational values upon which Canada rests, while not making us any safer from terrorism...

We strongly disagree with those who would suggest that attaining a balance between human rights and security is an insurmountable task. In addition to sharing many of the concerns others have raised regarding the proposed legislation, Canadian Muslims have particular misgivings regarding how...Bill C-17 [could] have a disproportionate impact on members of our communities that may be considered discriminatory.

[...]

With regard to the impact on individual freedom and liberty, after 9/11 every major criminal terrorism-related incident, from the Toronto 18 to the case of Momin Khawaja, has been disrupted and prevented without the need for preventive detention or investigative hearings.

•(1555)

I repeat: here is another witness who is saying that the measures set out in this bill are not useful and could even carry risks.

Let us go back to the statement made by James Kafieh. He said:

We also need to bear in mind that not everyone who chooses to remain silent in such circumstances is guilty, and that choosing to remain silent is not an admission of guilt or a proof of guilt. People may, for example, have legitimate concerns for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Such an extraordinary measure as investigative hearings should only be used for the purpose of preventing an imminent act of terrorism. It should never be used as an investigative tool for past acts. The present text of [the bill]...allows for investigative hearings for past events, for which the imperative of safeguarding of innocent life from imminent attack is wholly absent. This is, in itself, an escalation.... Such an escalation shows that we are already witnessing creep in the use of such provisions before the court.

He also said:

This [bill] allows for the arrest and detention of people without ever proving any allegation against them. It could also make people subject to conditions on release with severe limitations on their personal freedom, even if they have never been convicted of any crime. Anyone refusing to accept and comply with the terms of the recognizance may be imprisoned for up to 12 months. The legislation does not limit the number of times this provision may be reapplied.

How is this consistent with our Canadian values and the principles upon which our system of justice is founded? ...The most recent cases of five men who were detained for up to eight years without ever being charged or convicted of a crime should give us all cause for concern.

That is food for thought for our discussions on this type of bill. When it comes to combatting terrorism, we cannot just simply add slightly tougher provisions to the Criminal Code without understanding why. The fact that Canada is already a signatory to a number of international conventions that address this makes these measures unnecessary.

In 2001, when these provisions were being discussed, the aim of the Anti-terrorism Act was to update Canadian laws to meet international standards, particularly UN requirements. All the provisions of the Anti-terrorism Act, except for that concerning investigative hearings and recognizance with conditions, remain in effect today, which is what we are discussing today and what is being presented in Bill S-7.

To be perfectly clear, all the provisions of the original Anti-terrorism Act have remained in effect except for the two that expired in 2007, which were never used and which parliamentarians felt did not need to be renewed because they did not prove necessary.

Now, we are dealing with a Conservative government that says that the NDP is against making the country safer when it comes to combatting terrorism. In truth, this bill does not add anything substantive in terms of security. What is more, this bill will undermine fundamental human rights and freedoms. In my humble opinion, this represents a real risk. Canada already has a legal arsenal to combat terrorism, including international treaties, a complete section of the Criminal Code that deals with this, and a whole host of laws.

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Furthermore, another provision in this bill would amend the definition of “special operational information” in the Security of Information Act. Under this change, the identity of a confidential source that is being used by the government would be considered to be special operational information. This would reduce the transparency of information.

• (1600)

Considering this government's track record when it comes to transparency, reducing it any further on such a delicate subject would really worry me.

In short, I oppose this bill because we already have very effective measures in place. This measure would be ineffective and pointless in the fight against terrorism.

This bill violates civil liberties and human rights and, once again, does so unnecessarily. In particular, it violates the right to remain silent and the right to not be jailed without a fair trial, two rights that are absolutely fundamental in Canadian society.

The provisions we are debating here today were invoked only once, and unsuccessfully. This perfectly illustrates the fact that we already have all the tools we need to combat terrorism. Thus, there is no reason to pass legislation that threatens our civil liberties.

• (1605)

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, and I would like to ask her a question.

I recognize that Bill S-7 creates an imbalance between security and fundamental rights.

She said that we have the Criminal Code and international treaties and that therefore unreasonable legislative measures like the ones put forward in Bill S-7 were not the most appropriate way to maintain a balance.

What other methods could she see being used in this bill, whether in terms of the police or intelligence services?

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, at this point, the Criminal Code and the various pieces of Canadian legislation already adequately address our anti-terrorism requirements.

There is no need for the provisions set out in Bill S-7, because I think at this point our police have the means to act.

Last Monday, I said we would have to think about it. Are we ready to sell our souls to the devil? Are we ready to accept provisions that run counter to our fundamental rights to ensure, in theory, greater security even though we are really not any safer? The question must be asked.

With this bill, we are going too far. We cannot sacrifice our rights to justify security needs that are in fact useless.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for her presentation.

The points she raised are essential to this debate, primarily with regard to international law and human rights. Having taken part in a number of international debates for more than 25 years, I would

appreciate it if she would elaborate on this issue in light of human rights and if she would tell us how the bill is going to affect these concerns.

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, according to one of these provisions, it would be possible to keep somebody in detention without a trial. In my view, this makes absolutely no sense. It is a basic principle of the justice system in any great democracy in the world: you cannot detain a person without a trial, without giving him an opportunity to defend himself and without his even knowing why he is there.

It seems to me that this is one of the major flaws in this bill, and this is why I am not recommending that people support it.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to congratulate my New Democratic colleague for her excellent, well-documented and substantial comments about concerns that, in my view, are fair and legitimate.

I would like to ask her a question about the overall direction being taken by the Conservative government and about what is revealed in this bill. It amounts to one more bill that restricts civil liberty, and that aims at oppression and repression. Some repression is of course needed, but caution is in order. Our police officers should have the resources they need, but are we dealing with a government that wants to interfere in the private lives of Canadians? What is more, where are we on bill C-20? I do not know where it stands. It is as if it has disappeared. It raised legitimate concerns.

And yet the government is systematically moving towards limits on fundamental freedoms and respect for human rights.

I would like my colleague to tell us whether she believes we are witnessing some form of neo-conservative bifurcation by the government on the other side of the House.

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, when I began to speak on Monday, I explained that the provisions of the Anti-terrorism Act had been introduced following the events of September 11, 2001. The fear and panic in response to an obviously terrifying event at the time were understandable.

However, the Conservatives tend to continually try to use this fear to make people believe that there are dangers when there are not. The current Criminal Code has all the provisions required to combat terrorism appropriately. This fear is being used to get people to accept measures that are inconsistent with the fundamental rights of all Canadians, and that is truly dangerous.

• (1610)

[English]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my friend's comments about the bill. One of the things I note is that the added powers given to the police have never been used or have been used very rarely, but this does cost a lot of money.

I might be wrong, but I think that far more people have been harmed by tainted meat in this country than by threats of terrorism because this act was not in place from 2007 until today.

We are spending our money unwisely, I believe, by not spending it on protecting Canadians from tainted meat but on imagined terrorism instead, or on eliminating personal liberties in the guise of protection against terrorism.

Would the member like to comment?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, that is indeed the case. As my colleague mentioned, this bill is useless. None of the measures have thus far been of any use. None of the measures that expired in 2007 were ever used.

We know that these measures were not used, and yet we are spending time in the House talking about it, when people were contaminated by E. coli bacteria and their health was at risk. I would imagine that might appear somewhat strange.

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to explain that the government is making increasing use of the Senate to introduce bills in the House of Commons, when they should normally be introduced by elected representatives of the people.

It strikes me that this bill should have come from the Department of Justice, but curiously, the government chose to use the Senate.

What does she think about this way of using the Senate to introduce bills?

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, I find it exceedingly odd that the Senate was used. This bill should have come from the government, from the House of Commons.

Besides which, Bill S-11, Safe Food for Canadians Act, is on the way. I happen to think that we have discussed food safety enough. Here again, the bill comes from the Senate.

I find it altogether incomprehensible that these bills are not coming from the government. I do not know what planet the Conservatives are living on, but it strikes me that it should have come from the House of Commons.

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour for me to debate the bill known as the Combating Terrorism Act with my colleagues.

The main objectives of this bill are: to amend the Criminal Code in order to provide for investigative hearings and preventive arrests; to amend the Canada Evidence Act to allow judges to order the public disclosure of potentially sensitive information about a trial or an accused once the appeal period has expired; to amend the Criminal Code to create new offences of leaving or attempting to leave Canada to commit a terrorist act; and to amend the Security of Information Act to increase the maximum penalty for harbouring a person who has committed or is likely to commit an offence.

More than 10 years have now passed since the tragic attacks of September 11, 2001. These events turned the whole world upside down. As a result, international co-operation has been strengthened in order for the global community to better protect itself against terrorist acts.

A number of western countries implemented policies and laws to protect themselves against terrorism. Canada was no exception. In

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the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, the government hastily passed Bill C-36, which was followed by Bills S-3, C-19 and C-17 in later years. The Conservatives introduced all bills after Bill C-36.

The attacks had a much more insidious effect: everyone felt threatened by terrorists, who were hiding everywhere, and it was necessary to sacrifice freedoms for security. All of a sudden, people felt far less safe and a climate of fear began to take hold.

Since coming to power, the Conservatives have spent a great deal of time creating an atmosphere of fear, suspicion and insecurity with respect to national security. They have led Canadians to believe that there is an ever-present danger to our major urban centres. In my opinion, the political objective of the government's approach to safety is to obtain increased police powers for the state from the Canadian people.

When a tragedy such as a terrorist attack occurs, it is easy for a government to fall into the trap of acting quickly and forcefully. It is understandable since, after all, the government is responsible for the safety of its citizens.

I would like to quote the former justice critic and current member of Parliament for Windsor—Tecumseh, who clearly described the government's willingness to act when catastrophic events occur. He said:

When facing a crisis, we as political leaders feel that we have to do something even when all the evidence shows that the structures we have, the strength of our society, the strength of our laws, are enough to deal with it. We passed legislation in early 2002 to deal with terrorism when we panicked. We have learned in the last eight years that there was no need for that legislation.

The bills that the Conservatives introduce and the speeches that they give leave me feeling completely baffled. They are asking us to give them the tools they need to protect us. In exchange for their protection, they are asking us to give up a few of our civil liberties. It is not true that freedom and security are mutually exclusive. It is possible to strike a fair balance between freedom and security by making thoughtful decisions that take these two variables into account.

The Conservatives do not believe that. I will explain why. The Conservatives' idea to adopt such a policy emanates from somewhere and that is from beliefs that are deeply rooted in their right-wing ideology. According to political studies, there are often many types of beliefs. This includes fundamental beliefs, which are often associated with basic rights. One's personal safety is, in my opinion, one of these fundamental beliefs. Anyone under the influence of fear will act to protect him or herself. In fact, in our laws, we recognize the legitimacy of the right to defend ourselves.

The Conservatives are dealing in fear. They want to put Canadians on the defensive so that they will then give the government more power in exchange for certain civil liberties.

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•(1615)

The official opposition's role is to make sure that the government does not use worst-case scenarios to mislead the public and give itself extraordinary powers. Furthermore, the Conservatives have been implying that if opposition members do not agree with their very restrictive policies, it means that we do not care about public safety and that we cannot be trusted when it comes to national security. I think that the Minister of Public Safety has insinuated that many times.

To my Conservative colleagues I will say that I have worked to make Canadians safe. I also used to be the deputy critic for public safety and I care very much about the safety of all Canadians. Our party would take the necessary and appropriate measures to effectively protect Canadians. Unlike the members opposite, we care about the most fundamental human rights and freedoms, and these must be taken into account when introducing bills or policies that could threaten certain rights and freedoms. We do not take this kind of thing lightly.

The key thing is to never contradict the Conservatives. They firmly believe that an attack is imminent and that police forces need more tools from legislators to be able to combat terrorism. They will reject all facts and arguments that do not corroborate this belief. They focus only on those that support what they believe. How many times has the government refused to listen to scientists and experts, whether on environmental or social policy matters? If something does not support their position and ideology, they reject it outright, regardless of the facts, and the fight against terrorism is obviously no exception.

It worries me a lot to see that the government completely ignores experts in various fields. Public policy is no longer based on common sense. Good public policies are based on facts and on expert and stakeholder opinions. That is how it should work. That is what it means to govern in partnership, a concept that the Conservatives do not seem to care much about.

In my opinion, the worst is that the government is playing right into the hands of terrorist groups by restricting Canadians' civil rights. Terrorist groups attempt by their actions to cause greater collateral damage than the attack itself. So they try to draw media attention to the savage nature of their terrorist attack in order to spread a climate of fear among all nations. That is where the government may be tempted to limit its citizens' liberties. When that happens, the terrorists have achieved part of their objective. From that point on, all security-related political actions are influenced by terrorism and the fear that it caused.

How does that relate to Bill S-7? The purpose of this bill is to grant the government extraordinary powers with respect to terrorism. Those powers are not justified by the threat level or by Canadian society's values respecting civil rights and freedoms, particularly since the Criminal Code contains a series of sections on terrorism and security.

As I mentioned, Bill S-7 is the most recent in a series of anti-terrorism legislative measures introduced since Bill C-36 was tabled in 2001. In this bill, the provisions respecting preventive arrests and recognizance with conditions, two provisions included in the bill,

were subject to a sunset clause that expired in February 2007. And there was a reason why that type of provision was inserted. It was that the House had serious concerns, including the possibility that those provisions might be abused.

When the House revised the Anti-terrorism Act, we saw that there had been no investigative hearings or situations requiring recognizance with conditions. The Conservatives wanted to renew the bill in 2007, but they needed the consent of the House, which they fortunately did not obtain. The House decided not to renew those provisions. In fact, only one investigative hearing has been held since 2007, in the context of the Air India attack, and that produced no conclusive results.

•(1620)

And now the government is back with its phoney majority to pass a bill that the House previously rejected because it ran counter to Canadian values. It has also not bothered to include all the recommendations of the Subcommittee on the Review of the Anti-terrorism Act. It selected only what suited it.

What is the rush? Why are these measures suddenly necessary? They expired nearly six years ago, and the act has never been used for this purpose. Naturally, the Conservatives' response to these questions is that just because these measures have not previously been used does not mean they are unnecessary. They will use the ticking time bomb argument and offer all kinds of Jack Bauer-style scenarios.

I will briefly describe those two measures to put this bill in context and sum up what is stated in section 83.28 of the Criminal Code concerning investigative hearings.

A peace officer may, with the prior consent of the attorney general, apply to a provincial judge for an order that any individual who might have information concerning a terrorist act appear before a judge. If the order is made, the person must attend for an examination, answer all questions and bring with him anything he has in his possession relating to the order. Investigative hearings are used to obtain information, not to prosecute individuals. Accordingly, the answers given at one of these hearings may not be used against an individual in criminal proceedings, except in the case of prosecutions for perjury or the giving of contradictory evidence.

Section 83.3 of the Criminal Code deals with preventive arrest under the heading "Recognizance with Conditions". That section is formulated to include preventive detention. A peace officer may arrest a person without warrant if he believes it is necessary in order to prevent a terrorist attack. The individual who is detained must then be taken before a provincial judge within 24 hours after being detained or as soon as possible, to show cause for the detention. The peace officer must then apply to a provincial judge, with the prior consent of the attorney general, to order that the person appear before a judge to determine whether it is necessary that the person be required to comply with certain specific conditions.

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If a judge finds that the person must enter into a recognizance, the person will have to undertake to keep the peace and abide by other conditions, such as giving up control of his firearms for a period of up to 12 months. If the person refuses, he may be committed to prison for a term not exceeding 12 months.

As parliamentarians, the question we have to debate this afternoon is whether the provisions set out in Bill S-7 are necessary and appropriate to protect the safety of Canadians. During the first hour of debate, my colleague from Toronto—Danforth asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice whether there had been any testimony at the Senate hearings in support of reinstating the provisions set out in this bill. In her answer, the parliamentary secretary did not refer to any such testimony.

The reality is that in police investigations since 2007, terrorist conspiracies have been dismantled without having to use any of the provisions set out in Bill S-7, nor did those investigations call for any extraordinary powers to be granted. Whether in the case of Khawaja, the “Toronto 18” or, more recently, the four people in the Toronto region, none of the provisions of Bill S-7 have been necessary.

I think this is conclusive proof that our police forces have the tools they need to protect the Canadian public. We have to continue to support our public safety officers so they are able to keep doing the good job they have done to date.

We will be opposing this bill because it is a completely ineffective way to combat terrorism and because it infringes our most fundamental rights and freedoms. This bill demonstrates the Conservatives’ total failure to grasp the connection between security and liberty.

•(1625)

The way the provisions of the bill are written could have serious consequences for law-abiding people. Bill S-7 would make individuals who have never been charged with a terrorist act liable to imprisonment for as long as 12 months, or make them subject to strict conditions of release.

The provisions of this bill could be invoked to target individuals participating in activities such as demonstrations or acts of dissent that have nothing to do with any reasonable definition of terrorism. Is the government aware of that or is it knowingly doing this?

The Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations has raised an interesting situation I would like to share with my colleagues. It says that it is still unclear how the distinction will be made between acts associated with terrorism and other criminal acts. For example, the recent firebombing of a Royal Bank branch in Ottawa, just before the G20 summit, was treated as criminal arson, and so no charge was laid under the anti-terrorism provisions. However, the people who committed that crime could have been charged with terrorism.

Need I remind my Conservative colleagues of who Maher Arar and Mr. Almallki are? They are Canadian citizens who were detained, deported and tortured because we had falsely accused them of terrorist activities.

Is this the kind of policy that this government wants to adopt? Regressive, outdated policies? The Conservatives need to listen to

Canadians and perhaps relearn our basic Canadian values, for they seem to have forgotten them.

This bill applies to people who have not committed any terrorist acts per se. Also, in order to now justify all of the tools available to national security agents and for any strategic issues, there are several forms of terrorism and as many tools that can be used depending on the kind of terrorism—environmental, economic, religious, nationalist, and so on.

The recently released anti-terrorism strategy is proof that this government is targeting broader groups. That document gives examples of terrorist groups and includes things like occupy and environmental groups. The government has said on a number of occasions that environmental groups are extremists, perhaps even terrorists. That is why I think the Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations is an interesting example, since it demonstrates that the application of these anti-terrorism measures will affect everyone differently.

This is not the best way to combat terrorism. The best way to fight terrorism is not by passing extraordinary legislative measures like the ones proposed in this bill, but rather to collect information, and that is the job of police forces.

The existing Criminal Code provisions are more than adequate to investigate people who engage in terrorist activities or to detain someone who poses an immediate and credible threat to Canadians. The Conservatives know this, but they want to prove that they are tough on crime, even at the expense of our individual rights and freedoms.

Neither I nor any NDP member can support this bill.

•(1630)

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I warmly applaud the speech by our colleague from Châteauguay—Saint-Constant. Since 2006, we have seen many things being gutted, including environmental legislation, social rights, workers' rights and some constitutional rights. I would like to hear my colleague talk a little more about that. In his view, how does this bill go even further in denying our constituents' civil and constitutional rights?

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank my colleague for his question.

He pointed out some undeniable facts and truths, one of them being that the government seems to always be trying to attack the rights of unions and unionized workers. It wants to attack the most fundamental of rights, as Bill C-20 shows. Apparently, the government has now put that bill aside, because of the public discontent created by the idea that it would give police the power to listen to or spy on the conversations we have on the Internet or in email.

With this bill, the government is launching a shameless attack against the most fundamental of our freedoms: our individual freedoms. We must strongly condemn this attack.

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•(1635)

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite made reference to the Toronto 18. In double-checking, it was June 2, 2006, when these individuals were apprehended. At that time, we did have the provisions that provided for the investigative hearing and recognizance with conditions measures in place. However, that expired in 2007, which is why these provisions are being reintroduced at this time.

[Translation]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question.

I think she mentioned the exact date, which was 2006. What is more, when the individuals who were about to commit acts of terrorism were arrested, the extraordinary provisions introduced in 2002 by the then Liberal government were not used. Those extraordinary provisions to combat terrorism were completely useless. These special measures were not used in the case of the Toronto 16. As I was saying, the police used all the provisions available in the Criminal Code to stop this group that was preparing to commit terrorist attacks.

The uselessness of the provisions was demonstrated by the fact that the police completely ignored them. The police did not use these special measures.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague about preventive detention.

Under the bill, a peace officer can arrest an individual without a warrant if the peace officer believes that doing so is necessary in order to prevent a terrorist attack. Unfortunately, considering how easy it is to access the Internet these days, that individual could be a 13-year-old.

Does my colleague think that the child's rights are being respected when a 13-year-old is arrested without a warrant and detained for up to 24 hours before he is brought before a judge and knows what is happening to him?

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her excellent question.

A section of our Criminal Code defines the powers of arrest that police officers could use to keep someone from committing any crime, whether it is a crime of terrorism or not. Therefore, based on the current provisions, a police officer could arrest a person who intends to commit any type of crime.

However, when it comes to the situation my colleague mentioned, that is, arresting a person under the age of 18, some issues and questions were raised in the Senate committee about the notion of "last resort", a principle that is part of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as other international treaties that strengthen children's rights.

To give the government its due, the bill that alludes to preventive detention is also a last resort measure. This means there has to be a balance, which does create a problem. That was not considered in the final drafting of the bill.

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech. I would like to reiterate that the New Democratic Party is in favour of protection against terrorism. My colleagues have been adamant on that point. We also stand up for human rights and we are good stewards.

Since 2001, the government opposite has spent as much as \$92 billion to combat potential acts of terrorism.

I would like my colleague to summarize for us, in his own words, why this bill, to use a strong image, is taking this belt and braces approach and why it is going to do more harm than good.

•(1640)

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi for his question.

He has raised a number of points in his question, including the fact that enormous sums of money have been spent and it is extremely difficult to ascertain how effective they have been, since this is a completely closed government that constantly prevents parliamentarians from doing their job by concealing costs. It is therefore extremely difficult to determine how this money was spent.

Furthermore, yes, the provisions it includes are going to create additional expenses, and it will be extremely interesting to determine at the Standing Committee on Justice or the Standing Committee on Public Safety—we will see where the bill is examined—how much more might be spent on these pointless legislative measures that our public safety officers have absolutely no need of.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know whether my colleague could say a few words to the groups that are concerned about the fact that this bill is drifting into racial or religious profiling.

What are his comments on the concerns raised by some of the groups?

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for that excellent question.

In fact, there are several questions that can be asked regarding the profiling that some people might be subject to. I did not make a note of the people who testified at the Senate committee on this question, but witnesses who are experts on Islam expressed their concerns about this bill, which the police could use to target certain people in particular, including certain Muslims.

I think there have been a few cases in the past, including the case of Maher Arar. Because he was Muslim, Mr. Arar was targeted when he was on a trip to his country of origin. He found himself at the centre of major charges because of a mistake made by our police. Mistakes are always possible, unfortunately. We have to try to keep them to a minimum, but these Islamic groups have raised a number of questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, Aboriginal Affairs; the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway, International Trade; the hon. member for Western Arctic, Aboriginal Affairs.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before resuming debate, I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill S-11, An Act respecting food commodities, including their inspection, their safety, their labelling and advertising, their import, export and interprovincial trade, the establishment of standards for them, the registration or licensing of persons who perform certain activities related to them, the establishment of standards governing establishments where those activities are performed and the registration of establishments where those activities are performed, to which the concurrence of the House is desired.

* * *

COMBATING TERRORISM ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Security of Information Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in this House about Bill S-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Security of Information Act.

The official opposition is opposed to this bill because it will not solve any of the problems related to terrorism and it rides roughshod over civil liberties and values that are very dear to Canadians. Once again, the Criminal Code would be amended by the government, when there are already provisions that make it possible to protect society by investigating and detaining persons who commit offences. I am referring here to part II.1 and sections 83.01 to 83.33 of the Criminal Code. Moreover—and this is what is most worrisome, in my opinion—this bill creates an imbalance between security and the most fundamental rights that exist in society.

I will remind members of the four objectives of Bill S-7. First, it would amend the Criminal Code in order to include investigative hearings and recognizance with conditions. Second, it would make changes to the Canada Evidence Act. A judge could order the public disclosure of potentially sensitive information concerning a trial or an accused person once the appeal period is over. Third, new offences would be created in the Criminal Code concerning individuals who have left or attempted to leave Canada for the purpose of committing a terrorist act. Finally, the Security of Information Act would also be amended. The maximum penalty for harbouring an individual who committed or is liable to commit a terrorist act would be longer.

To begin with, one wonders why this bill was introduced in the Senate at first reading. That is always a legitimate question, and I hope that later in this debate, the government will give us an answer. Moreover, I would point out that my hon. colleague, the member for Gatineau and the justice critic for the official opposition, asked the same question in the House on October 15.

Secondly, I am confused about what motivated the government to introduce Bill S-7. I am going to read the remarks made by the

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Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice in the speech she gave on October 15, 2012.

Since the horrific events of 9/11, the absence of terrorist violence on Canadian territory does not preclude the possibility of a terrorist attack. Canada's solidarity with the international community of nations in the fight against terrorism has rendered Canada a potential target.

I am troubled by such statements because, since 2007, nothing has happened in Canada. The country has not been subject to terrorist attacks. Leading Canadians to believe that our country could be a target for terrorist acts and then using that argument to put in place a legal arsenal that is very questionable in terms of our civil liberties and legal rights—we will talk about this later—is not the right approach. The NDP believes that terrorism will not be fought on the legislative field but, rather, by improving intelligence gathering and the sharing of information among the various intelligence agencies.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice went on to say the following:

It is our responsibility to lay down the rules by which terrorism is fought. We are responsible for tracing the difficult line between combatting terrorism and preserving liberties in a way that is effective and gives clear guidance to those charged with combatting terrorism on the ground.

• (1645)

Once again, I would like to express my disagreement with the hon. member. I repeat: this bill creates an imbalance between fundamental rights and security.

I would like to draw the House's attention to some provisions of this bill that could infringe on the rights of children. I would also like to talk about those that would be a welcome improvement in terms of intelligence gathering and the sharing of information among the various intelligence agencies in Canada, which are found in clauses 4 to 8 of this bill.

First, I am going to read the words of the hon. member for Gatineau with regard to Bill S-7 and the youth criminal justice system. These questions should be of great interest to all members of the House.

What will we do about minors living in these kinds of situations? Who will have precedence? Will it be the youth courts, which usually have exclusive jurisdiction over children under the age of 18? Will those provisions take precedence? There is a great deal of concern here. What rights are there? What do we do about the right not to incriminate oneself? What need is there for us to impose this kind of direction on a system in which we have no evidence of this kind of need?

A distinction must be made between a habitual criminal and a young person whose parents have forced him or her to commit a crime. That is not at all the same thing. I have the same questions for the government again today.

Based on Senate committee evidence, the bill clearly violates Canada's international obligations regarding the protection of children's rights.

Kathy Vandergrift, chair of the board of directors of the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, has expressed some reservations about detaining minors, especially considering the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international agreements signed by Canada. She suggested amending the bill to ensure that it complies with international laws that apply to people under the age of 18. She said, and I quote:

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The Paris Principles emphasize using detention only as a last resort, not as the primary response to evidence of unlawful recruitment activities. Recent research in Australia documents the negative impacts of even short times in detention for the healthy development of young people.

I would now like to focus on one particular aspect of clauses 4 to 8 of the bill. Those clauses create a new Criminal Code offence: leaving Canada or attempting to leave Canada for the purpose of committing certain terrorism offences.

My hon. colleague from Toronto—Danforth very clearly explained the problems associated with those provisions. I would like to quote something he said in this House on October 15, 2012, regarding border security and controls. This issue is of particular concern to me, since my riding of Brome—Missisquoi has an airport and border crossings.

At the moment, we all know there are no exit controls at all the borders, notably at airports, other than no-fly lists for those deemed to be a threat to aviation. Testimony before the Senate made it clear that co-operation protocols or memorandums of understanding would be needed among CSIS, the RCMP and the CBSA.

● (1650)

Mr. Fadden, the director of CSIS, went further and noted that would have to extend likely to CATSA, the agency of the Department of Transport that regulates security. How these protocols will be developed and what kind of accountability there will be for their operation remains a concern especially because the RCMP, a key link in the inter-agency collaboration that will be needed here, has been shown by both the Arar and the Air India inquiries to be an agency that suffers from lack of accountability and inappropriate oversight mechanisms. Yet, with the government's Bill C-42, we see that it has no intention of acting on the Arar commission's carefully thought through recommendations for RCMP accountability and oversight.

Perhaps the government could provide some answers today to this important question raised by my honourable colleague.

I want to list the risks and flaws associated with this bill. This bill would allow individuals who have not been charged with any crime to be imprisoned for up to 12 months or subjected to strict recognizance conditions. The NDP believes that this is contrary to the core values of our justice system. The provisions of this bill could be used for purposes other than to combat terrorism, such as to target individuals engaged in protest activities.

In closing, this bill to combat terrorism raises too many key questions with regard to protecting our fundamental rights and our civil liberties. The presumption of innocence, the right not to incriminate oneself, the right to be told quickly what we are accused of and the right to defend ourselves against those charges are essential concepts in a society where the rule of law prevails.

Accordingly, the NDP firmly believes that neither combating terrorism nor preventing terrorism should jeopardize these fundamental rights and civil liberties. For all these reasons, the NDP is opposed to this bill.

● (1655)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite made a number of references to concern for our youth. However, there are provisions in the bill to protect our youth, particularly against this growing phenomenon of foreign terrorist groups recruiting our young people.

The bill seeks to make it a crime to participate in any activity of a terrorist group, facilitate a terrorist activity, commit an indictable

offence for the benefit of a terrorist group and commit an indictable offence that is also a terrorist activity.

Why would the member opposite not want to implement provisions to create deterrence to our youth being recruited by foreign-based terrorists?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my honourable colleague for her question.

Again, by focusing on the idea that there is terrorism and recruitment by terrorists, we go astray and we begin to engage in racial profiling.

My questions about the rights of youth have to do with the fact that a young offender is a young person in trouble who needs help rather than punishment. That is why we ask questions first, not later.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we all recall the terrorist attacks of 2001. It was difficult for everyone. I was attending a rural university. Everyone was appalled by what we saw on television.

I would like to know what the member thinks about the following comments by Mr. Barrette:

The International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group and the Ligue des droits et libertés believe that the provisions dealing with investigative hearings and preventive arrests, which are intended to impose recognizances with conditions, are both dangerous and misleading [for a liberal society].

● (1700)

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for her question. It is dangerous and misleading to tell people that the threat of terrorism is imminent. What happened on September 11, 2001, is a tragedy, but it happened in the United States. I cannot imagine that it would happen tomorrow morning in Canada.

Nothing has happened in the past four years. There has been nothing and things have been quiet. I cannot understand why, all of a sudden, we want to scrap our Charter of Rights and Freedoms and forget about the rights it guarantees for children and adults alike. I believe that we have the tools we need with the Criminal Code, special statutes and international treaties. We need only invest in the police and intelligence services. That would be more useful than spending millions of dollars on phantom threats.

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi for an excellent and compelling speech today.

The hon. member, like others who have given speeches that focus on the issue of civil liberties and legal matters, has put forward a very compelling case that the police already seem to have the necessary tools to combat terrorism, using existing procedures and laws.

It is not as though that because these things have not been invoked and been useful legally that they have no impact. There is clearly a social impact in having these laws come before the House for debate and put on the books.

Government Orders

On the eve of September 11 of this year, I showed a film in my riding entitled, *Change Your Name Ousama*, which talks about the stigmatization of the Muslim-Canadian community in this country.

I am wondering if my colleague would have any comments on the social implications and impacts of such laws, like the one we are debating today, on certain communities in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jacob: I am not an expert on Islam, but I do know that, in Montreal, Muslim communities feel ill at ease. September 2001 was a long time ago. Yet, when something happens elsewhere in the world, they feel as though they are targeted and victims of discrimination.

If it passes, will Bill S-7 heighten paranoia? I would say yes, and the fundamental rights of the people targeted will decrease in the same measure. Muslims and people of other faiths contribute to Canada's economy and culture. For the most part, they are not violent people. To answer the question, I would say that we do not need to pass Bill S-7. We should instead invest in collecting intelligence and training police. That is all.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's presentation. Social and environmental terrorism were mentioned in previous remarks. The speakers could have added aboriginal terrorism, while they were at it. They are fond of this term, on the other side of the House.

My colleague spoke of the imbalance in this bill between security and fundamental rights. I would like him to say more about this.

• (1705)

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his brilliant question. It is indeed possible to speak about social, environmental, and aboriginal terrorism. However, Aboriginals—since we are talking about them—are one of the three founding peoples of our magnificent country. There are Anglophones, Francophones, but there are also Aboriginals who—we too often forget—were here before us.

There should be no racial profiling. Everybody's fundamental rights must be respected. When it comes to the economy, Aboriginals have for some time been put in reserves, and enough is enough. Progress has been made with recent decisions, and Justice Wagner, who is starting his career at the Supreme Court of Canada, has recognized this. Aboriginals are a plus in Canadian society.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during his speech, my colleague spoke frequently about the importance of focusing more on intelligence gathering in order to prevent terrorism.

I would like him to speak more about coordinating information among intelligence services. Provincial authorities, departments, or other bodies may be in possession of information. The fact that all this information is spread among several different entities may mean that a situation that should otherwise attract attention goes unnoticed. If the person handling the situation had all the information at their disposal, they could choose to act in accordance with the current provisions of the Criminal Code.

Mr. Pierre Jacob: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question.

In any fight money is important, but so too is information. Information received by intelligence services must be coordinated, but until such time as somebody has been accused, the information must be kept confidential.

It is, therefore, very important to coordinate information and to respect confidentiality until such time as formal charges have been laid.

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before beginning my speech on Bill S-7, I would like to say something. Given that the government considers this bill so important and so significant, I think it is a shame that I find myself once again this week making a speech about it. On Monday, I spoke about Bill S-9. Both of these bills were introduced by the Senate.

I was elected on May 2, 2011, in a democratic electoral system. I was not appointed to a seat on an honorary basis just because I was a close friend to the Conservatives. Ministers should spend less time discussing bills before Senate committees and spend more time reporting to House of Commons committees and providing evidence to duly elected members.

We are opposed to Bill S-7. I would like to tell the government that, instead of getting the so-called other chamber to pass its bills, it should do so itself. If terrorism is so important to the government, why does the Senate have to take the lead after several years and introduce Bill S-9?

The government always says that talking is all well and good, but it is taking action. That is not true, because obviously the Senate is doing the government's work. Either the government does not want to admit that its resources are inadequate, or its priorities are different than it says, for instance, in terms of Canadians' security.

Bill S-9 deals with food safety. According to the Minister of Agriculture, food safety is one of the government's priorities. If food safety is a priority for the government, why did the Senate have to draft the bill?

I would like to know why the government does not face up to its responsibilities instead of letting the Senate do all the work.

I would now like to begin my speech on Bill S-7, which concerns the important issue of terrorism.

Nowadays, people will cry terrorism at the slightest provocation, but the concept remains vague. It is used quite frequently to create a climate of insecurity. In fact, it is meant to create a climate of fear. As I said yesterday, the Conservatives have often used the concept of terrorism whenever they felt like it to justify the policies or decisions they made that were criticized by the public. The concept of terrorism creates fear, and more fear; it is a vicious circle. This is exactly what Bill S-7 does; it nurtures a climate of fear. It is a rather twisted approach and a concept that remains vague and is meant to make us believe that our rights and freedoms are much better served if they are taken away from us.

Government Orders

Moreover, I would like to point out that these provisions expired four years ago. We have not required these provisions over the past four years. Why bring them back now? They have expired but, when it comes to priorities, the government is well known for making flagrant errors in judgment.

Let us be clear: nobody in the House, especially in the official opposition, supports terrorism. We understand the importance of keeping Canadians safe, and it is one of our top priorities. What we are criticizing here are the provisions contained in Bill S-7. We are critical of this bill's failure to strike any balance whatsoever between two equally important concepts: security and fundamental rights.

The government constantly engages in petty partisan politics by pitting two important notions against each other in order to create confusion in the minds of Canadians and force them to choose between two principles: fundamental rights and security. Yet, this government should guarantee both these principles.

• (1710)

The two principles are at the very heart of our democratic society. The government should ensure that they are upheld without putting one ahead of the other.

The NDP believes that it is important to take strong action against terrorism while also, as I said, respecting the rights and freedoms that are at the heart of our society, our system of justice and our democracy.

In the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, the Government of Canada responded, as it believed it should, and under extreme pressure from the United States, to what was an exceptional event. The legislation that was passed, although very strong, contained sunset clauses—and for good reason.

In the days and months that followed the attacks of September 11, the United States, with George W. Bush at the helm, declared war on terror. What I wish to stress here is that changes were made to some civil rights in the name of the war on terror, such as indefinite detention for presumed threats to national security, the creation of prisons, and even the legalization of torture, all shameful examples of the failure to respect fundamental human rights.

For example, the Geneva convention on the treatment of prisoners of war sets out fundamental rights. Omar Khadr is a case in point. He was imprisoned in Guantanamo as a mere teenager, which flies in the face of international law.

Canada's involvement in international conventions should never, under any circumstance, be taken lightly. It is very easy to forget our international obligations when the government chooses to do so. Child soldiers should never be imprisoned. This is an internationally recognized principle that Canada should stand up for, without exception.

Canada's involvement in this regard helps to combat terrorism while at the same time assisting in the eradication of child soldiers. Two such fundamental principles should never be pitted against each other. We have a charter of rights and freedoms. The United States may have a point of view that is different from ours, but here in Canada, our rights and values should prevail over any outside

decision or influence. That is why it is important not to succumb to Orwellian paranoia, like our neighbour to the south.

The provisions regarding preventive arrest and interrogation techniques were subject to a sunset clause and expired in 2007. It is now 2012. These provisions were included in the Criminal Code for good reason. The balance between the need for security and civil rights is essential. We do not need others to tell us what standards we want to adopt, particularly when those standards infringe on our fundamental freedoms.

The NDP is of the opinion that Bill S-7 violates civil liberties and the most fundamental rights, particularly the right to remain silent and the right to not be imprisoned without a fair trial. I would like to remind the House of this.

Perhaps, over the past few years, the government members have forgotten to read our magnificent Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I strongly advise them to do so just to refresh their memories with regard to our values, the values upon which the Canada they hold so dear is built. The weight of the state should never be used against an individual to force him to testify against himself. Self-incrimination is internationally recognized as an illegal and undemocratic principle.

The Criminal Code contains the provisions required to investigate people who engage in criminal activity and to detain anyone who may pose an immediate threat to Canadians.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I do not accept the fact that government members are telling me to be quiet while I am giving my speech. I was elected, and I have the right to speak in the House.

• (1715)

The battle against terrorism cannot be conducted by means of legislative measures, but rather through intelligence and appropriate police action.

There is no need to pass Bill S-7; the Criminal Code already provides all the tools that are needed, and it contains provisions to combat terrorism. I have a serious problem with establishing a system that forces people to incriminate themselves. Contrary to the recommendations of the Subcommittee on the Review of the Anti-terrorism Act, witnesses clearly told the Senate committee that there were major problems in terms of the protection of children.

There is Bill C-10 and criminal justice for minors, the status of aboriginal children, and poverty among immigrant children: we have been singled out and criticized repeatedly for our violations of children's rights. Once again, the government should be ashamed to have been singled out as a democratic industrialized country that violates children's rights. And yet again, the government would like to pass legislation that would violate the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is shameful. The government members should be ashamed to be smiling as I remind them that they are violating children's rights.

Government Orders

It is also noteworthy that since 2001, over 10 years ago, none of the investigations that have led to charges or convictions has required the use of these extraordinary powers. There is still doubt about how, for example, a distinction could be made in practice between a terrorist act and other offences. For example, the incendiary bomb at the G20 in Ottawa was treated as a criminal offence and not an act of terrorism. The Criminal Code can handle such acts very well.

Bill S-7 would make people with no criminal charges against them liable to imprisonment for up to 12 months or subject to strict release conditions, and the NDP believes that this contravenes the fundamental values of our justice system. That the provisions were only ever invoked once, and the only time they were invoked it was a total fiasco, illustrates that the police have the tools they need to combat terrorism with existing procedures, without any risk to our civil liberties or justice. The provisions of this bill could be invoked to target dissidents or people involved in demonstrations.

I see a trend here. The Conservatives want to prevent people from protesting. I remind members that the right of association is a fundamental right protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is not the first time that the government has tried to restrict our fundamental freedoms and civil liberties. I remind them that the Canada they love so much was created with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and they should be ashamed of trying to take away the freedoms that people fought for.

This legislation shows a lack of balance between security and fundamental rights, and the New Democratic Party cannot vote for such a bill. We must give serious thought to the issue of terrorism, but we must also protect our rights and freedoms.

I would like to conclude my speech by saying that this bill shows a flagrant lack of respect for Canadian values. This is an ideological bill that threatens Canadians and their freedoms. The Criminal Code already contains all of the provisions needed to fight terrorism, and the government should be ashamed of trying to take away our civil liberties to further its own ideological and political agenda.

• (1720)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just as we saw in the asymmetric warfare conducted in Afghanistan, so too is terrorism a constantly evolving manifestation. What the bill seeks to do is to prevent an imminent attack and to provide the tools necessary to do so.

The member opposite spoke at length about the need for balance. Why would she want to put the balance of power in the hands of the terrorists?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, since 2001—over 10 years ago—none of the investigations that have led to charges or convictions has required the use of these extraordinary powers the government is trying to give itself.

I do not need a lecture from a member who made a speech in this House and mixed up the Canadian and American constitutions. She is not even familiar with Canadian fundamental freedoms. She does

not even know the Canadian Constitution. I do not need any lectures from her.

• (1725)

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her speech. She spoke at length about children's rights. I am especially concerned about that aspect of this bill.

We are talking about the risk of brainwashing teenagers or even the risk of children being enlisted to engage in terrorist activities.

First of all, does my colleague believe there are any non-legislative measures in place to avoid this problem? Also, does she believe that non-legislative measures would be more effective than legislative measures?

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, the concept of child soldiers is clear. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is someone who is under 18. Any child who is captured during an armed conflict, regardless of whether or not he is part of a terrorist group, is considered a child soldier.

I would remind the government that it signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child—and proudly boasted about it, too. However, when it comes to applying the principles of protecting children's rights, we clearly see the government's ideology behind all of that.

Regardless of whether a child is brainwashed into committing violent acts, a child is a child. It is our duty as a society to protect children. Legislative measures that turn children into criminals and throw them in jail will never be good legislative measures.

How can we put a child in prison and then expect to be able to help that child? It makes no sense. Legislative measures are not the right way to address the use of child soldiers in armed conflict.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île. I am glad she responds occasionally to the insults coming from across the floor, since those members often laugh, chat or heckle when she is trying to speak to the House.

Can the member tell us if she believes that the fear of a potential terrorist act or paranoia can cause collateral damage and restrict the individual and collective freedoms of Canadians?

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, terrorism is a major problem. Nevertheless, a major problem, whether we are talking about terrorism or drug trafficking, should never undermine the values that Parliament is built on.

I am reaching out to every MP who was democratically elected under the Canadian flag, under the banner of our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to ask them whether they are truly prepared to reject the freedoms that people fought so hard for. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a guarantee.

Government Orders

Does their paranoia make them believe that people would be better off without their fundamental freedoms? Are they prepared to tell Canadian soldiers who fought for our values that they fought for nothing? It is outrageous.

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île. If I understand correctly, Bill S-7 will leave the door wide open to injustices. It will tarnish our international reputation, which has already been battered by this government.

Can the hon. member tell us what values unite us as Canadians? She said that we fought for these rights. I should know, because I am a member of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. I know that many countries do not have a charter of rights and freedoms like the one we have in Canada.

Can the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île tell us what unites us as a people? Will Bill S-7 divide us rather than bring us together?

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, because he is a lawyer, section 1 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms says that fundamental rights guaranteed under the charter are subject only to such limits as can be justified in a free and democratic society.

My question is for the government, which has many lawyers among its members. Is a violation of our fundamental rights, which were won by people who fought for them, justified in a free and democratic society? I do not believe so.

• (1730)

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member thinks the position of the NDP is due to its job-killing carbon tax.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives probably think so. That clearly shows the government's perspective. It is ready to invent all kinds of reasons to put its right-wing agenda ahead of Canadians' interests.

[English]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when we talk about personal security in the country, the other side seems to forget that there is far more danger to the residents in my riding from handguns than there is from terrorism. In fact, there were four funerals this summer of young men in their teens and early twenties as a result of handgun violence, all of them were from Somalia.

Our border is quite porous to the availability of handguns coming across the border. We are spending \$92 billion to protect against imagined terrorism, but we are spending very little to beef up our security at the border and to keep these handguns out. Add to that the 22 people who were killed by listeriosis and a number of other people who were killed by tainted meat.

The government appears to have its priorities wrong. It is spending money tilting at imagined ghosts instead of getting at the real problems that make people feel insecure in country.

Could she comment on that?

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to offer my condolences to all families affected by gun violence and all the victims. It is a terrible scourge.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, the security of Canadians and fundamental freedoms are two elements that should be guaranteed by the government. Instead of guaranteeing Canadians' security and freedom, the government is creating a hierarchy in the defence of rights, freedoms and security. Instead of defending Canadians in their neighbourhoods against criminals who may live next door, the Conservatives are spending millions of dollars to protect against potential attacks. That is truly ridiculous. Canadians must be protected at home, in the streets, and not in an abstract way with a bill that will prevent a potential future attack.

[English]

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak against Bill S-7, a bill designed to violate the civil and human rights of Canadians, a bill to amend the Criminal Code and the Canada Evidence Act to allow a Canadian to be arrested without a warrant, imprisoned without having a fair trial and imprisoned for up to 12 months without even being charged with a criminal offence.

These fundamental changes were brought in by the Liberal government of the time in 2001, immediately after September 11. At that time, it was not a public policy discussion; it was a crisis management tool. Some of the provisions of the bill expired in February 2007 and, at that time, the NDP led the opposition to the renewal of these clauses and opposed the extension of the provisions. We were very proud to stand for human rights. It is unfortunate to see that through the Senate this bill is now back in front of us.

I remind people that there is a lot to learn from history. Maher Arar, a Canadian, was arrested without a warrant and was imprisoned without a fair trial. He was never charged. There was never a criminal offence. He did not do anything wrong. It was during that unfortunate period that he was not only sent to be tortured, but he was imprisoned in a coffin-like box for almost a year and eventually freed. During the O'Connor commission inquiry, there was a great deal of talk about the kinds of human rights violations against Maher Arar.

What we have in front of us is a bill that unfortunately would take away a tremendous amount of rights from an individual. We can have a secure country without having to violate the civil and human rights of individuals. We do not have to give up those rights.

The provisions in the amendments of the Criminal Code and the Canada Evidence Act had been deleted since February 2007. The police from that time to now never saw the need to use any of the provisions. Also, no investigations needed to use them.

Government Orders

Many things have occurred, as my colleagues have talked about, such as the case of the Toronto 18 and the more recent case involving four people from the Toronto region, the bomb situation. In none of those situations did the police have to use any of these provisions. People did not have to be put in jail without charges or arrested without a warrant.

● (1735)

In many ways we actually do not need to do anything because police investigations have successfully dismantled terrorist plots all of those times. Why are we particularly concerned? It is because we have seen instances where some sectors of the community, especially the Muslim community, have been subjected to some of the unfortunate discriminatory measures.

The executive director of the Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations, Ihsaan Gardee, talked about arresting people without any charges or warrants and stated that these kinds of measures posed a significant risk to the abuse of the powers conferred to the state. For an example, he said the ability to detain a person for 72 hours, compromising civil liberties when faced with a potential danger which has not yet happened, only dissolves the boundaries between civil rights and concrete national security concerns.

He went on to say that the council believes that the provisions already contained in the Criminal Code are more than enough to allow the policing authorities and courts to prevent terrorism-related offences before they are committed. He said that according to article 495, a person detained for reasonable motives must appear before a judge who can impose the same conditions as the proposed anti-terrorism measures. He then said that the judge can even refuse bail if he or she believe that the liberation of the person concerned constitutes a danger to the public.

In his opinion, the experience of the last 10 years has shown that Canada's Muslim communities would be disproportionately affected by the abandonment of civil liberties. It is even less clear how the distinction would be made in practice between acts linked to terrorism and other criminal acts. For example, the recent fire bomb attack incident in Ottawa against a Royal Bank branch before the G20 summit was treated as a criminal act of arson and no charges were laid under the anti-terrorism provision, et cetera.

The president of the Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association of Toronto, Ziyaad Mia, and Nathalie Des Rosiers, general counsel of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, said that, in their opinions, the bill should not move forward, that it is unnecessary, that it does not offer any solutions and that there are substantial problems.

A very renowned lawyer, Paul Copeland, who is actually in the Order of Canada now, said that the provisions being examined or that were being debating would unnecessarily change the legal landscape in Canada. He said that we must not adopt them and that, in his opinion, they were not necessary. This man who has practised criminal law for at least 30 years. He went on to say that other provisions of the code provide various mechanisms for dealing with such individuals.

The Canadian Islamic Congress said that removing people's rights was problematic because some people may have legitimate concerns

about themselves but know that if they speak out their family members overseas may suffer persecution. We have heard from many legal experts who have said that we are already very well protected under the Criminal Code. If we were not, how were the police able to solve a lot of the problems before they occurred.

● (1740)

They talked about having close working relationships with communities. Good policing means community based policing. When various activists or people who are very engaged in their communities hear of problems or notice suspicious things, if they trust the police because of a close working relationships with them, they very likely will talk to the police and deal with the problem before it happens. That kind of good, community based policing is what ultimately led to destroying the terrorism plot.

I also want to talk about security at the border. I have noticed there has been a recent massive layoff of people who keep our borders secure. It is not just the Canadian Border Service Agency that has suffered layoffs. As a result of the Conservative government cutting back millions of dollars to CATSA, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, we have seen massive layoffs of airport screeners. When we go through the security gate at airports, these are the people who help screen people to ensure they are not carrying objects that are dangerous and keep both our airlines and air travellers safe. A few months ago, 300 people were laid off in Toronto and a few hundred have just received their notice in the last few days. Therefore, we will have fewer people in the biggest and busiest airport in Canada.

The government says that it does not have enough money, which is why it has to lay off people who keep us safe and secure. However, the government has continued to charge significant fees for the air travellers security charge, which increased in April 2010. If individuals come on an international flight from other countries, they will be charged \$25.91. For a domestic round trip it is close to \$15. In this year alone the federal government has taken in \$658 million in revenue from these so-called air travellers security funds. The government is actually making money from these fees to keep us safe but it is not putting that money into border airport screeners.

On one hand, we are losing jobs at a time when we need to create jobs. On the other hand, we have a bill before us that is supposed to keep us secure but, in actuality, as all the legal experts have said, the bill is not necessary because the Criminal Code and the Canada Evidence Act already have the provisions.

The other concern with the bill is that it could be invoked to target individuals participating in activities, such as acts of protest or of dissent, which have nothing to do with a reasonable definition of terrorism.

● (1745)

I do not need me to remind members about what happened at the G20 Summit in Toronto. There were a series of human rights violations. People were arrested and some of them were not allowed to speak to lawyers. They were put into a detainment area where their human rights were violated. In some cases, women had to go to the washroom in public and they were humiliated. There were assaults that led to different charges against the police.

Private Members' Business

Various inquiries and studies have shown that sometimes, if the state feels it has the power to dominate, people's human rights can be violated, as we saw, unfortunately, during the G20 Summit protests in Toronto. In that case, it was partially because the Conservative government did not give the City of Toronto and the police enough time to prepare for security measures. The summit was imposed on the city even though the mayor at the time felt that having that kind of event in downtown Toronto was a huge problem. Unfortunately, the Conservative government did not listen to those concerns.

There are provisions in the bill that could be invoked to target individuals who want to express their dissent to existing policies, and there are other problematic areas.

For example, the institute released a report claiming that the various branches of government involved in the fight against terrorism in Canada received \$19 billion more than what they would have normally received, or \$69 billion with inflation. However, Bill S-7 is not clear on the financial costs to reactivate these measures. It is not clear how much it would cost taxpayers. This is at a time when CBSA officers are being laid-off. These measures expired four years ago. Why is this necessary since nothing much has changed from 2001?

I also want to mention some very serious studies that I would encourage my colleagues who are supporting the bill to read. An in-depth study presented to the Canadian Human Rights Commission talked about why this anti-terrorism bill was unnecessary. It quoted many legal experts from when it was Bill C-36. Reports from the Department of Justice also state the problems with the bill.

I urge my colleagues on the opposite side to not support Bill S-7, an act to amend the Criminal Code.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from October 5 consideration of Bill C-299, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (kidnapping of young person), as reported (with amendments) from the committee; and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:52 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage of Bill C-299, under private members' business.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

• (1835)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 478*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)

Ashton

Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brousseau
Casey
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Kellway
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Plamondon
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan
Stoffler
Toone
Turmel
Aubin
Bélangier
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Caron
Cash
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Cotler
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Eyking
Fry
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hyer
Julian
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
Mai
Martin
May
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Quach
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
St-Denis
Sullivan
Tremblay
Valeriote — 116

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Baird
Benoit
Bernier
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Adams
Aglukkaq
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Aspin
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement

Private Members' Business

Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	Paradis
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Yelich	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 151	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 lost.

[English]

The question is now on Motion No. 2.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

● (1845)

[Translation]

(The House divided on Motion No. 2, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 479)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brousseau
Caron	Casey
Cash	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Côté
Cotler	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fry	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguié
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclét	Perreault
Quach	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
(sor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stoffer
Sullivan	Toone
Tremblay	Tumel
Valeriote — 115	

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Bellavance	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Leef
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MackKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Plamondon	Poilievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Yelich	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer— 153	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 2 lost.

[English]

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Mr. Speaker, if you seek it I believe you will find agreement to apply the results from the previous motion to the current motion with the Conservatives voting yes.**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote, and will vote no.

[English]

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals agree to apply the vote and will be voting no.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois votes no.

[English]

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, I am voting no.**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, the Green Party is voting no.**Mr. Peter Goldring:** I will be voting yes.

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

(Division No. 480)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)

Private Members' Business

Hawn
 Hiebert
 Hoback
 James
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Leef
 Lemieux
 Lizon
 Lukiwski
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Mayes
 McLeod
 Menzies
 Miller
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Norlock
 O'Connor
 Opitz
 Payne
 Preston
 Rajotte
 Reid
 Richards
 Ritz
 Schellenberger
 Shea
 Shory
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Tilson
 Toews
 Trottier
 Tweed
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Warawa
 Watson
 Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Williamson
 Yelich
 Zimmer— 151

Hayes
 Hillyer
 Holder
 Jean
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 Leitch
 Leung
 Lobb
 Lunney
 MacKenzie
 McColeman
 Menegakis
 Merrifield
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Nicholson
 Obhrai
 O'Neill Gordon
 Paradis
 Poilievre
 Raitt
 Rathgeber
 Rempel
 Rickford
 Saxton
 Seeback
 Shipley
 Smith
 Sorenson
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Toet
 Trost
 Truppe
 Uppal
 Van Loan
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
 Wilks
 Wong
 Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
 Atamanenko
 Ayala
 Bellavance
 Benskin
 Blanchette
 Boivin
 Boulerice
 Brosseau
 Casey
 Chicoine
 Choquette
 Christopherson
 Côté
 Cullen
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Day
 Dion
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Easter
 Foote
 Genest
 Giguère
 Goodale
 Groguhé
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hughes
 Jacob
 Kellway
 Larose
 Laverdière

Ashton
 Aubin
 Bélanger
 Bennett
 Bevington
 Blanchette-Lamothe
 Borg
 Boutin-Sweet
 Caron
 Cash
 Chisholm
 Chow
 Cleary
 Cotler
 Cuzner
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Dewar
 Dionne Labelle
 Doré Lefebvre
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dusseault
 Eyking
 Fry
 Genest-Jourdain
 Godin
 Gravelle
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
 Hassainia
 Hyer
 Julian
 Lapointe
 Latendresse
 LeBlanc (Beauséjour)

LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
 Liu
 Mai
 Martin
 May
 McGuinty
 Michaud
 Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
 Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nicholls
 Pacetti
 Patry
 Perreault
 Quach
 Raynault
 Rousseau
 Sandhu
 Scott
 Sgro
 Sor)
 Sims (Newton—North Delta)
 St-Denis
 Sullivan
 Tremblay
 Valériote— 117

Leslie
 MacAulay
 Marston
 Masse
 McCallum
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
 Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
 Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
 Murray
 Nash
 Nunez-Melo
 Papillon
 Péclet
 Plamondon
 Ravnignat
 Regan
 Saganash
 Scarpaleggia
 Sellah
 Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
 sor)
 Sitsabaiesan
 Stoffer
 Toone
 Turmel

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Mr. David Wilks** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour, please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion, the yeas have it.*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1855)

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

(Division No. 481)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
 Adler
 Albrecht
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambler
 Anders
 Armstrong
 Baird
 Benoit
 Bernier
 Block

Adams
 Aglukkaq
 Alexander
 Allison
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Aspin
 Bateman
 Bergen
 Bezan
 Boughen

Private Members' Business

Braid	Breitkreuz	Côté	Cotler
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Cullen	Cuzner
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Butt	Calandra	Day	Dewar
Calkins	Cannan	Dion	Dionne Labelle
Carmichael	Carrie	Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Chisu	Chong	Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Clarke	Clement	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Daniel	Davidson	Easter	Eyking
Dechert	Del Mastro	Foote	Fry
Devolin	Dreeshen	Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra	Giguère	Godin
Fantino	Fast	Goodale	Gravelle
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Flaherty	Fletcher	Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Galipeau	Gallant	Hughes	Hyer
Gill	Glover	Jacob	Julian
Goguen	Goldring	Kellway	Lapointe
Goodyear	Gourde	Larose	Latendresse
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Hawn	Hayes	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Hiebert	Hillyer	Liu	MacAulay
Hoback	Holder	Mai	Marston
James	Jean	Martin	Masse
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	May	McCallum
Kent	Kerr	McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Lake	Lauzon	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Leef	Leitch	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Lemieux	Leung	Mulcair	Murray
Lizon	Lobb	Nantel	Nash
Lukiwski	Lunney	Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie	Pacetti	Papillon
Mayes	McColeman	Patry	Péclet
McLeod	Menegakis	Perreault	Plamondon
Menzies	Merrifield	Quach	Ravignat
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	Raynault	Regan
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson	Rousseau	Saganash
Norlock	Obhrai	Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon	Scott	Sellah
Opitz	Paradis	Sgro	Simmis (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Payne	Poilievre	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Preston	Raït	St-Denis	Stoffer
Rajotte	Rathgeber	Sullivan	Toone
Reid	Rempel	Tremblay	Turmel
Richards	Rickford	Valerioté — 117	
Ritz	Saxton		
Schellenberger	Seeback		
Shea	Shipley		
Shory	Smith		
Sopuck	Sorenson		
Stanton	Storseth		
Strahl	Sweet		
Tilson	Toet		
Toews	Trost		
Trottier	Truppe		
Tweed	Uppal		
Van Kesteren	Van Loan		
Vellacott	Wallace		
Warawa	Warkentin		
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)		
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks		
Williamson	Wong		
Yelich	Young (Vancouver South)		
Zimmer — 151			

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:55 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private member's business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

[Translation]

SECURE, ADEQUATE, ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP) moved that Bill C-400, An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be here today to debate Bill C-400, which would establish a national housing strategy. This bill would require the minister responsible for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to work with the provinces and territories, aboriginal communities, municipalities, non-profit and private-sector housing providers, and civil society organizations.

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau	Caron
Casey	Cash
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary

Private Members' Business

Coordinating these efforts is the key to success. Today is International Anti-Poverty Day, which makes this bill even more significant. I would like to sincerely thank the members for Halifax, London—Fanshawe and Vancouver East for working so hard and so diligently on the housing file. Another big thank you goes to the official opposition housing critic, the member for Hochelaga, for her support and co-operation over the past few months.

We have worked hard since this bill was introduced in February. We have met with dozens of stakeholders, participated in forums and got the support of a number of organizations across Canada. These organizations include YWCA Canada, the Réseau québécois des OSBL d'habitation, the Wellesley Institute and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which represents more than 2,000 cities. Like the NDP, these organizations believe that Bill C-400 can solve a lot of problems. It is no accident that I am sponsoring this bill. As elected members of Parliament, we are fortunate to be able to introduce bills that can improve Canadians' quality of life. I am a former community worker, so housing and homelessness are particularly important to me. I would like to acknowledge my former colleagues, the members of the Corporation de développement communautaire des Maskoutains and the Table de concertation solidarité itinérance maskoutaine. We always dreamt of having a bill like this, as did Jack Layton.

Whether as a Toronto city councillor, or president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, or even when he was here in the House of Commons, Jack Layton always worked to make sure every Canadian had a roof over their head. I am introducing Bill C-400 in order to carry on Jack's work and the work of every housing and homelessness organization. Every Canadian should have access to safe, adequate, accessible and affordable housing. Jack Layton said:

When all Canadians can say "I have suitable housing in my community," then our work will be done.

That is so true that even the Conservatives agree. On September 14, the hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot said this about housing:

Our government is committed to supporting Canadian families and communities, but it takes the efforts of many and partnerships at all levels to get real results.

Working together and coordinating efforts are precisely what Bill C-400 proposes. But the government prefers to abandon Canadians rather than listen to the official opposition. That is the problem with this government. It hits us with rhetoric, but a reality check makes it clear that the situation is out of control. Canada is the laughingstock of the UN when it comes to housing, as the 2009 UN report on decent housing indicates. The special rapporteur said that Canada is lagging in its social housing obligations and in its fight against homelessness. He also criticized the government's failure to address this growing crisis. The rapporteur also expressed concern over the many cuts to funding and housing programs. The 2009 UN universal periodic review addressed these critical concerns in its final recommendations for Canada. Our record is poor.

Believe it or not, Canada used to be a world leader in terms of its housing record. But the cuts to housing programs in the early 1990s have prevented Canada from meeting its international obligations. The situation has been getting worse ever since.

What did the government do in response to this damning UN report? It promised to work more effectively with the provinces and territories.

● (1900)

The government made this promise to the United Nations Human Rights Council. Unfortunately, this commitment never amounted to anything. More empty words. The last departmental report published by the CMHC indicates that the federal government does not plan to keep its commitments. In 2013, Canada will undergo its second universal periodic review by the UN Human Rights Council. At that time, the government will have to report to civil society organizations and member countries of the United Nations human resources committee on its accomplishments in the area of housing. The way things are going, we are probably not going to do any better than the first time.

Nevertheless, the NDP is offering the government the solution on a silver platter. The national housing strategy set out in Bill C-400 would respond to most of the UN's concerns. The federal government's efforts must be coordinated with those of the provinces and territories, as well as those of the private sector and organizations on the ground. The solution is simple: we must stop improvising.

I am hardly the first person to say it. In 2004, the hon. member for Vancouver East introduced Bill C-509 for the first time. This bill was a declaration of housing rights that would have protected the right to affordable, accessible and adequate housing. In 2006, this same bill was again introduced by the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Not willing to give up, in 2009, the hon. member for Vancouver East once again introduced an amended version of the bill.

With the support of the other opposition parties, the bill went to committee, where a clause was added that would have allowed Quebec to opt out of the legislation with full financial compensation. Unfortunately, the bill died on the Order Paper when the election was called in the spring of 2012. The bill had the support of all the opposition parties and even the support of one Conservative member. Canada was close to having its own national housing strategy. This time, I hope that the government will agree to adopt this strategy.

The situation is completely out of control. The economic crisis gave rise to a housing crisis that is affecting the entire country, not just big cities such as Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal.

Household debt has reached a critical point. Many international organizations are warning the government, but it does not seem to be listening. In 2008, the global economic downturn resulted in higher property prices. Those who were able to buy a home ended up with a mortgage that they could not afford to pay.

Private Members' Business

The Bank of Canada and the International Monetary Fund have warned Canada that the country's household debt is far too high, at 158%. That is unprecedented. Mortgages account for 68% of that debt. Those who cannot afford a mortgage are forced to turn to the rental market, which can no longer keep up with the demand. Vacancy rates in Canada have reached record lows. Once again, this is not exclusive to large urban centres. In 2010, the CMHC found vacancy rates under 2% in 10 Canadian cities: 0.9% in Winnipeg, 1% in the Quebec City region, 1.4% in St. John's and 1.8% here in Ottawa. There is a serious lack of rental housing in those cities.

Changing global economic conditions are reflected in the changing housing needs in Canada. These conditions have created a void in the construction and housing sectors. There is a housing shortage, and low-income families have very few housing options. Where are the solutions? This federal government certainly is not offering any. At the end of the day, on the one hand, we have renters who are inadequately housed and are paying too much, and on the other hand, we have fewer and fewer home owners with increasing debt levels.

What is not make clear in this equation? The only thing that is crystal clear is that this government has lost all control. It is time to adopt a national housing strategy. I know I am repeating myself, but there is nothing else to add. We need to act now. Other G8 countries realized this a long time ago. This government likes to compare itself to other G8 countries, and so it must know that those countries have known for quite some time that adequate housing guarantees long-term, sustainable economic growth.

● (1905)

In Belgium, for example, housing is under regional jurisdiction. Social housing represents 7% of the national rental housing stock, and every region has a regional social housing corporation. Social housing units are allocated based on a combination of income ceilings, household size and urgency of need. Monthly rents depend on tenants' incomes.

In addition, the right to housing is guaranteed by the constitution. Article 23 provides that every person is entitled to dignity, which includes the right to decent housing. These policies have resulted in a vacancy rate of 7.8%

Austria's housing policy focuses on two essential factors: government financial assistance and a competent and diligent limited-profit sector.

The government has established essential financing mechanisms and legislation to regulate security of tenure and rents. As a result of a long-standing government commitment, one in six Austrians lives in an apartment built or managed by a limited-profit housing association.

In the United Kingdom, the Minister of Communities and Local Governments works together with local authorities to manage housing in the country. The government has just adopted the Affordable Homes Programme 2011-2015, and that program is backed by a £4.5 billion investment to increase the supply of social housing in the country. It includes a special component for seniors and persons at risk. The result is that social housing serves more than four million households.

Investing in housing pays dividends. Safe, adequate, accessible and affordable housing means Canadians who are well housed, more fit for work and in better financial health.

However, unlike the major industrial countries, Canada has not yet understood this.

Given the federal government's withdrawal from this sector, many Canadian municipalities have decided to adopt action plans, often with very few resources.

In Saskatoon, the city encourages the construction of rental properties by offering a \$5,000 subsidy for every rental unit built, in addition to a progressive tax credit over five years.

In 2010, Quebec City adopted regulations to slow the conversion of rental apartments to condos. As a result, a rental property must be vacant for 10 years before it can be transformed into a condo property.

In 2010, in my riding, the Saint-Hyacinthe city council invested \$2 million in social housing. That is a lot for a city of about 50,000 people.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate it if my colleagues would keep the noise down and take their conversations into the lobby.

The City of Surrey has established a policy prohibiting the conversion or demolition of rental units, unless the vacancy rate for the entire city is under 4%. The city has also adopted a plan to provide housing for the homeless. We are talking about 150 emergency beds, 500 housing units for people in transition and 5,000 social housing units for the homeless, families and single people.

In 2009, the City of Regina adopted a housing policy that includes tax incentives for small densification projects, tax write-offs for rental units and \$10,000 in subsidies for affordable housing. The most critical housing shortage in the country is in Regina, where the vacancy rate is currently 0.6%. With significant problems such as these, housing has become a major election issue. Why is it that housing is such an issue in Regina and the federal government barely talks about it?

On Monday evening, my office organized a non-partisan round table on housing. All members were invited. We invited the government a number of times. National groups and housing experts from as far away as Regina and Toronto flew here to attend the round table. However, only one Conservative walked over to the La Promenade building. I would like to thank my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville for attending.

He finally had the opportunity to hear that Canada needs a national housing strategy.

Therefore, today, I am asking if the government is committed to supporting Bill C-400 right now so that every Canadian family can have decent housing.

Private Members' Business

• (1910)

[English]

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is my colleague aware that due to the economic action plan, the Government of Canada has helped create 605,000 new housing units across the country? I have seen first-hand the positive impact of that economic action plan based on creating affordable social housing in my own riding. I also made an announcement in the riding of the member from Halifax. People who needed housing received housing. That is taking action during a difficult economic crisis.

When the member across the way talks about what countries in Europe are doing, if she looked at the economic performance of the countries in Europe that she talked about compared to the economic performance of Canada during this economic crisis, she would see that Canada is on the right track.

Like many Canadians across the country, one of the strongest answers to any social housing problem is good, well-paying jobs and this government, through the economic action plan, has created 820,000 net new jobs, 90% of those are full-time jobs.

My colleague failed to mention one other thing in her speech. How does she pretend to pay for this national housing program? Could it be that she will use money from a \$20 billion carbon tax to help fund this national housing strategy those members talk about?

• (1915)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives will not leave the carbon tax alone. They talk about it every chance they get.

My colleague asked a number of questions. All I can say is that in a country with somewhere between 150,000 and 300,000 homeless people, in which millions of families have pressing housing needs, the Conservatives have nothing to brag about. They would do well to follow the lead of other countries that are providing their citizens with safe, accessible, adequate and affordable housing. That is all I have to say.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate my colleague on her speech. The Liberals will definitely vote in favour of this bill, but there is a big problem: I am sure the Conservatives will not support it. It is a good plan, but it will never come to fruition.

I would remind my hon. colleague that in 2004-05, the Liberals had a great plan for affordable housing and we were about to implement it. However, the NDP voted against it, and then the election was called. The only way we could have had an affordable housing program is if the NDP had supported the government in 2005. If it had done so, we would have had such a program five years later. Does my colleague agree?

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for refreshing Canadians' memories. When the NDP votes against a bill, it is because the bill does not meet the needs of all Canadians. That is why the NDP voted against this bill. Then we had the 2005 elections.

The only objective of this bill is to suggest some tools to the government. In view of the attitude of my colleagues opposite, I see that the government does not intend to support it. That is really too bad, because we are providing it with a useful solution on a silver platter. We are prepared to work with the government to implement such a strategy. My party will not abandon the fight for housing, and neither will I.

[English]

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on second reading of Bill C-400, an act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians.

The choice this evening is quite simple. We could support this private member's bill, which would host the conference, encourage a few more studies and essays on the topic and allow for more speeches to be made. Or members can support the unprecedented levels of funding our government has provided to social housing across Canada. More talk or more action? I know which one I support.

The sponsor of the bill tells us that it is meant to improve the access for Canadians to safe affordable housing. Regrettably this approach could have the opposite effect. By not recognizing that social housing is largely a provincial lead and moving away from the local delivery of social housing programming, this approach could lead to less effective and more costly social housing.

Having said that, hon. members should know that rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all solution, this government is pursuing and will continue to pursue a proven and effective multi-pronged approach that engages many stakeholders and facilitates access to housing across a continuum of housing needs. Rather than launching another round of meetings, discussion papers and conferences, as is proposed in the bill, we have opted for taking tangible action to address housing issues.

Our government has invested heavily in a broad range of housing and homelessness programs and activities over the past number of years. In fact, our government is already investing more on affordable and supportive housing than any other government in Canadian history.

Through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the government contributes to Canada's strong housing finance system by ensuring that mortgage financing is available for all types of housing in all parts of Canada.

• (1920)

[Translation]

Thanks in part to CMHC's mortgage loan insurance and securitization guarantee programs, 80% of Canadians are able to meet their housing needs in the marketplace, without direct support from government.

Private Members' Business

[English]

At the same time, we recognize that the government cannot turn its back on those whose needs are not met by the marketplace, including low-income families, people with disabilities, first nation households living on reserve, the homeless and others in need. That is why we are working with provinces and territories, municipalities, national aboriginal organizations, the private sector and not-for-profit groups to deliver a full range of housing support and assistance, from providing emergency shelter for those at greatest risk to assisted housing for low-income households.

Regardless of what form federal assistance takes, our government believes that local housing challenges require local solutions. We believe that the people closest to those requiring assistance are best positioned to develop and deliver effective lasting solutions. Unlike this bill, our government's approach recognizes the constitutional jurisdiction of the provinces and territories in this area of assisted housing, as well as the need to work with a variety of different partners in order to deliver results.

When Canada's economic action plan was announced, we immediately sought the engagement and support of the provinces and territories to deliver housing-related stimulus funds to the economy. Working through CMHC, in record time, we negotiated amendments to existing housing agreements to ensure that the bulk of federal investments in social housing could be delivered quickly and effectively by provinces and territories. The results speak for themselves.

Through our economic action plan, we have created 46,000 new affordable housing units and renovated 104,000 more. Every year the government is providing support for over 605,000 individuals and families with subsidized housing.

Since 2006, over 8,900 new rental units have been committed under the on-reserve non-profit housing program. In addition, under Canada's economic action plan, over 10,800 new units were created on and off reserve. These projects not only improved living conditions for tens of thousands of Canadians, they also put people to work quickly and stimulated local economies.

All of this was made possible because our government recognized the provinces and territories were in the best position to deliver housing-related stimulus funding quickly where it was needed most and where it would have the greatest impact. This philosophy is also reflected in the investment in affordable housing 2011-2014 framework that the government jointly announced with provinces and territories in July of 2011.

Under this framework, provincial and territorial governments are cost matching the federal investment for a combined total of \$1.4 billion over three years toward reducing the number of Canadians in housing need. The new framework recognizes that Canadians have diverse housing needs and that a range of solutions from existing programs to new approaches is needed. To that end, provinces and territories are responsible for designing and delivering affordable housing programs that address specific housing needs and priorities in their jurisdictions.

Through bilateral arrangements negotiated with our government, most provinces and territories have opted for a new approach. In 11

out of 13 jurisdictions, federal housing investments are now provided under a single funding envelope and provinces and territories have the flexibility to invest in a range of programs and initiatives to reduce the number of households in need. As hon. members can appreciate, this is the opposite of the one-size-fits-all approach that could result from Bill C-400.

CMHC also works closely with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and first nations leadership as well as housing organizations to deliver federal funding to address housing needs on reserve, including supports for new construction and the renovation of existing homes on reserve.

• (1925)

[Translation]

These are all important initiatives carried out in partnership with a range of housing stakeholders. They are key components of the multi-pronged approach I mentioned at the outset.

[English]

Since 2006, our government has invested some \$13.1 billion in housing and homelessness programs. Working with our partners, assistance has been provided to about 755,000 Canadian households, including low-income families, seniors, persons with disabilities and first nations people.

Our government believes that actions are more important than talk and our focus is about delivering results, not holding more conferences. I urge all members to reflect on this and to vote in support of our government's strong record of action on housing and vote against this bill.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this topic.

As I had predicted, we now know that the Conservatives will vote against it, and this bill, which I think is a good one, will not go through, which is unfortunate. As I said earlier, this could have been avoided had the NDP supported us back in 2005 when we had a strong affordable housing program.

I do congratulate my Conservative colleague for his speech, but I must say that the Conservatives' performance in the area of housing has been absolutely pathetic, notwithstanding his words. Let me explain why I say that.

First, the member mentioned the Constitution. It is true, as stated in a Conservative document in 2006 called "Fiscal Imbalance", that the Conservatives said explicitly that housing should be purely a provincial matter, and he echoed that thought.

Private Members' Business

The Conservatives do not like federal involvement in housing, by their nature and ideology, and their performance reflects that. It is true, and I accept it, that during the two years of the economic action plan there was a little blip in housing, but now it is over and it has come dropping down like a stone, by hundreds of millions of dollars. Nothing whatsoever has been committed beyond 2014.

We have the CMHC long-term 35-year mortgages coming due this year, next year and for 10 years to come. As those come due, the subsidies that are geared to income will disappear. There are 200,000 such people now needing that support over the next coming years. That support will gradually wither away to zero. Also, when co-ops want to refinance their mortgages, they are treated by CMHC in a more negative manner than the way they would be treated by an ordinary commercial bank.

I do not really mind what the member has said. The facts are there. There was a little blip during the two-year economic action plan, but other than that, federal support for housing is dropping like a stone. It is en route to dropping to zero, which is consistent with what the Conservatives said in their fiscal imbalance document in 2006, so none of us should really be surprised by that.

We have a worthy bill. It is not one-size-fits-all, as the member said. Discussions with stakeholders would probably produce many sizes, depending on the different needs in different regions of the country. However, it will not come to be because the Conservatives do not want anything to do with housing and will vote against it.

That is all I need to say because the outcome and the reasons are clear. A good project that would have helped many Canadians will not come to pass, as long as we have a Conservative majority government.

• (1930)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as official opposition housing critic, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-400, introduced in this House by the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. This bill would establish a Canadian housing strategy.

I also want to thank the member for Vancouver East, who championed this issue for many years on behalf of the NDP opposition.

It goes without saying that my constituents in Hochelaga are following this debate closely and want all members of this House to pay attention to this issue that is very important to them. They want all of them to work together to enact this bill that would benefit all Canadians.

In Hochelaga, 69% of residents are renters; 30% of households spend more than 30% of their income on housing; and 42% of renters, or 18,250 households, have incomes that do not allow them to meet basic needs.

Canada is the only industrialized country that does not have a housing strategy. The NDP hopes to remedy that situation with this bill.

Many Canadians still have a hard time finding adequate housing, if they even manage to have a roof over their heads at all.

It makes absolutely no sense that, in a country like ours, countless people live on the streets or have to make tough choices between paying rent or feeding their family.

Voters across the country want their elected representatives to care about their basic needs, and I am sure you know, Mr. Speaker, that adequate housing is a basic need.

The problem today is that the poor are not the only ones having trouble finding adequate housing. Middle-class families also struggle with this. To fix this situation we need a plan.

Two weeks ago I spoke here about World Habitat Day, created by the United Nations General Assembly in 1985 to highlight the fact that everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living, including housing. Housing is a fundamental right under international law, and Canada committed to take action in this regard.

Another NDP bill, Bill C-241, introduced by the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, would amend the Canadian Bill of Rights to include the right to proper housing, at a reasonable cost and free of unreasonable barriers.

The purpose of the bill before us today is to move from words to deeds.

We want to work with the provinces, municipalities, aboriginal communities and community organizations involved in housing — as we have much to learn from them — in order to give Canada a meaningful housing strategy, so that all Canadians can finally have access to safe, appropriate, accessible and affordable housing.

What we mean by affordable housing is not something that costs \$300,000, but a scenario in which housing costs—including rent or mortgage payments, property taxes, electricity, water, fuel and other municipal services—are less than 30% of a household's total pre-tax income.

It all sounds very good, but this is exactly where Canada has a real problem. According to survey results released by Habitat for Humanity Canada for World Habitat Day, 35% of respondents bought fewer groceries because of high housing costs; this percentage jumps to 46% in the Maritimes; one in four Canadians has postponed paying bills to pay the rent; and 84% of Canadians participating in the survey believe that the federal government should take action towards affordable housing. This is from people who elected us.

Private Members' Business

The advantages of having a truly integrated housing strategy are numerous: being able to assess the diverse needs of the elderly, women, aboriginal communities, students, people with disabilities, families, victims of violence, people taking part in rehabilitation programs and more; stopping housing crises before they start; reducing homelessness; ensuring that people are not paying too much for housing; allowing people to invest in other sectors of the economy; and making it possible for all to live in dignity.

● (1935)

Before adopting the strategy, we first need to consult with the people and special interest groups. That is why, last month, I launched Canada-wide public consultations on the state of housing in the country.

In the coming months, I will travel to every part of the country to meet with citizens and community groups in order to better understand their actual housing needs. I can already report on some of the things I was told by the people I met in the town hall meetings I organized. The federal government should maintain—or better yet, increase—funding for social housing.

In Canada, more than 620,000 social housing units, including 127,000 in Quebec, have been built under long-term agreements with social housing providers ranging in length from 25 to 50 years depending on the terms of the mortgage. These grants were meant to allow social housing projects to help their low-income tenants while paying off their mortgage. In the past four years, roughly 26,000 social housing units in Canada have been affected by the expiration of these long-term agreements. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's estimates, that number will grow by 73,000 by 2016, bringing the total number of affected units to some 100,000.

The problem is that after 25 or 30 years, the buildings have to be renovated, such that most of these social housing projects will no longer be viable at the end of their agreement.

Let me talk about renovations for a minute. Housing co-operatives that have recently tried to refinance their CMHC mortgage through a financial institution in order to do some renovations, were levied excessive penalties, which prevents them from doing the necessary work. It will be important to reduce those penalties to ensure the integrity of the buildings and the viability of the projects.

In the highlights of main estimates for 2012-13, the government points out a \$21.7 million reduction as a result of expiring operating agreements for long-term projects, which means that the government considers this to be a savings and it has no intention of renewing funding for social housing.

In that case, around 2030, these "savings" will total \$1.7 billion a year, or 85% of the total federal housing budget. In the coming weeks, I will be moving a motion in the House calling for the money saved at the end of operating agreements to be reinvested in social housing.

The major problem that I see with such a large budget cut is that social housing is the least expensive way to fight homelessness, as researcher Stephen Gaetz pointed out in his study on the cost of homelessness.

I would like to remind hon. members of some facts. In 2007, the cost of a hospital bed for one month was \$10,900. In comparison, the cost of a bed in a shelter was \$1,932. The cost to the City of Toronto—where rent is not the lowest in Canada—for a social housing unit was \$199.92.

On top of all that, the federal homelessness partnering strategy provides only short-term funding that is not indexed. We are still wondering what will happen to this program when it expires in 2014, but, meanwhile, the waiting lists for social housing are getting longer and longer.

In addition to pressing social housing and homelessness prevention needs, many cities and regions of the country also have a shortage of rental housing. Right now, the vacancy rate is down from 2.5% to 2.3% for all of Canada and is at 2.2% for Quebec. For 10 years now, this rate has been below the break-even point of 3%, and the country has been experiencing a rental housing shortage. The situation is even more alarming in some regions of the country that have a vacancy rate of close to zero.

I could also give a number of examples of housing in aboriginal communities. What we saw last winter in Attawapiskat is only one of many examples of the alarming situation that exists in many communities across the country.

It is high time we had a national housing strategy. Time is of the essence.

● (1940)

[English]

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak against Bill C-400. Our government believes in taking action. We are focused on delivering results, not holding more conferences.

Our plan is working. In September 2008, the government announced more than \$1.9 billion in funding for housing for the homeless over five years, until March 2014. This included a two-year renewal of the homelessness partnering strategy and existing housing programs until March 2011, and a commitment to maintain annual funding for housing and homelessness until March 2014.

In the fall of 2009, the government consulted with other levels of government, as well as public and private stakeholders to tell us how the existing approach to housing and homelessness could be improved and how the federal government could make better investments in this area from 2011 to 2014. In line with the feedback we received during these consultations, we renewed our homelessness partnering strategy. Through the strategy the government continues to invest in communities and we are also working to further strengthen our relationships with the provinces and territories, building on the successful partnerships we have established to date.

What we do not need are endless talks and more committees. What we do need is action. That is exactly what the homelessness partnering strategy does. For example, just over a month ago the Edmonton Inner City Housing Society celebrated the grand opening of its new apartment complex for people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness. The organization received more than \$1.3 million in partnering strategy funding for the project. As a result, homes were built for people who may have addiction, mental health or developmental problems.

Examples like this Edmonton project prove that our partnering strategy is working. Since the strategy was first launched in April 2007, the government has approved nearly 2,200 projects to prevent and reduce homelessness in Canada. With approved funding of \$134.8 million annually, thousands of Canadians have found shelter and restored dignity in their lives. This funding ensures that we can assist those who are homeless or are at risk, including women fleeing violence, people with disabilities, recent immigrants, seniors and off-reserve aboriginal people who need support.

Our partnering strategy recognizes that a stable living environment is a requirement for improving one's health, finding a decent job, becoming a parent and providing for one's children's education, in short, for leading a productive and fruitful life. It also recognizes that the best solutions are at the grassroots level, not imposed from the top down. That is why we encourage communities to develop local solutions to address their local housing and homelessness needs.

Despite being in a period of fiscal restraint and economic uncertainty, our government continues to invest heavily in this area. In total, the government is already investing more in affordable and supportive housing than any other government in Canadian history. Even more importantly, these investments are achieving rare results, making a real difference in the lives of Canadians right across the country.

The partnering strategy provides a comprehensive approach to preventing and reducing homelessness, providing both national and community based funding. Most of the program's funding is delivered to 61 designated communities across Canada. These are primarily major urban centres that have been identified as having a significant problem with homelessness. Organizations and local stakeholders that are contributing to the fight against homelessness set the priorities for funding in their local communities. This ensures that those who are closest to those requiring our assistance are the ones developing the solutions.

•(1945)

Funds are also targeted to rural and remote areas of the country where housing and poverty can be an issue.

The strategy's aboriginal homelessness funding stream addresses the specific needs of the off-reserve homeless aboriginal population.

At the national level, the partnering strategy funds pilot projects developed with other federal programs dealing with policy issues related to homelessness. As an example, we are working with Veterans Affairs Canada to test innovative approaches to addressing homelessness among those who have served our country.

Private Members' Business

The knowledge development funding stream provides grants and contributions to stakeholders for research. The funding is widely disseminated to support the communities' ability to identify problems and develop solutions.

The national homelessness information system is a federal database development initiative. It helps stakeholders across the country, including service providers, researchers, and different levels of government, to establish baseline data related to the use of emergency shelters across Canada so that we can better understand homelessness.

Finally, the surplus federal real property for homelessness initiative makes surplus federal properties available to community organizations, the not-for-profit sector, and other levels of government for projects and services to help prevent and reduce homelessness.

From 2007 to 2011, the partnering strategy has placed over 38,000 people in more stable housing, helped 11,000 homeless people pursue education or training opportunities, helped 15,000 people find full- or part-time employment, and successfully leveraged investments by external partners. For every dollar invested by the HPS program, nearly \$2.45 has been invested by partners.

We have taken coordinated and strategic action to address homelessness. Helping the most vulnerable citizens in our society is a shared responsibility that requires the participation of our provincial and territorial partners, municipalities, first nations, the private sector and community groups. We will continue to work with our partners in a co-operative way to prevent and reduce homelessness across Canada.

Sadly, it was the NDP that voted against funding to provide desperately needed new social housing for aboriginal families, persons with disabilities, and low-income seniors. It is the NDP that voted against funding to renovate and put new roofs over the heads of thousands of families in need.

While the NDP talks about helping the needy, our government is getting the job done. While the NDP talks about helping the vulnerable, the reality is it has voted against every single measure we have put forward to help these very people. That is why I will be indicating my support for a plan that is working by voting against the bill.

•(1950)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in favour of Bill C-400, an act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians.

I congratulate my colleagues who have spoken on the bill today, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot who presented this important piece of legislation before us, and the member for Hochelaga who speaks for our party on housing issues.

I also pay tribute to my colleague and friend, the member for Vancouver East, whose Bill C-304 from the last Parliament is the basis of the current legislation before us. It illustrates the commitment of the New Democratic Party to dealing with one of the most important issues facing Canadians: affordable housing.

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This is not just about homelessness, as the member opposite would have us believe. There are many people in Canada who are under-housed and do not have enough housing. In my riding, for example, there is a widowed and disabled woman living with three teenaged children in a one-bedroom apartment, because that is all anyone has for her. Raising three children in a one-bedroom apartment is not good. She has been on a waiting list for seven years and is told it will be another five years she has to wait. Her children will have grown up before she receives adequate housing.

That is the message the government opposite seems to be missing in the debate. This is not just about homelessness; it is about adequate housing for all Canadians. It is one of the most fundamental needs of our society. Indeed, Canada is a signatory to a number of international agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, recognizing that adequate housing is a basic human right.

Unfortunately in Canada there are too many families without adequate and affordable housing in their reach. Nearly 1.5 million Canadian households pay too much on their rent, over 30% of their gross income, leaving not enough money to spend on their children, their health and their future. This is not acceptable when we live in one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

My own riding of York South—Weston in the city of Toronto is home to 115,000 people. It is an urban riding within the metropolis of Toronto, Canada's largest city. Of the 42,000 homes in York South—Weston, half are rental apartments. Many of these apartments can be found on Weston Road, Lawrence Avenue, Jane, Keele and Eglinton. In half of those rental apartments, or some 10,000-plus apartments, we have seniors, single persons, lone-parent families and families with children paying more than 30% of their gross income on rent. That is not acceptable to the NDP.

The members opposite have suggested that maybe we should get all of them better jobs. That will not happen to seniors or children. Moreover, it certainly will not happen when there is no industrial strategy on the part of the government to create the jobs that will pay enough. Every chance the Conservatives get, they want to lower wages and expectations. However, people cannot afford housing if their wages are being lowered by the government. By paying more than 30% of their gross income, they have less money to support their children, their health and to provide for their future.

In York South—Weston, why do we have so many paying more than they can afford for rent? Despite the government's action plan, it is because there are so many low-paying minimum wage jobs in our economy today that someone earning \$11 an hour will be paying 40% of their before-tax income to rent a bachelor apartment in Toronto. No one can raise a family in a bachelor apartment in Toronto, and even that is over 40% of their before-tax income.

According to the CMHC, the average rent for a bachelor apartment last year was \$822 a month. It is higher now. For a two-bedroom apartment, which the women I talked about earlier would need at the least, was \$1,161 a month last year. Again, that is now higher. That is the average.

No wonder we have over 10,000 households in my riding alone paying more than they can afford in rent. That means less money for

their health, less for their children and less for their future. That should concern us all, not just this side of the House.

It is not a story unique to my riding of York South—Weston, as the briefs from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, among many other groups, have made quite clear for over a decade now. The social costs of bad health outcomes, of lower educational attainment, of inadequate pensions that people with low incomes live with and endure are well-documented and indisputable.

● (1955)

We need a national housing strategy to be developed under the leadership of the federal government in concert with our provincial and municipal partners in order to address this housing crisis. A national housing strategy is needed now more than ever and Bill C-400 seeks to achieve that very necessary goal.

Earlier this summer, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association released its 2012 survey of social housing waiting lists in Ontario. It illustrates the deepening housing crisis for low-income families. The data showed that, in 2011, there were 156,358 households in Toronto alone on the social housing waiting lists. Another year of increased numbers, a net increase of 4,281 more households waiting for housing whose rents they can afford. Of the 156,358 households on that waiting list, over one-fifth were seniors, one-third were families with children and, as Ontario has only 260,000 social housing homes, it takes a long time to gain access to this affordable housing.

Last year only 18,500 in Ontario were successful in getting into social housing, but despite that, the waiting lists grew larger for the fifth consecutive year. For some families, according to the Non-Profit Housing Association, the wait can be over 10 years. That is unacceptable in Canada.

In my hometown of Toronto, the survey showed there were 69,342 households on the waiting list for social housing in 2011, representing over 44% of the Ontario list, despite the fact that Toronto represents only 20% of Ontario's population and despite the fact that Toronto only has 96,000 rent geared to income social housing units. That means that for every 10 social housing homes in Toronto, there are 7 families waiting to get in, 7 families paying more rent than they can afford while they wait.

I met with the vice-president of the Toronto Community Housing last week. One of the things it has had to do in order to maintain the housing stock it has is to sell off housing stock. We are reducing the amount of housing.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take this opportunity to revisit the important issues and specific challenges related to mental health for first nations communities.

Last spring, the Conservative's omnibus budget undermined any government intention to take this issue seriously. At that time it became clear that the actions of the Conservative government speak volumes while its words mean nothing.

No amount of rhetoric will fill the void that is created when reporting agencies are cut. No sympathetic message will pick up the slack created when groups that help focus services based on community needs are cut, which we are seeing now, as tribal councils have become the next in line on the Conservative chopping block.

Why is that? Is it because we have a government that values its own opinion more than the experience of those on the ground? Is it because the government wants to protect that opinion from any facts or information that might challenge it?

What we do know is that mental health problems happen more regularly in Canada's first nations population. We know that for men, the suicide rate is five and a quarter times greater among the first nations population than it is for other Canadians. For women, too, even though the total occurrence is considerably less, the rate among first nation women is seven times the number for other Canadians. This speaks to a true epidemic, and the government must pay attention to the problem and address it in a meaningful way.

However, the magnitude of the problem is much bigger than suicide. Suicide can only be seen as a horrible culmination of deteriorating mental health, not as a stand-alone phenomenon.

[Translation]

This government must engage with our first nations to address the issue of mental health. The government has a responsibility to provide health care to the first nations. This is a quote taken from the Health Canada website:

So many factors can influence your health, including your mental health. These factors are commonly known as the determinants of health and include such things as how much money you make, how much education you have and your relationships with family and friends

[English]

We know that for the determinants of income and education in many of our first nations communities, there is much work to be done. These are items that can be measured, that can be addressed by proper regional strategies informed by local knowledge and the nuance that can only come from responsive bodies like tribal councils. By understanding what we are hoping to achieve, we can reasonably expect that good statistical analysis will only help us focus those efforts and ensure we are using all available resources in the best way possible.

This is not the view of the Conservative government. What we have learned is that the Conservatives are decidedly anti-information. They are the same people who hobbled the census under false

pretenses. Behaviour like this ensures that they can challenge statistical information and rely on anecdotal stories to back up their ideologically driven opinions.

We see this in the way they callously abandoned funding for the First Nations Statistical Institute. They labelled it a waste, but we know it is more of an inconvenience to the stories they like to tell themselves. However, the real waste is the time that is not being used to address the mental health challenges in many of our first nations communities, challenges that are significantly out of proportion to those in the rest of Canada. It is a waste to make flashy announcements and promote strategies while taking away the ability to organize and report that would only ensure better success.

The Conservatives like to talk about partnership, but first nations in my constituency and throughout Canada feel dismissed by the government. Aboriginal people face unique and serious health challenges, yet the government has slashed funding to the few organizations in the country that specifically address challenges faced by aboriginal people. There is a huge need to address first nations mental health concerns. This is widely known.

How can the Conservative government believe that the best way to solve mental health problems that disproportionately plague our first nations is to reduce resources?

● (2000)

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House to respond to this question, not just because I think the government is responding effectively to this issue that has been raised but as somebody who has worked as a nurse in these isolated remote first nations communities for more than eight years of my life. I think I bring some credibility in this response.

Our government is committed to working with our partners to improve aboriginal health outcomes and is making significant investments to address these issues. There is tremendous strength and resilience among first nations and Inuit communities in Canada and our government will work with these first nations and Inuit partners to develop solutions that will address their unique needs and circumstances. It is through these kinds of partnerships that we have developed the first nations and Inuit mental health and wellness strategic action plan developed with first nations and Inuit. The plan provides overall guidance for this government's investments in first nations and Inuit mental health programs.

Adjournment Proceedings

Our government invests approximately \$245 million per year for first nations and Inuit programs. These initiatives are targeted at mental health promotion, addictions, suicide prevention, counselling and other crisis response services treatment, as well as after-care follow-up services. For example, the brighter futures and building healthy communities program provides \$89 million in funding to all first nations and Inuit communities to support their ability to address local community level mental wellness priorities and programs. Some communities use this funding for individual and family counselling services while others use it to support intervention, rehabilitation and after-care services. Still others have identified promotion and prevention activities as their priority. This flexibility ensures programs and services are responsive, community-based and prioritized from the community.

As members are well aware, the Mental Health Commission released Canada's first national mental health strategy in May of this year. That strategy, "Changing Directions, Changing Lives: The Mental Health Strategy for Canada", was built as an inclusive approach. This is exactly the path that our government is following. Our government's efforts to reduce and prevent suicide among aboriginal youth across Canada in the north are prime examples. Aboriginal youth under 20 years of age account for more than 40% of the aboriginal population. The physical and mental health of these youth represents the future, not just of aboriginal communities but the regions in which they reside. Helping young aboriginal people and preventing aboriginal youth suicide is a priority for our government and, indeed, for all Canadians.

In recognition of the urgent issue of youth suicide in first nations and Inuit communities, Health Canada invests \$15 million per year through the national aboriginal youth suicide prevention strategy. The strategy funds over 150 community-based prevention projects to enable at-risk communities to improve overall mental health and wellness. It is important to draw some attention to some early success that we are seeing as it demonstrates that through partnerships we can make a difference.

Our government will continue to work with first nations and Inuit communities and organizations, provincial and territorial organizations, as well as other partners uniquely positioned to work with us to coordinate, prevent, treat and respond to mental health and addiction issues facing aboriginal communities.

• (2005)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised to find out that the member opposite sees this issue in a different light. I would remind him that the ultimate gauge to judge this by is on the ground in the communities and not in this place. That is made all the harder without the First Nations Statistical Institute, without the good work undertaken by tribal councils. It sends the message that Canada wants to work in a vacuum, that we do not care to hear how things are and, instead, we would rather just tell first nations people how they should be.

The New Democrats are worried. We are worried that the government is setting the agenda for discussions without the input of first nations. We are concerned that the government is doing damage that could take another generation to undo. We know that first nations do not want to be treated as unequal partners but that is what is happening time and again and the cost is significant.

Mental health is an indicator of community health. The government is not helping matters with its indiscriminate cuts. When will the government give the first nations people the tools they are asking for to deal with mental health challenges that disproportionately affect their communities?

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, it just shows how little the member and perhaps the official opposition actually know about funding when it comes to these kinds of programs. As I mentioned, brighter futures, for example, is a program that provides for the community to take priorities, particularly around mental health, wellness, addiction and prevention-based programs in their own communities. That was patently false.

This government is supporting the mental wellness of first nations and Inuit as is evident from our investments in mental health, suicide prevention, addictions and to address prescription drug abuse in particular. Our approach is aligned with the recommendations of the Mental Health Commission's national strategy, something we hear from the opposition quite frequently. This government has a national prevention strategy that is specific to aboriginal youth. This strategy was renewed by this government in budget 2010, with an increase in funding.

Health Canada will continue to work with all partners to develop comprehensive approaches to address these important issues.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a few months ago I rose in the House following the tabling of a so-called human rights impact assessment with regard to the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement. I say "so-called" because the report was absolutely devoid of any assessment of the effect of the free trade agreement on the human rights situation in Colombia. This is concerning for a number of reasons.

First, the Conservative government has broken its own law. The legislation that implemented this agreement states the following:

Each Party shall provide a report to its national legislature by May 15 in the year after the entry into force of the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia and annually thereafter. These reports will be on the effect of the measures taken under the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia on human rights in the territories of both Canada and the Republic of Colombia.

The report tabled in Parliament by the Conservative government did not do this. It contained no reporting whatsoever on the effects of the free trade agreement on human rights. There were no measurements, no consultations with people on the ground and no analysis of the human and labour rights situations as they stand now. Instead, what we got was a re-statement of economic statistics that we already know.

Adjournment Proceedings

I note that this reporting requirement was mandatory. It did not say “may”, it said “shall”. The government simply did not comply.

Second, the importance of the human rights impact assessment and the importance of it being a thorough and comprehensive assessment cannot be overstated.

Let me give a little history of the human rights impact assessment and why it is part of the free trade agreement. When we were studying the bill in the House we heard very disturbing stories about the human rights situation in Colombia: trade unionists being killed or disappearing in the most dangerous country in the world, as it is; government suppression of opposition; and the forced expulsion and removal of indigenous people from traditional land.

We heard that the Canadian government had failed to perform due diligence and had not followed UN guidelines for implementing a free trade agreement.

The UN's “Guiding principles on human rights impact assessments of trade and investment agreements” states that:

All States should prepare human rights impact assessments prior to the conclusion of trade and investment agreements.

Our government did not do any assessments prior to signing this agreement.

New Democrats took a principled stand against this deal not because we were anti-trade, as the Conservative camp often says. On the contrary, we are and always have been supportive of expanding trade opportunities for Canadian business. We opposed this deal because the Conservative government ignored experts and moved forward with an extreme trade agenda that ignored human rights.

However, in a minority Parliament, the Conservatives were able to secure the support of what has since become the third party by assuring Parliament that they would report back annually on the human rights situation. This empty report proves that was an empty promise.

Now we see that, with their majority, Conservatives are ramming through trade deals with partners with equally suspect records, Panama and Honduras, again without doing the due diligence of a human rights assessment beforehand.

Also telling is the fact that this government has failed to require human rights impact assessments in any new agreements. This tells us that Conservatives were never serious about human rights to begin with.

My question to the government is this. How can Canadians and the international community take Canada seriously on the issue of human rights when it does not live up to the commitments that it makes in writing?

• (2010)

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the party opposite, our government believes that engagement with countries like Colombia is more effective than isolation when promoting human rights. The

close ties between Canada and Colombia, including through our free trade agreement, allow us to share our values of human rights and democracy.

In opposing trade, the NDP and its special-interest backers continue to fearmonger and misrepresent the facts. It would rather have a Canada that isolates itself from the world, a Canada that does not engage with countries like Colombia. Ultimately, the NDP's Canada is a Canada that lacks confidence and a Canada that cannot compete.

Our government, on the other hand, knows that Canadians can compete with the best in the world and win. Our government is focused on the priorities of Canadians and the Canadian economy. Through our ambitious pro-trade plan, we are helping create jobs for Canadian workers and their families. This plan includes engagement with our neighbours in the Americas.

Tonight I will focus on our agreement with Colombia because through this agreement Canada's producers and exporters benefit from reduced or eliminated tariffs on nearly all of Canada's current exports to Colombia. The agreement also provides a more predictable, transparent and rules-based trading environment for Canadian investors and businesses. Members of the House will recall that the NDP opposed this agreement at every step, yet another example of its failure to stand up for new opportunities for Canadian exporters.

Canada signed the agreement concerning annual reports on human rights between Canada and the Republic of Colombia due to the unique relationship Canada has with Colombia, a relationship that includes the promotion of human rights. The agreement requires both Canada and Colombia to each produce separate annual reports on the impact of measures taken under our free trade agreement on human rights in both countries.

The Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement did not enter into force until August 15, 2011. It was therefore only enforced for the last four and a half months of 2011, the calendar year covered in the report tabled in 2012. As the free trade agreement had not been in force for a full calendar year and since there were not sufficient data to do an analysis on any changes that might have taken place over such a short time period, this year's report focused on outlining the methodological steps to be followed in our future annual reports. The entire period from August 15, 2011 to December 31, 2012 will be covered in the report to be tabled in May 2013.

Adjournment Proceedings

● (2015)

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Conservatives pursue an extreme, ideological approach to trade and they do it incompetently. Under the current government, we have gone from a trade surplus of \$26 billion, when the Conservatives took office, to a deficit of \$50 billion today. Our manufacturing trade deficit has exploded six times to \$90 billion. We are exporting \$30 billion more in raw materials but \$35 billion less in value-added products.

The Conservatives brag that they have signed trade agreements, but these are with the smallest economies around: Panama, Honduras, Jordan, Liechtenstein and Colombia. None are with India, Japan, Brazil, Russia, the large economies. Worse, there is no strategy to pursue agreements with countries that would really benefit Canada. For Conservatives, it is only about the number of deals, not the quality of the deals or the strategic value of selected partners.

Can we pursue a pro-trade policy that respects human rights? Can we sign trade agreements that have positive effects on the environment and labour standards? Can we expand Canadian exports, create good-paying jobs in Canada and increase our value-added products? New Democrats say “yes”; Conservatives say “no”. Why not?

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, they are asking the tough questions. We really should not be surprised by the NDP's opposition to trade. Ever since the historic NAFTA, the New Democrats have consistently opposed our efforts to open new markets for Canadian workers and businesses. The only reference to trade in the NDP platform is to its cap and trade carbon tax that would raise the price of everything for Canadian workers including gas, hydro and groceries.

On top of harming the interests of hard-working Canadians and their families, the anti-trade agenda of the New Democrats and their radical activist supporters would deny a better life to the millions of people in the emerging economies with which Canada is deepening its relationships, countries just like Colombia. Trade creates new economic opportunities for people struggling to lift themselves out of poverty and hardship. By opposing trade, the NDP is standing in the way of economic development, improved living standards and the emergence of democracy, freedom and prosperity in these emerging economies.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on September 12, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development issued offshore exploration leases to more than 9,000 square kilometres of the Beaufort Sea to Franklin Petroleum, a U.K. company, for \$7.5 million in promised work.

Franklin has no experience in the Arctic. According to its most recent corporate filing, it had \$220 in the bank and a corporate value of minus \$32,000. It is unlikely this company will actually do any work. Instead, it now has exclusive control over a vast area of the Beaufort Sea.

Now that Franklin has these leases, section 85 of the Natural Resources Development Act allows it to transfer the leases to anyone

by only notifying the minister of the transfer. No approval is required.

Internationally, it is common that transfer of leases require ministerial approval. This is how things are done in the North Sea. Norway requires approval of the minister before licences can be transferred. Its law states:

Transfer of a licence or participating interest in a licence for petroleum activities may not take place without the approval of the Ministry.

Franklin Petroleum could just sit on these leases and do no work without any penalty. No jobs will be created while companies able to do this work will be excluded for many years. How does this help the economy or work in the national interest of Canada?

The oil patch is scratching its head as to why the minister did this when he could have decided to not issue any leases as per the Canada Petroleum Resources Act which states:

The Minister is not required to issue an interest as a result of a call for bid.

The *Canadian Business* magazine, on October 10, questioned this decision, stating:

How could a little-known British firm with two employees and no producing assets end up owning the largest oil lease ever issued in the Canadian Arctic?

Long-time oil patch analyst, Paul Ziff, said:

We're talking about one of the most environmentally sensitive areas in Canada... This type of award flies in the face of public concern.

Nigel Bankes, professor and chair of Natural Resources Law, University of Calgary, said:

...I don't think that we have seen a give-away on this scale since the giveaways that occurred before the first major discovery of oil and gas resources in the Arctic in Prudhoe Bay (Alaska) in 1969. Following that discovery federal policy makers resolved to be more demanding of international oil companies. This most recent decision looks like a step back in time.

Professor Bankes has put forward three recommendations that the minister should have followed, if he were doing his job.

First, carry out a strategic environmental assessment before making the significant decision to open up a new area to exploratory drilling.

Second, develop and implement a scheme for the pre-qualification of bidders in an effort to ensure that those who are bidding on these blocks have the assets, the experience and the safety record to engage in this type of activity.

Third, tighten up the bidding system, either to change the standard practice to a cash bidding system, or to require that a minimum work bid must at least cover the cost of the estimated exploratory well that must be drilled during the first period of the licence.

Having a strategic environmental assessment actually follows the current cabinet directive on these types of development and is the process used in developing the off shore oil and gas off Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

Adjournment Proceedings

Unfortunately, the minister did not do his job and failed to protect the national interests of Canada by not doing due diligence on these leases. This is a disgrace.

• (2020)

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work the hon. member and I do together on the standing committee.

To respond to the question of the hon. member for the Western Arctic on this matter, he should know that the Government of Canada continues to deliver on initiatives under the northern strategy, including the issuance of exploration licences in the north, which encourage investment in northern communities.

The process to acquire the rights to explore for oil and gas on Crown lands in the north is called the rights issuance process. It is the result of an open and transparent process set out in the Canadian Petroleum Resources Act.

The process has four phases, which include: community engagement; call for nominations; call for bids; and the issuance of exploration licences. It is a public process through and through.

Rights issuances in Canada's offshore areas are market driven and awarded based on competitive calls for bids. Industry identifies parcels of interest which may be included in a subsequent call for bids. We have one bidding criterion, which is the highest bidder wins. The minimum bid is set at \$1 million and before a licence is awarded, a financial deposit is required, which represents 25% of the bid. Companies are required to come up with this financial deposit within 15 days of being announced as the highest bidder before any licence is issued.

Let me be clear. Lands are not sold in the process. Rights issuance does not provide permission to conduct exploratory activities. In fact, a licence is awarded for a specific period of time that affords the holder the exclusive right to apply for authorizations to undertake work. When companies get to the stage of seeking permission to conduct exploratory activities, they require authorization from the National Energy Board. Only after a rigorous review process and environmental assessments does the National Energy Board authorize exploration. By law, the company needs to demonstrate that it has the financial capacity to afford potential liabilities in the event of a major incident.

What is more, this exploration of Canada's offshore regions generates economic opportunities for communities and direct and indirect benefits to northern and Canadian economies.

We are getting things done in the north. Whether it is setting high standards for regulatory frameworks, increasing opportunities or making food more readily available, our government takes its responsibility to the north and to all northerners seriously. We are committed to working with our partners to ensure any future development takes place in a manner that protects the northern environment and is respectful of community interests.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, my colleague neglects to say that there is a cabinet directive to provide a strategic environmental assessment before any leases are handed out. As well, the process that he describes sounds great if it is being handled in a correct fashion by a company that can handle it. However, what we see now is a company that cannot financially handle this kind of investment in the Arctic and will undoubtedly pick other partners for it. If the company or the other partners are successful in finding a significant discovery in that area, the companies then have the right to that resource. That resource remains with them.

What we have is a situation where we do not have a clear future outlined in the handing out of this lease for such a low sum of money. I might add that a letter of credit is all that is required for the deposit that goes on these leases.

• (2025)

Mr. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring a strong and prosperous north to help shape the future of our nation. This includes meeting our responsibilities for ensuring sustainable and balanced development in the north. This includes oil and gas exploration in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and the northern offshore areas through the rights issuance process. This process is open and transparent and abides by the Canada Petroleum Resources Act. Winning bidders must provide financial security for their bid. What is more, drilling can only take place after a rigorous review and environmental assessment.

Protecting the north and the interests of northerners is a priority for our government. The rights issuance process is carefully managed to ensure that the northern environment is safeguarded.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:26 p.m.)

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